Assignment 3

1. **Why is choosing the right question important in Monitoring and Evaluation ?**

Let us begin with this statement in one of an article of Bernadette Wright published in August 23, 2016, which explains correctly the importance of a question. Refering to the answer of a question asked to computer pioneer Charles Babbage, she concluded that : in program evaluation, as with computers, you need to ask the right question to get the right answer. It’s not possible to give a machine a wrong information and still get the right answer.

As presented in the training manual note, evaluation questions are the questions your evaluation is meant to answer about your work/program. They help set the direction of the work/program, as well as assess its effectiveness. This means that evaluation questions and the overall program are closely bind, we can even say that it’s a summarized way of presenting the program.

Monitoring and evaluation is a key activity in the implementation of a program. General evaluation questions follow from the goals set for evaluation process. For example, a general evaluation question regarding program implementation would be, ‘Is the program being implemented with fidelity ?’

We must ask questions about program objectives that are relevant to the goals of the evaluation – evaluation questions need to be concerned with how well program objectives were met. The program objectives under question must relate to, or fall within the scope of, the goals of the evaluation.

We must select which questions to evaluate – more than likely the evaluation team will come up with more questions than can be evaluated in the study. It is not feasible to address every question, no matter how significant. The evaluation team must decide which questions take priority.

Evaluation questions always need to relate to what key stakeholders and the primary audience wants to find out about the program as a result of the evaluation.

All evaluation questions must relate to how well the program is working

* It helps you understand what effects different parts of your effort are having ;
* It helps you clarly define what it is you’re trying to do ;
* It shows you where you need to make changes ;
* It highlights unintended consequences ;
* It guides your future choices
* In participant evaluation, it involves stakeholders in setting the course of the program, thus making it more likely that it meets commity needs
* It provides focus for the evaluation and the progam ;
* It determines what needs to be recorded in order to gather data for evaluation

An effective evaluation must focus on getting the information you can use to strengthen your program and benefit the people it serves. For each of your evaluation questions, consider why you are asking it and how you will use the answers.

Before you begin, an evaluation can help you show funders and stakeholders the need for a community swwimming pool, the likely benefits, and the viability of your plan.

An effective evaluation reveals promising ways to overcome obstacles and build on successes so your program can meet its full potential.

An evaluation can help increase buy-in by including those other stakeholders and asking for their thoughts on how to meet shared goals

If your program is supported by a grant award, you may be conducting a program evaluation to meet funder requirements. In that case, you’ll want to be sure to answer the questions that your funder wants to be answered.

You will likely also need to ask additional questions to get good and relevant for understanding of how your program functions shows ideas and casual relationships that might be important to explore.

Four general questions that a program evaluation can answer are often important :

1. Did we achieve the results we expected ?
2. Why or why not ?
3. What effets did we have ?
4. What would strengthen our program ?

In conclusion, it is difficult to specificly explain why is choosing the right question important in Monitoring and Evaluation. We can just present how must be the questions in Monitoring and Evaluation and implicitly understand why is choosing the right question important.

1. **Why is research important component in monitoring and evaluation. Give and explain four**

In general, research seeks answers to questions in order to generate new knowledge and/or understanding. It is intended to prove a theory or hypothesis. A new community program or intervention is an experiment too, one that a governmental or community organization engages in to find out a better way to address a community issue.

To see if an experiment is working well or needs adjustment, we use some science methods which must be reliable, accurate and give credible results. These methods are sometimes difficult to apply for projects and certain experiments that quasi-experimental designs are prefered.

Quasi-experimental designs came about because of:

1) difficulty of applying the classical natural science method to the social sciences

2) overemphasis on theory testing and development

3) high cost of classic natural science methods

4) development of new statistical tools that allowed for statistical control

For their accuracy, all the methods need to control for threats to the validity of a piece of research. They are usually referred to as threats to internal validity and threats to external validity.

Controlling for Threats to Internal Validity

1) History:  did some other current event effect the change in the dependent variable?

2) Maturation: were changes in the dependent variable due to normal developmental processes?

3) Statistical Regression:  did subjects come from low or high performing groups?

4) Selection:  were the subjects self-selected into experimental and control groups, which could affect the dependent variable?

5) Experimental Mortality:  did some subjects drop out?  did this affect the results?

6) Testing:  Did the pre-test affect the scores on the post-test?  No, both groups supplied energy records.

7) Instrumentation:  Did the measurement method change during the research?

Controlling for Threats to External Validity

1) Unique program features

2)  Effects of Selection

3) Effects of Setting

4) Effects of History:

5) Effects of Testing:  None noted.

6)  Reactive effects of experimental arrangements.

The quasi-experimental design is not as strong in controlling for threats to the internal and external validity of the study as the true controlled experimental design.

As presented in the training manual note, there are several types of quasi-experimental designs, including :

* Pre – and post single group design ;
* Interrupted time series design with a single group ;
* Interrupted time series design with multiple groups ;
* Control group design.

**Pre – and post single group design**

This consists of simply measuring whatever you’re concerned with in one group, applying your intervention to that group or community, and then observing again. This type of design assumes that a difference in the two observations will tell you whether there was a change over the period between them, and also assumes that any positive change was caused by the intervention

**Interrupted time series design with a single group**

An interrupted time series used repeated measures before and after delayed implementation of the the program, or experiment to help rule out other explanations. This minimizes the weaknesses of single measurements such as regression to the mean and, to some extent, history as a threat to internal validity.

**Interrupted time series design with multiple groups**

The addition of a second time series for a comparison group helps to provide a check on some of the threats to validity of the Single Interrupted Time Series Design discussed above, especially history.

**Control group design**

A common way to evaluate the effects of an independent variable is to use a control group. This group is usually similar to the participant group, but either receives no intervention at all, or receives a different intervention with the same goal as that offered to the participant group.

**Archival data**

**Using Archival data has its own bottlenecks. Name five and explain how to overcome them**

Archival data is data that already exists in someone else’s files as a result of administrative procedures or past studies or evaluations

The disadvantages of secondary data collection are :

* You will need to familiarize yourself with the data, and if you are dealing with a large and complex data set, it will be hard to manage.

The only thing to do is to take the time necessary to understand the whole data and use it ;

* The data may not match the research question : there may be too much data, or there may be gaps, or the data may have been collected for a completely different purpose.

The solution can be to find ways to complete the lacking data before using them ;

* The measures, for example between countries/states/historical periods, may not be directly comparable ;

The data may have to be re-coded to answer a new question or cope with the need ;

* The researcher has no control over the quality of the data, which may not be seen as rigorous and reliable as data which are specifically collected by the researcher, who has adopted a specific research design for the question ;
* Collecting primary data builds up more research skills than collecting secondary data.

Using secondary data must not be an habit but just a solution in certain conditions. A learner must have to collect at least once the primary data ;

* Company data particularly may be seen as commercially sensitive, and it may be difficult to gain access to company archives, which may be stored in different departments or on the company intranet, to which access may be difficult.

**References**

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