**Workshop on the Theory of Change and Evaluation of Impact on International Cooperation**

## Prof. Simone Castello

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

In recent years, the attention paid to designing interventions for the community and to assessing the achieved results has increased enormously. If effectiveness of the projects should be the starting point and the raison d’être of the non-profit sector by its nature and vocation, there is a growing pressure from the sponsors who increasingly require ‘impact tests’ for various reasons. This emphasis is also evident in the guidelines set out in the three-year planning and policy document 2019-2021 of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) which highlights: *‘Assessment is essential to measure the effectiveness of the cooperation towards development and must be intensified to become an integral part of the decision-making and management process.’*

The course aims to provide students with a theorical and operational overview of the most advanced procedures and tools for designing, monitoring and evaluating interventions that aim to create a positive change in the community. These tools respond to the need to assess project efficiency and, adjusting to the international standards of key figures in development collaboration and, more in general, the social sector, satisfy the increasing requirements of public and private stakeholders.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

* Navigate in the philanthropic sector and the dynamics that influence the decisions of public and private funding bodies.
* Design projects by using the *Theory of Change*, by focusing on changes (*outcomes*) rather than on products/services (*outputs*).
* Use the *Logical Framework* by EuropeAid for the purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).
* Distinguish between the main evaluation approaches and identify the most suitable to respond to specific knowledge needs.
* Understand the essential steps for implementing an evaluation of impacts, knowing logic, opportunities and limits, recognising the cases in which it is possible to apply it and to distinguish between rigorous and non-rigorous evaluations.

***COURSE CONTENT***

*Introduction*

Trends and tools that guide the financing choices of the suppliers.

Overcoming the concept of ‘fiction’ of ‘the social impact assessment’ (VIS). The meanings and areas of application of the different evaluation methods.

The link between planning and evaluation.

*Theory of Change (ToC) – Explanation*

What is the Theory of Change: origins, spread, purpose.

What is it made of: the *results chain*.

Case studies: ToC at the organisational strategy level and at the project level.

*Theory of Change (ToC) - Application*

Developing a Theory of Change: the procedure

Guidelines for managing a participatory workshop with the stakeholders.

Exercises

*Planning – Monitoring – Evaluation*

Framework of the ToC in relation to monitoring and evaluation systems and impact evaluation.

The *Logical Framework* and the tools for monitoring interventions.

Exercises

*Evaluation of effects*

Verifying the results (i.e. determining the validity of the ToC): the rigorous methods of impact assessment.

Correlation vs causation.

Limits and distortions of the comparisons ‘before-after’ and ‘treated-untreated’.

*Evaluation of effects*

Counterfactual approaches for impact assessment: experimental and quasi-experimental methods.

Strengths, applicability, criticalities, case studies.

The distortions arising from the need for universal measurability: the *Social Return On Investment* (SROI) method – potential utility and how not to use it.

*Answering the evaluation question*

Is it always worth evaluating? What goals can be set? How to respond to requests for (hyper) evaluation?

Discussion and conclusions.

Wrap-up of the course.

***READING LIST***

D. Hunter, *Working Hard – and Working Well,* Hunter Consulting LLC, 2013.

A. Anderson, *The Community Builder’s Approach to Theory of Change,* The Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change, 2006.

A. Martini-M. Sisti*,* *Valutare il successo delle politiche pubbliche*, Il Mulino, 2009.

S. Castello – U. Swierczynska, *Filantropia 2.0, istruzioni per l’uso,* Franco Angeli, 2021

Ufficio Osservatorio e Valutazione di Fondazione Cariplo, *Sperimentare politiche sociali innovative,* Quaderni dell’Osservatorio n.19, 2015.

Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team, *Test, Learn, Adapt: Developing Public Policy with Randomised Controlled Trials,* 2012.

***TEACHING METHOD***

The course will alternate frontal lectures in class with guided practical tasks in groups, focused on planning and evaluation.

*Attendance*: Students must attend 80% of the lectures. Any students anticipating problems in doing so must contact the workshop lecturer who, where possible, will make alternative arrangements.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The assessment will take into consideration students’ active participation in class and will include a final written assignment. The test will be based on project drafts and simulations of everyday situations in the life of a non-profit organisation and will assess students’ learning as well as their critical thinking based on the tools and concepts discussed.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

Students require basic knowledge of project cycle management (PCM), as well as a good grasp of English.

In case the current Covid-19 health emergency does not allow frontal teaching, remote teaching and assessment will be carried out following procedures that will be promptly notified to students.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.