



## LTTA Content Summary – Madrid – November 2019

# **Emotions in the Classroom and Social** Interaction

### Introduction

- 1.- Intensity of the Emotion
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"We are not what we think, we are what we feel (...), behind every rational thought lies an emotion."

(Elsa Punset)

"The lessons should be understood as a gathering that lasts for a few hours, it should be pleasant, spontaneous, and intimate, the exercises should combine theory and practice, there should be room for dialogue, explanations, discussions, and questions to flow freely in a rational fashion."

(Giner de los Ríos)







### Introduction

Emotions can be recognised when they are externalised and because of the consequences they generate. However, when it comes to their very origin, the cause that triggers them in the first place, it becomes clear that they can be very diverse and complex, and they can be difficult to interpret. As Husserl put it, the emotional world answers to phenomena that require to be explained thoroughly.

It is to this phenomenon that we devote our contribution to the common essay: presenting the different ways in which emotions can be triggered as a result of the teaching efforts carried out within the context of the Adult education institutions.

To this end, we decided to use a series of interviews carried out with the staff at the Adult education institutions of Logroño (La Rioja), Palencia and San Sebastian de los Reyes (Madrid), which took part in the ELMO LTT activity held in Madrid. These Adult education institutions have been selected because of the vast diversity of phenomena that can be observed in their environment.

This study was conducted through a series of semi-structured interviews following the recommendations made by A. Cicourel in his studies regarding methods and measures. A group of 12 educators took part in the study. We would like to highlight that al lot them are in charge of subjects that are prone to triggering emotions directly, since they are related to art, photography, music, literature, calligraphy, self-care, painting and physical education.

We proceed now to present our findings taking into account the general topic that we have projected through our questions.

### 1- Intensity of the Emotion

We asked the interviewees to identity the moments in which emotions seem the peak and what triggers them. There seem to be a general agreement that developing good group dynamics makes the experience in the classroom much livelier, and everything that happens within the group then seems to be linked to that emotional peak.

Developing a strong community turns a group of teachers and learners into a family. The interviews reflect the notion that the learning process in different fields allows for a group experience to develop, and it is vital to identify that crucial moment in which learning and discovering new things become the main triggers to create shared experiences.

Several of the educators highlight the satisfaction that comes from realising one's own accomplishments in the fields of photography, painting or calligraphy. Group effort (physical education) and determination (self-care) are also some of the most remarkable emotional peaks reported. The feeling of redemption experienced by an inmate after signing a painting they have made themselves is another significant example of the impact emotions can have on the learner.





### 2.- Relevant Factors

We have thoroughly explored the factors that have triggered the intensity of the emotions described in the previous section. This is not a simple task though, since there is not a straightforward connection between emotional phenomena and the causes behind them.

However, building up trust seems to be a recurrent factor in the interviews we conducted. Trust is built up through learning experiences: the more one learns, the more confident they feel. This way the learning process becomes proper education when that confidence spreads out of the classroom and into the student's life. Some students report that something as simple as acquiring basic knowledge in math has made it possible for them to fulfil their dream to travel, and it has helped them find a 'room of their own' in their lives. This is an example that elucidates the important connection between the student's personal circumstances and their emotions in the classroom.

Another factor that all the interviewees mentioned was the adaptation process of the students in the group, whether it is proactive or happens as a way to compensate for the original deficiencies of each subject. Emotions seem to thrive when the student finds their place in the group through the knowledge and findings they are learning in the classroom. Perceiving cognitive development as something that belongs to them boosts emotional engagement in the classroom.

## 3.- Planning vs. Spontaneity

In other words, can the triggering factors that we mentioned be pre-programmed or is it all just a product of spontaneity?

As expected, the answer to this question lies somewhere between the two options. The interviewees have highlighted the preliminary work that must be done in order to develop protocols and procedures: this is a product of planning. Without that element of preparation, it would be completely unreasonable to expect emotions to flourish all by themselves and balance out the lack of commitment. However, it is true that established practices are often influenced by events that are out of the educator's control. These spontaneous events can trigger very powerful emotions. Some examples of this would be a spontaneous round of applause, displays of affection, the exchange of gifts, and interpersonal effort and commitment: if I help you with this issue, I expect you to help me later.

All in all, these are simply some unplanned elements that make the planned activity run much more smoothly. Due to the effectiveness of these unplanned 'deviations', many of the educators interviewed report trying to include them in their teaching plan. However, this is far from being a simple endeavour. They manage to do so by means of working with context, in an environment in which there is room to experiment with specific aspects. This can be observed in every consolidation process dealing with self-responsibility, when the personal circumstances of the student may end up shaping their success. For instance, that would be the case of the inmate that is shocked by the acknowledgement that they painting they painted belongs to them, even though the materials have been provided by the institution.





## 4.- Repetition

In this section we will deal with the matter of whether it is possible, once the classroom activities have succeeded in triggering a remarkable emotional response, to replicate those experiences in a different context or at a different time.

As expected, the interviewees reported that recreating the ideal atmosphere for an emotional response to occur is strongly linked to exhaustive planning and protocol development. The best way to achieve this seems to be the development of group dynamics and activities that encourage participation and engagement, and, even so, a positive result cannot be guaranteed. Furthermore, it cannot be generated before a suitable atmosphere has been developed due to the importance of spontaneous events. As stated by Roland Barther, emotions cannot be replicated, but propaedeutic models aimed towards a specific end can be developed.

There seems to be a general agreement that the strengthening of the feeling of community, enhancing interpersonal relationships, might be the best option when trying to create an emotional atmosphere.

A similar phenomenon can be observed with regard to controlling the frustration levels that may arise when seeking to obtain cognitive success. If the student does not perceive improvement, their confidence decreases, blocking any positive emotions that might help them. It is not so much about knowledge acquisition, as it is about developing the confidence necessary in order to acquire it. To this end, teaching guides play a decisive role, and the relationship between the teacher and the student is key.

### 5. The Teacher-Student Relationship

Considering the importance this relationship has, we have tried to take a closer look at it. First, it must be highlighted that the relationship between the student and the teacher depends on the existence of a very basic agreement: I will teach you, and you will learn. This agreement shapes the teacher-student relationship and its dynamics. Then a few things must be established: the final objective (learning), the channel (the classroom) and the asymmetric distribution of responsibilities assumed by the people involved (the way the subject is organised). The learning process has three main stages, as stated by Smith and Kosslyn (2007): knowing, knowing to do, knowing to be.

Having said that, it is true that the educators interviewed remarked the importance of day-today activities that bring people closer; those actions that make the knowledge acquisition process gentler. Thus, the use of humour and a close relationship with the students are not considered to be teaching strategies, but fundamental pillars to the relationship that must be established from the very beginning. This is a factor that has been highlighted by many interviewees: the importance of that first day that sets the tone for the rest of the course.

Listening, being extremely respectful with that agreement, and satisfying the need for attention that each individual has are core elements to the teacher-student relationship. There is a formula developed by Rizzolatti and Fadiga, researchers of Parma University studying mirror neurons. In 1996 they posed a hypothesis regarding the neuronal behaviour observed in individuals when they were seeing a relative acting in a specific way. It can be understood





from their findings that non-verbal communication (eye contact and kinesics) is a decisive element to the strengthening of the teacher-student relationship.

There is only one potential risk to this: that students might become too dependent.

### 6.- Contraindications

We could also mention those situations that should be avoided. Teachers always have in mind a long list of prescriptions that have been long discussed in the field of pedagogy. We could say that there are some practices to be avoided, such as categorizing or labelling the students.

However, in this section we want to highlight the responses given by the educators interviewed. For the most part, they do not believe in contraindications, rather they consider that the classroom environment poses a lot of challenges that must be taken into account some of them can potentially have a very negative effect on the desired emotional response in adult education. The matters on which there seems to be a general agreement are listed below:

- Paying attention to feedback and how it is managed. If feedback does not flow properly, there will not be room for progress. Rather than the development of a stronger commitment through emotions, the natural response to lack of direction is quitting.
- If politeness and civics are not implemented, the group will not be able to progress. Being kind and polite sets the stage for emotions to flourish.
- Avoiding the implementation of methodologies that are not compatible with the student's background. A traditional example of this would be to avoid cultural or religious references in multicultural groups. However, those differences can be worked on when taking an intercultural, inclusive and solidary approach.
- Avoiding the polarisation of the classroom around a few individuals with stronger personalities.
- Lastly, leaving no room for lies in the classroom. There is nothing more toxic for the development of a healthy emotional atmosphere than lies. They are not acceptable even when there are good intentions behind them. Education is no game, education is an expression of life.

### 7.- Dynamics

Within the ELMO initiative there is a clear reference to the implementation of dynamics that would lighten up the learning process and would contribute to achieve the learning objectives set. In this regard, great contributions were made both in Vilnius and in Hannover.

The experiences reported at the Adult education institutions are somewhat different, maybe due to the type of participants that usually take part in their programmes: adults that are deeply committed to the learning process. Strengthening emotional links does not seek to contribute to group adaptation or avoiding absenteeism, because those things are a given. At the Adult education institutions, emotional enhancement seeks to boost the transmission of





specific knowledge. In other words, highlighting emotional factors is linked to strengthening of and contribution to the humanist process that takes place through knowledge acquisition to then influence the individual's personal life. Once one has acquired the knowledge of a specific subject, they become an expert; once one has felt the excitement resulted from their own findings, they become a sage.

Therefore, the dynamics preferred by the educators at the Adult education institutions are those that promote the visualisation of the desired learning objectives. These dynamics are mostly based on ad hoc approaches. The educators interviewed report that dialogue, questions and discussion are constant features of their activities in the classroom. Of course, they also carry out activities focussed on group cohesion, but these are often part of the early stages of the learning process, and not so much part of their day-to-day activities.

It is quite common for them to implement reflexive dynamics, during their office hours or analytic sessions, in order to evaluate the progress of their activities. The Forum model is often used to combine the evaluation of the accomplishments made and how they contribute to self-development. An example of this would consist in analysing whether mastering photography framing would improve a person's general visual perception.

The activities related to physical contact that are performed in areas such as dance, yoga or physical education seem to be mostly related to warming up and preparing for the central activity of the class, and not so much to emotions and motivation.

## 8.- Support

As previously mentioned, during the interviews the educators highlighted the importance of preparation and planning in order to achieve an emotional response. Their thoughts seem to be in line with those of Picasso's: 'I believe in inspiration; I just hope it comes to me while I am working'. This is the main idea behind their interviews. Making use of all the didactic tools available in order to enhance the learning process in the classroom is, for them, a daily activity. Then, it is a matter of hoping that the emotional response comes to them while they are in the classroom.

Because of this reason, they implement support methods – both general and specific –, such as mentoring, coaching or neurolinguistic techniques. The interviewees mentioned:

- Creative, professional, organisational and **self-development** tools: coaching.
- Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Enneagrams, Theory U, Visual Thinking and Dragon Dreaming.
- Solution-oriented approaches, Collaborative Intelligence, Systemic Thinking, Psychodrama, Neuroscience, Project-based learning, Emotional Intelligence, Relational Intelligence, etc.

### 9.- Emotional Learning and Its Characteristics (Conclusions)

Emotions are energizing bursts capable of multiplying the potential impact of any learningoriented activity. Emotions are a 'phenomenological' characteristic of individuals. As such, they are not to be replicated, since we cannot measure their intensity in each person. It is as if the





octane number related to each subject's emotional fuel varied. We know that emotions enhance life, but we cannot regulate them at will. Because of this reason, and following the recommendations set by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory, we chose to focus on the experiences shared by the educators at our Association.

The first aspect they all seemed to agree on, and therefore a decisive one, can be summarized as follows: from an emotional point of view, each individual is a combination of psychological elements, experiences, background, and intuitive responses. In order to create an emotional atmosphere, one must find a way to connect these different sections of the individual's emotional sphere.

Thus, the classroom is not enough. For this active emotional atmosphere to occur in the classroom, it is necessary that the activities in the classroom are linked to its spatial and temporal contexts. It is key that the group's background and experiences are given an important role in the classroom. This implies learning the previous experiences of the students and transferring them to the classroom environment so that they can be part of the learning process.

The classroom is then no more than a **meeting point**, a space where all the important aspects of the learning process take place. Enhancing diversity is a core aspect at the Popular University, and it is one of the educators' preferred approaches when it comes to stimulating the classroom environment. Celebrating diversity, analysing the specific characteristics of the group and connecting experiences are all extremely emotionally loaded processes.

If that level of diversity is accomplished, it can stimulate the group dynamics; then behavioural and cognitive success is guaranteed. Thus, acquiring a thorough knowledge of the group is essential. Without solid knowledge regarding the group, its expectations and their potential trajectory, it is impossible to benefit from such diversity.

This does not imply that everything depends on external factors, that everything is simply a matter of luck. Quite the opposite: the classroom is the place destined to boost all sort of activities aimed towards a general strategy to achieve emotional stimuli. Throughout this essay, we have highlighted those elements on which the educators at the Adult education institutionrely the most. In a nutshell, trusting creativity seems to be the most important factor. This is so because the creative process requires a combination of specific techniques and an emotional response. Therefore, it is the preferred method used within our network. It comes as no surprise that the areas with a strong creative content (photography, dance, painting, etc.) are the ones that shape our contribution to the learning process in our environment.

As it transpires from the interviews conducted, creativity is a gate for emotions to come in and out. At the entrance, emotions get mixed with individual and collective matters, with stimulation and frustration, with the good and the bad. At the exit, those emotions should be organised so that they can flow in an orderly manner towards the higher stage of enlightened humanism.





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## Methods of the LTT in Madrid:

"To let the eye stray over a palette, splashed with many colours, produces a dual result. In the first place one receives a purely physical impression, one of pleasure and contentment at the varied and beautiful colours. In the second place, one receives a psychological impression caused by colour. The psychological strength of colour causes an emotional vibration. The core physical strength is the channel used by the colour to reach the soul, that is the acoustic quality of colour... The artist acts as a hand that, by pressing this or that key, makes the human soul vibrate adequately" (Kandinsky 1998, p. 42)

### Method:

### **Basic idea (summary)**

This activity is developed within the framework of the Women Area of the Popular University of Palencia. The Area seeks to enhance lifelong learning and personal growth that allows women to develop their identity, explore their place in the world, boost their skills and strategies to estimulate their emotional intelligence, intellectual capacity and freedom. In order words, this programme aims to give them the chance to speak their mind and build their own life project.

### **KEY WORDS**

Lifelong learning Social education Women's social, educational and cultural development Art education

**Popular Universities** 

### Goals

### **General Objectives:**

- Analysing two trends that have had a huge influence in contemporary art. The aim is to spark the interest of the female participants (some of the activities are open for anyone to enroll), so that day have the resources they need in order to asses and interpret the world they live in. The art trend chosen for this activity was ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM.
  - To focus on female artists and learn about them.
  - To promote individual and collective expression.
  - To disseminate the art created by the participants through different channels.

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To acknowledge female authorship.
- To give value to women's lives and social relevance.
- To promote new interpretations of reality, new approaches.

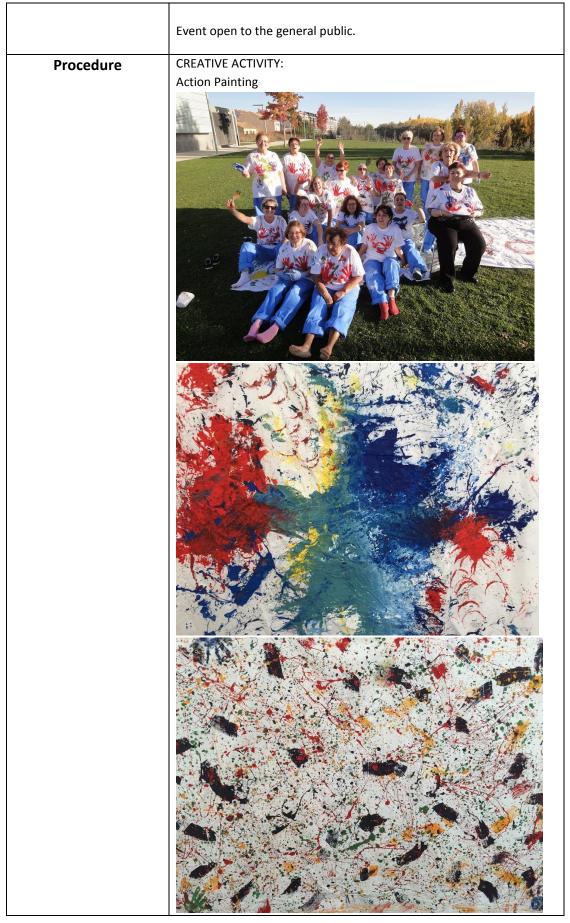




	<ul> <li>To enhance oral, written and visual expression.</li> <li>To make time for analysis, reflection and synthesis.</li> <li>To unlearn social patterns and perspectives that have been learned by means of tradition and have not been developed by the individual.</li> <li>To enhance the exchange of different perspectives: discussion.</li> <li>To be able to justify one's own opinion.</li> <li>To develop curiosity and interest in research. To promote processes for group and self-exploration.</li> </ul>
Conditions	
Target Group	Women around 60 years old
Group size	28 people
Material	Computer Projector Acrylic paint Containers to mix the paint Paint brushes Plastic drop cloths to cover the floor Paper sheets Photocopies Comfortable clothes that can be stained THE BEDSHEEETS FROM THEIR TROUSSEAU
Preparation	Programme  Theoretical Workshop: Learning about Abstract Expressionism
	Duration: Two 1.30h sessions Made for the participants of the Women's Classroom course. They get to learn about the characteristics of the movement, and its most relevant aspects and representatives. There will be a focus on the techniques used in this art movement, so that the participants can use them. The main technique learned in the course is Action Painting. Seminar: The female representatives of abstract expressionism "For decades, women have been victims of sexism in the arts, which has turned their male counterparts into respected idols, whose work is admired by the masses. At last, the female representatives of abstract expressionism take the place they deserve" RAFA RODRÍGUEZ Speaker: María Teresa Alario Trigueros (PhD in Art History)













### **EXHIBITION**

After the activity, a suitable place for an exhibition must be selected, always bearing in mind that it would be shown for a short period of time.

After the exhibition, some of the bed sheets created by the participants may be kept by the institutions developing the activity. The rest of the bed sheets are cut into pieces and distributed among the participants, so that they can keep it.

The pictures and videos taken during the activity are then posted on a blog or social media.







Modification options	Other art movements may be used.
Evaluation	
Tipps for trainers	This is a beautiful activity that, apart from promoting the knowledge of modern art, allows the participants to channel their creativity in a light-hearted and fun atmosphere.
Questions for evaluation/debriefing	<ul> <li>- What did you learn?</li> <li>- How can you transfer this experience to your everyday life? And to the way you see the world?</li> <li>- Before joining this activity, did you like contemporary art? Did you understand it? Do you now?</li> <li>- What did using the bedsheets of your trousseau mean to you?</li> <li>- How did you feel when you saw those bedsheets being exhibited?</li> <li>- Do you think this activity encourages good relationships to develop within the group?</li> <li>- In your group, has it been difficult for the participants to agree on the design? How was the decision-making process? And the creating process?</li> </ul>
Other comments	This activity is highly satisfactory. It enhances communication and promotes a good atmosphere in the group. It channels the participants' emotions and opens the door for them to access a new 'language' they can use to be more creative and flexible.

### Method:





	V
Basic idea (summary)	The meditation posture
Goals	<ul> <li>To accomplish a posture that naturally supports and enables the meditation process.</li> <li>To create a structured position so that we can rely on gravity to hold up our body and serve our meditation purposes.</li> <li>To discover that the act of sitting can acquire more importance than the technique we use while at that posture.</li> </ul>
Conditions	
Target Group	Adults of all age groups
Group size	35 people
Material	Floor mats, chairs, meditation benches, meditation pillows, blankets.
Preparation	Each person must choose what to sit on (pillow, meditation bench, etc.). To this end, people must observe their own bodies and decide what would suit them best on that day. The group sits forming a circle and starts finding the right posture. They receive guidance through the trainer's explanation.
Procedure	It starts with a theoretical introduction on how to sit properly, analyzing the potential challenge they may encounter. Each person starts analyzing their own posture bearing in mind that if we focus on keeping our bodies very still, it will be more difficult. We also must notice that if we try to relax the body as much as possible, the body structure will give in: we will notice that our head feels heavy, the front part of the body becomes shorter, and the back becomes longer, so we lose the vertical position of our body.  Achieving the right posture is part of the purpose of the activity, because it helps you get into the right head space.  An adequate meditation posture allows for better breathing and, thanks to that, your mind gets calmer.  If one attempts meditation with the wrong posture, they will feel uncomfortable, and their knees, hips, back, or neck might hurt, so it will be hard to maintain the position.  The physical discomfort will lead to mental agitation.  When one seats on the chair, the body should acquire a straighter posture, without it becoming stiff, and the knees positioned below the pelvis. When seating on a pillow or meditation bench, our hips move slightly forward and we can





rest our knees on the floor, so that we achieve a good curve on	
the lower back area and keep our spine straight easily.	
Mind spaces are linked to body postures, and therefore, it is important to pay attention to the different changes that can be observed on different days or during the session. If the participants need to lay down or change their seat, they should be allowed to.  The group should be encouraged to openly share the struggles they encounter and how they overcome them.	
Evaluation	
It is key to note that this activity devoted to the meditation posture can be extended, if necessary, in order to truly understand the importance of posture in meditation.  The usual amount of time required to achieve such goals is 4 sessions.	
Can you perceive how your body aligns?  Does your posture help you achieve a calmed state of mind?  If your body is not aligned, can your feel your muscle stress increasing in order to maintain the posture?  What happens in your mind?  What happens with your breathing?	

Method:	
Basic idea (summary)	A class on how to improve the motor, cognitive and emotional development of children through play. This is done by carrying out simple tasks adapted to their age and creating a space the encourages active participation so thay the afective communication between the adults in class and their children is facilitated and promoted.
Goals	General Objectives
	Knowledge Objectives
	<ol> <li>Learning the interaction style that best contributes to the development of the children.</li> <li>Acknowledging and respecting the different personality traits of the children.</li> </ol>
	3. Learning what games and activities are best suited for their age.  Their age.





	Behavior Objectives
	We work together with parents and their children in order to:
	<ul><li>4. Develop good communication between them.</li><li>5. Support their parenting.</li><li>6. Assist them as they grow up and become more independent.</li></ul>
	Specific Objectives
	FOR THE PARENTS  Learning the specifics of the growing stage of their children in order to adequately meet their needs.  Acknowledging, supporting and respecting individual traits.  Learning what games and materials are most appropriate for them.  Establishing a harmonious and satisfactory relationship with their children, which is key for a healthy development.  Enhancing their emotional intelligence.
	FOR THE CHILDREN  o Implementing the acquired motor skills and developing
	new ones.  Developing sensorial games.  Introducing them to symbolic play.  Providing strategies to promote positive behavior when adapting to changes.  Sharing their games with other children.  Enhancing their emotional intelligence.
	Conditions
Target Group	Pairs formed by an adult and a toddler (6 months-1 year) The composition of the group is key. Under no circumstance can an adult bring two children to the session. Should there be twins in the group, it is important to explain the importance of spending time with each one of them individually.
Group size	30 participants: 15 adults and 15 children
Material	- Mats - Playground parachutes - Hoops - Balls - Play tunnels - Music - Children's books - Play dough - Treasure boxes containing ordinary objects made of different materials, glass, rope, metal, wood, etc.





	- Ropes - Bubble blower - Balloons
Preparation	Preparation of an open space that is warm and bright. The mats are arranged in the shape of a square, and, on top, a colorful playground parachute is set. The families then sit down forming a circle with the children in the center. The teacher stays close to the shelves containing all the materials and changes the materials as the session progresses.
Procedure	When creating the program for the activities the overall development and the learning style of the children must be considered.
	The session starts with gross motor, sensorial, communication and social contact activities. The session ends with a relaxation exercise.
	Body movement-oriented activities:  o Games with balls, balloons and hoops
	Senses-related activities:
	<ul><li>Bubble blower</li><li>Touching different materials</li></ul>
	Social-related activities: <ul><li>Symbolic play</li><li>Dancing, storytelling, songs</li></ul>
Modification options	
	Evaluation
Tipps for trainers	One of the basic principles of the session is to follow the natural learning process of children and respecting what they need to express. Because of this reason, the adults being willing to listen is key to the activity, and so the trainers must work with the parents so that they can achieve that.
Questions for evaluation/debriefing	5: Excellent 4: Very Good 3: Good 2: Average 1: Bad  A. Evaluation of the workshop
	A1. Organisation (preliminary information, addressing questions, solving doubts, etc.)





	A2: Activities and contents
	A3: Didactic materials
	A4: Facilities
	B. Teacher/Educator
	B1: Knowledge and skills
	B2: Communication and approachability
	B3: Punctuality
	C. Participation
	C1: Your involvement and participation
	C2: The level in which your expectations have been made
	C3: Would you recommend this workshop?
Other comments	