Course Evaluation
Course Evaluation

Course evaluation takes place during and after course implementation. It is based on data that may come from:

**Internal Evaluation:**

Internal evaluation includes those evaluation processes that take place prior to the participant leaving the class. They may include:

- **Internal Review:** In the development phase, before a program is ever taught, a team of internal reviewers should go over program materials looking for:
  - internal consistency (a match between objectives, materials, and test items)
  - material quality (instructional quality and accuracy).

Having people (including a few who aren't program developers/designers) scrutinize the materials before they're used means revisions can be made before training. That avoids wasting participants' time on unclear or otherwise poorly-designed materials.

- **Learners' Observations:** Learners are typically asked to evaluate a course on its last day -- indeed, too often at the last minute. Frequently, this is the only course evaluation data called for in an evaluation plan. But, this data may not be reliable because learners are asked to assess a course's value before they've had an opportunity to return to their jobs and use their newly learned skills.

"Last day" course evaluation can give developers important insights, such as participants' opinions of:

- training materials
- instructor skills
- course structure and sequence
- facilities

Working from this data, steps may be taken to improve instructor skills, revise a program, and its materials or facility. But, variations on traditional "last day" evaluation make better use of participants' observations:

- daily or weekly program evaluation helps reveal where specific improvements should be made. And, because these give an
instructor information during course implementation, they allow for adjustments and improvements of methods and materials while participants are still in the course

- evaluation of how well a course prepared participants to perform on the job should be done a month or so after the course. By then participants have had an opportunity to apply what they learned to their job responsibilities. They may identify areas where training helped them perform their jobs-and areas where they believe more or different training is needed.

- **Instructor Observations:** Instructor input on course design and materials should always be solicited. It's important to know what seemed to work in a course and what didn't—and to figure out why. Learners' observations won't always distinguish whether a well-presented section's success owed to good materials, an experienced instructor, or a combination of the two. But a candid, self-aware instructor can tell you.

Ask for instructor observations to be put in writing. It's also a good idea to get a copy of each instructor's lesson plan to see what notes the instructor added. A well-prepared, seasoned instructor may add notes that should become a regular part of course materials.

- **Learners' Course Performance:** Learners' course performance in formation consists of results from the tests and laboratory/workshop exercises plus instructor reports on individual participants. This data may point to course sections that need revision. If a large proportion of the learners fail the test(s) for a particular objective, there may be a problem with the objective, test item(s), course structure, or instructor competence in that area.

**External Evaluation:**

External evaluation include those evaluation processes that take place after the participant finishes the class. Such evaluation process may include:

- **Training Completer's On-The-Job Performance:** Data on on-the-job performance can come from several sources:
  - supervisor reports on individuals' performance
  - comparative studies of production before and after training
  - quality reports on products and services
  - production reports on time use and material waste
  - solicited or unsolicited reports from customers.
Job performance data can be compared with data about participants’ course performance to pinpoint areas where revisions and additions are necessary. And, when combined with other data, further conclusions may be drawn: for instance, if an entire class does well on an objective in a course but fails to transfer learning to the job, that objective is poorly written or poorly tested.

**Improvement**

Based on the interpretation of the data available, action can be taken to correct deficiencies and improve the course. Improvements may need to be made in any phase of the development cycle. The job may change requiring a new job analysis and task analysis, new needs may be identified requiring a new needs analysis. The design may prove weak when implemented. The development phase may have poorly written lessons or student material. The implementation may have not been performed as designed. It is through a comprehensive evaluation program that weaknesses are identified and improvements can be made.