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A Mentoring Approach to the One-Year Evaluation Course

MIRI LEVIN-ROZALIS AND BARBARA ROSENSTEIN

ABSTRACT

This article presents the conceptual scheme for a one-year evaluation course. The scheme is based on the experience of the authors in developing a single-year evaluation course over a period of four years. The task of the evaluation course is to teach the competencies required to conduct evaluations that provide the sense-making needed for informed decision-making. Such competencies include eliciting, conceptualizing, and providing information, as well as interactions, processes, and experiences required to conduct evaluations that provide the sense-making needed for informed decision-making. The authors have found that these competencies are based on four kinds of knowledge: theoretical, methodological, conceptualization of practice (including converting tacit to explicit knowledge) and practical personal knowledge. These knowledge

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categories entail a dialog between theory and practice. Hence, the authors have constructed a conceptual setting for teaching evaluation against the background of mentoring, a system that combines theory and practice. The article presents each kind of knowledge, explaining its role in evaluation, the type of learning needed to master it, and the format adopted in the course for teaching it, including the dilemmas that arose in the course of study and practice. Solutions for such dilemmas are offered and discussed. The article ends with a discussion of student feedback on the course.

INTRODUCTION

In this article we present the conceptual scheme for a one-year evaluation course based on mentoring. The article presents a single-year course that was developed and co-taught by the authors over a period of four years. The course aims at producing potential evaluators as well as evaluation-knowledgeable consumers of evaluation and members of project or evaluation teams.

The article opens with a description of the context of the course and follows with a description of the course structure, components and requirements. We continue with a discussion of the content and dynamics of the course by outlining four types of knowledge that form the base of evaluation practice and present a challenge to evaluation teaching. We then proceed with the suggestion of mentoring as a solution to this challenge. The article ends with a presentation of student feedback on the course.

THE COURSE

Context of the Course

The growing interest in and use of evaluation in non-government organizations (NGOs) and government agencies in Israel has created a need for clear evaluation guidelines and qualified evaluators to implement them. In addition, the need for educated users of evaluation has grown. In an effort to satisfy these needs, the Department of Education at Ben-Gurion University decided to offer a two-semester graduate course in Program Evaluation. The course upon which this article is based is a compulsory part of the Graduate Program in Educational Management and Policy at Ben-Gurion University and is open to students from other programs as well. Thus, the student population consists of experienced professionals returning to university for a masters degree. They come from a variety of fields including education, social service, and management. The average number of students enrolled in the course at any given time is between 30 and 40, with a maximum of 60.

Course Structure

We teach the course which we constructed around an evaluation project that the students are required to carry out in the field throughout the year. Our tasks involve presenting lectures, leading small groups and serving as mentors to the students in the evaluation projects. All course material and procedures are related to work in the field.

We based the structure of the course on the work of [Dewey \(1933\)](#) and later on [Schön \(1983\)](#). We agree with Schön who proposed the use of practice, rather than standard academic

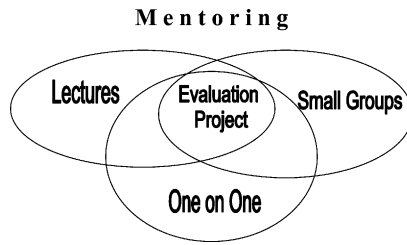


Figure 1. The one-year evaluation course based on mentoring.

studies, “technical rationality,” as the best means of training professionals. We followed his suggestion to wade in the “mucky waters of practice rather than cling to the high ground of academic analysis” (Schön, 1987). The situation of a practicum as described by Schön (1987) allows for guided experience. By allowing the learner “to learn while doing” the practicum provides the support and coaching needed for success. Such “learning by doing” has been the subject of several articles concerned with teaching evaluation (Gredler & Johnson, 2001; Trevisan, 2002).

At the outset of the course, students working in pairs select a project to evaluate. They do preliminary information gathering and consult with the teacher/mentor before proceeding. The teacher/mentor examines the preliminary data and discusses the feasibility of continuing with the project. Early on in the course the students begin their evaluation work in practice. Thus, the theoretical and practical elements of evaluation are taught and learned side by side.

In essence, the students learn from a basis of “legitimate peripheral participation,” a term used by Lave and Wenger (1991) to describe a form of learning in which the learner participates in practice under the guidance of coach or mentor. We discuss the element of mentoring at length further on in the article.

Figure 1 illustrates the course structure. The course consists of three major sections as illustrated in Figure 1: lectures (30–60 students in a two-hour lecture once a week over two semesters with 26 lectures in all), small groups (7–15 students taking part in two-hour meetings once every other week over two semesters, with 13 meetings in all), and individual guidance (one-on-one meetings, with five scheduled meetings over two semesters, plus student-initiated meetings throughout the course). Each section focuses on the evaluation projects of the students, using their specific experience in the field as a basis for discussion. These sections and the rationale for them are discussed in detail in the following section.

Lectures. The lectures include theoretical issues such as “The differences between evaluation and research” (Levin-Rozalis, 1998), “Participatory evaluation” (Brisolara, 1998; Cousins & Whitmore, 1998), “Evaluation and empowerment” (Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996), “Ethics in evaluation” (Morris, 1999), and “Evaluation and organizational learning” (Preskill & Torres, 1999). We explain theories by using examples from the work of students in the field. For example, during a lecture on ethics in evaluation a student raised the issue of disclosure of information. She and her study partner had evaluated a program that was problematic and they said so in their report. The outgoing director of the program did not want to share the evaluation report with her replacement. The ensuing discussion focused on the issues of ownership and disclosure of information. Another student raised a question concerning “knowledgeable consent.” He wanted to use interviews he had conducted during his

data gathering for another research project on narrative analysis. Again the issue of ownership of information was discussed.

Small group meetings. The small groups contain between 7 and 15 students. The meetings have a loose structure, given that fieldwork tends to be chaotic (Darabi, 2002). We as instructors and mentors select the topics according to stages of fieldwork. Goal analysis, organizational structure, differences between targets and means, and targets and evaluation questions are the topics of the first sessions. How to analyze multi-source data and providing ongoing feedback are discussed in the middle of the year. Presentation of findings are discussed at the end. The small meetings focus on specific projects. For example, in a session on organizational structure, a student presented the organizational structure of the project she was evaluating. The other students noticed that the structure did not include a position for coordinator of group leaders. A discussion of the effects of structure on the communication in the project followed, with the students using their own projects as fuel for the discussion. The discussion raised the students' awareness of the importance of examining the organizational structure of a project during the evaluation process, and exposed them to variety of examples and points of view.

Individual guidance. In these sessions the students receive personal mentoring, ranging from simple, good advice, to personal guidance, reflection and joint planning, to more personal support of professional emotional needs, and encouragement of students to persevere and improve. For example, a student who is also the director of the department of education in a city in the area had difficulty maintaining the boundaries between management and evaluation. His mentor worked with him on detaching himself from the situations, controlling his tendency to manage, and developing efficient ways of providing feedback to the project. At the end of the course he received compliments from his co-workers at his work place on the change in his management style. He had become a more flexible and understanding manager and had developed skills of evaluation (e.g., active listening, observations, and sharing thoughts). He attributed this change to work with his teacher/mentor.

Course staff. Two lecturers who are experienced evaluators took the responsibility for the lectures and these two lecturers together with two experienced assistants were responsible for the small groups and the one-to-one guidance.

Course requirements.

1. *Class attendance.* Active participation in the lectures and small group sessions is essential to understanding and applying the theoretical material necessary to complete the required evaluation project. An oral presentation is requested, with students presenting a professional article review in class, highlighting pertinent theoretical issues, and applying them to practice.
2. *Written assignment.* Students are required to write a critical essay on an evaluation report. For this purpose the instructors keep a file of current local evaluation reports in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as reports from other countries in English.
3. *Field diary (portfolio).* The portfolio is a collection of student reflections on their experience of conducting the evaluation and on working together. Students are required to write six sections about their evaluation experience throughout the year. They have

to analyze the experience reflectively, giving special attention to their difficulties in the field and to the solutions they create to overcome them. This process forces them not only to reflect and to recognize their own working style, but to conceptualize their individual coping strategies also.

4. *Final project.* Students are required to write an evaluation report based on their field work. They submit the report to the evaluatee and to the course instructors/mentors.

COURSE CONTENT: THE FOUR TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

The course content is based on four types of knowledge pertinent to the teaching and learning of evaluation: theoretical knowledge, methodological knowledge, conceptualization of practical knowledge and personal practical knowledge. These categories of knowledge are discussed below.

Theoretical Knowledge

Theoretical knowledge includes the history of evaluation, evaluation models, main trends in evaluation, the philosophies behind them and the main writers and theoreticians of evaluation. In the one-year course, the scope of this type of knowledge is limited. Theoretical knowledge is taught in formal lectures, based on the evaluation literature, and through student presentations of articles.

One of the challenges of the one-year evaluation course is the task of balancing theory and practice within a very limited time. Surveying the literature of evaluation training, [Morris \(1994\)](#) comes to the conclusion that “virtually everyone who has written about evaluation training has stressed the importance of incorporating real-world experiences into the process.” Such a dialog between theory and practice is not unique to teaching evaluation. It is part of all professional training programs such as teaching and social work, and of course medical professions ([Adams, 1992](#); [Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, 1995, 1997](#); [Wayne State University Graduate School, 1992](#)).

The main dilemma with this kind of teaching is the problem of relevancy to the ongoing fieldwork. Students do not always see the connections between an academic article and their struggles in the field. Our solution is to build the lecture on the students’ own examples. By making repeated reference to the students’ actual experience we connect theory with practice, thus allowing the theory to emerge from the practice. Discussion of the examples in light of the articles helps the students create their own theory-based practices. For example, after presenting empowerment evaluation the students discussed ways in which they, in their small way, can empower their evaluatees by helping them to gather and analyze data for their own purposes.

Methodological Knowledge

Methodological knowledge forms the base for evaluation skills: data gathering and analysis, including skills of interviewing, observing, conducting focus groups, building questionnaires, providing feedback, and writing reports. Although these skills are addressed by other courses dealing with research methods, referred to by [Morris \(1994\)](#) as a “network of offerings,” we devote a great deal of course time to this issue. Oftentimes the students’ knowledge of

research methods for research interferes adversely with the process of evaluation. Since the students' first encounter with research methods was in a non-evaluation setting, they have to readjust their thinking when doing the evaluation. The focus on serving stakeholders and decision-makers' needs is new for students whose experience has been in academic research. The rules of generalizability are less important in most evaluations. Rather, deep understanding of the overall situation of the project is more important in order to solve the immediate problems. Thus, we have found it essential to stress the differences between research methods for research purposes and research methods for evaluation purposes (Levin-Rozalis, 1998). We taught the students to be aware of the process of abduction that raises hypotheses on probation and checks them in a circular spatial way (Levin-Rozalis, 2000). For example, pupils in an intensive learning support program, evaluated by our students, seemed to gain nothing from the program. Their marks remained low and the school was about to give up. The students insisted on questionnaires (generalization), but they were not sure what to ask, so they came to consult with their mentor. They said that the teachers seemed skilled enough and the teaching materials adequate. They were quite confused. Incidentally, one of them mentioned that the pupils, "like pupils," looked tired. The mentor noted this fact and offered to relate to it as "hypothesis on probation." The students then observed that the pupils were really tired. They interviewed the pupils and learned that the extra lessons were immediately after school and that they didn't have time to rest or eat and they were usually too tired to listen and too hungry to concentrate. The students gave this feedback to the program coordinator, while suggesting a long break between the last lesson at school and the program lesson, with enough time to eat and to drink. The subsequent change in the pupils' achievements seemed almost miraculous.

Conceptualization of Practical Knowledge

Evaluation settings are often somewhat chaotic. Many unexpected and interfering phenomena exist. We often react spontaneously because we have neither the time nor the opportunity to plan in advance. The more experienced we are, the more automatically we react. Such reaction based on knowledge and experience has become tacit knowledge.

Transforming teacher knowledge into actionable knowledge for the students is one of the main challenges facing teachers during the one-year evaluation course. If the teacher cannot effectively transform tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge, most of the teacher's experience is lost for the students.

One way for transforming tacit knowledge into actionable knowledge or into formal knowledge is to conceptualize what one does spontaneously or intuitively. That is, reflect on one's seemingly spontaneous action, articulate it, analyze it, convert it into a concept based on a rationale, an idea underlying a class of actions as a general notion, and articulate it so that it can be clearly understood. Once we have a concept we have educated knowledge of how and why we act. Such transformation is important because it enables us to share our knowledge with the larger group.

The evaluator's tacit knowledge is comprised of and enhanced by skills, knowledge, and competencies. Much work has been done in this area recently (King, Stevahn, Ghore, & Minnema, 2001; Mertens, 1994). King et al. provide an entire taxonomy of evaluator competencies. These are not, however, competencies that can be taught "in theory." A degree of practice is necessary to develop them. The teacher of evaluation must rethink her/his own tacit knowledge in order to make it explicit.

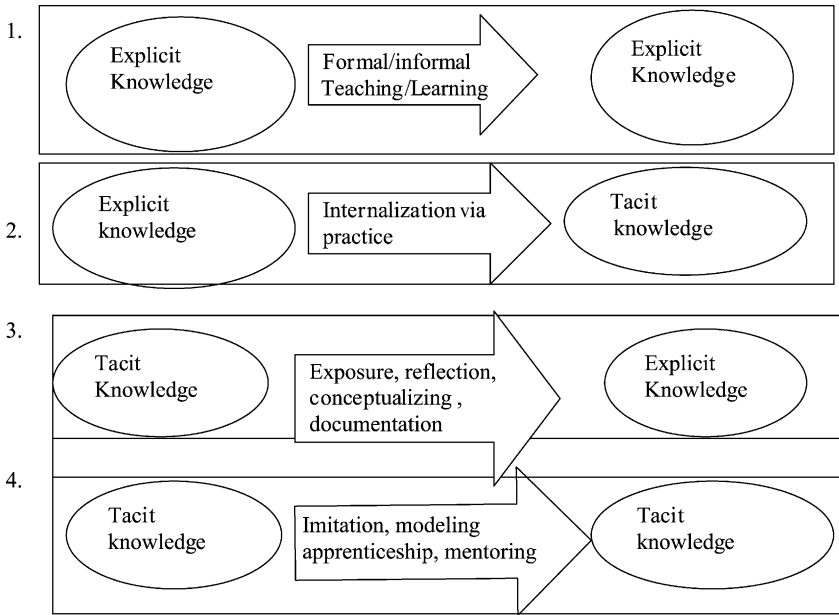


Figure 2. Transforming knowledge.

Figure 2 provides a framework for the transformation of knowledge from one kind to another or from one person to another. Teaching explicit knowledge is relatively straightforward and requires a formal learning setting. In the first row across (1) we go from explicit knowledge to explicit knowledge. This transformation involves the locus of the knowledge rather than the form. The teacher possesses the knowledge, is aware of it, can conceptualize it and teach it to a learner who then makes it his/her own. The tool used for this process is formal teaching and learning whether by lecture or in groups, in formal or informal settings. The act of learning is relatively clear to both the learner and the teacher. Dealing with tacit knowledge, however, is far more complicated because by definition, tacit knowledge is “felt” rather than “verbalized” (Polanyi, 1958). It is thus necessary to translate the feeling into words.

Across row (2), explicit knowledge is transformed into tacit knowledge through internalization of experience on the part of the learner. Such an internalization process involves constant repetition and practice.

Going in the reverse direction, from tacit to explicit knowledge (3) is the most difficult transformation. The tacit knowledge has become so automatic that it has to undergo a rebirth in order to become explicit. For example, the experienced evaluator can “sense” the right moment to say the “right thing.” The question, “How is this project different, what does it offer that is different?” seems simple and obvious, but the experienced evaluator can ask it at the right moment to spark an in-depth examination of purpose. The teacher of evaluation has to analyze and conceptualize the meaning of “right moment” in order to transfer such tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge that can be taught.

Row (4) illustrates the weakest link in the process, going from tacit to tacit knowledge from one person to another. For generations, people have been trying to transfer one person’s tacit knowledge to another by means of apprenticeship, imitation, and modeling. A good coach

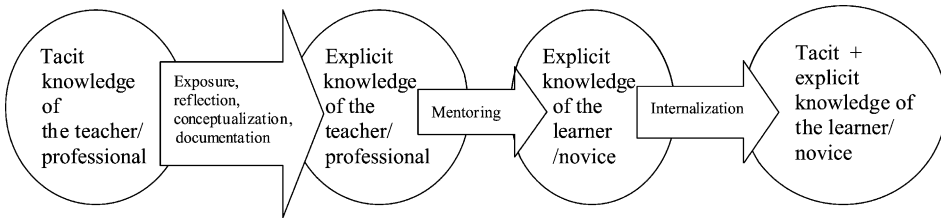


Figure 3. The role of mentoring.

or mentor is needed to articulate and conceptualize practice so that the learner can understand and apply the reasons for his actions.

It is often necessary for the coach or mentor to make the transformation from his/her own tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge before he/she can help the novice. Thus the challenge we are dealing with in our course looks more like Figure 3. The teacher/professional, in our case the evaluator, has both explicit and tacit knowledge. The student/novice has to learn it and make it his/her own. In order for the teacher to convey his/her knowledge to the learner, that knowledge must be made explicit through a process of exposure, reflection, conceptualization, and documentation. Once that is out in the open, the teacher and the learner can work through a process of mentoring, of joint and guided discovery and experience to transform that knowledge into explicit, and finally tacit knowledge on the part of the learner/novice. Figure 3 illustrates this process.

The challenge for the teacher/mentor is to be able to understand student reactions to their experience and find the explanation and rationale for such reactions. The mentor encourages the students to ask "Why did you do what you did?" or "Why you want me to do so?" For example, a student tried to learn about changes in communication between parents and children as a result of a community program. She asked the parents general questions about such changes and received superficial and incomplete answers. The teacher/mentor then advised her to ask concrete questions such as: "Tell me about your last conversation with your son," "What did you talk about?," "How long did the conversation last?," "Who initiated it?," "Is it similar to other conversations? In what way?" Following the student's query the mentor had to explain the difference between abstract questions asking for definitions and conceptualized answers that usually initiate declarations, and concrete questions asking about specific behavior. In addition, the mentor had to explain when and why to use each kind of question. All these considerations were automatic for the teacher but new to the student. The teacher conceptualized her "automatic" reactions for the student. She put her reactions into words, gave a concrete rationale for such reactions, and generalized about the practice. Without hearing this conceptualization, the student might do a good job at this particular project (asking the right questions) but would risk repeating the same mistake in other projects, or ask concrete questions when abstract questions would be more productive.

We encountered a problem of relevancy with the conceptualization process. When we analyzed examples taken from an actual fieldwork, students often failed to recognize the relevance of one explanation of practice to another example taken from their own work. They were frequently very short sighted in relating to the experience of others.

In order to reduce such short sightedness, we approached important issues and practices from numerous angles and through analysis of a variety of cases drawn from the work of the students.

Personal Practical Knowledge

In addition to academic skills, good evaluation work requires personal skills such as building and maintaining trust, engaging in productive dialogue, ability to reflect, patience, ability to cope with obscurity and ability to be there when needed and not there when not needed. The development of personal skills involves all types of learning and teaching. Personal skills are evident in explicit knowledge of theory and philosophy, practical experiences, conceptualization of the practical experiences, and tacit knowledge acquired through experience and mentoring.

The challenge in this area involves creating the flexibility required to apply new personal skills to old contexts and to apply already existing personal skills to new ones. Creating such flexibility is particularly difficult among the adult learners in our student population.

We invested time and effort in the creation of a safe non-threatening environment, providing support, respect and assistance. Interestingly, such an environment is a reflection of the environment needed for insightful, productive and useful evaluation. Hence, the course itself served as a model for good evaluation practice.

Table 1 summarizes the four kinds of knowledge, the type of learning needed to master each one, the format adopted in the course for teaching it, the materials used, the dilemmas that arose in the course of study and proposed solutions (the solutions that we found successful).

MENTORING

The one-year evaluation course requires a frame that engenders trust, encourages cooperative/collaborative work and facilitates discussion between equals. We found that mentoring best fit our approach to this course and the kind of responsibility that we took upon ourselves.

Mentoring differs from the age-old tradition of apprenticeship in that it emphasizes coaching and working together. In apprenticeship, deriving from “apprehend,” to seize, the onus is on the learner. Mentoring on the other hand, stemming from the personage of Mentor in Homer’s *Odyssey*, places the burden on the adviser/tutor who works with the learner in an attempt to understand and master practice.

Feiman-Nemser (1998) examines the gap between teacher-mentors and teacher-educators. It is fine for the student or novice teacher to observe experts in action, but without the necessary “thinking aloud” and ensuing dialog and reflection-on-action, there is little chance for internalization of the expert’s tacit knowledge (**Polanyi, 1958**). **Shulman (1987)** insists that the job of teacher-educators is to “make the tacit explicit.” Observation and modeling behavior must be accompanied by dialog between the coach and the learner so as to make the tacit explicit and to allow the learner to make it his/her own. Such a process is referred to by **Schön (1987)** as transformation, by **Mezirow (1991)**, transformational learning. **Lave and Wenger (1991)** refer to it as “situated learning.” It is a way of learning in which the learner transforms the knowledge of others into his/her own through the process of reflection, re-framing, changing perceptions, and thought schemes (**Rosenstein, 2002**).

There have been several attempts to categorize different styles or types of mentoring (**Ball & Cohen, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Feiman-Nemser & Parker, 1993; London, 2001; Zelditch, 1990**). Drawing on experience concerning the adaptation of students to university life, Zelditch summarizes a mentor’s multiple roles. “Mentors are advisors, people with career experience willing to share their knowledge; supporters, people who give emotional and moral encouragement; tutors, people who give specific feedback on one’s performance; masters, in

TABLE 1.
Summary of the Four Types of Knowledge

<i>Type of Knowledge</i>	<i>Type of Learning</i>	<i>Format and Requirements^a</i>	<i>Material and Activities</i>	<i>Difficulties</i>	<i>Solution Within the Course</i>
Theoretical	Formulated (explicit) knowledge to formulated (explicit) knowledge	Lectures with reference to literature and practice <i>Article review</i> <i>Theoretical section of the final report</i>	Articles, books	Students do not see the relevance of lectures to everyday field work Students are ambivalent about the field of evaluation Students have fixed mind sets and need to create new repertoires and frames	Immediate connection to field work and experience of students
Methodological	Tacit knowledge to actionable knowledge	Mentoring—one-to-one	Students' own on-going experience in the field	Students are confused by the chaotic and zigzag nature of the course	Division of evaluation project into stages
	Formal knowledge to tacit knowledge on the part of the student	Small groups	Mentor's tacit knowledge base		Awareness of the process of abduction lessens confusion (if you call it something it is less confusing)
Conceptualization of the practical	Peer learning	Simulations <i>Conducting an evaluation</i>	Tools and skills	Students have trouble generalizing from one example to another	Patience
	Tacit to formalized	Lectures	Concept mapping		Repetition Discussion
	Formalized to formalized Tacit to actionable (a result of above two) Peer learning	Small groups Individual <i>Portfolio and tool building (interviews, etc.)</i>	Portfolio Group-discussion Evaluation reports		Reflection
Personal and practical	Formalize and conceptualize tacit knowledge in action	Small groups	Drawn from experience and practice Evaluation reports	Students are faced with learning new personal skills as adults Students are unable to apply new personal skills to old contexts	Group sharing of experience Safe environment
		Individual <i>Portfolio</i> Experience in the field Interaction Modeling Behavioral adaptation Peer learning Reflective learning	Role playing Reflection-on-actions Simulations		Peer learning and practice Creating a community of practice

^a Italics indicate student assignments.

the sense of employers to whom one is apprenticed; sponsors, sources of information about and aid in obtaining opportunities; models, of identity, of the kind of person one should be to be an academic" (Zelditch, 1990, p. 11). Research shows that students who have mentoring relationships during their university studies have higher productivity levels and higher levels of involvement (Green & Bauer, 1995).

Most writers dealing with mentoring at the university refer to it as a tool to close the vacuum between graduate students and their universities or departments (Adams, 1992; Committee on Science, Engineering, and Public Policy, 1995, 1997; Green & Bauer, 1995; London, 2001; Wayne State University Graduate School, 1992; Zelditch, 1990). Our use of mentoring during a regular one-year course serves a different aim. It serves as a tool for helping students adapt to a new role and acquire new skills in non-threatening surroundings.

The literature involves two main challenges for the mentor: (1) To know how to use his/her own tacit knowledge and experience openly, exposed to the scrutiny and queries of the students. (2) To know how to create a safe environment for the students to learn experientially, to make mistakes and learn from them, and to expose their difficulties and weaknesses together with their strengths and abilities. Both these qualities depend on the mentor's ability to work at eye level with the students, not to fear losing control, making mistakes, and not knowing the right answer "on the spot." The mentor has to be able to be non-judgmental, supportive, patient and responsive. To be a mentor is above all a state of mind.

It is important to state here the importance of clear boundaries and clear rules and expectations. Mentoring does not mean anarchy. The lack of clear rules and expectations might very easily turn a learning arena into a market place. The mentoring environment can create the impression that "anything goes." In a university setting the students (and the teachers) have to learn new rules. These new rules must be clear to everyone. The assignments are assignments; a timetable is a timetable; and criteria are criteria.

As mentors, we provide the students with experience in evaluation in a protected environment. They are students in a course; they are learners; they share responsibility. We provide a group of colleagues to think together and to function as a support group. We provide personal treatment and support. This structure encourages our students to broaden their experience, take risks in their fieldwork, and improve themselves. Such a situation is called "lateral peripheral learning" by Lave and Wenger (1991). Our students conduct an evaluation project for which we as teachers bear the academic responsibility. In that sense we share responsibility with our students, we have to try to be as constructive as we can in order to enable our students to do the best work they can. The shared responsibility between teachers and students can be seen as teamwork, which by definition involves mutual respect.

The structure of the course allows for individual relationships to develop between the teachers and the students. Student interests can be dealt with naturally within this setting. In the context of evaluation we help the students establish and maintain the sometimes delicate and blurry boundaries between evaluator and evaluatee.

We chose mentoring because we thought that this way of handling the course would provide the best answer to most of the needs of such a course. Did our students concur?

STUDENT FEEDBACK

At the end of the second year of the course we decided to conduct an evaluation. Our purpose was to use student feedback to improve, adjust or disseminate the content and format

of the course. We sent questionnaires to all 60 graduates of the course. We received 32 questionnaires in return.¹ In addition to structured closed items concerning student opinions about specific aspects of the course, the graduates were requested to answer three open-ended questions:

1. What three essential features/items would you change in the course?
2. Name three good features/items about the course
3. If you have any additional comments please include them here.

We will present the analysis of these open questions here. The structured questions did not relate to the subject of this article. The numbers refer to the number of times each subject was mentioned. The general opinion of the course was very high. Most of the answers (58) in the open section referred positively to issues connected to mentoring. (We processed the third question together with the first two. That is, if a student wrote that it would be good if there were more one-on-one guidance, or that he wished the lectures would focus on his own project, we added the answer to the appropriate category.)

The fewest number of answers (17) dealt with basic skills, especially with the newly attained ability for understanding processes and complexities (8), the use of evaluation skills and evaluation tools (7), and new knowledge in general (2).

The majority of answers dealt with different elements of mentoring. The students mentioned the guiding process and its importance 22 times. "The best thing was personal relations with the lecturer and her guiding my work"; "The quick response of the lecturer to any question or problem that arose during the evaluation work"; "Me being able to get support and guidance on the spot."

The second major finding was the importance of practical experience in the field: "Accumulation of experience, practice and coping abilities with complex realities in order to conduct evaluation while applying the material we learned"; "The work in class (with the lecturers) is not enough, there is a need to go to the field more and to observe different ways of evaluation."

The third important finding was peer learning (7): "The work in pairs greatly enhanced the way we think."

Several other issues were raised. Five students cited the importance of the variety of ways of learning and experiencing, referring to the three sections of the course (lecture, small group and individual, plus the experience of conducting an evaluation in the field). Three students clearly preferred the discussions to lectures. Issues such as reflection, portfolio, the connections between theory and practice and the inadequate (too short) length of the course (two answers each) were also cited as important. Referring to the fact that two teachers and two experienced assistants taught the course, several students praised their exposure to different points of view and the construction of learning. In reference to working in pairs, one student claimed that such work was difficult for him.

Table 2 presents the findings of the open questions.

Thus, it is clear from the feedback we received that the students appreciated the structure of the course and the mentoring scheme. We were satisfied with the development of the course and especially pleased with the results, but realize that mentoring requires a great deal more time on the part of the teacher than conventional teaching. In the second year that we taught the course, we succeeded in convincing the Education Department to raise the number of credits awarded per semester, giving the course more weight for students and teachers alike. Moreover, the Masters Degree Committee decided to recognize the evaluation project as a Masters Degree project for students on a non-thesis track.

TABLE 2.
Analysis of Open Questions

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Number of Times Item was Mentioned</i>
Basic evaluation skills	Understanding complexities	8
	Use of evaluation skills and tools	7
	New general knowledge	2
Total		17
Mentoring elements	Teacher’s guidance	22
	Experience in field	9
	Peer learning	7
	Variety of ways of learning	5
	Discussions	3
	Reflection	2
	Portfolio	2
Other	Connections between theory and practice	2
	Course length	2
	Working in pairs	1
Total	Exposure to several teachers	3
		58

CONCLUSION

In this article we present the rationale and practice of our evaluation course, trying to tackle the complexity of teaching evaluation in one year. A comprehensive evaluation program is of course the preferred way of teaching evaluation. The reality of the academic setting, however, dictates that one year is often the time allowed for such a course. We show that the complexity of evaluation work requires a complex way of teaching. Teaching is needed that can navigate between two levels of knowledge, tacit and explicit, while including four types of knowledge: theoretical, methodological, conceptual, and personal practical. We have demonstrated that this complex task requires a combination of teaching and learning methods: conventional lectures, guided fieldwork, working in small and individual groups. We incorporated these in a scheme of mentoring that we believe led to success.

In the role of mentor rather than conventional teacher, we were able to explore our own tacit knowledge and transfer it into explicit knowledge, share our experience with students in problem-solving situations, focus on specific student needs, and help the students internalize different kinds of knowledge. Within a mentoring setting, we were able to create a safe learning environment that facilitated the development of evaluation professionals and consumers.

NOTE

1. We cannot comment on the return rate because we don’t know how many questionnaires reached the students. It is possible that some of them moved after graduating and couldn’t be reached at their student addresses.

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