

Porto Seminar

Question VII:

What resources are needed in order to evaluate projects with young people? What kind of evaluation do we need/want/can we have? How do we measure success? How do we define it?

Group members:

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Main points of discussion:

We have to define success before we can evaluate it.

Success can mean different things to different people, even within the same project – funders, organisations, educators, participants, etc.

Success is a very 'loaded' work. Do we always have to 'succeed'? There needs to be room for failure, and the freedom to take risks.

Evaluating over time – success isn't always immediately apparent. Potential for the internet to be a tool to track outcomes over time.

Importance of asking the right questions. Also to ask open ended questions, not just to participants but also to project delivery team.

Value of participant observation as well as self evaluation, but again, this can be done in various directions – not just teacher observing students for example.

Importance of relationships within a team to the success of a project. Polly talked about her work on Action Learning Sets as a way of enabling better understanding between different professionals – teachers, artists, gallery educators (more info available).

Why are we involved as cultural organisations in partnerships? Arts/education projects often have more than one agenda, and have social and other outcomes as well as artistic ones. We need to have the confidence to highlight the cultural aspects.

Importance of making space to reflect on how we make meaning.

Need to enable participants to understand what they have acquired through a project or other engagement – this might be knowledge but also skills, ideas or a different perspective.

How can we change the rules of what we have to 'measure' or evaluate the success of? How easy is it to challenge traditional definitions of success?

If we believe culture is a right, then what right do we have to try and measure or evaluate someone's engagement?!

That said, there is a need to evaluate for all sorts of reasons, and this is most effective when the framework for evaluating the 'success' of the project is defined at the beginning, involving all team members (and participants ideally). Addressing the key questions of who, where, when, why, what?