**Module 4 Assignment:** Questions on Data analysis, Uses of Monitoring and Evaluation results, Project failure, Monitoring and Evaluation report and Feedback.

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**ASSIGNMENT:**

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

**What is meant by data analysis?**

Community Tool Box chapter 37 Section 5 gives a brief description on what is meant by data analysis.

Analyzing information involves examining it in ways that reveal the relationships, patterns, trends, etc. that can be found within the information. That may mean subjecting it to statistical operations that can tell not only what kinds of relationships seem to exist among variables, but also to what level the answers gotten can be trusted.

It may mean comparing information in one group to that from other groups i.e. Control or comparison group, to help draw some conclusions from the data. The point, in terms of evaluation, is to get an accurate assessment in order to better understand work and its effects on those concerned, or in order to better understand the overall situation.

There are two kinds of data to work with, although not all evaluations will necessarily include both.

**Quantitative data** refer to the information that is collected as, or can be translated into, numbers, which can then be displayed and analyzed mathematically. Quantitative data is usually subjected to statistical procedures such as calculating the mean or average number of times an event or behaviour occurs (per day, month, and year). These operations, because numbers are “hard” data and not interpretation, can give definitive, or nearly definitive, answers to different questions.

Various kinds of quantitative data analysis can indicate changes in a dependent variable related to frequency, duration, timing (when particular things happen), intensity, level, etc. They can allow you to compare those changes to one another, to changes in another variable, or to changes in another population. They might be able to tell you, at a particular degree of reliability, whether those changes are likely to have been caused by intervention or program, or by another factor, known or unknown. And they can identify relationships among different variables, which may or may not mean that one causes another. Quantitative data are typically collected directly as numbers. Some examples include:

The frequency e.g. rate, duration of specific behaviours or conditions

Test scores like scores/levels of knowledge, skill, etc.

Survey results e.g. reported behavior, or outcomes to environmental conditions, ratings of satisfaction, stress, etc.

Numbers or percentages of people with certain characteristics in a population (diagnosed with diabetes, unemployed, Spanish-speaking, under age 14, grade of school completed, etc.)

**Qualitative data** are collected as descriptions, anecdotes, opinions, quotes, interpretations, etc., and are generally either not able to be reduced to numbers, or are considered more valuable or informative if left as narratives.

Unlike numbers or “hard data,” qualitative information tends to be “soft,” meaning it can’t always be reduced to something definite. That is in some ways a weakness, but it’s also a strength. A number may tell you how well a student did on a test; the look on her face after seeing her grade, however, may tell you even more about the effect of that result on her. That look can’t be translated to a number, nor can a teacher’s knowledge of that student’s history, progress, and experience, all of which go into the teacher’s interpretation of that look. And that interpretation may be far more valuable in helping that student succeed than knowing her grade or numerical score on the test.

Qualitative data can sometimes be changed into numbers, usually by counting the number of times specific things occur in the course of observations or interviews, or by assigning numbers or ratings to dimensions e.g., importance, satisfaction, ease of use.

Qualitative data can sometimes tell things that quantitative data can’t. It may reveal why certain methods are working or not working, whether part of what is being done conflicts with participants’ culture, what participants see as important, etc. It may also show patterns in behavior, physical or social environment, or other factors that the numbers in quantitative data don’t, and occasionally even identify variables that researchers weren’t aware of.

As might be expected quantitative and qualitative information needs to be analyzed differently.

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

From Gage and Dunn 2009, Frankel and Gage 2007, and PATH Monitoring and Evaluation Initiative.

**Monitoring** is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing and using information to track a programme’s progress toward reaching its objectives and to guide management decisions. Monitoring usually focuses on processes, such as when and where activities occur, who delivers them and how many people or entities they reach.

Monitoring is conducted after a programme has begun and continues throughout the programme implementation period. Monitoring is sometimes referred to as process, performance or formative evaluation.

**Evaluation** is the systematic assessment of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institution’s performance. Evaluation focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts), processes, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack of achievements. Evaluation aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of interventions and the contributions of the intervention to the results achieved.

An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful. The findings, recommendations and lessons of an evaluation should be used to inform the future decision-making processes regarding the programme. (Adapted from Gage and Dunn 2009, Frankel and Gage 2007).

**Why is monitoring and evaluation important?**

Monitoring and evaluation are critical for building a strong, global evidence base around a program or project and for assessing the wide, diverse range of interventions being implemented to address the situation. At the global level, it is a tool for identifying and documenting successful programmes and approaches and tracking progress toward common indicators across related projects.

At the programme level, the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to track implementation and outputs systematically, and measure the effectiveness of programmes. It helps determine exactly when a programme is on track and when changes may be needed. Monitoring and evaluation forms the basis for modification of interventions and assessing the quality of activities being conducted.

Monitoring and evaluation can be used to demonstrate that programme efforts have had a measurable impact on expected outcomes and have been implemented effectively. It is essential in helping managers, planners, implementers, policy makers and donors acquire the information and understanding they need to make informed decisions about programme operations.

Monitoring and evaluation helps with identifying the most valuable and efficient use of resources. It is critical for developing objective conclusions regarding the extent to which programmes can be judged a “success”. Monitoring and evaluation together provide the necessary data to guide strategic planning, to design and implement programmes and projects, and to allocate, and re-allocate resources in better ways.

(Adapted from Gage and Dunn 2009, Frankel and Gage 2007)

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

As described by Discenza, R. & Forman, J. B. (2007) in their conference paper on risk management sustainability, they give an explanation that, each year, enterprise organizations around the world face astronomical project failure rates, often wasting millions of dollars per failed project. The same enterprises agonize over the causes of project failure, call in expensive consultants to assess and recover failing projects, and often abandon what originally seemed like well-planned, well-organized projects, destined for success.

They also discuss that there is no single method or organizational structure that can be used to manage projects to success. Different organizations handle the functional projects differently. Some have fragmented and decentralized groups with multiple titles indicating that they are projects, while others might have large aggregations of project management professionals in a centralized support organization.

Discenza et al 2007, argues that project failure can happen in any organization and to any project. There are an infinite number of reasons for failure. Sometimes it’s out of the control of a project manager or the team members. Sometimes failure is controllable. Failed projects and people involved with the failure have some things in common. In both cases they are given prescriptions for “quick fixes” which typically prove to be ineffective and can sometimes produce disastrous side effects.

**Why projects fail**

On the same paper they went ahead and explained why projects most commonly fail, and it’s 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 clear view 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. Requirements may still continue to creep. Virtually in 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** - Successful large projects typically have software measurement programs for capturing productivity and quality historical data that can be used 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 centered 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 (Participatory approach)** - It has been observed that successful projects occur when end users (customers) and the project members work as a team. 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 results?

**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 of higher paid people with the 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 they 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 roles.

**In 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 provide significant value to a firm. The seven factors outlined above 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.

Discenza et al 2007, survey results on the common causes of project failure indicate that the failure factors can be grouped into three main categories as:

(1) People factors.

(2) Project process factors.

(3) Project communications factors.

Managing a failing project begins by assessing its real condition by the use of questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. When the assessment is complete and the project over and no decision has been made by the stakeholders, the assessment team can build a plan to implement project recovery.

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

A retrieval from the final monitoring and evaluation report written by Nguyen Tuan Doanh 2015, the following parts of the report was retrieved.

I. Abstract.

II. An overview of the project.

2.1. General information.

2.2. Objectives of the project.

III. An introduction of M&E activities.

3.1. Objectives.

3.2. Scope and targeted audience of the M&E activities.

3.3. Methodologies and information sources.

3.4. M&E activities and working plan.

IV. An evaluation of the relevance of the project.

6.1 Projects sustainability.

V. An evaluation of the progress and outputs of the project.

5.1. The project’s progress.

5.2. Outputs of the project.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations.

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

From the writings of Patel M (2001) and Theis J (2004). Feedback is described as the process of communicating the results and learning from your work to the various stakeholders within and outside of your organization. It is a key way to demonstrate your accountability. Feedback can stimulate changes that will improve the way in which you work and your effectiveness. It can provide examples of good practice to be shared with others, and can inform your national and international advocacy work.

Feedback is information which allows an individual or organization 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 organizations to collect feedback, translate this information into action, and evaluate outcomes enables improvement in activities such as product development, service provision, etc.

However, there is no guarantee that feedback is collected, analyzed, or used systematically or effectively. The specification of what sources are relevant, the selection of mechanisms to collect information, and the manner in which information is used all determine the effectiveness of feedback generated. They also determine the nature of blind-spots (e.g. information not collected or used). Subjecting mechanisms and blind-spots to a critical assessment of how they affect performance or produce externalities (i.e. unexpected outcomes) constitutes an important part of working with feedback. To improve feedback systems it is thus important to answer the following questions:

1. What determines if feedback is relevant for a given purpose?

2. How does the specification of what feedback is relevant create ‘blind-spots’?

3. How does the nature of a feedback system and blind-spots influence the usefulness of information gained? Extracted from an Agricultural Learning and Impacts Network paper written by Jonas Heirman, Andre Ling and Dr. Yvonne Pinto, from the site [www.aline.org.uk](http://www.aline.org.uk)

Lessons from feedback theory from [www.aline.org.uk](http://www.aline.org.uk)

Explained that 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:

1. The systematized collection of feedback takes place within an existing information exosystem, characterized by assumptions about what is important. These assumptions need to be questioned to avoid problematic blind-spots.

2. The selection of sources of feedback and mechanisms can reflect and/or alter relationships between levels of participating actors, and with customers, users, beneficiaries, etc.

3. The selection and use of measurement tools and data are critical processes, reflecting power relationships between actors within the feedback system.

4. The appropriateness of a given measurement tool is determined by its ability to depict change in a meaningful manner, which could be quantitative, qualitative, or any combination.

5. The inclusion of feedback into a specific stage of development, research, or planning will shape the nature of thinking and innovation that takes place.

6. The usefulness of feedback to understanding or improving performance depends on the selection of sources, methods of collection, and timing of inclusion.

From the Feedback topic in module 4 of Monitoring and Evaluation notes 2018, from the African Centre for Project management the following are also discussed on the topic why provide feedback in project monitoring and evaluation.

These are some of the reasons why feedback should be given from time to time in project monitoring and evaluation hence help in knowing the importance of feedback.

To help community leadership assess progress towards meeting the initiative's goals.

To help see areas wherein the members of the initiative may want to put more energy.

To help detect when too much energy or effort is spent in areas less central to the mission.

To provide the opportunity to celebrate small accomplishments.

To help the initiative focus on the "big picture" by seeing cumulative accomplishments over time.

To provide funders the opportunity to help re-direct the initiative towards activities more directly related to the mission.

To provide funders the opportunity to see and reward the accomplishments of the initiative.

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