Guideline for the evaluation of group discussions

Introduction: The following "guideline for the evaluation of group discussions" should help with the processing and analyses of group discussions and contribute to a harmonized methodology of evaluation, in order to make the reports comparable and better to resume (regarding the quality of the criteria of analyses).

Group discussions became basically structured through **"Outline for interviews with learners"**. Separate fields of questions of the interviewers divide the discussion into 7 main discussion phases. The pattern should be maintained throughout the evaluation. The formal evaluation contains the following 3 paragraphs:

I. General Data: Information on location, time, interviewer, course and learning aims, etc

II. Personal Data: Information on number of participants, age, gender and degree of education…

III. Content analyses: Remarks about the evaluation within the main discussion phases

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I. General Data

Date, day and time of meeting:

Place meeting held (please give full address):

Moderator/interviewer:

Information about the course(s) of the participants

- Name of the course
- Aim and content of the course
- Specialities

II. Participants – personal data

Total number of participants:

Please indicate if possible:

Participant 1:
Age:
(w)women or (m)men: (w)………. (m)…...

Course:
Educational level:

Participant 2:
Age:
(w)women or (m)men): (w)………. (m)…….
Course:
Educational level:

Participant 3:
usw.

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III: Content analyses of the respective phases of discussion

The following remarks should help to process the respective main phases of discussion and to analyse them according to certain aspects.

Attention: It certainly won`t be always possible to give comments to all of the following points.

General modus operandi to evaluate group discussions

- phenomena / respective contributions to the discussion should be illustrated through examples (possibly in direct speech)
- resume
- interpretation

Remarks about content analyses

- name **the frequency of answers** (if possible), for example for question 1:
  How many preferences exist for a certain media? How many learners had experiences with a certain phenomenon?

  We are definitely not looking for a statistical evaluation here, but we should still try to name the frequency of respective answers in order to be able to get a rough idea about existing experiences.

- report the **variation / diversity of answers**: please describe all contributions to the 7 main discussion phases – and definitely report solitary opinions. Examples: Which experiences exist regarding symbols, pictograms (question 2)? In which (everyday-) situations were pictures helpful (question 3)? Which difficulties did the participants experience regarding pictures, symbols or pictograms (question 4)? Etc.

Attention: This complex is especially interesting and important because we want to learn about biographical experiences – as established in the project application.

- Describe the **intensity of answers** to the respective questions, for example: How many learners agree strongly / agree partly / have rather big difficulties / have no experience, etc. How many learners don`t comment at all?

  Examples: Especially in group discussions the uttered opinions and experiences could lead to strong controversies. It would be interesting to see which topic causes a discussion. Can we make comments about the reason? Which experience or comment would be rejected completely? Where do the other participants agree?

- Maintain the **completeness of verbal contributions** (as far as possible).
  Examples: In connection with which everyday situation has a certain experience been made?

- Describe **the process of the discussion groups** in regard to the respective questions, id est: reconstruct processes of opinion making: How did certain opinions, descriptions, examples evolve? For instance, through verbal contributions by single or various persons? Which contributions are interconnected?

- Maintain the **originality of contributions**: please add quotations by the learners to the description, if necessary. Please mark the interviewers own interpretations.

- **Remarks on learning and living world** (= common spaces of experience in regard of biographical and socialisation experiences) and aspects of group dynamics.

  Background :

  Photos, pictures, graphic works and symbols can be "open" for differing meanings. This meaning evolves through active communication of the spectator / user, etc. with a photo. It often isn`t complete, or unchangeable. Depending on the user it can result in different meanings.
  In our group discussions these singular (also differing) meanings become clear and are discussed by the participants. Under certain circumstances they can be interpreted in relation to the learning and living world of the target group.

  Attention: In group discussions sometimes it´s better to observe "how" a comment is made, than by its content, id est: "what" is said. Further it could be revealing what is told, and what is not told.

  Attention: This complex is also especially interesting and important because we want to learn about biographical experiences – as established in the project application.

Further incentives for reflection regarding group dynamic processes:

- description of the overall "atmosphere" during the discussion (for instance:
  relaxed, nervous, running out of time)
- Have the respective participants interacted well? If not, why not? Possible explanations?
- Have there been opinion leaders in the group, who had a strong influence on the discussion with their contributions? Which effect did it have?
- Was there coalition-building among the participants?
- Who else was present at the discussion (moderator, other members of the organisation)?

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Self-reflection of the interviewer during the evaluation:

- On which level am I? Am I describing or interpreting?
- Does a made contribution really express something about the learners experience with a specific phenomenon?