**STRATEGIA NETHERLANDS**

**Course:**

**Diploma Programme**

**Assignment Four (4)**

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1. **a) Collecting information or data is just one part of the process of monitoring and evaluation.**

**What is meant by data analysis?**

Data analysis is the process of inspecting, cleaning, transforming, and modeling data with the objective of discovering useful information, arriving at conclusions, and supporting decision making process. There are multiple facets and approaches with diverse techniques for the data analysis. The data analyses in statistics are generally divided into descriptive statistics, exploratory data analysis (EDA), and confirmatory data analysis (CDA).

Lecompte and Schensul (1999) define analysis as the process a researcher uses to reduce data a story and its interpretation. Data analysis is the process of reducing large amounts of collected data to make sense of them. Patton (1987) indicates that three things occur during analysis: data are organized, data are reduced through summarization and categorization, and patterns and themes in the data are collected in the field, as soon as possible after the data have been collected, both while the researcher is still in the field, and later, when the researcher is no longer in the field. They describe in-the-field analysis as including inscription, description, and transcription. They also suggest that analysis may be conducted in both a top down fashion and a bottom up fashion.

**Approaches to Analysis**

Merriam (1998) discussed several approaches to data analysis, including ethnographic analysis, narrative analysis, phenomenological analysis, and constant comparative method, Ethnographic analysis involves identifying categories related to a culture’s economy, demographics, human life, particularly family, education, and health care issues, and the environment. She describes narrative analysis as it used in several fields of study. For example, sociological/sociolinguistic models relate narrative to the social context, psychological approaches focus on memorization in storytelling, with particular emphasize on understanding, recall, and summarization. Anthropological models emphasize how stories vary across cultures, looking at customs, beliefs, valves, and social context of narratives. Literary models focus on grammar, syntax, and plot of narrative; ideological perspectives, like feminist theory, critical theory, and postmodernism, may be used to analyze and interpret narratives. Phenomenological analysis includes an epochal approach, which involves laying out one’s assumptions about the phenomenon under study, bracketing, imaginative variation (looking at the phenomenon in various ways), and first and second order knowledge. Constant comparative method assigns codes that reflect the conceptual relationships (Merriam, 1998).

Bernard (2000) also suggests several approaches to data analysis, including hermeneutics or interpretive analysis narrative and performance analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, content analysis, and cross-cultural analysis. In hermeneutics or interpretive analysis, the researcher ‘’continually interpret(s) the words of those texts to understand their meaning and their directives’’ (p, 439). The focus of narrative and performance discover repeated similarities in people’s stories.

Discourse analysis involves looking closely at how people interact with each other.

Bernard describes grounded theory as ‘’a set of techniques for (1) identifying categories and concepts that emerge from texts, and (2) linking the concepts into substantive and formal theories’’ (p, 443). In content analysis, Bernard presents a more quantitative approach to data analysis by creating codes, applying the codes to texts, testing the intercoder reliability when more than one coder is used. Creating a matrix or table of units of analysis by variable, and conducting statistical analysis of the matrix, cross-cultural analysis emphasizes the application of codes found in the human relations Area Files (HRAF) at Yale University.

**(b) State any three uses of monitoring and evaluation results.**

M&E is a process of continual gathering of information and assessment of it in order to determine whether progress is being made towards pre-specified goals and objectives, and to highlight whether there are any unintended (positive or negative) effects from a project and its activities. It is an integral part of the project cycle and of good management practice.

Uses of Monitoring and Evaluation results:

**M&E results help improve your program interventions.** Using M&E results keep you and your staff in a learning mode as you gain understanding about how and why your program is working. M&E results also help you make decisions about the best use of resources. For example, outcome and impact evaluations may provide further insight on certain risk and protective factors, thus shaping your future efforts. As staff use results to reflect on the programs implementation and make necessary improvements, they are more likely to feel supported by the M&E process.

**M&E results strengthen your program institutionally.** M&E results can help stakeholders and the community understands what the program is doing, how well it is meeting its objectives and whether there are ways that progress can be improved. Sharing results can help ensure social, financial and political support and help your program establish or strengthen the network of individuals and organizations with similar goals of working with young people. By publicizing positive results, you give public recognition to stakeholders and volunteers who have worked to make the program a success and you may attract new volunteers.

**M&E results can help you design new or follow-on activities.** Programs often begin on a small scale in order to test their feasibility. Evaluation results document the strengths, limitations, successes or failures of these initial efforts and allow program planners to make objective decisions about which elements of a program to continue, modify, expand or discontinue. Elements that are not very successful but show promise can be modified for improvement.

**(c) Describe any seven factors that may lead to project failure.**

Projects most commonly fail because there is a lack of attention and efforts being applied to seven project performance factors:

1. **Focus on business value, not technical detail. This** involves establishing a clear link between the project and the organizations key strategic practices. The project plan needs to cover the planned delivery, the business change required and the means of benefits realization.
2. **Establish clear accountability for measured results:** There must be clearview of the interdependencies between the projects, the benefits, and the criteria against which success will be judged. It is necessary to establish a reasonably stable requirement baseline before any other work goes forward. Requirement may still continue to creep. In virtually all projects there will be some degree of ‘’learning what the requirements really are’’ while building the project product.
3. **Have consistent processes for managing unambiguous checkpoints.** Successfullarge projects typically have software measurement programs for capturing productivity and quality historical data that can sued to compare it against similar projects in order to judge the validity of schedules, costs, quality, and other project related factors. The lack of effective quality centred mechanisms can be a major contributor to both cost and schedule overruns.
4. **Have a consistent methodology for planning and executing projects.** There should be a detailed plan developed before any release date of a project is announced. Inadequate planning is one of the major reasons why projects spin out of control.
5. **Include the customer at the beginning of the project and continually involve the customer as things change so that the required adjustments can be made together.** It has been observed that successful projects occur when end users (customers) and the project members work as teams in the same cubicle, although this is not always possible. Projects are less likely to fail if there are informed customers giving meaningful input during every phase of requirements elicitation, product description and implementation. The customer needs to be asking, ‘’how are the project result used over time and what do I get out of the result?
6. **Manage and motivate people so that project efforts will experience a zone of optimal performance throughout its life.** This involves managing and retaining the most highly skilled and productive people .knowledge is money. A project team made up higher paid people with right specialized skills is worth more per dollar than a group of lower cost people who need weeks or months of training before they can start to be productive.
7. **Provide the project team members the tools and techniques the need to produce consistently successful projects.** The project team must be skilled and experienced with clear defined roles and responsibilities. If not, there must be access to expertise which can benefit those fulfilling the requisite role.

**Conclusion**

Assessing and recovering a failing project can be among the most challenging work for a project manager to perform for an organization. However, the payoff can be huge, since a project brought out of failure can be provide significant value to a firm. The seven factors outlined in this paper are critical for assessing a failing project’s performance and planning corrective action to make the project successful. All seven factors are needed for success. When one factor turns negative and is not corrected disaster is unavoidable.

1. **Identify any six parts of a monitoring and evaluation report**

A sound project M&E system requires six main components which together help to ensure that M&E is relevant to the project within the capacity of the project management organization, and is used to good effect. Each is considered briefly below:

* **Clear statements of measurable objectives for the project and its components.**

Projects are designed to contribute to long-term sectoral development goals, but at the level of project purpose their outcomes should be quite specific and complete. Thus, for example, an irrigation project may be designed to further the sectoral goals of increased agricultural productivity, farm incomes and rural employment, but have a project purpose of providing an increased and more reliable irrigation supply through rehabilitation or modernisation of an irrigation system. Objectives at the level of project purpose should be specific to the project interventions, realistic in the timeframe for their implementation and measurable for evaluation.

* **A structured set of indicators covering; inputs, process, outputs, outcomes, impact, and exogenous factors.**

Indicators provide the qualitative and quantitative detail necessary to monitor and evaluate progress and achievements at all levels of the project hierarchy. The ability to define an indicator, and agree with partners and stakeholders a target and the timing for its achievement, is a demonstration that project objectives are clearly stated, and are understood and supported.

The logical framework approach provides an effective structure for planning M&E by defining a hierarchy of objectives for which indicators are required. Classifying project objectives according to their level highlights that management will need to develop systems to provide information (data collection systems) at all levels, from basic accounting through to statistics of project impact. Ultimately constructing good indicators will be an iterative process.

* **Data collection mechanisms capable of recording progress overtime, including baselines and a means to compare progress and achievements against targets.**

Within project M&E systems there will be a need to collect information of the baseline situation and for measurement of change over time for the indicators selected. It is vital to think about the sources of data, the reliability of that information and the costs and responsibilities. Data sources for indicators can be primary or secondary.

Primary data are collected directly by the project team or agency concerned, whilst secondary data have been collected by other organistations for purposes not specific to the project concerned.

Use of secondary rather than primary data has both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side its use can be more cost-effective, and for many project situations it may simply be too costly to collect detailed primary data when this would require a large and costly household survey, or alternative data collection method of comparable cost. On the negative side, secondary data may have limitations if the purpose for which it was collected does not match well with the purpose intended for project M&E. The validity and reliability of the data must be considered, trying to identify any sources of bias and inaccuracy that may have arisen during its collection.

* **Where applicable, building on data collection with an evaluation framework and methodology capable of establishing (causation attribution).**

As part of the growing emphasis on impacts and results, more attention than ever is now being given to rigorous impact evaluations that seek to discover how effective particular types of intervention or policy are at achieving their goals – for example, the effectiveness of free school meals in raising school attendance, or the impact of microfinance programmes on rural poverty rates. Driven by a desire for a better understanding of what does and what does not work in development, a small number of projects are even intended from the outset to serve as experiments to test the effectiveness of a particular development tool. Many of these involve randomised control trials (RCTs), in which project beneficiaries are randomly selected so that the outcomes for this group can be subsequently compared with those for a control group that did not benefit from the project, much in the way medical treatments are tested. There are many different ways of trying to analyse the impact of an intervention. The choice will depend upon whether the need for such an analysis was fully recognised at the project design stage (so as to allow RCT, for example), upon the type of intervention being investigated, and the sorts of questions that need answering (Rogers 2009). We do not have the scope to examine the different techniques in this module, however, you should be aware that, whilst RCT is the most publicised one, and some would argue, the most rigorous technique, it is not the only one. As a continuously available mode of analysis for project managers ongoing evaluation can be used to address the following key questions for rural development projects.

* **Clear mechanisms for reporting and use of M&E results in decision making.**

There are a range of possible users for the results of monitoring and evaluation of development projects. These include primary stakeholders, the project management organisation, government agencies, other implementing partners, and donors. Clear feedback mechanisms are important if the purposes of M&E are to be achieved. Providing the right information in the right place and right form to be used by the right person in decision-making is the ultimate aim.

A good flow of information is also closely linked to the development of accountability within the project, sector, government, and donor. In many countries, information on projects and programmes is poor and difficult to access, and the mechanisms for feedback are weak or nonexistent. The highest payoffs to evaluation arise at the policy and programme level, but project-level evaluation offers an easier and less sensitive starting point in many instances. Information from monitoring and evaluation can be used to demonstrate accountability and to promote knowledge transfers and adaptive learning in government agencies and other organisations.

Information should be reported concisely, be relevant to the user and be timed to improve key decision-making events. Four means of communication may be used and will reinforce each other: detailed written information (reports), written executive summaries, and oral and visual presentations.

* **Sustainable organizational arrangements for data collection, management, analysis and reporting.**

In terms of organisational arrangements there is no single correct way to build a project M&E system. Projects vary in their characteristics and requirements, and countries and organisations are at different stages of development with respect to good public management practices in general, and M&E in particular. It is also important to recognise that M&E systems are continuous works in progress that must be flexible and adaptable to changing needs and circumstances.

Logical framework analysis indicates that project management will need to develop systems to provide information at all levels, from basic operational inventories and accounting through to generation of statistics about outcomes and impact.

In contrast, the achievement of project outcomes normally depends on how project beneficiaries respond to the goods and services delivered by the project. Compiling evidence for leading indicators of their response and the benefits they derive requires consultation, research and data collection skills that may be beyond the capacity of the project management organization, but if so, must be carried out in close partnership with it. Then because outcome and impact evaluation will only be measurable towards the end of implementation, or in later years, and because it also requires higher levels of research and analytical skills and objectivity, it may often be better done by a separate agency, independent from implementation.

1. **Why is feedback an important component of project monitoring and evaluation?**

Feedback is a process within the framework of monitoring and evaluation by which information and knowledge are disseminated and used to assess overall progress towards results or confirm the achievement of results. Feedback may consist of findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons from experience. It can be used to improve performance and as a basis for decision-making and the promotion of learning in an organization.

Feedback is information which allows an individual or organisation to understand their relationship to others within any given environment. Feedback can be useful for understanding the state of systems or relationships and for guiding actions taken to effect change. The ability of individuals or organisations to collect feedback, translate this information into action, and evaluate outcomes enables improvement in activities such as product development, service provision, etc.

Carefully implemented, it is argued that feedback systems can generate monitoring data for senior decision-makers and also improve practice at the field level: they can link management systems and participatory processes. The monitoring data summarises the views of intended beneficiaries, similar to customer satisfaction data in business. The process of collecting data and discussing it at field level can create opportunities to improve projects, strengthen relationships and help achieve development goals. If performance is monitored according to local people’s opinions, the field staffs have incentives to listen and respond to their concerns and priorities (Jacobs, this IDS Bulletin). For instance, in Bangladesh a social movement uses feedback from women’s self-help groups to assess staff performance (Jupp and ibn Ali2010).

Feedback is sourced from those who receive goods, outputs, treatments, or services (Jacobs 2010). Feedback is most commonly understood as perceptual data provided by beneficiaries or customers, but can take many different forms according to the context.

**Lessons from feedback theory**

Each theoretical school highlights aspects about feedback which play an important role in defining what information is sought from whom, and how it is used. Some lessons that are relevant to feedback in M&E include:

* The systematized collection of feedback takes place within an existing information exosystem, characherised by assumptions about what is important. These assumptions need to be questioned to avoid problematic blind-spots.
* The selection of source of feedback and mechanisms can reflect and/or alter relationships between levels of participating actors, and with customers, users, beneficiaries, etc.
* The selection and use of measurement tools and data are critical processes, reflecting power relationships between actors within the feedback system.
* The appropriateness of a given measurement tool is determined by its ability to depict change in meaningful manner, which could be quantitative, qualitative, or any combination.
* The inclusion of feedback into a specific stage of development, research, or planning will shape the nature of thinking and innovation that takes place.
* The usefulness of feedback to understanding or improving performance depends on the selection of sources, methods of collection, and timing of inclusion.

**In conclusion,** feedback can provide information from customers, beneficiaries, or users that is valuable to improving the performance or effectiveness of many different initiatives. The extent to which the information is useful will depend on the purpose, mechanisms, and sources, as well as the way in which it is subsequently analysed or used. There are many possible reasons why feedback is not collected in an effective or useful manner, and critical reflection on feedback systems may help identify ‘blind spots’ and opportunities that can be overcome.

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