

Process Documentation in Development Projects

Reading Material



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CHANGING FOCUS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Changing Focus of Development

Development is a dynamic concept; it exhibits the movement from the existing stage to another stage which is different. This change can happen in the natural sequence over a long period of time or can be brought about in a limited time sphere through planned interventions. We can find the planning process in place, both in terms of long term, medium term and short term plans. The interventions through these plans are mainly achieved by design and implementation of specific schemes or projects to achieve the objectives of development.

In the initial years of development most of the developing countries found themselves lacking in technology to achieve developmental objectives. As such their efforts focused on direct introduction of exotic technologies to address the local problems, which meant that they were seeking technical solutions to the issue of development. Though the effort yielded some results but it could not be sustained since the breakdown due to direct intervention of exotic technologies could not be addressed. For ex. Water pumps, bore wells, pipes etc in irrigation and water supply projects. So also introduction of new exotic breeds of cattle resulted in failures.

Due to the above experiences of failures the developmental focus shifted towards new styles of intervention by way of upgrading the technology and also on maintenance of these technologies. For ex. setting up and training water users associations and committees, setting up and training watershed associations and user groups etc. with a mandate to adapt technologies, build capacity in the users to maintain and manage them. Various methodologies such as PRA were inducted to assist in improving participation of end users in decision making. Hence the second switch of the developmental focus was from technological focus to social and

managerial aspects of development which was designed to improve the sustainability of the systems.

A further review of the experiences of implementation of these projects revealed success in some of them where as there were failures in others. It could be observed that just training or building the capacities of the users groups and the associations and participation by the stake holders was not found to sustain the developmental focus since many failed. The analysis led to the feeling that it was unrealistic to expect these groups and associations to do everything by themselves ie. to operate and manage development with major managerial and technical problems. Hence there were large scale failures of sustainability of these projects. It was felt that to make the development projects sustainable apart from developing the capacities of the people involved, the enabling environment needed to be supportive. The enabling environment would mean the policies, legislation, supporting institutions, and the community level bodies. There is need for a greater interaction between all the actors to unleash support. Any sustainable solution requires all stake holders, communities, public and private institutions in decision making. Hence the development sector shifted its focus from technical interventions to social and managerial interventions and now seeks to intervene in the wider areas of enabling environment leading to governance of resources and services.

Governance refers to the set of systems that controls decision making with regard to management and service delivery. This covers technological, managerial political and people as the elements. In the present context efforts are already under way to implement the projects on these lines.

Learning from experiences

Development is a continuous activity be it in a family, community or a country. Developmental projects that address the issue of governance may clash with deep rooted traditions within societies. Hence development process is unique to each situation and context. The main reasons why the same projects are successful in some cases while they are failures in others basically indicates the

appropriateness of the processes used. Hence the process of development is important in any developmental project. As the developmental activities are a continuous phenomenon, and the modes of interventions are on the lines of the project or scheme, it is necessary to document the process of development in each of the schemes or projects such that the lessons learnt from the experiences generated could very well be integrated in each of the subsequent schemes.

It would be necessary to have a clear understanding of the key concepts such as the "TASK", "PROCESS", "process documentation" and develop skills in undertaking the process documentation activity.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF THE TASK

What is a 'Task'

In the management of development projects or schemes "TASK" assumes a lot of significance. It is necessary for any development project head to understand the concepts and the related aspects of the TASK.

In simple terminology the word TASK is used in project management to refer to an activity or a job or an assignment that needs to be undertaken or accomplished. An assignment of a task is the responsibility of the Project Head. Completion of the task is the responsibility of the assignee.

The examples of a TASK are: watershed development, increasing milk production, managing pests and diseases in crops, conducting demonstrations, strategic planning etc.

Features of a Task

Any type of TASK irrespective of its relatedness to the sector or the level at which it is implemented has certain common features. Some of the key common features of the TASK are:

- Has a specific purpose or objective
- Has an end result
- Consumes resources
- Has a time frame
- Individual, group or organization oriented
- Could be simple or complex
- Specific to a given situation
- May have sub tasks at various levels
- Needs the skills related to the task

Types of Tasks

We come across many types of tasks in the normal functioning of the organizations dealing with developmental management. Some of the types of tasks and their implications for development process are indicated below.

1. Simple and Complex Tasks

Simple tasks are those that can be understood and undertaken by the persons/persons without any difficulty, whereas in the case of complex tasks, they demand greater level of planning, more number of persons, need delegation of authority and larger amount of resources including time to operationalize the task.

2. Individual, Group or Community Oriented Tasks

The tasks can also be classified based on the involvement of personnel in each of them. There are many tasks which can be individual oriented wherein all the aspects concerned with the task are undertaken by the individual himself. Since only one person is involved in planning and implementation of the task, most of the situations are under the control of the person.

In the group oriented task, a group of people or a team specifically identified for the purpose would undertake the task. Some of the examples for group oriented task are activities undertaken by user groups in watersheds, self help groups in watersheds, farmers interest groups at the village level, production teams in processing industry etc. are related to the group oriented task. Here the responsibility of the task is shared among the members of the groups with a leader basically to coordinate and lead the group. Success of the task depends upon the type of group, skills available within the group and the extent of harmony and process within the group. These tasks are slightly different from the individual tasks and are comparatively complex since they need synergy from various members of the group to bring out task results.

The community oriented tasks are more complex, are larger in dimension and need the involvement and support of the whole community for their planning, execution and operation. The examples of these types of tasks are watershed development in an area, whole village development, promotion of commodity organizations, rural water supply, tank irrigation etc. In all these cases, the tasks demand the involvement and contribution of a larger community for being effective. The implication of these is that the needs and interests of various categories of sub-groups that are affected by the task have to be put in convergence to achieve the objectives of time, personnel, funds and management mechanisms to make them operationally effective.

3. Open and Closed Task

The Open Tasks are those wherein the objective or purpose of undertaking the task is not mentioned explicitly or indicated clearly. The tasks are said to be closed when there is an indication of the basic purpose or the objective in the given task.

‘Open’ and ‘Closed’ are useful terms to describe certain characteristics of aims and tasks we have to face. Given the need to do something the following Questions are critical in influencing our approach to it.

About the aims

Is the purpose clearly understood? Is it clear why the task is to be done, who and what it is for, what benefits will ensue?

Is there a target and result to be achieved? Is it clear what it is?

Are there clear and precise success criteria by which to assess progress or achievement?

About how to do the task

Is the task reasonably clear? Can we see how to start and what the likely steps will be ?

The more ‘yes’ answers to these questions the more closed the situation confronting us. ‘No’ answers imply a degree of openness.

Perceptions of ‘openness’ and closedness’ will vary between individuals, a fact which needs to be borne in mind when working with others. The degree of prior experience, skill or familiarity with the situation will influence a person’s response.

For example, launching a new product range would be seen as relatively closed and straightforward, even though complex, for an experienced marketing person, and in all probability, as dauntingly open by anyone else. Then again, some people may be stimulated by the creative possibilities in an open situation while others may feel ill at ease with the associated lack of clear guidelines.

Indications that tasks are too open may be feelings of uncertainty, hesitancy, much debate and questioning, different interpretations and false starts. A situation that is too closed may be indicated by boredom apathy, aggression towards the task or the person giving it, and the introduction of 'red herrings', proposals to 'buck the system' or other more enlivening topics.

Tasks need to be closed down sufficiently to enable purposeful action to be taken. If the openness arises from an uncertainty about any of the aspects of the aims, then the remedy suggests itself. Where the openness comes from confusion about how to proceed, even though all aspects of the aims are clear, then a number of possibilities present themselves.

- If there are many things that need to be done....
Select one, make a start, review progress regularly (and so gain experience) and tackle the others later
- If it is not apparent what to do at all
Gather more information conduct tests or experiments, explore the question brainstorm for ideas.
- If there are potentially limitless possibilities.....
List criteria, consistent with the purposes, against which the possibilities can be reduced to a short list of things to start off with and recognize that the first steps taken are progressing towards an answer.

Steps in undertaking a task

Any task irrespective of the sector or the type of personnel invited in implementation follows three basic steps such as (i) planning or preparation, (ii) action or implementation and (iii) review. Each of these steps are being followed by all of us in implementing any task be it simple or complex, open or closed and individual or group oriented. At the beginning of each task, an individual or a group

would start thinking about the task and what it demands to be done. It will end up with a tentative plan of action of how to undertake the task. Once the plan is ready, it is implemented by the individual. At the end of each sequence of implementation normally, a review is undertaken either consciously or unconsciously to understand what has been done and achieved. The results of the Review are helpful and are utilized in planning for the next task. A continuous process of preparation, action and review creates the experiences from which lessons could be drawn that would help in improving the skills of the people implementing these tasks.

Skills required for undertaking tasks

In respect of the job itself, they use their professional or technical skills such as accountancy, engineering, brewing, computer programming. They are dealing with the job itself, the task to be performed.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF PROCESS

What is Process?

Process refers to the course of action or a route followed by an individual or a group while undertaking a common activity or a task. The process indicates as to how the task was undertaken and completed by individuals or groups. It also refers to the way in which people think, feel, interact, decide and act in carrying out a task.

As example of process would be the interaction between people engaged in launching a product, the things that each of them did to promote purposeful and methodical work, and the effects these efforts produced on their colleagues.

Features of Process

- Process is subtle and not visible after the task is completed.
- Is derived from the interactions of the members in the group
- Influences members' behavior and contributions
- Has an impact on the task results.
- Needs specific handling in group situations.
- Needs specific awareness and skills within the group

Process Issues

Most of the problems or issues affecting the implementation of task relate to the lack of clear understanding of the process aspects in the working teams. Various process issues that exerted in a group or team interaction are:

- The way they think (with differing patterns of thought)
- The way they act (with a variety of behavioral skills)
- The way they feel (the emotions that arise)
- The values they respect, the ethics they uphold, the judgments they make.

- Process also embraces the reaction of people to the physical and emotional environment in which they work, how they are affected by it and what they do to influence it.
- Since Process issues influence Task results, and often critically, it follows that people need to develop both sorts of skills, and to be aware of them in others.

Skills required for process management

Different types of skills are required for managing the process in the implementation of tasks. Most of these skills relate to building in sensitivity of the personnel to each other, apart from the task requirements. Various types of skills that help in managing the process in any given tasks are: observational skills, listening to other's ideas, supporting each other, being clear and making others clear on the task aims, managing time and resources, establishing common procedures, cooperation and helping each other etc.

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Process planning

In Process Review, observations are assembled about the way the group worked while doing a task. Based on this information, groups express intentions to improve the way they work on future tasks. These are more likely to happen when translated into plans which clearly allocate responsibility

Process plans are not intended as permanent procedures or ones to be transferred haphazardly to different groups. They are plans to suit the situation which exists, and will be modified, abandoned, or replaced as the situation changes. Learning in the group can be greatly enhanced when proposed process plans are

rapidly supported, tested and reviewed, thus enlarging members' understanding of practices that may be drawn upon.

The following are examples of situations which groups have faced, and the Process Plans they tested to create improvements.

A group found repeated difficulty in getting started when given a job to do, though once started it moved ahead well. It had also noticed that the flow of ideas was helped by recording on a flip-chart.

The process plan for this situation was simply:

On receiving a task instruction everyone would read it first. One would go to the flip-chart and write 'Aims', and then prompt responses by asking 'What is the purpose of the job?'

Fine plan but too little time to implement it. One member of the group frequently appeared to have sound views on how long a job would take.

The process plan they made was:

As soon as the nature of the job and its purpose have been clarified, 'A' would make an estimate of the time which should be allowed for Action. Whoever is assigned to charting, 'B' would then mark a scale on the side of the chart, showing time at which the Action stage should start and finish, giving 5 minutes for task review to check that the job is complete.

Group members had great difficulty in listening to each other, each thinking that their own ideas were the best. This led to time being wasted through needless repetition, the loudest or most persistent idea prevailing (regardless of quality), and other members losing interest and withdrawing.

A process Plan to help this was:

After an initial 2 minute thinking period, 'C' would go round the table and chart each person's ideas in turn. Everyone would try hard not to interrupt each other. Many would act as a backstop and pull them up short if necessary. The Observer would log and feed back all interruptions'.

To be actionable, plans should inherently answer 'Who does what, when, where, and how?' Process Plans are no exception. One Success Criterion for Process Reviews is that at least one actionable Process Plan is produced for testing during the next task.

Process skills

People working together each bring a unique cluster of personal skills, not just those connected with their craft or profession but also ones that affect the interaction of people, no matter what the task is. These human, or process skills merit exploration since the way they are used will influence the team's working effectiveness, which in turn affects the job performance.

The more each of us is aware of the strengths that we bring to a group the better able we are to use them in a timely and effective way. The more we are aware of the skills and qualities of others in the groups, the better able we are to encourage their use, draw upon them, complement them and perhaps copy them.

Some skills can benefit a group even if only one person has them: for example, the ability to visualize clearly a desired end result or a flair for detail and precision at the planning stage. Other skills are enhanced in their effect if everyone possesses them: for example, a respect for each other's views by carefully listening to them.

Some strengths are readily apparent: for example, the ability to chart what is said quickly and accurately or skills in summarizing. Others, such as an air of confidence or of caring for others, are harder to pin point and may be noticed more in their absence when a member is not present.

An interesting addition to our perception of others arises when we examine what at first sight appear as hindrances. Often an attribute can be seen as a valuable asset by one person and an irritation or hindrance by another: for example, a meticulous attention to detail may also be distinctly unhelpful. So, obstinacy in a person may also be seen as tenacity, according to the circumstances and to our own view as to the validity of the point being expressed. This duality, which may be called the 'Principle of Obstinacy' can be used to advantage if what is first perceived as hindrance is examined honestly for its reverse aspect, revealing, perhaps, how a slight change in timing or use will release a precious skill.

PROCESS DOCUMENTATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The word 'Document' comes from Latin 'documentum' and 'doceo' which literally refers to teach, both for giving instructions and for warning purposes. A "document" is a collection of data, regardless of the medium on which it is recorded and can include both paper and electronic. Documentation is the process of systematically collecting, organizing, storing, retrieving, and disseminating information; a process used for the purpose of learning or sharing or for recording intellectual property. Output of documentation process can be written, visual and audio information about, for example, an object, a practice, a product or an event.

There are different types of documentation and include Annual Reports; Books; Case Studies; Digests; Guides; Handbooks; Journals, Magazines; Newsletters or Bulletins; Occasional Papers; Pamphlets; Policy Briefings; Position papers; Reports; (Project Reports, Research Reports, and Technical reports); Working Papers; Success Stories etc.

Documentation is any communicable material that is used to describe, explain or instruct regarding some attributes of an object, system or procedure. Good documentation can serve several very important functions and can make it easier to use and thereby save users' time and money. It can enhance the perceived quality of the product. The value of documenting for self-reflection and sharing of learning is often not recognized or does not figure prominently on the agenda of development organizations.

Process Documentation

In order to understand what Process Documentation is, we also need to understand what is 'Process'?. A Process is a series of steps and interrelated work activities, characterized by specific inputs and tasks which add value, and make up a procedure for a set of specific outputs. Thus the word 'Process' refers to the steps and work activities a transaction follows through an organization's systems, applications, and

people. The word Documentation – refers to a narrative, or some description of the way the process works.

Process Documentation is a systematic way of capturing what happens in a process of change and how it happens, to reflect and analyze why it happens and to organise and disseminate the findings. It helps to reflect, analyse and discover patterns that help or hinder change. The purpose of process documentation is to improve the quality and impact of a project. Process documentation allows internal project learning and joint learning with direct stakeholders. It looks beyond the project – into the context and may help projects to break through their sharp boundaries in time and space – enabling projects to raise issues of general interest and stimulate reflection and debate in wider society. (Groupe Developpement South Asia Regional office 2008).

There has been growing acceptance of the need to consider the development process in addition to simple development inputs (technology, knowledge, capital). While development inputs are necessary ingredients to development, serious attention to the process (the approach followed), and structuring positive and negative outcomes, is required.

The basic aim of Process Documentation is to learn from implementation experience and in the light of this modify the strategy and ultimately, policy (Mosse,1998).

Process documentation is

- a detailed description and analysis of the different activities undertaken during the course of study
- it describes stakeholders' participation; the process by which specific issues, concerns and interests are articulated, addressed or resolved; significant activities undertaken; the process by which resolutions were arrived at and how conflicts were resolved; the stakeholders and key players who participated; the outcome of the activity.

- It analyses significant concerns, questions and issues articulated and addressed at different stages of the study
- It serves as a tool for decision making
- It helps identify problems and bottle necks, identify deviations to tackle corrective action and institutional learning.

Process Documentation is a planning and evaluation tool that can help the project team and stakeholders track meaningful events and discern what is happening, how it is happening and why it may be happening. Process documentation involves a structured, focused way of capturing the change process; organizing the information and disseminating the information quickly enough to be the most useful.

How do we document: Tools and Methods in Process Documentation

Process documentation uses qualitative research methods to capture information from different sources in a variety of ways: Participant observation and analysis: eg: understand the way farmer groups are performing, quality of participation; Regular field notes and diaries; Focused Group discussions; Reviewing written communication and records; Team meetings on issues.

Data collection methods can include interviews with individuals, review of meeting minutes and other documents, observation of meetings and photography or video.

Outputs in Process documentation

- Case studies on specific issues;
- M & E reports: qualitative descriptions on how outputs are achieved and used
- Newsletters
- Reports
- Discussion Notes

Major steps in Process Documentation

Step 1: Documentation prior to the start of any task: involves documenting the objective of the activity and approach; steps to be taken; why; who will be involved

Step 2: Documenting immediately following the Process task: what was actually done; modifications made on the approach and why; successes; what worked well; indicators used to gauge success; factors contributing to the success; actual achievements; progress; level of participation etc.

Step 3: Synthesis of findings and insights. Feedback may be obtained from stakeholders involved in the activities to find out factors which determined success; factors leading to failure; what worked well; what did not work well and needs to be adjusted; capacity building needed;

Step 4: Communication of findings and insights to stakeholders for obtaining feedback.

Process Documentation is an invaluable tool in effective project management and governance. It aids action research, learning alliances and multi-stakeholder platforms that recognize the impact of cultural traditions and power constellations on development.

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Process Documentation

Process Documentation is an invaluable tool in effective project management and governance. It aids action research, learning alliances and multi-stakeholder platforms that recognize the impact of cultural traditions and power constellations on development.

Process Documentation systematically looks at the context, history and traditions rather than being confined to what is going on during the limited time of the project. It looks beyond the project into the real world that the project aims to change into history, culture, patterns of power and decision making. Hence, it is important for projects and also developments. Most of these projects have the ambition to change traditional patterns, attitudes, relationships, approaches and ways of thinking. They should therefore try to understand the context and the background of these attitudes, relationships, approaches and explore the impact on project objectives.

While capturing the process of change or development, the process documentation also organizes, analyzes and disseminates findings in ways that make them useful. It involves (a) a structured focused way of capturing the change process that a project aims to bring about by way of activities and interactions between stakeholders, issues and contextual factors, (b) organizing information in such a way that stakeholders have an opportunity to reflect and learn about the process, (c) analyzing information by looking at common themes, trends, patterns and placing the findings in the context of the project and its theory of change, (d) disseminating information quickly enough to be useful.

Application of process documentation requires a clear understanding of the theory of change. This provides direction and focus in deciding what is important or less important to observe. All the projects oriented to social change have a theory, most of them implicit but not explicit. It could be that concerted action of all stakeholders results in sustainable development or empowerment and help improve access of poor people to the benefits. By understanding the importance of the

theory of change and making it explicit, allows stakeholders to participate in the discussions on the basic assumption of the project and to react positively or negatively.

The theory of change may be that a project will lead to integration between departments or sectors improve coordination between stakeholders, increase joint decision-making and participation and lead to changes in attitude and empowerment. Key indicators of these changes need to be expressed in project goals to give a better understanding of what to document. A well articulated theory of change encourages project leaders to explain what is meant by words that are often used too easily. For example, what is empowerment? How will it look when people or groups are empowered? How does it show, if they are not? What is meant by sectoral integration and how does it look like? What attitudes you are seeking to change? What are the indicators for concerted action? The theory of change provides a lens to observe the process, and process documentation provides a systematic way to capture what happens in the process of change and how it happens and to organize and disseminate the findings.

Why Process Documentation:

The first aim of process documentation is to improve the quality and impact of the project. This is done in three ways. (a) It allows those most closely involved to step back far enough to reflect on trends, patterns, opportunities and warning signs. (b) It contributes to the collection of qualitative information on results that are not easy to capture quantitatively and so fills our story behind the figures. (c) It encourages learning from the states and offers opportunities to lead towards positive impact of the project.

Secondly, it also helps to challenge assumptions by bringing the theory of change in touch with field reality, ultimately leading to the theory being adapted where necessary and to have a deeper understanding of the crucial processes in society.

Thirdly, process documentation sets a project in its local context, helping the actors to see the bigger picture rather than having their horizons limited to their own interventions. It provides a voice for the people and shows their life holistically, capturing significant and unique local background including environmental and political factors. As such, the projects are likely to interact with the people's realities rather than seeing them as project beneficiaries.

Fourth, process documentation helps to bring into the public arena, the hidden factors relating to politics, power and relationships in the developmental scenario for a larger debate and Public discussion.

Fifthly, the process documentation helps to build up a synergy among the project work teams by intimate relationships between themselves and the stakeholders, thereby enriching their own knowledge and understanding of the development process apart from empowering them with the experiences of development over the years.

What should be documented?

Process documentation involves recording both formal and informal events, taking minutes, watching what happens in meetings, and also talking to people outside meetings, listening to them etc. The main indicators for documenting the process can be derived from the theory of change being promoted by the project of the assumptions the project envisages. However, key areas of process documentation normally included are as follows:

A The Decision making process

- Who is a part of the decision making and who is not?
- How are decisions taken – formally or informally?
- Are there conflicts in decision making? If so, what are they?
- Is there resistance to change in the decision making? If so, why and about what?

- Does every stakeholder have the same access to information?
- Do stakeholders consider shared decision making to be a better way of doing things?

B. The process of concerted action:

- How do stakeholders organize themselves formally and informally?
- How stakeholders traditionally communicate with other stakeholders, formal and informal networks.
- Are there dependency relationships? If so, what they are and how do they manifest themselves?
- Do all stakeholders have the same objective and what are the differences?
- Do stakeholders follow up on agreed actions?
- Do stakeholders communicate with their constituencies?

C. The process of behavioural and attitudinal change:

- What are stakeholders' beliefs, norms and values in relation to the project?
- What are stakeholders' beliefs, norms and values in relation to working with each other?
- How do stakeholders describe each others attitude and behaviour?
- How are stakeholders known in the community?
- Are there signs of stakeholders known in the community?
- Are there signs of stigma, prejudices etc.?
- Is there any easy contact between stakeholders or a larger social and cultural gap?
- Which attitudes hamper or promote concerted action and shared decision making?

D. The process of empowerment:

- Which stakeholders consider themselves powerless and why?
- Who has the power and who has none?

- Are there any power conflicts about how to use the benefits?
- Which natural or social traditions and patterns block the empowerment of groups?
- Are all stakeholders represented in the decision making process?

4. How to document the process?

Process documentation involves three stages such as capturing the process, organizing and analyzing the material and sharing or disseminating the findings.

A. Capturing the process:

The Process documentation specialists may use different methods for capturing the process. However, some of the common aspects relate to observing the field actions, interacting with stakeholders and getting their responses, reviewing the diaries of project team and collecting information by way of anecdotes, stories relating to the project and its implementation. The use of various techniques and tools for process documentation necessarily depends on the skill and resources available with the documenter.

However, some of the common methods which are used in the documentation process are:

- Observation
- Interview
- Focused group discussion
- Case studies
- Success stories
- Review of reports, diaries etc.

Apart from this, the documenter can also use some of the aids such as video recording, audio recording and still photography for capturing the processes in the development projects.

B. Organizing material:

The next step process documentation personnel follow, after capturing the process, is to organize all the material that is available in different formats. This would help the project team to step back from daily business and reflect on issues, trends and patterns at certain points of time. Organizing information has two major components; the first is to file the captured information such as interview notes, video cassettes, audio cassettes, still photographs in a simple filing procedure based on the sequencing of the events, so as to access it at any point of time. All these materials must be described and put into a file with dates, names, subject etc.

Secondly, information and material should be organized into articles, photo books, video films, case studies, success stories etc. These documents should be simple to produce and easy to distribute for a wider audience.

C. Analyzing findings:

It is necessary to build in a process of analysis of the findings by the project staff after documenting the material. The project staff, when starts reflecting on the results of analysis, will be able to understand the linkage between their own interventions and its effect, and response from the stakeholders, apart from factors leading to success or failure of the projects. The process of reflection with the documented information helps them to recheck their own assumptions and provide a feed back for their actions, so as to assist in proposing further interventions in the project. This step necessarily has to be undertaken by the process documenter along with the project team.

D. Disseminating information:

Documentation of the processes in developmental management is aimed at helping the project team that has implemented the project, the planners who will have planned the projects, the policy makers who were involved in supporting the projects apart from the funding agencies and the public at large. Hence, it would be helpful and necessary to disseminate the lessons from the projects to various

categories of personnel, depending on their role. Various methods of dissemination may include short briefs, case studies, success stories, video films, audio cassettes, articles in newsletters etc.

5. Who documents the process?

There is no single answer to who documents the process. A process documentation specialist is essential, while stakeholders themselves play a critical role in learning, and outsiders too can become part of the documentation process.

Insiders – the project team

There are good reasons to put overall responsibility for process documentation into the hands of the project team, so that it becomes an integrated project activity, and so that reflection and learning become more systematic. However, it is still sensible to appoint someone to do the job of process documentation, someone who is not involved in daily project work, but can concentrate on capturing the process, organizing information, stimulating reflection and analysis, and disseminating information products. Combining process documentation with project work is likely to be counterproductive. Process documentation requires some distance from the project objectives, since the role of the documentation specialist is not in the first place to achieve project objectives, but to discover why the project is achieving its objectives or why it is failing to do so. The process documentation specialist must be able to go her/his own way. Process documentation should be done both as part of the project and in parallel to it. That may sound as if it has the potential to be tense and conflicting; and that is just as it should be. If the process documentation specialist does not challenge the work and assumptions of the project team and create some tension, then she or he does not have sufficient distance from the daily work. However, if the specialist becomes too distant from project objectives, then the project team will not learn and adapt the project as needed. The process documentation specialist has a double role in the team: to follow the project process at some distance, and to organize and stimulate

internal learning and analysis, which may involve challenging the project team to have a critical look at its own assumptions.

Direct stakeholders:

It is not only project team members who are involved in action research projects, learning alliance and multi-stakeholder platforms, but a much wider group of stakeholders. Involving these stakeholders in process documentation stimulates opportunities for learning and reflection. When a district engineer goes to a community to interview people about loaning water service delivery, they are bound to become more aware of community realities and perspectives and this triggers personal reflection. However, means and procedures are needed to feed this personal learning back into the learning alliance and multi-stakeholder platform. Experience shows that these techniques give shape to activities in action research projects and that those taking part in learning alliances or multi-stakeholder platforms appreciate being given and learning from these concrete tasks.

Outsiders

Involving outsiders in process documentation has a big advantage as they already have some distance from the project objectives. That helps them to observe the process of the project more clearly and more critically. Involving an independent documentary film maker, journalist or writer will give good results, so long as they can work in freedom. Such professionals want to look behind the well-phrased project objectives, to know what others think of the project and to read between the lines so that they can produce good information products.

However, the relationship between the project and the outsider must be well organized. Projects not only have the objective of documenting the processes they set in motion, they also want results. There is a delicate balance between achieving project results and looking behind the scenes to reveal power constellations and factors that hamper change. An outsider should not stretch the balance between

the two objectives to the extent that the project results or even the continuation of the project are endangered.

6. Qualities of a good document specialist:

- Is curious and does not take every answer for granted
- Independent thinker who appreciates working on his/her own and takes his/her own decisions
- Is non-Judgmental and can listen to many perspectives without an expert hand on
- Can ask questions that stimulate critical thinking and dig below the surface
- Is able to stay objective while also seeing the big picture and placing learning in the concept of larger vision
- Is trusted by the community but can reform findings without bias
- Can synthesize large volumes of information to identify key learning points
- Is skilled on communicating messages in a positive way
- Has Conceptual understanding, writing and analytical skills

7. Planning for process Documentation:

- Identify the purpose of process documentation. This helps to identify the target groups, indicators to be documented and so on.
- What is the project theory of change?
Who will the indicators and criteria derived from?
What processes are to be traced? which individual or group to be followed through the process and where and when this will take place?
- What tools are needed to capture the process information, analyze and disseminate?
- Who will document process?
- Will extra skills be needed (Writing, video, audio etc.)
- What outputs for internal learning and common strategy?
- How will the process documentation be monitored? What would constitute success?

Process documentation is a valuable tool in action research, learning alliances and multistakeholder platforms which are all methodologies that recognise the impact of cultural traditions and power constellations on development. Process documentation is a tool that helps project staff and stakeholders to track meaningful events in their project, to discern more accurately what is happening, how it is happening and why it is happening. Every project has an agenda, a programme and a list of tasks that usually outweigh the time available to do them. The main actors are busy, engaged and struggling to reach their targets. They need to respond to changing events and think creatively about how to overcome problems. In a project with many stakeholders, there are many perspectives and different amounts of power. When there are disagreements, some people voice their objections, while others may not put reservations into words, but simply become less involved or even obstruct the work.

One purpose of process documentation is to help the process of learning and to tease out those silent views and conflicting emotions. Process documentation aims to improve the quality and impact of a project. It allows those most closely involved to step back to reflect on trends, patterns, opportunities and warning signs. It contributes to the collection of qualitative information on results that are not easy to capture quantitatively. This includes information on who or what influences decisions, and whether certain attitudes help or hinder change. Thirdly, it encourages learning from mistakes and offers opportunities to celebrate impact.

Documentation sets a project in its local context, helping those delivering a project to see the bigger picture, rather than having their horizons limited to their own interventions. It gives people a voice, capturing significant and unique local background, including environmental and political factors. Process documentation helps to share, disseminate and encourage debate about important development processes in society with a wider group of organisations and individuals, who can then take part in the learning process by discussing and analysing successes and failures.

METHODS OF PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

Process documentation uses interviews, observations, focussed group discussions, photographs, videos, story telling, and quick summaries of meetings – but whatever the methods, its essence lies in the process of recording change, resistance to change, conflict and resolution and in helping the actors to reflect and learn.

Observation

Observational technique is an important aspect of many action research studies and of case studies whether undertaken by participants or outsiders.

It is an important and extensively used method in social science research. It is a primary research instrument of gathering data in a more natural way. The validity and reliability of data are 'core' to any social science research, for which the exactitude and scientific temper avoiding bias may be possible through means of observation. In fact, it is not always possible to use only quantitative techniques. In all cases quantitative scientific methods may not be of much avail in research and observation may be the best method or at least best alternative. Observation technique is adopted for testing hypothesis where structured methods cannot be employed and pilot enquiries into new problem areas where the purpose is production of hypothesis rather their verification. Thus, observation is a perfect method of investigation and a popular one in gaining knowledge of research.

Observation is a careful and systematic watching of facts as they occur with regard to the cause and effect mutual relations. In every act of observation, there are two components – the object or what is observed and the subject or the observer. If one may observe one's own immediate experience, it would be subjective observation or introspection. If the observer becomes an entity apart from the thing observed, it would be objective observation or extrospection. In recording psychological information and social information, the introspection and extrospection respectively are appropriate methods. An observer may be a visiting stranger, a participant observer, an attentive listener and an eager learner.

In observation:

1. The use of senses – either to see or to hear – is involved.
2. The observer cannot observe anything and everything but only certain things that fall within an act of observation. The scientific observer may see all kind of things but takes notice only of those which are objects of his scientific study. Thus, observation is systematic and relative.
3. Research at certain specified objectives which are to be attained by the researcher. In other words, he/she should notice those facts or activities that relate to the enquiry. For this reason, observation is objective.
4. Observation is a direct outcome of dominant interests which serve in the course of investigation.
5. Watching the course of action is embodied with scientific temper. This means observation is efficient form the point of view of drawing conclusions qualitatively based on properly standardized tools. This quality should be converted into quantity.

Types of Observation

Observation may take place in the natural or real life setting or in a laboratory. The procedure adopted in observation may vary from one study to another depending upon the nature of data and purpose of study under investigation. However, the investigator must be sure about (a) what should be observed, (b) how the observation should be recorded, (c) how to insure accuracy of observation (d) what relationship should be obtained between the observer and the observed.

The classification of scientific observation broadly is as:

1. Participant/ non-participant observation
2. Controlled/ Uncontrolled observation
3. Structured / Unstructured observation

Participant observation

The credit goes to Prof. Edward Linderman for introducing participant / non participant observation in science research. Participation observation means an

activity or a group or activities of a group in which the observer himself participates under investigation. The observer freely mixes with the activities of the group not as an outsider trying to have a critical study of what they do, but as a willing member trying to participate in what they do as a full fledged member of the group. For example an investigator observing rural and urban conditions in India may be able to gain if he merely stood-by and watched what is going on. Linderman is of the opinion that if one wished to know what the subject is really doing one should watch the subject and not ask him/her.

An important point that the observer should keep in mind is that he/she should desist from acquiring any special status but disguised in the group so that the members of the group are unaware of his/her presence. This helps access the information.

Merits

1. The observer by becoming as one of the members in the group gains insight into the behaviour of the group in natural settings.
2. The observer can gather more real and correct information as a member of the group than an outsider. Certain phenomena and behaviour are not open to observation from outside or from a distance; in such cases participant observation is the only method of investigation to collect information.

Demerits

1. The main limitation of participant observation is that the observer may identify himself/herself with the group and may develop emotional attachment. Such emotional identification may lose impartiality as well as objectivity.
2. Certain phenomena cannot be observed in a short time available to the observer.
3. The observer cannot cover a wider area and as such the conclusion reached from the observation of the small group or place may become doubtful.

Non-Participant Observation

Non-participant observation, in contradiction to the above, is characterized by a relative lack of participation by the observer in the life of the group that he is observing. In other words the researcher either observes the phenomena from a distance or while being present in the group but never participates in its activities. Here it should be observed that the observer is present in the group. Therefore, Goods and Hatt called it, quasi-participant observation than non-participant observation.

The difference between participant observation and non-participant observation is that in the former the observer becomes a member of the group and behaves as a member of the group and actively partakes in all activities. In the latter, though the observer associates himself with the group physically, he keeps aloof in its activities and observes the phenomena as it occurs passively.

Merits:

1. In non-participant observation the observer is unattached with the activities of the group so that impartiality and objectivity can be maintained.
2. As he/she maintains cordial relations with the member of the group so will have access to the entire information.
3. The observer being a stranger is less involved emotionally which is likely to result in the ideals of objectivity and real phenomena for analysis.

De-merits:

1. The observer fails to appreciate the significance of actions and activities as he/she cannot view them merely a member. This lack of appreciation may make some of the findings biased in the background of his/her own understanding
2. The observer may not have access to informal organizations and as such cannot understand the whole of the phenomena.

3. The behaviour of the members of the group may get altered during the presence of the observer. Prof. Wirth says that the presence of an observer even merely as one extra person in the interacting situation, will lead to distortion.

Controlled Observation

For a systematic collection of data and for verification of hypothesis, control is imposed on the observer or on the object. Such controls increase precision, reduce bias, ensure reliability, systematize procedure and increase objectivity. Observation is carried according to a plan. Sometimes controls are imposed both on the phenomena and on the observer. The former are laboratory type of experiments. The following are a few control devices used for the purpose:

1. Preparation of a detailed observational plan which helps the observer in systematically making it more standardized.
2. The use of mechanical appliances like photos, films, tape-recorders etc. aids for proper observation and objectivity.
3. The use of socio-economic methods render qualitative observations to mathematically precise and thus produce greater objectivity in the observation as well as analysis.
4. The control over the bias of the observer may be exercised through team observation. The individual observer is likely to commit errors of observation and interpretation. But a team of persons can never be wrong.

Uncontrolled Observation

In this method, observation is made in the natural environment. P.V.Young calls this type of observation as unaided observation. The observer does not plan his/her study in advance. Most of the situations are studied in some uncontrolled setting as they occur rather than in artificial surroundings created through controls.

Uncontrolled observation enables first hand acquisition of knowledge about the social phenomena which implies that this technique is mostly applicable to socio-cultural problems.

Structured observation

In this method of observation, a careful definition of categories under which the information is to be recorded is needed. Structured observation is used greatly in studies designed to provide systematic description or to test casual hypothesis.

Unstructured Observation

Unstructured observation represents the ideal contrast to structured observation characteristics such as a careful definition of the units to be observed, information to be recorded, the selection of pertinent data for observation and standardization of conditions for observation. The observer can ease himself into the field at an appropriate pace.

Validity of Observation:

For ensuring the validity of observation, the following points must be fulfilled.

They are:

1. The actual observations should be made of the on-the-job activity.
2. The aims and objectivities of activity must be known to the observer.
3. The point on which the judgement to be made by the observer must be defined clearly.
4. Reporting the observed information should be accurate.

In order to make observation more and more reliable and valuable for the investigation, the observer must qualify himself as an expert. Symonds states the essentials of good observation which are: (a) good eyesight, (b) alertness, (c) the ability to estimate, (d) the ability to discriminate, (e) good physical condition, (f) an immediate record, (g) good perception, (h) freedom from preconceptions, (i) emotional disinterest. To be an expert, the observer should possess efficient sense organs; be able to estimate quickly and accurately; must be alert to observe several

things in detail simultaneously; must control the effects of his emotional attitude and must be able to record immediately and accurately the results of his observation.

Source: Research Methodology in Social Sciences – C. R. Reddy (1987) Daya Publishers, New Delhi.

Interview

An important tool for data collection specially in the field of research is the 'interview'. It implies personal interview in which the interviewer and the interviewee carry on conversation face to face and discuss problems thereto. It may be noted that an interview is more than a conversation. It is not only the words spoken but also the gestures, glances, facial expressions, pauses, intimation, rate of speech etc. which also matter. In the words of Brown and Ghiselli, "the term interview stands for a generic concept which includes a wide variety of procedures adopted in collecting data through person to person contact between an interviewer and a respondent.

Interviews can be used to collect facts, eg information about people's place of work, age, etc., but such questions are usually no more than opening items which precede the main substance. The bulk of interview questions seek to elicit information about attitudes and opinions, perspectives and meanings. Interviews are widely used because they are a powerful means of both obtaining information and gaining insight. They give us an idea of 'what makes people tick', of the personality and the motivation of the interviewee.

Most field research or empirical social survey is adopting the procedure of interviewing for the purpose of collecting relevant data. This method is to be used as a scientific tool. The interview method is not to be called scientific, if its results would not be useful and reliable. It is unplanned if it is carried on with variable purposes and questioning procedures and the bias of the interviewer enters into the selection, recording and analysis of the data etc. In other words, the interview, as a tool of collecting data, should be used with caution as well as in a scientific manner

and with scientific instruments as well. Interview may be said to be one of the most commonly used techniques of data collection in studies of human behaviour (Stouffer and Associates in their study entitled, the American Soldier). Thus, the interview method is quite an effective technique in collecting data in social science research.

Interview is adopted as a method to offset the drawbacks in a questionnaire. The subjects (people) are usually more willing to talk than to write. The interview is often superior to other data collection devices. The interviewer must possess the skill and talent of carrying out the interview. It is an important method because of the following factors:

1. The causal factors are being probed by the interviewer and determine the attitude and also the origin of the problem.
2. It is more appropriate to deal with illiterates and others who face difficulty in understanding the language
3. It is essential in diagnosis.
4. It helps in stimulating the interviewee for eliciting vital, valid and reliable response.
5. It permits, if necessary, small clues in complex material where the development is likely to proceed in any direction.
6. It provides an opportunity for the interviewer to explain information and to develop certain attitudes on the part of the interviewee. Such an opportunity is indispensable in the interview.
7. On the spot improvements, explanations, adjustments or variations are possible in collecting data because of its flexibility in character.
8. The subjects are more willing and less hesitant to talk than to write particularly on delicate, confidential matters, etc. In such context the interview method is more appropriate.

Type of Interview

Interview may be classified as structured interview and non-structured interview. In the former a detailed pre-planned schedule is used. The responses may simply be 'yes' or 'no'. This type of interview may involve use of open-ended

questions with predetermined order. The interviewer is free to repeat the questions if the reply is not to the point. In the latter, interview is conducted with no predetermined questions but which proceed on the basis of an interview guide. The interviewer has the freedom to ask supplementary questions, if he/she feels and has the freedom to record the response according to convenience. In other words, structured interview and non-structured interview respectively are called as controlled, guided or direct interview; and uncontrolled, unguided or indirect interview. Non-structured interview is again divided into (a) focused (b) non-directive interview, (c) depth interview and (d) repetitive interview.

To study the focus of attention on a given experience and its effects is termed as focused interview. For example, the impact of a film-show or TV programme on social behaviour. The behaviour is analyzed prior to the interview. The interviewer tries to focus attention to the aspect or a film seen or TV programme heard and tries to gauge the expressions and attitude, regarding the behaviour under study.

In non-directive interview, the interviewer's function is to encourage the respondent to talk freely about a given topic under a direct questioning or guidance. He/She should create an atmosphere in which the subject feels free to express without fear of dispute and without advice from the interviewer. The non-directive interviewer's function is primarily to serve as a catalyst to a comprehensive expression of the subject's feelings and beliefs.

The depth of interview is intensive. Often there is a need for repetitive interview especially when the researcher wants respondents under varying conditions. This type of interview is particularly useful to trace the specific developments of a social action to know their influence upon the people.

Interview Guide

It is a common practice to prepare and make use of an interview guide for the purpose of interview. The interview guide is to be prepared after thorough study of the subject concerned and the respondent's behaviour. It would require detailed thinking and planning about the interview and preparing in a proper sequence the way the questions have to be asked by the interviewer. In this context, it is always advisable to prepare an interview guide. An Interview guide is a brief written

document giving an outline of the different aspects to be studied. It forces the interviewer to think and plan the interview properly. Thus, the interview guide facilitates in gathering the information fully.

Preparing

The first step before the interview is actually to think over the problem properly. In this process all the relevant matters have to be chalked out duly and given the shape of questions. The arrangement of questions in a proper way is highly appreciable. After the preparatory plan is ready, the interviewer has to resume and locate the various respondents who may have to be interviewed. Selecting a sample of population in a scientific manner is very essential in social science research. Random sampling should be adopted for the purpose. Practicability is one of the characteristics of research which has to be kept in mind by the interviewer while covering the area under study. The cost factor should not be forgotten.

Developing Rapport with the Interviewee

Developing rapport with the interviewee is the second important step in the interview technique. Once the plan and the interview guide are ready, the interviewer will have to find out the address of the informants with their residential address. After locating the residence, the persons concerned would have to be contacted. For smooth conduct of the interview and thereupon getting more useful information may be well appreciated if the interviewer has rapport with the interviewee. This would also facilitate in choosing the time and place of the interview suitably.

The first approach to the interviewee should be made carefully so as to get his/ her confidence and cooperation. Generally, he/she may be greeted with a smile. If the interviewees are not convinced about the authenticity, they may refuse to oblige the interviewer. The correct answers and facts have to be obtained. Thus, the basic key to successful interviewing is to establish rapport with the interviewee to create a friendly atmosphere for the best response.

Carrying the Interview Forward

The interviewer would be required to carry the interview forward with the help of a interview guide and ask the questions after the rapport with the subject has been established. The interviewer should not interfere too much but should intervene to bring the interviewee back to the question if he/she is diverging from the subject. However, the interviewer will have to handle the situation carefully and apply his /her own judgement and expertise to carry out the interview and draw facts from the interviewee.

The interview is not a mere conversation but is more than that – it is an effort to gain the correct and desired information. The interview's manner should be friendly and courteous throughout the interview. Listening patiently with self-restraint is a difficult task but this has to be done to get right information. He/She should be a quiet listener but at the same time should be an analytic listener. The idea should be to put the interviewee at ease so that he/she will talk freely and fully. Prof. Ferdinand Zweig found through his experience that “the success of his interview ... depended primarily on his insight, friendliness, willingness to safeguard the interest and on what he calls flow of energy”. Thus, the interviewer is not a debater but a reporter.

Recording the interview

Once the facts have been gathered, they must be properly recorded. To this conscious attention is to be paid otherwise the very purpose of interview would be jeopardized. The interviewer may remain more engrossed in understanding the replies and forget to record them; and often may forget to ask questions from the respondent as well.

Under the conditions mentioned above, it will be a problem for the analyst to tabulate and analyze the data if it is incomplete or something is missing. Even the results obtained may not be correct. The only means to avoid this, is to sit down to write them immediately just after completion of the interview when it would be fresh in his mind. If he does not act promptly, he may forget to record the relevant and important information. An alert student without an extraordinary memory can reproduce some 15 to 20 pages of material from the interview lasting one and half

hours – if he/she goes immediately to record the same while the experience is still vivid.

Closing the interview

Closing the interview is the last step in the process of interview. It is a fact that often closing the interview is a difficult job than starting it. The interviewer has to see that he should not antagonize the interviewee and should not abruptly break the rapport developed during the time of interview. To make a good departure one should select the right time for closing the interview. He/she should, thus, make it quite natural to depart.

In the light of the above discussion covering some of the major types of interviews, each one has its own strong points as well as weaknesses and each is suited to a particular kind of situation. The overall merits and demerits of interview method are given below.

Merits

1. The personal interview compared to questionnaire yields good response.
2. The interview method yields a perfect sample because practically everyone can be reached by and can respond to the approach.
3. By the interview method selecting information is likely to be more correct compared to other techniques used for securing information. This is because the interviewer's presence on the spot clears up irrelevant answers by explaining the questions to the informant.
4. Supplementary information can be collected about the environment which is often of great value in interpreting results. Flexibility is a character of interview which means new questions may be posed if needed. Because of flexibility, the interview is a superior technique for exploration of areas for investigation.
5. Since the interviewer is present on the spot he can observe facial expressions, gestures etc. of the informant as also the surrounding pressures of the subject. This helps the interviewer to evaluate the meaning of the verbal replies given by the informant. For example, hesitation may give rise

to doubt and the interviewer may then ask indirect questions to verify doubts.

6. Visual stimuli to which the informant may react can be presented.
7. The interview method ensures qualitative as well as quantitative responses compared to other methods.
8. The face to face contact provides enough stimulation to the respondent to probe deeper. Thus, the interviewer acts as a catalyst.
9. Adaptation to the level of education and ability of the person interviewed is possible. Therefore, it avoids misleading questions.
10. The interview is the right technique for collecting information about complex, emotionally laden subjects.
11. On the spot adjustment is possible that ensures rich material.

Demerits

1. In terms of cost, energy and time, the interview approach poses a heavy demand.
2. Collecting information both qualitative and quantitative requires thorough training and skill of interviewers and as also rigorous supervision over them, failing which data may be inaccurate.
3. If the interviewer has bias, the collected information may contain the background understanding of the situation by him. In other words, it is said that human equation may distort the returns.

Source : Research Methodology in Social Sciences – C.R.Reddy (1987), Daya Publishers, New Delhi

Focus Group Discussion

Focus group are group discussions in which about eight to ten people are gathered together to discuss a topic of interest. The discussion is guided by a group leader (called a moderator) who asks questions and tries to help the group have a natural and free conversation with each other.

Focus groups are aimed at encouraging participants to talk with each other, rather than answer questions directly to the moderator. The group interaction of

focus groups is important because it gives us some understanding of how the people are thinking about the topic.

The questions asked of the group are usually “focused”. By this we mean that they focus on one or two main topics, to get a really detailed idea about how the people think about the area of interest. They are also focused because participants of any focus group usually share common characteristics, such as age, sex, educational background, religion, or something directly related to the topic being studied. This encourages the group to speak freely.

Focus groups can find out about people’s feelings, attitudes and opinions about a topic of interest. They examine only one or two topics in great detail, in an effort to really understand why people think or behave the way they do.

Knowledge and skills required for Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

The knowledge and skills required for FGD are mentioned below.

- ❖ Roles of the team. General personal characteristics of the moderator.
- ❖ Preparation for focus group sessions.
- ❖ Activities for reception of participants.
- ❖ Communication and co-ordination with the team.
- ❖ Beginning the focus group.
- ❖ Asking questions.
- ❖ Encouraging and controlling the discussion.
- ❖ Observing for non-verbal messages.
- ❖ Closing the sessions.
- ❖ The debrief.

Moderator

The moderator is the discussion leader. It is a very demanding job, but with practice and a little confidence, it can be performed well. The moderator is in control of the session and is responsible for the direction that the focus group takes.

The moderator is provided with a question-line (or question guide) that will provide the direction for asking questions to obtain the information of interest to the project. The moderator must be familiar with all the objectives of the study, as this is

essential to explore responses that are given during the focus group and may not be expected by the planning team. To demonstrate this, say a participant gave an answer to a question that was not expected by the team. It may prove to be very important to the main objectives, but if the moderator is not familiar with the purpose of the study he or she may brush over the answer and miss the opportunity to explore something relevant.

Observer

The observer has several functions. The main task is to observe the session and to take notes. If we are relying only on the observer's notes, then we will need to get as close to catching every response as we can. On the other hand if the session is being tape recorded, then less detail of the session is required.

In addition to noting responses, the observer is also looking at any nonverbal sign or body language that the group demonstrates. This can tell a lot about how the group feels about the topic under discussion as well as give some indication of how many people hold the same idea. Sometimes people may nod their head in agreement or shake their head in disagreement without actually saying anything. Observing these signs can add a lot to the written notes of the responses.

The observer also acts as a "back-up" moderator. He or she can quietly pass notes to the moderator to point out any major question not asked, any area that could be followed up, or anything they think may help.

The observer is also responsible for any equipment that is being used such as tape recorders or cameras.

Assistants

If project permits, it can be useful to have focus group assistants. These team members are used to help the moderator and observer run smooth focus group. They are particularly useful in keeping down crowds during sessions, minding the children of participants and generally helping to host the session. They can easily be

recruited from the community for a particular session. They need not have any training or understanding of the project.

If the team member or researcher who wants the final control over the discussion does not speak the language of the participants, then translators are required to assist in the session. It should be noted that direct translation of each response to the moderator by interrupting the discussion is not desirable. For this reason, where translation is required, it is necessary to have a four member team. For this, it is necessary to have two moderators, an observer and a translator.

Moderator translator

This role is one where a translator is trained to be the session moderator, but is directed to some degree by a controlling moderator. The moderator translator will conduct the session with the help of the prepared question guide. They will pose the questions and encourage the discussion, but should only ask questions previously discussed by the team, or those that are included on the question guide. If the moderator translator thinks that a response should be explored, they will need to check with the controlling moderator first. They will need to be very familiar with the study objectives, and although they are directed by the controlling moderator, they should have the skills to conduct the session alone. The only difference is the controlling moderator will have the final say about what direction the discussion will take. In more formal research projects, the team member who is responsible for the project may need to have direct control over the focus group session. In other projects, the team leader or coordinator may want to moderate the sessions themselves, but may be restricted by language.

Controlling Moderator

This member of the team has the final say about what questions are added or dropped from the question guide. They should allow the moderator translator a reasonable amount of freedom in leading the discussion. If the controlling moderator interrupts the discussion too frequently, then it will disrupt the flow of the session. This moderator should simply listen and observe, and interrupt only

when a new line of questioning that has not previously been discussed by the team is necessary.

Translator

The translator is expected to keep both the controlling moderator and the observer informed of the entire sessions. The translator should aim to provide the other team members with a summary translation of each response by each participant. It is not possible to provide a full and direct translation for such a long period. It is also necessary to translate what the assistant moderator is saying in order to aid the overall understanding of the session.

Observer

The role of the observer for translator- assisted sessions is essentially the same as that in the single language sessions. They are there to look, listen and take notes. In this case, the observer will be noting responses as they are translated by the translator. These notes will be used in the debrief after the focus group discussion is over. The debrief checks on the direction of the focus group and quality of the information gained. The notes are also important to the development of future question guides for further focus groups. For these reasons it is extremely important that the translation is as accurate as possible.

Communication and co-ordination with team members

There are clear responsibilities for all members of the team. It should also be apparent that a high level of communication and co-ordination is required to achieve results. There will always be times when some team members will feel that the session is sliding out of control. The main point here is to understand the roles and needs of your team members and to be understanding when problems arise.

The other aspect of communication is translation where you are working in a second language. It is really important that the team knows what is going on at all times. If you are losing track of what is going on, it is better to stop the session than for the

translator to try to keep pace and to provide the moderator or observer with an inaccurate translation.

Good communication also involves honest and helpful feedback of the session during the debrief. You will be expected to discuss any difficulties you face as soon as they arise.

Personal characteristics of the moderator

There are many personal characteristics of the moderator that can aid in producing excellent results from focus groups.

-**Listening skills.** Being a good listener is a good skill to develop. For focus groups, it is particularly important. You need to be able to listen to what the participants are telling you, so you can summarise comments and repeat them back to the participants to check understanding; in addition it is only possible to gain information from the group if the moderator is not talking too much!

It is the role of the moderator to encourage the group to speak, rather than talk throughout the discussion. However, it is very easy to do this, especially if you are anxious about the success of the discussion. In addition, the moderator will not be taking many notes and therefore close attention to the discussion is necessary. You will need to be able to remember the comments and then relate them somehow to the next question, and to ask follow-up questions on the basis of what people say. Asking good quality follow-up questions is only possible if you are listening carefully to the participants' comments and really trying to think about what they mean. The skill of good listening requires practice! One can practice this by listening to a group conversation and trying to remember the main points.

- **Leadership skills.** The role of the moderator is also that of a leader. Leadership does not mean taking over the group, but directing the discussion. On the other hand, you do not want the group to lead you. If this occurs you will not have time to get the information you need to meet the needs of the research project.

- **Relationship with the participants.** In order to encourage discussion, participants in focus groups need to be able to communicate with you comfortably. It is important to try to understand what the participants are saying and what it really means to them, being sincere; learning about the community should be felt by the group. Good moderators are very sensitive to the needs of the community in which they work, and should be as familiar as possible with important aspects of the local culture. Your tone of voice could tell the participants many things without you actually saying anything wrong! Where it is necessary to ask further questions so as to gain more information, this must be done in the most gentle and friendly way possible.

It is also extremely important not to be judgemental about any response you hear. People will not talk freely if they think they are being judged, if they feel that you disagree with them, or if they feel that they are giving the “wrong answers”. There are no right or wrong answers in focus groups.

- **Patience and flexibility.** Sometimes focus groups do not go as planned. This can occur by interruptions of many kinds. It helps to try to think of what these interruptions might be, but sometimes the unexpected happens. More people turn up, the group doesn't work well together. Some groups may not talk much or, at first not even arrive! If things happen that you cannot control, then you need to accept whatever happens. Always keep your sense of humour.

- **Observation skills.** As well as listening to the participant's responses it will also be necessary to watch for anything that could indicate boredom, anxiety, tiredness, or impatience. If this occurs, be prepared to fix any problems swiftly.

- **Clothing** It is always a good idea to find out how the local people would expect you to dress. If you are working in very poor communities you will not be well accepted in very expensive clothes. This could well distance you from the local people. On the other hand, some communities would expect a certain standard of dress,

particularly if you represent a district or provincial health office. Find out from local staff the best thing to wear in the field.

-Mental preparation. As the focus group is an activity that requires intense concentration for a one to two hour period, it is important that the moderator is mentally alert and free from anxieties or worries. For the period of the study that includes focus groups, being well rested will assist in your ability to concentrate.

Another factor influencing the success of the focus group is your ability to conduct a smooth and natural conversation, and it will be necessary for you to memorise the questions that will be asked. You will always have a copy of them in front of you but they should only be glanced at to remind you what the next question should be or what small prompting questions to use to encourage conversation.

Focus group discussion checklist

Any activity that requires many activities, equipment and field visits needs to be well planned. Although the majority of plans have been made, it will always be necessary to make sure that you are leaving for the field with everything necessary to conduct the focus group as successfully as possible. You should prepare a checklist to go through before you leave for the field for every focus group. Any member of the team can be responsible to check that everything is prepared and available. In your list include all the paper work, necessary equipment and lists of participants.

Writing a Success Story

A 'success story' is known as a snapshot of reality, a slice of life and facets of development, which ushers in an understanding of the situation with analysis, and offers a set of recommendations that can be used as a template for replication.

A success story shows an initiative making a difference in people's lives. It describes a positive change and shows how that change benefits people. A good success story uses evidence from evaluation to show the value of Extension. A success story can be written about an entire program or part of a program that is particularly noteworthy and significant. It may be about an innovation, emergency response or outstanding effort. The program may be complete or in an early stage of development but with important accomplishments to describe. One could even write a success story several years after a program's completion after collecting evidence of long-term impact. For a multi-year initiative, a series of success stories could be written that describe significant but different changes that occur over the years.

'Success Story' is not just a 'story' but the art and science of description of real events. It must be based on factual information, with provision of corroborative evidence to support the facts. It is a "microcosm" of reality that has already happened. The principal qualification of a qualitative success story is the systematic documentation of experiences that sets it apart from the rest. The distinguishable feature of a success story is the set of practices and processes that have helped to bring in optimal 'change' and it must clarify three basic dimensions viz.

What is different?

How is it different?

Why is it different?

The ultimate mission of documenting a success story is to "cascade the effect of success from one to many".

The objectives are:

- To recognize and communicate a message of 'uniqueness' (success).

- To analyze the reasons for 'uniqueness' (success)
- To provide a set of guidelines (practices and processes) to replicate the 'uniqueness' (success).

The satisfaction that is obtained from observing direct success among our clients or community as a result of our Extension program efforts is most gratifying. These successes may take many forms and may be focused on a single individual, group, or larger population. However, the underlying theme in any success story is the positive result on an individual or society that occurred as a result of our program efforts.

Importance of the success story:

- By understanding the complexity of the process, it is possible to assess and better diagnose the nature of the problem and the efficacy of the development interventions.
- A simple story seeks to show a direct causal relationship between a single activity and a single outcome.
- A more complex story shows that there are many influences on outcomes and that the outcomes themselves are usually only a point on a process.

Writing a Success Story

What goes into a success story?

Situation: What prompted the program?

Response: How did Extension respond? (Inputs and outputs)

Results: Who benefited? What resulted? (Outcomes)

Evidence: What is the evidence? (Evaluation)

Situation: should make the case for why the program was initiated. Why Extension started the program. What problem, issue or concern needed addressing? Who are the key stakeholders?

Response: Extension's response including inputs (staff, funding, research, expertise) and outputs. Outputs include activities (teaching, facilitation, product development) and people reached (number of people and demographics), Partnerships and external funding sources.

Results: Quantitative and qualitative data to describe important outcomes. Who benefited and how? Outcomes include changes in knowledge, skills, motivation, behaviour, decision making, practices, policies, social action, social, economic and environmental conditions.

Evidence: How the program was evaluated to attain the reported evidence? The data collection method (pre or post-test surveys, interviews, testimonials), sample (number and how selected), response rate and the date of data collection. Credible information is needed for a good success story.

What makes a good success story?

A good success story:

- Describes results that are valued by clients
- Contains compelling, significant facts
- Catches attention
- Tells who benefits
- Is easy to read and understand
- Identifies key partners and funders

Writing a Case Study

Case study is termed as a method, a technique, an approach to social reality and a mode of organizing data in terms of some chosen units. The case study method is a popular form of qualitative analysis and involves complete observation of a social unit, whether it is a person, a family, an institution, a cultural group or even the entire community. It is a method of study in depth. The case study places more emphasis on the full analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their interrelation. It deals with the processes that take place and their interrelationship. Thus, case study is essentially an intensive investigation of the particular unit under consideration. The objective of the case study method is to locate the factors that account for the behavior -patterns of the given unit as an integrated totality.

According to Pauline V. Young, case study is “a comprehensive study of a social unit, be that unit a person, a group, a social institution, a district or a community.” Thus, case study method is a form of qualitative analysis wherein careful and complete observation of an individual or a situation or an institution is done ; efforts are made to study each and every aspect of the unit in detail and then generalization and inferences are drawn. Thus each situation, whether it is an entire life cycle or a particular process of the cycle, forms part of the case study.

Case study is a method of organizing social data so as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied. It is an approach which views any social unit as a whole – *Goode and Hatt*.

Case study method may be defined as a small inclusive and intensive study of an individual in which the investigator brings to bear all the skills and methods or as a systematic gathering of enough information about a person to permit one to understand how he/she functions as a unit of society - *Yang Hsin Pao*

The case study is a form of qualitative analysis involving the very careful and complete observation of a person, a situation or an institution- *Biesanz and Biesanz*.

A case is a factual description of events that actually happened at some point in the past.

Why case study

- to improve practice
- to forge close links between the academic and the practical
- to offer practitioners suggestions about appropriate ways to act
- to inform practitioners about a single case as a way of understanding others (that is, generalization)

The attraction of case study

- it resembles detective work
- or investigative journalism
- the methods used to investigate the case will relate closely to the nature of the case

Objectives of Case Method

- Helps one to acquire the skills of putting textbook knowledge about management into practice. Managers succeed not so much because of what they know but because of what they do.
- Gets one out of the habit of being a receiver of facts, concepts and techniques and get into the habit of diagnosing problems, analyzing and evaluating alternatives, and formulating workable plans of action.
- Trains to work out answers and solutions for ourselves, as opposed to relying upon the teacher/counselor or a textbook.
- Provides exposure to a range of organizations and managerial situations (which might take a lifetime to experience personally), thus offering a basis for comparison.

Characteristics of a Case Study

1. It should create interest while reading and thus attract attention of the participants.
2. Case study is a deep, detailed and intensive study of a social unit.
3. It is a method of qualitative analysis.

4. It is a comprehensive study
5. Real life sample
6. All the variables and traits are linked with one another
7. It aims at studying everything about something, rather than something about everything.
8. Unit of study may be an individual, a family, an institution, a cultural group or an entire community.
9. Case study covers sufficiently wide cycle of time. According to P.V.Young, case data may be gathered exhaustively on the entire cycle of a social unit or a definite section of it.
10. As the study is more detailed and extends over a wider expanse of time, the number of units has to be small. The number may vary from a single unit to a few dozen or even a few hundred.

There are different kinds of case studies. Four types of case studies are: Illustrative (description of events); exploratory (investigative); cumulative (collective information comparisons) and critical (examine a particular subject with cause and effect outcomes).

Merits of a Case:

- Close to field realities
- Digs out specific facts
- Helps take decisions on specific situations
- Provides data in depth
- Develops skills in appraising situations

Case studies provide an excellent opportunity for triangulation; that is, using a number of research methods to complement and confirm findings. For instance, using observation, interviews and questionnaire.

Organizing/writing the case

Structuring in a narrative style: Narrative style lays out a sequence of events that develop the story. It covers:

- What happened
- Who were involved
- When it happened
- Why it happened
- How it happened (processes involved)

A narrative writing should be organized chronologically, in the order in which the events occur.

- Problem statement / key issues : Start with a statement of the problem / key management issues you have identified through your analysis. We have to concentrate on the critical issues facing the case
- Supporting argument: Sufficient explanation should be given why this is the key issue (s). This conclusion should be carried out with the help of the data / information gathered and comparing it
- Alternative strategies: Lay out the alternative strategies available to the organization. Three or four alternative strategies are enough. With the help of theoretical models or information show why these strategies are viable by explaining the cost and benefit of each strategy proposed.
- Recommendations: Explain the recommendation suggested. This recommendation should emanate from our earlier discussion of the case.
- Implementation plan: Present an implementation plan for the recommended strategy.

A Case Study should have Objectivity, Clarity in purpose, Use real names, events and written in sequence of time.

References:

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Inside story- process documentation: experiences from EMOWERS Project co funded by European MEDA water programme.

Mustafa A (2008). Case study method and practice, research and management approaches. Atlantic publishers and distributors.

Effective communication

Effective communication occurs when there is shared meaning. The message that is sent is the same message that is received. There must be a mutual understanding between the sender and the receiver for the transmission of ideas or information to be successful.

Effective communication may be defined as:

- Using language that is appropriate to others' levels of understanding.
- Making sure others receive the information or knowledge intended.
- Developing relationships with others.
- Talking with others in a way that facilitates openness, honesty and cooperation.
- Providing feedback.

Communication can be either Oral or Written. Oral communication can be formal or informal. Generally business communication is a formal means of communication, like: meetings, interviews, group discussion, speeches etc. An example of Informal business communication would be the Grapevine. Written Communication would include - agenda, reports, manuals etc.

Basic Communication Skills

From the sender's perspective, one needs to have the following essential skills:

- Skills to compose the message
- Skills to send the message

From the receiver's perspective one needs to have the following essential skills:

- The skill of receiving a message
 - Without assumptions
 - Placing biases aside
 - Actively listening

Thus, the elements of effective communication are: Listening; Verbal skills; Non-verbal skills.

The characteristics of effective communication are:

1. **Clarity of Purpose:** The message to be delivered must be clear in the mind of sender. The person to whom it is targeted and the aim of the message should be clear.
2. **Completeness:** The message delivered should not be incomplete. It should be supported by facts and observations. It should be well planned and organized. No assumptions should be made by the receiver.
3. **Conciseness:** The message should be concise. It should not include any unnecessary details. It should be short and complete.
4. **Feedback:** Whether the message sent by the sender is understood in same terms by the receiver or not can be judged by the feedback received. The feedback should be timely and in personal. It should be specific rather than general.
5. **Empathy:** Empathy with the listeners is essential for effective verbal communication. The speaker should step into the shoes of the listener and be sensitive to their needs and emotions. This way, the speaker can understand things from their perspective and make communication more effective.
6. **Message to be modified according to the audience:** The information requirement by different people in the organization differs according to their needs. What is relevant to middle level management might not be relevant to the top level of management. Use of jargons should be minimized because it might lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretations. The message should be modified according to the needs and requirements of the targeted audience.
7. **Multiple Channels of communication:** For effective communication, multiple channels should be used as it increases the chances of clarity of message. The message is reinforced by using different channels and there are less chances of deformation of message.

8. **Make effective use of Grapevine (informal channel of communication):** The employees and managers should not always discourage grapevine. They should make effective use of grapevine. The managers can use grapevine to deliver formal messages and for identification of issues which are significant for the employees. The managers can get to know the problems faced by the employees and can work upon it.

Communication is used as a tool to facilitate the participation of people in development activities. Knowledge and information are essential for people to respond to opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes. However, in order to be useful, knowledge and information must be effectively communicated to people.

7 Cs and 4 Ss of Communication

In any business environment, adherence to the 7 Cs and the 4 Ss of Communication helps the sender in transmitting his message with ease and accuracy. The 7 Cs are as follows:

Credibility: If the sender can establish his/her credibility, the receiver has no problems in accepting his/her statement. Establishing credibility is a long-drawn out process in which the receiver, through constant interaction with the sender, understands his/her credible nature and is willing to accept his/her statements as being truthful and honest. Once the credibility of the sender has been established, attempts should be made at being courteous in expression. Much can be accomplished if tact, diplomacy and appreciation of people are woven in the message. Courtesy implies taking into consideration both viewpoints as well as feelings of the receiver of the message. A courteous message is positive and focused at the audience. It makes use of terms showing respect for the receiver of message and it is not biased.

Completeness: The communication must be complete. It should convey all facts required by the audience. It is cost saving as no crucial information is missing and no

additional cost is incurred in conveying extra message if the communication is complete. A complete communication always gives additional information wherever required. It leaves no questions in the mind of the receiver. There should be enough information to be useful to enable the reader use the technology or practice successfully after following the instructions. Important items should be included and all the steps in a process covered in enough detail. Complete communication helps in better decision-making by the audience/ readers/ receivers of message as they get all desired and crucial information. It persuades the audience.

Clarity: Clarity of ideas adds much to the meaning of the message. The first stage is clarity in the mind of the sender. The next stage is the transmission of the message in a manner which makes it simple for the receiver to comprehend. As far as possible, simple language and easy sentence constructions, which are not difficult for the receiver to grasp, should be used. Scientific terms can be made simpler and jargon should be avoided. Clarity in communication enhances the meaning of message. A clear message makes use of exact, appropriate and concrete words.

Correctness: If the sender decides to back up his communication with facts and figures, there should be accuracy in stating the same. The information must be truthful and accurate and the statements should be scientifically justifiable. A situation in which the listener is forced to check the presented facts and figures should not arise. Finally, the usage of terms should be non-discriminatory. In correct communication, the message is exact, correct and well-timed; a correct message has greater impact on the audience/readers; it checks for precision and accuracy of facts and figures used in the message and makes use of appropriate and correct language in the message.

Consistency: The approach to communication should, as far as possible, be consistent. There should not be too many ups and downs that might lead to confusion in the mind of the receiver. The level of the language should be the same throughout. If a certain stand has been taken, it should be observed without there being situations in which the sender desires to bring about a change in his

understanding of the situation. He should ensure that the shift is gradual and not hard for the receiver to comprehend.

Concreteness: Concrete and specific expressions are to be preferred in favour of vague and abstract expressions. It should say when a particular technology or policy is appropriate? When it should not be used (eg: on which soils, at what altitude), and give an indication of costs and benefits. Abstractions or vague statements can cloud the mind of the sender. Instead of stating “There has been a tremendous escalation in the sales”, if the sender made the following statement: “There has been an escalation in the sales by almost 50% as compared to last year”, the receiver is more apt to listen and comprehend the details. Concrete message is supported with specific facts and figures; it makes use of words that are clear and build the reputation and concrete messages are not misinterpreted.

Conciseness: The message to be communicated should be as brief and concise as possible. As far as possible, only simple and brief statements should be made. Excessive information can also sway the receiver into either a wrong direction or into inaction. Quantum of information should be just right, neither too much nor too little. Concise communication is both time-saving as well as cost-saving. It underlines and highlights the main message as it avoids using excessive and needless words. Concise communication provides short and essential message in limited words to the audience. A concise message is more appealing and comprehensible to the audience and is non-repetitive in nature.

4 Ss : An understanding of the 4 Ss is equally important.

Shortness: It is often said “Brevity is the soul of wit.” If the message can be made brief, then transmission and comprehension of messages is going to be faster and more effective. Flooding messages with high sounding words does not create an impact. Often, the receiver has to spend his time trying to decipher the actual meaning of the message.

Simplicity: Simplicity, both in the usage of words and ideas, reveals clarity in the thinking process. Using simple terminology and equally simple concepts would help.

Strength: The strength of a message emanates from the credibility of the sender. If the sender himself believes in a message that he/she is about to transmit, there is bound to be strength and conviction in whatever he/she tries to state.

Sincerity: A sincere approach is evident to the receiver. Sincerity is reflected in the manner in which the sender communicates a message. If the sender is genuine it will be reflected in the message. If there is any element of insincerity in the interaction or on the part of the sender, the receiver would be able to sense it and the transaction would not materialize.

General principles in Communication

A. Know your purpose

Why are you preparing this communication? What is your purpose – are you analyzing? evaluating? assessing feasibility? describing? advocating? What outcome are you looking for – to create awareness? to increase the level of information and knowledge? to change attitudes? to stimulate action? The first two are general educational purposes. The next two, however, go beyond education to include communication for influencing. What message do you want your audience to take away?

B. Know your audience

Identify who you are trying to reach with your message – your professors? your peers? your employers? a diverse group with differing knowledge, perspectives and interests? the general public? concerned citizens?

What is their background? Will they understand technical material or professional jargon? What is their point of view? How large is your audience? What do they expect from you? What are their information needs? What do they already know? What do they want to get out of it? Their purpose may be quite different from yours. Understanding their collective and individual needs and backgrounds – and adapting

your content and approach accordingly – will help you ensure that your intended message is received. Put yourself in your audience’s shoes.

C. Be clear and concise

You need a clear, concise and easy to understand message. Keep It Simple and Straightforward! Keeping it simple doesn’t mean that it is elementary or trivialized. It means that you use plain language or explicit images effectively to convey your message. You should be able to summarize your main point or message in two or three concise sentences.

Maureen Garland and David Shackleton
<http://www.library.ubc.ca/ereserve/agsc250/Comm.doc>

Effective Report Writing

A report can be defined as a testimonial or account of some happening. It is purely based on observation and analysis. In today’s corporate world, reports play a crucial role. They are a strong base for planning and control in an organization. Reports give information which can be utilized by the management team in an organization for making plans and for solving complex issues in the organization. A report discusses a particular problem in detail. It brings significant and reliable information to the limelight of top management in an organization, on the basis of which, the management can make strong decisions.

An effective report can be written going through the following steps-

1. Determine the objective i.e., identify the problem.
2. Collect the required material (facts) for the report.
3. Study and examine the facts gathered.
4. Plan the facts for the report.
5. Prepare an outline for the report, i.e., draft the report.
6. Edit the drafted report.
7. Distribute the draft report to the advisory team and ask for feedback and recommendations.

The essentials of good/effective writing are as follows-

1. Know your objective, i.e. be focused.
2. Analyze the niche audience, i.e. make an analysis of the target audience, the purpose for which audience requires the report, kind of data the audience is looking for in the report, the implications of report reading etc.
3. Decide the length of the report.
4. Disclose correct and true information in a report.
5. Discuss all sides of the problem reasonably and impartially. Include all relevant facts in a report.
6. Concentrate on the report structure and matter. Pre-decide the report writing style.
7. The report should be neatly presented and should be carefully documented.
8. Highlight and recap the main message in a report.
9. Encourage feedback on the report from the critics. The feedback, if negative, might be useful if properly supported with reasons by the critics. The report can be modified based on such feedback.
10. Use graphs, pie-charts, etc., to show the numerical data records over years.
11. Decide on the margins on a report. Ideally, the top and the side margins should be the same (minimum 1 inch broad), but the lower/bottom margins can be one and a half times as broad as others.
12. Attempt to generate reader's interest by making appropriate paragraphs, giving bold headings for each paragraph, using bullets wherever required, etc.

WRITING TIPS

- Use active voice.
- Use short, complete sentences.
- Be concise.
- Choose simple words.
- Avoid jargon.
- Avoid acronyms.
- Use your name, program name

Writing Effectively

Audience and Format:

The first step to writing clearly is choosing the appropriate format. Do we need to send an informal email? Do we need to write a detailed report? Or write a formal letter? The format, as well as the audience for whom it is meant, will define how formal or relaxed the tone should be. One needs to start by identifying who will read the message. Is it targeted at senior managers, the entire human resources team, extension officers or a small group of farmers? The readers or recipients, should define the tone as well as aspects of the content.

Composition and Style

Tips for composing and styling your document:

- **Start with your audience** – Remember, your readers may know nothing about what you're telling them. What do they need to know first?
- **Create an outline** – This is especially helpful if you're writing a longer document such as a report, presentation, or speech. Outlines help you identify which steps to take in which order, and they help you break up the task into manageable pieces of information.
- **Try some empathy** –What's the benefit for your audience? Remember your audience's needs at all times.
- **Use the Rhetorical Triangle** – If you're trying to persuade someone to do something, make sure that you communicate why people should listen to

you, pitch your message in a way that engages your audience, and present information rationally and coherently.

- **Identify your main theme** –What do you want to say? This is likely to be your main theme.
- **Use simple language** – Unless you're writing a scholarly article, it's usually best to use simple, direct language. Don't use long words.

Structure

Your document should be as "reader friendly" as possible. Use headings, subheadings, bullet points, and numbering whenever possible to break up the text.

It is easier to read a page that's broken up into short paragraphs, with section headings and bullet points rather than a page full of lengthy paragraphs.

Headers should grab the reader's attention. Using questions is often a good idea, especially in advertising copy or reports, because questions help keep the reader engaged and curious. In emails and proposals, short, factual headings and subheadings can be used.

Adding tables, graphs and charts is also a good way to break up your text. These visual aids can communicate important information much more quickly than text. It is easier to understand a graph or a table rather than all the data within a lengthy paragraph.

Grammatical Errors

Errors in a document can make us look unprofessional. It's essential to avoid common mistakes that spell check may not find.

Example of commonly misused words:

Affect/effect

- "Affect" is a verb meaning to influence. (Example: The economic forecast will affect our projected income.)
- "Effect" is a noun meaning the result or outcome. (Example: What is the effect of the proposal?)

Key Points

It is important to know how to communicate your point quickly and professionally. Many people spend a lot of time writing and reading, so the better you are at this form of communication, the more successful you're likely to be.

Identify your audience before you start creating your document. If you feel that there is too much information to include, create an outline to help organize your thoughts. Learning grammatical and stylistic techniques will also help you to write more clearly; and be sure to proof the final document.

Know why you are writing

Before one starts the actual formal writing, it helps to think about and identify why we are writing something, and what we are writing.

Answer some basic questions first

Before we start writing a draft, we need to think and answer these questions:

o *Why am I writing this?*

o *What do I want to achieve?*

o *Who am I writing for?*

o *What do I want people to think, feel, know or do after they have read it?*

o *What would be the best form for it to be written in? An article, pamphlet, poster, etc?*

Answering these questions will help us to be clearer, more confident and quicker in our writing process.

Reasons for writing

What is the objective of your writing? What do you want to achieve? What do you hope your audience or reader will think, feel, know or do afterwards?

We write for many reasons. It is good to identify a main objective. Sometimes we have additional objectives too. However, if there are too many objectives, it may weaken the piece of writing by trying to achieve too many things at once. It confuses the audience if the objective is not clear, or there are too many.

What is the objective of writing? People write, amongst other reasons, to-

- advocate
- agitate
- educate

- entertain
- evoke certain emotions
- debate
- inform
- mobilise
- persuade
- plan
- promote particular action
- strategise
- raise awareness
- train
- win an argument

What are we writing?

One can think of many different types of writing. They could include:

Short pieces of writing, like:

- o banners
- o e-mail messages
- o fax messages
- o letters
- o minutes of meetings
- o notices
- o opinion pieces
- o pamphlets
- o posters
- o press statements
- o summaries
- o web site information

Longer pieces of writing, like:

- o appraisals
- o arguments
- o articles
- o booklets
- o case studies
- o evaluations
- o funding proposals
- o newsletters
- o plan documents
- o policy
- o reports of different kinds
- o reviews
- o speeches
- o success stories
- o strategy documents
- o training materials

What is your objective? And who is your audience?

Your objective and who you are writing for go together.

How to get started?

Too often, we sit down to write and stare at a blank page . Or we try to start writing a first draft straightaway. Starting off with some thinking tools encourages and unlocks your creative and original ideas, helps with planning your piece of writing.

Here are some ideas:

- o Think, talk and read about your topic before you even attempt a first draft. It helps to focus your thoughts and to speed up the writing process, if you allocate time before you start writing to think about it, read on your topic and talk to other people about what you have to write. It is an important part of the writing process because it creates fertile ground for when you come to write your first draft.

- o Keep a journal for jotting down thoughts. A journal is a good thing to have on hand because it gives you an on-going place to write. It does not matter what you write about so long as you keep practising writing. It is your place for reflecting.

- o Use free writing, to get started. Free writing is a thinking tool to use at the beginning of your writing process, and at points where you have blocks, or need to think out some thing. Free writing is private writing. When you free write you throw away the grammar book and dictionary. You concentrate on writing without boundaries. Free writing has many uses. Because you write only for yourself, it helps you to build confidence, unlock creativity, capture your first thoughts, get a flow going, and remove writing blocks. You need to follow some rules!

From Natalie Goldberg's book Writing Down the Bones, Page 8. Published by Shambhala, 1986.

- o Use mind maps. A mind map is a thinking tool. It helps to generate ideas, prioritise and lay the foundation for the rest of your writing process. Mind maps are an important way to get started on a writing project. Mind maps help you generate connections around your topic, so that your writing is fresh, and has depth and

originality. Mind maps help you to prioritise, organise and structure your writing.

A mind map is a thinking tool. It helps you to come up with wide and rich connections to your topic. The technique allows your mind to be creative and make both obvious and powerful new connections to your topic, and enhances participation and teamwork. You can do a mind map on your own or in a group.

Asking questions

As a connection to the topic in the middle of your mind map comes up, ask questions to both expand and deepen the connection. Once your mind map is completed, you can then decide what to prioritise, what to put on hold.

Use the basic journalist questions to grow your mind map:

- _ Why?
- _ What?
- _ When?
- _ Where?
- _ Which?
- _ Who?
- _ How?

Other questions extend from these, like:

- _ What are the implications of this?
- _ Where can I get more information?
- _ What resources do I need to achieve this?
- _ Who can help?

A mind map can help to prioritise, organise and structure our ideas and our writing.

Researching your topic

When you are writing about a topic you know well you will probably be able to write fairly quickly and easily. However, it is always important to ask whether we need to do some research to strengthen the quality of our work.

Gathering information

First, develop a plan before you start gathering information. This makes your task quicker and more effective. When you plan, you decide what you are doing, why you are doing it, what you need to know, how you will do it, and when you have to

do it by; then you are ready to start gathering information because you have a clear plan with deadlines to guide you. Even if you do know your subject well, it is always good to ask yourself whether there is something you should read as a part of your writing preparation.

Do you need to do some research?

There is usually something new on most subjects – especially with the advent of Internet. Up-to-date information strengthens a piece of writing, offering your reader something new, interesting and challenging to think about.

Read and use other ways to deepen your understanding of the context around your topic. First develop a broad understanding, and then later go into depth.

Where can you find information? The range of resources one can use to strengthen and enrich the final piece of writing include books, magazines, newspapers, programmes on radio, television, resource centres, libraries, videos, organisations, networks, the Internet and from other people etc.

Acknowledgement and Referencing

As you do your research, make detailed, accurate notes of where you get your information. You need to acknowledge the source of an idea or information, by referencing it. Depending on your source, and what kind of publication you are writing for, this could include to note: author, title of book, article, policy, etc., name of publication, e.g. book, magazine, journal, name of publisher, date of publication, country of publication, page number, title of a chapter in an edited book, web site address, and the date you visited it. If you quote someone, you should acknowledge the source of the quote. When you reference, you are acknowledging the ideas and work of others. And you are letting the reader know where they can find out more, if they want to follow up a reference.

Fact checking

If you give inaccurate information, you will lose credibility. So, do not always take at face value facts that people, or other sources offer. Try and find a way of cross-checking important facts. Do this by finding another source of information, using institutions that store statistical or other information, newspaper, libraries, and experts, amongst others. If you find different sources give different facts, then work out a way of reflecting this.

Copyright

When you use information or images directly from another source, like from a book, it is important to see whether that book (or whatever it is) is copyrighted. Most are. If there is a copyright, you can find out from the source that holds the copyright, and get permission to use what it is you want to copy. If there is no copyright, you can use it directly without having to ask. Just acknowledge the source.

People as a resource

People can be an invaluable source of information. Draw on people in your community and organisation and experts in the field you are writing about. Find people who have resources or ideas about your topic. Find people who have been through an experience related to your topic.

-Before you contact anybody, be clear about what you want to find out. This should be written into a brief that includes your objective, your focus, what you are writing, for whom you are writing, where it will be written, and when it will be published.

-Prepare your questions beforehand.

-Know why you are contacting a particular person.

-Remember whoever you talk to will have a particular perspective and viewpoint on your topic. Depending on what you are writing about and for, you may need to talk to people from different perspectives.

-It is important to cross-check information, and to separate opinion from fact. Even the same facts, like statistics, can be interpreted in different ways, depending on what people want to do with them!

- Ask people if they know of any other contacts for your topic, and about other resources, like people, books, journals, articles, non-governmental and other institutions or organisations, resource centres, web sites, and any source for more information. Be like a detective!
- Take detailed and accurate notes when people offer you information. And it is a vital way of building up your information on your topic. So, for example, keep accurate notes about who said what on your topic.
- If you want to quote a person in an interview for a story, then tell the person that is what you want to do. This means you have to take accurate notes of exactly what the person said, and use his or her exact words in quotes, or summarise accurately what they said in paraphrasing.

The Internet

The Internet is a useful source of information and communication. You can communicate with people via electronic mail (e-mail) and connect to Web sites. One can access a phenomenal variety, quantity and quality of information through the Internet. You can find out more about organisations, institutions, companies, and Government departments that have put up Web sites on the Internet. Along with all its value, however, there is some danger of being overwhelmed by the volume of options and information you can pursue on the Internet.

STYLE OF WRITING

To write effectively, you need to consider and carefully choose structure, content and style. Structure and content are largely determined by the objective of the specific writing task. Style consists of words you choose, the sentences you combine them in, and the person you write in (1st, 2nd, or 3rd person). The style you adopt depends on the type of text you are asked to write and your purpose in writing (to persuade, to inform, to entertain). The text may be formal or informal, objective or subjective, rational or emotive etc.

In general, one may use:

- an academic, formal style for essays and technical writing (avoiding slang, generalisations and unsubstantiated opinions); or
- a more descriptive, expressive, evocative language for reflexive/reflective texts.

Some writing forms (such as blogs) require a subjective and reflective approach to the subject matter and here the use of the first person (e.g., I, my) is often appropriate. The kind of language, writing style, and tone you use when you write will be guided by your objective, your audience, what you are writing, and where your piece of writing will go.

You would adopt a different style, for example in a:

- report
- mass media news story
- opinion piece
- pamphlet

An appropriate style will help you to achieve your objective. One of the best ways to reflect on different writing styles is to specifically gather and read different kinds of writings and the range of styles that people have chosen to write in. Reflect on what you think works well and what doesn't. Being sensitive to your audience is of vital importance. Make sure that your language, writing style and tone suit your audience.

Different styles of writing

Two writers may write about the same event in completely different styles. One might describe poverty using lots of statistics and government and economists' comments.

Use an interesting and appropriate style

Your job as a writer is to keep your reader interested. Think about what style will do this, whilst at the same time meeting your objective.

Writing Clearly

Be clear:

- Know what you want to say.
- Only use words that you are certain of their meaning. Consult your dictionary.
- Use parallel constructions for lists in sentences, or in dot points (e.g., faith, hope, not faith, hopeful).
- Ensure pronouns (he, she, they) clearly refer to their noun.
- Use transitional words to show the relationship between ideas (e.g., firstly, by contrast, furthermore, likewise).
- Place descriptive words or phrases next to the words they describe

Be precise:

- Choose verbs (doing/being words) well.
- Use specialist vocabulary carefully and precisely.
- Beware of words that sound similar but have different meanings (e.g., economic/economical; uninterested/disinterested).
- Avoid tautologies (e.g., red in colour; the month of May; a free gift).

Be concise:

- Choose short sentences (and short words) rather than lengthy ones.
- Choose the active rather than the passive voice (e.g., The women sold the rice; **not** The rice was sold by women).
- Eliminate superfluous words (e.g., today **rather than** at this point in time).

Your style should be controlled by why you write, what you write and who you write to.

1: Formulate the main idea

Express the main idea in the form of a topic sentence. The aim is to announce the content of the paragraph. A topic sentence expresses the main idea of a paragraph and tells the reader what to expect about the information that will follow. Most commonly, topic sentences occur at the beginning of a paragraph.

2: Explain the main idea

Provide your rationale or reasoning about the idea. This is where you will need to explain the main idea and discuss it by referring to relevant literature. At this stage you may include definitions, make distinctions, provide details and integrate relevant quotations. These steps can be repeated as needed. If necessary, supply an example to connect the topic sentence with your discussion. The example should provide support or evidence for the idea and the explanation you provided.

3: Close the idea of the paragraph and use a transition to the next paragraph

To consolidate the paragraph, provide a review/recap/summary statement. This is an effective way to draw attention to the relevance of the information you have supplied in the paragraph and link it back to the central idea/topic. Usually, at this stage you will need to direct the reader's attention to the idea that follows. You can do this with a transition.

Using transitions

Transitions come in the form of single words, phrases or sentences. Whilst they are used to establish relationships between sentences in a paragraph, they are also used to create a logical progression of ideas between paragraphs. Transitions or linking words are powerful tools for pulling ideas together. But don't just sprinkle them into your sentences; use them to support your logic. Examples:

To signal a reinforcement of ideas: also, for example, in other words, moreover, in addition, more importantly.

To signal a change in ideas: but, instead, although, on the other hand, yet, nevertheless, however, in contrast, in spite of.

To signal a conclusion: thus, in conclusion, therefore, finally, accordingly, so (informal).

Effective writing checklist

- Have you determined what style of writing to use?
- Is your writing clear, precise and concise?
- Does your writing have coherent paragraphs?

(Andersson, B., & Beveridge, A. (2007). *A guide to assessments and skills in SCCA* (2nd ed.). [Booklet]. Perth, WA: Edith Cowan University.

Rosen, L., & Laurence, B. (2000). *The Allyn and Bacon handbook: Annotated instructor's edition* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon)

EDITING FOR EFFECTIVENESS

A time comes when our draft is ready to be edited. With a few techniques one can edit the work and strengthen it enormously

Editing tips

Here are some tips to use when you edit to make your writing effective and powerful.

-Use everyday language so you reach more people. Read your piece of writing and highlight words not all your readers may understand. Find everyday words to replace academic words.

For example, instead of *in relation to* write *about*. The election observers were worried *in relation to* cheating. The election observers were worried *about* cheating.

- Avoid jargonistic, academic, abstract language and styles. If the reader needs to know particular jargon then explain it using clear, everyday words and examples. Jargon could include words and phrases like *mass-based umbrella body*, *mass democratic movement*, *globalisation*, and *means of production*. These are abstract words and can turn a reader off. Most people need jargon explained. Put yourself in your reader's shoes. Use examples to help people understand.

- Explain difficult concepts.

-Use short, uncomplicated sentences. One sentence for one idea.

-Check that you have an appropriate language, style and tone.

-Use examples, stories and voices of people that your reader will identify with.

-Try not to mix up your tenses in a sentence because it can be confusing to the reader.

-Use positive, not negative sentences. For example, the negative is: *The committee cannot discipline a member unless it has given him or her a chance to be represented.* The positive is: *The committee can discipline a member after it has given him or her a chance to be represented.*

-So long as it makes sense, put the main point to the beginning of the sentence. This is called a topic sentence. And also put the main point at the top of a paragraph.

-Try to have one topic in each paragraph.

-Use active voice. For example: *The decision to form a gender committee was taken by the User Groups (passive). User Groups decided to form a gender committee. (active)*

- Avoid foreign words and phrases. For example, *vis-à-vis – about/to do with*

- Avoid over-used expressions.

For example: *the bottom line is..., At this juncture..., A stitch in time saves nine...*

-Avoid old-fashioned words. For example *do you know his whereabouts?* Rather *do you know where he is?*

-Cut overlapping words. For example: *I've told you time and time again.* Rather: *I've told you repeatedly.*

-Use single verbs, instead of several words. For example: *take into consideration – consider. Make a decision – decide*

-Use single adverbs, not longer phrases. For example: *in close proximity – near*

-Use simple connecting words. For example: *nevertheless – but; provided that – if; on the grounds that – because.*

-Design and layout. Some guidelines:

o Use a friendly typeface (serif for main text, e.g. Times New Roman; sans serif for headings, e.g. Arial).

o Avoid THE USE OF CAPITAL LETTERS EXCEPT FOR PROPER NOUNS. Capital letters are harder to read and “shout”.

o *Use italics as little as possible, it is harder to read.*

o Use underlining as little as possible because it can dazzle

o **Use bold as little as possible because it is also rather dazzling**

o Keep the size of the letters comfortable to read.

o Use lots of headings and subheadings.

o Use uncomplicated numbering.

o Allow for uncluttered space, have wide margins, let the text breathe.

o Use boxes to highlight something.

o Use photos, graphics, cartoons.

Write the name of an organisation out in full the first time you use it, and the acronym after. For example, International Monetary Fund (IMF).

