**Module 3 Assignment**: Question in M and E, Using Archival data, Research in

Monitoring and Evaluation

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ASSIGNMENT:

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

From the M and E Module 3 notes it’s stated that, “Every evaluation, like any other research, starts with one or more questions. Sometimes, the questions are simple and easy to answer. (Will we serve something close to the 50 people we expect to?) Often, however, the questions can be complex and the answers less easy to find. (Which or which combination, of the three parts of our intervention will affect which of the two behavior changes we seek within participants?) The questions you ask will guide not only your evaluation, but your program as well. By your choice of questions, you're defining what it is you're trying to change.”

In the book Step by Step guide to monitoring and evaluation version 1.0 published in 2014, by (Kersty Hobson, Ruth Mayne, Jo Hamilton December 2013) gives a detailed explanation on the sub topic deciding the key issues and questions to investigate, where it gives explanations on:-

**Organizational capacity/group processes** – how well are you working together in relation to the following; needed resources (human, financial, technical), leadership and vision, management (e.g. clarity about aims, objectives, roles & responsibility; adaptability), cost effectiveness, sustainability (e.g. finance and/or volunteer burn out).

**Joint working** – how well are you working with others, for example - in relation to partnerships, the wider movement, alliances, coalitions - disseminating or sharing good practice and techniques Issues and questions external to your group.

**Relevance/acceptability** - how relevant are your projects to different demographic sections of the community?

**Effectiveness -** are you achieving your objectives (e.g. in relation to attitudes & values; behaviours; public support; community capacity/local resilience; the wider movement; improved policies & increased democratic space)? What internal or external factors are facilitating/constraining progress?

**Impact -** what is your impact on people’s lives (e.g. in relation to the ultimate changes in people’s lives or environment as a result of our initiatives)?

**Contribution/attribution** - what contribution have you made to outcomes and impacts (in relation to other factors/actors)?

Next key step is to identify the issues and questions you wish to learn about, and hence monitor or evaluate all of these questions or just some. This is likely to require balancing information needs with available resource

**In Summary.**

Community toolbox chapter 37 section one summarizes the question that needs to be asked before an evaluation question is decided on as follows:-

What do we mean by choosing questions?

Why is it necessary to choose evaluation questions carefully?

When should you choose questions and plan the evaluation?

Who should be involved in the process?

How do you choose questions and plan the evaluation?

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

Archival data refer to information that already exists in someone else’s files. Originally generated for reporting or research purposes, it’s often kept because of legal requirements, for reference, or as an internal record. In general, because it’s the result of completed activities, it’s not subject to change and is therefore sometimes known as fixed data (Module 3 notes on archival data)

Peter Kingsbury 1997 in [IT Answers to HR Questions](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0852926936/httpwwwemeral-20) discusses Archival or documentary secondary data as documentary records left by people as a byproduct of their everyday activity. They may be formally deposited in an archive or they may just exist as company records.

He also admits that historians make considerable use of archival material as a key research technique, using a wide range of personal documents such as letters, diaries, household bills, which are often stored in some sort of formal "archive".

Business researchers talk about "archival research" because they use many of the same techniques for recording and analysing information. Companies, by their very nature, tend to create records, both officially in the form of annual reports, declarations of share value etc., and unofficially in the e-mails, letters, meeting minutes and agendas, sales data, employee records etc. which are the by-product of their daily activities, (Peter Kingsbury 1997).

**Reasons for collecting and using archival data? (Advantages of archival data).**

From the *community toolbox chapter 37 section 7*, it is explained that there are sometimes good reasons for using original data, including that the information you need just isn’t available elsewhere. Additionally, if a researcher collects original data, he or she has more control on data to be collected.

On the other hand, if the information you need, or something very close to it, already exists, there are several good reasons to find and use it. It’s easier and less time-consuming than collecting all the data yourself. This is probably the most obvious and most common reason for taking advantage of archival data. Especially if you’re looking for a large amount of information or information about a large group of people, you may be able to save yourself an enormous amount of time and trouble by using archival data.

Archival data may have already been processed by people with more statistical expertise. Unless you’re a statistician or a health or human service researcher with an advanced degree (and often not even then), the chances are that you don’t have a flawless grasp of data analysis. You can hire someone or find a volunteer to help you, but if the hard work has already been done, it will make your work that much easier.

Even with raw data, the basic organization and preparation (transcription of interviews, entry of numbers into a spreadsheet or specific software, etc.) may have already been done, again saving time and resources.

It’s quite possible that you can find more information than you’d be able to gather if you did it yourself. The archival data you find may be more sweeping or more specific than what you’d be able to gather. It may involve more people than you’d be able to, cover a larger geographic area, or provide more detail.

Archival data could touch on important areas you have not considered, or identify patterns or relationships you wouldn’t have looked for. In cases like these, the use of pre-existing data might change your whole view of your work, and help bring you to a level of effectiveness you wouldn’t have reached otherwise.

It may eliminate the need to correct for problems, such as improper sampling, lack of inter-rater reliability, or observer bias.

Archival data allows the possibility of looking at the effects of your work over time. Is the change in your population part of a trend that seems to be reflected in data from a similar population or the entire state or nation? You may not have the capacity to collect data over a long enough period to answer such questions, but if the data already exist, it makes longer-term analysis possible.

Archival data can make it possible for small organizations with limited resources to conduct thorough evaluation studies. Most small community-based organizations simply have neither the money nor the personnel to gather large amounts of data – but, there’s no need to when the data you need exists elsewhere.

**Points to consider while using Archival material.**

From these points discussed *In Structural Survey, vol. 14 No. 4* it is stated that there are a number of points to consider when using archival material thus pointing out some bottle necks associated with archival data:

You will need to gain access to the company, and this may prove difficult. On the other hand, if you are doing a report/project on your own organization, access may be a lot easier, although even here you should gain agreement to access and use of material.

Even if you are successful in gaining access to the company, it may be difficult and time-consuming to locate all the information you need, especially if the company does not have a clear archiving policy, and you may need to go through a vast range of documents.

The data may be incomplete, and may not answer your research question – for example, there may be a gap in records, correspondence may be one-sided and not include responses.

The data may be biased, in other words it will be written by people who have a particular view. For example, meeting minutes are the "official" version and often things go on in meetings which are not recorded; profitability in annual reports may be reported in such a way as to show a positive rather than a true picture.

In a paper to review the Strengths and Weaknesses of Archival, Behavioral, and Qualitative Research methods, recognizing the Potential Benefits of Triangulation by Amy Hageman from University of Central Florida, Shadish et al. 2002 states that,

One of the primary challenges associated with archival research is that researchers cannot

easily test causal relationships. Relying on secondary data often compromises an archival

study’s internal validity. The researcher can analyze data trends, but it is difficult to establish that

a particular factor causes another. In most archival studies, researchers examine the relationships

between certain variables and attempt to control for other alternative explanations that may have

affected the relationship.

Thus, archival research designs have relatively low levels of internal validity, as it is difficult for the researcher to properly control for all other plausible explanations for an observed relationship between phenomena. This is particularly true for non-experimental designs, which lack randomization, control groups, pre-tests, and other factors; researchers instead measure and statistically control for alternative explanations.

He also explains that establishing causality with archival studies is especially challenging with cross-sectional studies, in that it is unclear whether the purported cause actually precedes the event; it is therefore critical that all other potential causal factors are well-measured and controlled, and that the model is very well-specified.

On the same paper, Kothari, 2001 also states that since archival research cannot clearly indicate causality, endogeneity of independent variables is another common concern. Researchers may test the effect of an independent variable on a dependent variable, but ignore the antecedents of the independent variable itself. An analyst’s affiliation is one such endogenous construct, as companies may choose analysts that are naturally optimistic.

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

One aspect of M&E is research. The other is evaluation. Evaluation of projects is done at specific times most often mid- term and at the end of the project. Evaluation is an important component of M&E as it establishes whether the project has met the desired objectives. It usually provides for organizational learning and sharing of successes with other stakeholders. (wordpress.com, M and E official blog site).

A paper written in 2010 as a Technical Guidance Note for Global Fund HIV Proposals in Monitoring and Evaluation stated the below with reference to importance of research as a component of M and E.

**Rationale for including M&E System building in the proposal**

With the global momentum to scale up the response to the three main infectious diseases, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria, public health practitioners need to provide various levels of accountability for their activities to several constituencies. It is becoming increasingly important for countries to be able to report accurate, timely and comparable data to national authorities and donors in order to secure continued funding for expanding health programs.

A functional M&E system is one of the cornerstones of a country’s response to fighting a disease, and ensures that:

Relevant, timely and accurate data are made available to national program leaders and managers at each level of program and health care system.

Selected quality data can be reported to national leaders and the national program is able to meet donor and international reporting requirements under a unified global effort.

**Suggested activities and performance results for strengthening RESEARCH as a component of an M&E System**

**Activities.**

Organize a national workshop with relevant individuals and organizations to agree on priority questions for evaluation and research as part of a national agenda-setting process.

Establish procedures for implementation of the national evaluation and research agenda.

Establish ethical procedures for evaluation and research and implement a mechanism for ensuring adherence.

Maintain a regularly updated national inventory of evaluation and research studies.

Establish a mechanism for sharing evaluation and research findings, including the synthesis

and interpretation of programmatic implications of the findings.

Organize an annual national conference to discuss the implications of evaluation and

research findings.

**Performance results.**

Inventory of completed and ongoing country specific evaluation and research studies.

Inventory of local evaluation and research capacity, including major research institutions and their focus of work.

National evaluation and research agenda.

Ethical approval procedures and standards.

National conference or forum for dissemination and discussion of disease specific research and evaluation findings.

**Referencing**

Amy Hageman from University of Central Florida, Shadish et al. 2002.

Community tool box chapter 37 section 7

Kothari, 2001 University of Central Florida.

Monitoring and Evaluation module 3 notes

Peter Kingsbury 1997, IT Answers to HR Questions.

Step by Step guide to monitoring and evaluation version 1.0 published in 2014, by (Kersty Hobson, Ruth Mayne, Jo Hamilton December 2013)

Technical Guidance Note for Global Fund HIV Proposals in Monitoring and Evaluation 2010

Wordpress.com, M and E official blog site.