

Promotion from within: the role of the *facilitator* in supporting dialogical and reflective forms of self-evaluation

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Abstract

This article presents a reflective and dialogical approach to evaluation that has been developed over twenty years by an educational research group at the University of Pavia and has been tested in the field in various experiences and research conducted in Italy in which day-care center and nursery school educators were directly involved. The approach, inspired by Guba and Lincoln's fourth generation evaluation and Dewey's theory of reflective thinking, considers evaluation as a process by which people working in an educational institution can reflect in groups on their educational beliefs and practices in order to plan and implement improvement actions. After briefly outlining the main characteristics of the approach, I will focus on the role played in it by a facilitator, a figure from outside the educational reality object of evaluation whose principal task is to help the participants to reconstruct a shared image of the reality in which they operate, making it possible to envisage the future, to think about why you do what you do and how you could improve it. The principal goal of this figure is to "promote from within" soliciting the empowerment of groups of educators and teachers through reflection. On the basis of a recent research, the communicative and maieutic strategies performed by this figure in promoting processes of self-evaluation in groups of educators and teachers will be presented.

Keywords

Participatory and dialogical evaluation – Promotion from within – Facilitator's role – Communication strategies – Early childhood educational services in Italy.

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Promover a partir do interior: o papel do facilitador no apoio a formas dialógicas e reflexivas de auto-avaliação

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Resumo

Este artigo apresenta uma abordagem reflexiva e dialógica para a avaliação que tem sido desenvolvida ao longo de cerca de vinte anos por um grupo de pesquisa em educação na Universidade de Pavia e que foi testado em campo em várias experiências e pesquisas realizadas na Itália, em que educadores de creches e escolas de educação infantil estiveram diretamente envolvidos. A abordagem, inspirada na avaliação de quarta geração de Guba e Lincoln e na teoria do pensamento reflexivo de Dewey, considera a avaliação como um processo pelo qual as pessoas que trabalham em uma instituição de ensino podem refletir em grupo sobre suas crenças e práticas educacionais, a fim de planejar e implementar ações de melhora. Depois de delinear brevemente os principais benefícios da abordagem, vou me concentrar no papel desempenhado nela pela figura do “facilitador”, alguém de fora da realidade educacional objeto de avaliação, cuja principal tarefa é ajudar os participantes a reconstruir uma imagem compartilhada da realidade em que operam, o que torna possível prever o futuro, pensando em por que você faz o que você faz e como você pode melhorar isso. O principal objetivo dessa figura é “promover a partir de dentro” provocando, através da reflexão, o “empoderamento” de grupos de educadores e professores. Com base em uma pesquisa recente, as estratégias comunicativas e maiêuticas utilizadas por essa figura na promoção de processos de auto-avaliação em grupos de educadores e professores também serão apresentados.

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Palavras-chave

Avaliação dialógica e participativa – Abordagem da promoção a partir de dentro – O papel do facilitador – Estratégias de comunicação – Serviços de educação infantil na Itália

A participatory and formative approach to the evaluation of educational contexts

For the past twenty years, the research group of pedagogical disciplines at the University of Pavia has conducted several evaluation experiences with groups of educators and teachers, mainly in the field of early childhood educational services (day-care centers and nursery schools). Such experiences have been developed following theoretical guidelines inspired on a participatory model of evaluation; in some studies the research group analyzed different aspects of such experiences in depth (BECCHI; BONDIOLI, 1997; CIPOLLONE, 1999; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2000a; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2004; SAVIO, 2011) coming to individuate the hallmarks of an approach that we called “negotiated quality” (BONDIOLI; GHEDINI, 2000; BONDIOLI, 2002). The study of more recent evaluation experiences, conducted using the same approach (BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2009; BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2011; SAVIO, 2013), has enabled us to focus more precisely on the role played from within by the figure of facilitator, and to analyze in detail the communicative exchanges between this figure and the participants of the evaluation work.

The “negotiated quality” approach

Our approach fits within the framework of the so-called fourth-generation evaluation of Guba and Lincoln (1989, 2001), who propose a constructivist approach to evaluation according to which the evaluation data do not have an objective quality; they are co-constructed and as such require an attribution of meaning. Within this framework, other sources of inspiration are: “democratic evaluation” (HOUSE; HOWE, 1999; HOUSE, 2005), which emphasizes the inclusive nature of the evaluation and insists, above all, on the values of equality and social justice; “participatory evaluation” (COUSINS; EARL,

1992; ULRİK; WENZEL, 2003), which is inspired by the non-authoritarian educational theories, and acts in order to provide opportunities of emancipation to those who have difficulties in presenting their point of view because they are far from the centers of power and decision-making; “communicative evaluation” (NIEME; KEMMIS, 1999), which underlines the dialogic nature of the evaluation process and the importance of exchanges between participants and between groups; “empowerment evaluation” (FETTERMAN, 1994, 2001) whose purpose is to make people more independent, more responsible and more capable of making meditated choices.

As I said before, on the basis of these sources of inspiration, the educational research group at the University of Pavia, initially directed by Egle Becchi, and today composed of Anna Bondioli, Monica Ferrari and Donatella Savio, has over the years developed its own approach to the evaluation, called the “negotiation of quality” (BONDIOLI; GHEDINI, 2000; BONDIOLI, 2002; BECCHI; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2000; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2001; BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2013), whose main characteristics are the following:

- Democratic intent to give voice and power to all those who are involved in a project, a service, an educational reality regardless of their hierarchical position within the institution;
- Non-neutrality of the evaluation, its political character. Quality, which is what a process of evaluation intends to evaluate, has a political nature in that it depends on the reference values of individuals or groups of interest that do not always coincide, hence the belief that the involvement of the different parties participating (stakeholders), although potentially in conflict as to interests and needs, is necessary for taking shared responsibility;
- Dialogue, confrontation as typical procedural rules. Evaluation, as we understand it, does not consist in determining whether a certain reality conforms to standards set by

superiors and from the top, but is a process in which stakeholders work to clarify and define by consensus values, objectives, priorities, ideas on how an educational institution is and how it should or could be. Evaluation must be shared; quality should be determined intersubjectively through democratic processes of discussion and negotiation. The validity of the criteria of the evaluation process is ensured through proper forms of inter-subjective negotiation of participatory type;

- Attention to the context. The notion of context has the concept of “ecology of development” (BRONFENBRENNER, 1979) and the systemic approach (BATESON, 1972) as theoretical references. In our approach, the object of evaluation (*evaluandum*) is the educational context understood as a complex set of material, human and symbolic resources that an institution organizes and brings into play to impact on the recipients of educational actions (children, students). The context is not considered only in its material particulars - characteristics of the building, space, and the furniture - but also as the actions of individuals, through which these concrete elements are organized and take on meaning. Even symbolic aspects - aspirations, attitudes, motivations, and intentions, of the people who move within the context - are an integral part of the school as an ecological environment. The context is not designed as a container but as a process: the environment constantly changes due to the actions, aspirations, and relationships of the individuals who work there; this transformation, in turn, influences the actions and the intentions of the people involved;

- A formative rather than summative aim, pointed to the improvement of educational reality rather than a final judgment on it (SCRIVEN, 1967);

- The rejection of the use of an exclusively quantitative mode of data collection and priority given to qualitative methods;

- The trend to remain open and expand;
- The need for an external support, an expert figure with mediation functions rather than technical ones¹.

“Promoting from within”

Within this framework, with reference to the evaluation of educational contexts, our approach outlines a series of specific objectives and a particular method of work, based on the idea of “promotion from within”.

As for its objectives, evaluation is thought of as a reflective and a transformative practice.

The main theoretical reference about reflective practices in education is Dewey’s text *How we think* (DEWEY, 1933) and the more recent Schön’s text *The reflective practitioner* (1983). To evaluate implies to reflect on educational practices (contexts, habits, customs and traditions of a service or an educational reality) to verify their meaning with respect to the purposes. It is a reflection that occurs not “in the abstract” but always with a precise reference to the facts, what is actually done and is done within a particular and situated educational reality. Evaluation as a thoughtful process implies that, according to a participatory and negotiation method, a group of individuals involved in a particular educational reality, raise, both individually and collectively, questions such as: “Why do I /we do what I/we do?” or “How can I /we do better?”.

The reflective function of the evaluation also aims at making pedagogical beliefs about established and undisputed practices explicit. Reflecting over practice means helping people to make “latent pedagogies” explicit (BECCHI, 2005; BONDIOLI, 1993), i.e., theories and representations that guide the educational experience, often unconsciously.

Reflecting over “latent pedagogies” is not an individual task; it requires collective commitment. From the perspective of Dewey, in fact, reflection has a substantially dialogic

¹- I will present this figure in the second part of this contribution.

nature, involves a dialogue with oneself, with experience, with others. It is a process of development and construction of shared meanings. Therefore, the “evaluation as promotion from within” requires that reflection be carried out both at the level of individual participants and at the level of the working group. The acquisition of knowledge, the exchange of knowledge, the constructive confrontation of points of view, the habit of plea bargaining and the examination of reality, the ability to cooperate are many of the aspects of the “training effect”, which one intends to induce through the evaluation process. Participants enrich professionally, gaining awareness, ability to act in an intentional manner, professional empowerment.

In our approach, evaluation also aims to be a transformative practice, that is, an improvement oriented to the development of reasoned and feasible innovation projects. The amount of participation, the confrontation of points of view, the negotiation of purposes, the reflection on practices take on value if they produce an “ameliorative transformation”, that is, if they bring about some changes. The changes can affect the physical environment (for example, the spaces in a school are re-considered and rearranged as a result of the evaluation process, and these changes produce a positive impact on the learning process) or be internal, i.e., changes in attitudes, intentions and aspirations of the people who participated in the evaluation process or who have been its beneficiaries. The outcome of the evaluation process is in fact a co-construction of meaning around the educational institution, which enriches the participants. From this point of view, the evaluation is also an exchange of knowledge.

As for the working methodology, it is based on the creation of an evaluation process characterized by different stages or steps, led by a figure of “trainer/facilitator” that supports the whole evaluation process by fostering reflection in the group of participants, encouraging dialogue and discussion and directing

participants to the design and implementation of changes for improvement.

The role of the facilitator/trainer in the evaluation based on “promotion from within”

The trainer/facilitator who promotes from within is a figure outside the educational reality object of evaluation: he initially knows neither the history and particularities, nor the specific physiognomy of the context that has to be evaluated; his perspective is different from those of everyone else involved. He is, however, although in different ways, an expert in school and evaluation. He knows the evaluation tools available². He knows the assumptions, values and quality criteria on which they are based and is able to clarify and specify them. And, therefore, his knowledge about the school and education is different from that of individual social members in each particular institution they work in, and, for this reason, he himself becomes a comparison instrument. Nevertheless, he does not represent a guarantor of the values, ideas and quality criteria of the tools he invites one to use. He does not have the external perspective of an expert; he is not the steward of a “more objective” vision of the educational institution, he is not like the mirror of truth, but a social actor himself, involved in the dynamics of inter-discussion and negotiation; his primary duty is to act as guarantor of the entire reflective and evaluation process.

Consequently, the the trainer’s task is not to convey his own convictions to unskilled people, but to help the skilled make their meanings explicit. The trainer promotes the expression of pedagogical beliefs among

2- By evaluation tools we mean instruments which present the main aspects of an education context to be evaluated (i.e. spaces, routine, educational activities, adult-child relationships, etc.) and makes explicit the values and criteria by which to appreciate them. Considering a particular educational context, evaluation is made by the comparison between what is verified in the field and the quality criteria indicated by the instrument.

the members of a community³ starting from reflection over practice; he also promotes comparison between different points of view, helping the identity of an educational service to emerge.

The role of the trainer/facilitator assumes particular characteristics according to the different steps of the evaluation process (see Table 1).

Table 1- Role and functions of the trainer/facilitator in the different steps of the “evaluation as promotion from within”

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|----------|--|
| Step 1 | <u>Constitution of the working group.</u> The trainer presents the approach of the “evaluation as promotion from within” to the participants of the working group. He illustrates its principles and stages. He also describes his own role. Then he asks each participant to explicitly state his/her willingness to adhere to the path, declaring his reasons for doing so. |
| Step 2 | <u>Decision about the evaluation task.</u> The working group, with the support of the trainer, compare and reflects on the dimensions of the context they aim to assess (e.g., spaces, relationships with parents, etc.) in order to reflect on their educational quality in relation to the pedagogical ideas of the participants, going deeper into their reasons and purposes for doing so. The reflective comparison is intended to decide which aspects will be evaluated in explicit and shared views. |
| Step 3 | <u>Selection of evaluation instruments.</u> The trainer selects and presents to the working group some evaluation tools that can meet their evaluation needs. The operators individually analyze the tool/s chosen in depth. The operators discuss the instrument with the support of the trainer, expressing doubts, questions, reflections that emerged from individual analysis. With the support of the trainer, the group discusses and criticises in-depth tools, deciding which one to use. At this point, the trainer clarifies the application of the instrument and determines the organizational details of its use (period of application, use of the answer sheet, etc.). |
| Step 4 | <u>Evaluation in the strict sense, with the use of the instrument adopted.</u> At this stage, the trainer does not participate. The operators individually apply the tool to evaluate the aspects of their environment that they decided to consider. |
| Step 5 | <u>Elaboration of evaluation data.</u> At this stage, the stakeholders involved do not participate. The trainer collects the individual evaluations and organizes them in tables/documents that allow participants to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the context, as well as the agreement or disagreement between the participants on the different dimensions evaluated. |
| Step 6 | <u>Return of evaluation data to the group.</u> The trainer returns the results of the evaluation process to the group: he calls for reflections on the strengths and weaknesses of the context according to the dimensions evaluated, invites comparison on the evaluations in disagreement, and supports the investigation of reasons for different points of view. The reflection and confrontation are aimed at a planned, negotiated and shared reconstruction of the educational identity of the service, of its “good” and “bad” practices and of educators’ beliefs. |
| Step 7 | <u>Choice and shared definition of a project for improvement.</u> On the basis of a thus re-built educational identity, with the trainer’s support, the group compares and reflects on what aspects of the evaluated dimensions it aims to develop an improvement plan for (for example, if the evaluation covers space, they can decide for a project that involves “only” spaces for symbolic play; if it involves relationships with families, the project can focus on the communication with parents at the time of children’s reception). The comparison is intended to negotiate a shared choice. With the support of the trainer, the group negotiates and precisely defines the best remedial method, going deeper into the reasons (how and why one wants to do something better) and the expected effects (if I intervene in this way, then I expect that to happen...). The procedures to verify the effects of the intervention are also defined (i.e., a number of observations of children’s and teachers’ behaviors and interactions). |
| Step 8 | <u>Implementation of the agreed improvement project.</u> In this stage, the trainer does not participate. The operators design a project of intervention together, alternating moments of individual and group work. |
| Step 9 | <u>Verification of the improvement intervention adopted.</u> With the support of the trainer, the group confronts and reflects on the data collected for the verification of the intervention. The group considers the correspondence between the data collected and the expected effects, and re- negotiates a co-construction of their meaning in view of a possible additional design phase. |
| Passo 10 | <u>Evaluation of the evaluation process.</u> The last stage is devoted to evaluating the evaluation process. The trainer reminds the meaning of the whole process and the different steps that have characterized it by asking each participant to freely express their evaluation (an individual questionnaire can be used). Then the participants confront and reflect in group on the whole evaluation process and also give an opinion on the evaluation approach that they have used. |

Source: research date

3- Given that one of the most important aims of a “promotion from within” approach is that of building and/or strengthening the pedagogical identity of a specific educational reality (a childhood service, a group of

schools belonging to the same area, and so on), the training intervention is addressed to people who belong to the same institution, community, or culture, and work together for a common goal. We call such participants “the working group”.

More generally, we can say that the role of the facilitator is primarily that of a guarantor. The trainer/facilitator is first and foremost a guarantor of the entire process, responsible for the relationship with the client with whom he clarifies the evaluation project (intent, instruments, participants, beneficiaries), the involvement of social actors, their training and knowledge to use the tools and evaluation procedures, the collection of the evaluations made by the participants, the content of the discussions and decisions taken together.

The trainer/facilitator is also a guarantor of the reflective and formative function of the evaluation: he presents the collected data, interprets it in the light of the “philosophy” of the proposed instrument, shows differences and concordance in the evaluation, starts the discussion on the critical points, invites reflection giving voice to all the social actors involved, and finally gives feedback on the results together with his reflection on the same (BECCHI, 2000; BECCHI; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2000; BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2000b).

He is also a guarantor of the participation, dialogic and democratic function of the evaluation: he ensures that all participants have the opportunity to express their points of view, urges the comparison between different points of view, promotes negotiation and shared decision making.

Promoting from within: the style of the trainer

An important reference for the “evaluation as promotion from within” is the idea of “reciprocal maieutics” (DOLCI, 1996). The trainer works to bring to light what is already potentially present in those who are trained, making them protagonists in the construction of “knowledge of self”. The focus is on the role of the trainer and the possibility that the “knowledge-power” passes from his hands to those of whom is trained. Only the “maieutic style” of the trainer can ensure such a transfer of power. The ideal dimension to develop a maieutic relationship is

that of the group. In the group, the meeting with the other, who has experiences and perspectives different from their own, stimulates learning. In this perspective, the evaluation is a form of co-education based on an equal exchange. In this context, the trainer, as well as being a person involved in the dynamics of co-training, assumes the role of “maieutic coordinator”, who guarantees a reciprocal maieutic process between the participants by promoting the expression of the point of view of each one, collective reflection, and a shared search for new meanings.

Another important aspect that has to do with the style of the trainer is his ability to transform the group of participants into a working group, as described by Bion. According to Bion, the individual, within the group, experiences a strong ambivalence between the need to belong, to which participating in the group responds, and the fear that their own individuality is “sucked up” by the group. In order for a group to become a working group, it should, therefore, have a “conductor” who is able to capture and contain the emotions from being in the group, so as to guarantee that individuals are able to express themselves as such, despite being in a group and thus preserve the rational approach to the task (BION, 1961).

Finally, evaluation as promotion from within, through the reflective process, calls for participants’ knowledge about themselves and their practices. One of the facilitator’s most important tasks is to help the participants to reconstruct a shared image of the reality in which they operate, enabling them to envisage the future, to think about why one does what one does and how one could improve it. Taking as reference Dewey’s way of thinking and on the basis of a genuine urge of the participants to want to deepen their educational identity, the trainer has the task of promoting the observation/evaluation of the educational context, the careful screening of the “facts of the case”, focusing on “what we do” and think about “why we do it”, and to bring to light the implicit aspects of educational actions and the beliefs that orientate them.

In summary, the facilitator's task of "promoting from within" in the evaluation process requires a shift of power in the construction of knowledge evaluation by the trainer to stakeholders, the supporting of the rational structure of the working group through the containment of emotional experiences of the individual and the group, and the promotion of reflective processes of "mutual maieutics".

Promoting from within: communication strategies

Performing such tasks, in the different steps of the evaluation process, the trainer/facilitator, by dialoguing with the participants, uses a communicative style according with Carl Rogers's non-directive communication (1951) and the tutoring model (WOOD, BRUNER, ROSS, 1976) applied to a group situation.

Roger's non-directive approach bases the effectiveness of communication on genuine listening attitudes (curiosity and openness to the view expressed by the other party), on unconditional and non-evaluative acceptance of the point of view of the speaker, on the ability to see things from the point of view of the speaker, to understand it from within). Backed by such attitudes, the communicative technique used is that of "mirroring", through which the active listener replies to the other party, which shows that it has been heard and understood. The active listener returns to the interlocutor what he has understood of his speech by repeating, rephrasing or summarizing what he expressed. The active listener adds nothing of his own but simply "reflects" what was said by his interlocutor so that the latter, feeling understood and "mirrored", can see himself from the outside and achieve greater awareness of himself, of his own ideas and of his own "lived experience".

According to the theory of tutoring the trainer, through different types of

communicative acts, performs several functions⁴:

- recruiting to the task, urging and enhancing the participation of everyone;
- intercepting the meanings only perceived by the participants and facilitating explanation by comparing points of view;
- evidencing crucial and compatible contents for the co-construction of areas of shared meaning;
- maintaining the direction towards the negotiation and the implementation of the shared task;
- containing the frustration related to self-evaluation, and the conflicts that may arise from the confrontation between opposing views.

Recent research, partially still in progress, has allowed us to evidence the principal communicative strategies used by the trainer/facilitator during the different phases of the evaluation process carried out with the groups of educators. Here are the principal ones:

1. Listening: the trainer presents himself as a careful listener who is eager to understand and ready to accept any point of view.
2. Spurring explicit expression: the trainer spurs the participants' points of view.
3. Reflecting: the trainer "gives back" to the individuals and to the group thoughts, ideas and feelings they have expressed by simply repeating them, in order to promote decentration and a more detached view of themselves.
4. Summarizing and stressing: by making use of these reflective forms, the trainer "gives back" a condensed version of the shared

4- The above listed strategies have been individuated through the study of various experiences carried out according to the approach of "negotiated quality" (BONDIOLI, SAVIO, 2009). The progress of research has been recursive in nature: model evaluation practices, the model as a guiding principal of targeted practices, development and field testing of such practices, verification of their congruence with the model and the effects produced. A closer examination was carried out by analyzing the transcripts of six audio registered meetings over two different paths of formative evaluation with educators from two different nurseries (BONDIOLI, SAVIO, 2014 - Research Report PRIN 2009 "Fare la qualità valutando: sperimentare un approccio di valutazione formativa nei servizi per l'infanzia [Doing quality by evaluation: to try out an approach of formative evaluation in early childhood services], Università di Pavia).

meanings which are being built, and focuses on the major points so that participants may extend and deepen their ideas.

5. Requesting examples and ideas: the trainer invites the participants to explain the way an idea is put into real daily life examples or, the other way round, to convey daily educational practices as pedagogical ideas.

6. Suggesting elaborations: the trainer suggests ideas/examples starting from what has been expressed in the group to foster their articulation and deepening.

7. Provoking and requesting coherence: by direct questions or requests of coherence, the trainer highlights divergent opinions and/or wrong deductions in order to foster both reflection and deeper comparison.

8. Suggesting connections between different points of view: the trainer shows how different opinions either belong to the same basic assumptions or are an articulation of them, so as to foster processes of negotiation.

By these communication strategies, the trainer does not suggest his own point of view; rather, he supports the reflective process through explicit expression, negotiation, and building of shared meanings and attribution of meaning. He neither teaches, nor explains, nor makes suggestions, but behaves like a midwife who helps ideas and meanings emerge. By considering education as emancipation, the trainer provides a relational and cultural “scaffold”, which may be removed at the end of the process.

Participatory evaluation in early childhood services in Italy and the role of the facilitator

In Italy, since the 1990s there has been a debate about how the evaluation of services for children (day-care centers and nursery schools) should be established and the reason for its significance and usefulness. Such discussion has been carried out through seminars and conferences organized by universities, local authorities, and associations of educators.

Strongly influenced by the diffusion of some important documents of the European Commission Network on Childcare (1991, 1996) and the translation and adaptation to the Italian situation of the well-known North American instruments Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – ECERS (HARMS; CLIFFORD, 1980, Italian adaptation, 1994) and Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale – ITERS (HARMS; CLIFFORD; CRYER, 1990, Italian adaptation, 1992), the debate has been accompanied by the implementation of experiences at different territorial levels (regional, provincial, municipal) that involved groups of stakeholders in the evaluation of their own services (for a review, see BONDIOLI; FERRARI, 2004; FERRARI, 2013; BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2015). Considering both the debate and the way experiences of which we have the documentation have been performed, it is possible to identify several recognizable trends: focus of the evaluation on the educational context, i.e., on all the different aspects that, at different levels, form the offer of education services, and not on the assessment of children’s learning; participation and direct involvement of operators and coordinators of services in the evaluation process; the assignment of greater importance to forms of self-evaluation and formative evaluation rather than forms of external evaluation of the inspection type.

The experience gained in recent years and the debate that has followed it confirm these trends with even greater force but reveal to an even greater extent that the evaluation must be accompanied by a figure outside the context being evaluated, who has the function of supporting the whole process and, as an external evaluator, presenting his personal point of view and judgment as a useful element for comparison and discussion with operators as internal evaluators. In the accounts of these more recent experiences (ZANELLI; SAGGINATI; FABBRI, 2004; PICCHIO; DI GIANDOMENICO; MUSATTI, 2013; DI GIANDOMENICO; PICCHIO; MUSATTI, 2015; GARIBOLDI, 2015), the role

of this figure is discussed with reference to participatory processes of formative evaluation aimed at group reflection on educational practices and at the reconstruction of a shared image of the service in order to clarify its pedagogical identity. Every case indicates the importance of this figure who, along with the internal evaluators, has the task of supporting the self-evaluation and integrating it with their own points of view as a new element of comparison. The approach presented in this paper develops and deepens this type of proposal, outlining more precisely the facilitator's role and functions in the participatory and reflective evaluation process (SAVIO, 2012). It is a figure who renounces

entirely the role of external evaluator in order to assume that of facilitator. In our approach, which considers evaluation as "promotion from within", such a figure is capable of supporting groups of educators in becoming aware of their professional role and the educational responsibilities that it involves. The approach presented goes beyond also in another sense, as it does not just outline the characteristics of the facilitator but studies and analyzes his behavior through the analysis of concrete experiences of "promotion from within" (BONDIOLI; SAVIO, 2014). The approach presented, from a simple proposal, becomes a hypothesis to check and verify in further investigations.

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