MANAGING THE PERFORMANCE OF HEALTH PROGRAMS USING THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Performance management constitutes of several major processes, namely measurement of the performance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of improvements. Developing a framework is recommended and as for that, the use of the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is suggested in developing a framework for managing the performance of any programs. The LFA is a powerful analytical tool for planning and managing objective-oriented projects. This tool could be utilised during the designing process and initial planning. It could also functions as a management tool during the program implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As a standardised tool for many projects at one go due to its comprehensiveness component, the LFA framework could be planned by the program manager and is easily monitored by the program coordinator or supervisor. Therefore, the main objective of this article is to discuss the application of the LFA in managing program performance.

1.0 Introduction

Performance management constitutes of several major processes, namely measurement of the performance, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of improvements that have been carried out (P. K. Dey, Hariharan, & Despic, 2008). Managing health programs not only entails the process of selecting and coordinating the resources across the projects, it also includes handling the links and sizing up the costs, benefits and the risks involved in the implementation of the programs (Aceituno et al., 2017). The managers of the health programs also need to take into account and monitor the physical progress of the project as well as the potential impact of the project and the environmental factors (external factors). Researchers such as P. K. Dey et al., (2008) and Galvin and McGlynn (2003) have identified the means for improvement and subsequently, constructed a framework for improvement in their endeavour to outline the measurement of a program performance. The use of approaches and tools are suggested in developing a framework for managing performance of the program (Couillard, Garon, & Riznic, 2009; P. K. Dey, Hariharan, & Brookes, 2006; Hariharan, Chen, & Dey, 2006).

Throughout the program, a format should be prepared for the monitoring and reporting purposes. This format, which is practical, specifically when there is a shift of manpower, for instance, managers, decision makers or employee, is essential to form a sound basis that could aid the health program managers in analysing the trends and mapping out viable strategies. The majority of previous studies have recommended various methods for program evaluation, namely the application of benchmarking (Maleyeff, 2003), outcome mapping (Roduner, Schläppi, & Egli, 2008) and analytic hierarchy process (P. K. Dey, Hariharan, Kumar, & Moseley, 2004; P. K. Dey, Hariharan, & Chen, 2007; P. K. Dey et al., 2008). The suggested methods have identified various factors that need to be considered in evaluating performance. These factors were then analysed with the aid of the stakeholder. Performance parameters were then calculated before improvement measures were put forward. Nevertheless, none of these methods have advocated the need to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the improvement measures as suggested by the Logical Framework Approach (LFA).

Crawford & Bryce (2003), Dale (2003), Jensen (2010), and Rogers (2008) argue that the LFA is a powerful analytical tool for planning and managing objective-oriented projects. This tool could be utilised during the designing process and initial planning. It could also functions as a management tool during the program implementation, monitoring and evaluation process. In this article, they will be discussed in detail.

2.0 The Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

The LFA could be easily comprehended as a viable, successful strategic planning and program management method that involves several steps in order to come out with the outcome of this systematic approach, notably the Logframe Matrix. This matrix consists of few elements, namely input, activities, output, purpose, goal, indicator, source of verification and assumptions that remains valid during the program implementation. Nevertheless, it is not

a rigid approach as modification could take place along the way. Many countries around the world and various fields have utilized this method in a broad range (Sandra C Buttigieg, Gauci, & Dey, 2016; Couillard et al., 2009; P. K. Dey et al., 2008; P. K. Dey et al., 2006; Goeschel, Weiss, & Pronovost, 2012; Luxford, Hill, & Bell, 2006; McDonald et al., 2010). In short, this matrix summarizes the program in a standard and structured format (Figure I): 1) the goal of the program; 2) the kinds of activities that are undertaken to accomplish its outputs and serves its purposes; 3) the required resources; 4) the possible problems that could affect on the program's success and 5) the measurement and verification of the program's progress and success.

Figure I   Standard format of Logframe Matrix

Project Description	Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Goal: Overall long term objective.	Measure achievement of the goal.	Sources of information for this indicator.	External factors necessary to sustain goal.
Purpose: Program's immediate outcome.	Measure achievement of immediate outcome.	Sources of information for this indicator.	External factors necessary to achieve goal.
Output: Results of activities to fulfil objective.	Measure to what extend the action achieves the output.	Sources of information for this indicator.	External factors must be met to achieve purpose.
Activities: Actions to produce outputs.	*Input:* Resources needed to implement activities.		Pre-condition required before action start.

Source: (P. K. Dey et al., 2006)

3.0 Application of the LFA in health programs

The LFA has been applied in many fields. Previous studies have demonstrated the use of the LFA as a method for quality and performance improvement in the healthcare settings (Sandra Catherine Buttigieg, Dey, & Cassar, 2016; P. K. Dey et al., 2008; P. K. Dey & Hariharan, 2006; P. K. Dey et al., 2006; Goeschel et al., 2012; Hariharan et al., 2006). As for the public health field, this method has been applied in the maternal and child health program (McDonald et al., 2010).

Researchers have consistently revealed that, as systematic and logical management tool, the LFA makes it possible for the managers to: (1) appraise current situation during the program planning; (2) initiate a logical hierarchy of means to attain the objectives; (3) discern possible risks in fulfilling the objectives and sustain the outcomes; (4) determine how the outputs and outcomes could be best monitored and evaluated; (5) provide the project summary in a standard format;   (6) monitoring the ongoing projects   and (7) evaluate project post-

completion (Sandra C Buttigieg et al., 2016; Sandra Catherine Buttigieg et al., 2016; P. K. Dey et al., 2004; P. K. Dey et al., 2008; P. K. Dey & Hariharan, 2006; P. K. Dey et al., 2006; Hariharan et al., 2006; McDonald et al., 2010).

In short, the LFA tool assists managers in constructing and presenting the logic of the projects in two dimensions. Firstly, the vertical dimension determines whether the project activities could reach its objectives and whether these objectives could meet long-term, wider goals. Secondly, the horizontal dimension seeks to see whether the evaluation plan could measure the progress of the project (labelled as process measure) and whether it will accordingly alleviate the possible problems (known as outcome measure).

4.0 Development of the program matrix

The vertical logic structures the concepts and provides operational definition for each level of the program, while what needs to be accomplished at each level is presented in the horizontal logic (Goeschel et al., 2012). It is vital to discern, monitor and analyse external assumptions during the planning and implementation of the program as these assumptions could lead to the failure of the project. Early identification of the important external factors could assist in the selection of compatible and suitable program strategies.

4.1 Vertical logic

The vertical logic sets forth that multiple resources are needed, for any programs, in order to obtain immediate outcome. This stipulation results in the narrowing down of a more focused-driven program goal. A 'backward planning' process, therefore, is more feasible where the LFA is concerned. A backward planning process requires that the program team or developer outlines the brief, incisive goal and works backwards to locate and single out the necessary components that are needed to obtain the goal (purpose, output, activities and input). Each level of vertical logic is contingent upon the assumptions that were posited during the formation of the horizontal logic.

4.2 Horizontal logic

The horizontal logic delineates what needs to be carried out at each level of the program. The horizontal logic that reinforces the program evaluation program, is drawn from the vertical logic. Key assumption, objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification are the three key elements of the evaluation plan. Each element has a column in the matrix. Clarifying assumptions at each level is necessary to ensure that the success of one Logframe level (e.g. Purpose) results in the success of the next higher level (e.g. Goal). Objectively verifiable indicators signal whether each level of the vertical logic has successfully been fulfilled or not. The means of verifications refer to the sources of data and information systems that provide both denominator and numerator data for the objectively verifiable indicators identified for each objective.

5.0 Discussion

The application of the LFA generally commences with the planning process, by having participation analysis of the specific program. This is very important to ensure the problem analysis process together with the involvement of concern stakeholder could be visualized comprehensively and hence, allow the objective analysis to be developed appropriately. Subsequently, the designing process take place by developing the program matrix which could be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

In addition, the LFA also serves some advantages which improves planning. This is done by drawing special attention to the linkages between the project elements and external factors, promoting understanding as well as facilitating effective communication between the decision makers, managers and those involved in the program. Moreover, the utilisation of the LFA and its systematic monitoring warrants that the approach remains continuous irrespective of the changes of the project's original members (Goeschel et al., 2012; Jensen, 2010; McDonald et al., 2010).

5.1 Limitation of the LFA

The rigidity in the project administration is a prominent limitation of the LFA. Over emphasis of objectives and external factors that have been identified at the outset may lead to rigidity. Rigidity, however, could be eschewed by reviewing the project regularly and re-evaluating as well as adjusting the important elements (Jensen 2010). As known, modifications could be made along the way.

6.0 Conclusion and recommendation

The application of the LFA in managing the performance of a particular program is valuable as it enables a logical, coherent approach to the program which ensures that the program's activities are able to achieve the goal that has been set. This analytical tool is also powerful and significant as it enhances shared understanding of the program goals, purposes and activities, facilitates better communication, and aids progress evaluation. Therefore, this ultimate method should be considered in conducting research to improve program performances.

IJPHCS
Open Access: e-Journal

International Journal of Public Health and Clinical Sciences
e-ISSN : 2289-7577. Vol. 6:No. 5
September/October 2019

Acknowledgement

Declaration

Author(s) declare that all works are original and this manuscript has not been published in any other journals.

Authors' contribution

Author 1: Idea conceptualizing, literature review, drafting the final manuscript, publication

Author 2: Advice and guidance during manuscript preparation

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