

Formative evaluation



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Formative evaluation assesses the efforts prior to their completion in order to improve the efforts. It is a technique/strategy used in the education and training evaluation literature to see if it is working efficiently (Nan, 2003; McCarragher, Hoffman and Rycus, 2003). This evaluation is implemented more than once on the early stages of a program or instruction. The main purpose of formative evaluation is to determine where improvement is needed. The basis used for further improvement is the evaluation gathered during the program or instruction.

Purpose and importance The main purpose of formative evaluation is to improve the quality, relevance and delivery of the program (McCarragher, Hoffman & Rycus, 2003). For instance, a restaurant wants to know if customers are satisfied with the food and service it provides. The manager can have mystery shoppers evaluate the restaurant's food and service through answering a list of questions. Through this initiative, the manager knows if further improvement is needed. Another example would be, if a manager wants to know if the training in a company is effective.

He can get feedback from the employees to know the quality of the training and find out if the employees think that the training is relevant to their work. Another purpose of formative evaluation is validating that the goals are achieved and improving the instruction based on the evaluation. This can be done through identification and continuous remediation of different problems. For instance, when you want to develop and design learning materials, such as books, for elementary students, you need to include a student as part of your formative evaluation.

This way formative evaluation improves learning (Melograno, 1998). One of the importances of formative evaluation is that it determines the weaknesses of a program or project (Williams, n. d.), thus facilitating better improvement of the program or project. Formative evaluation is also very important as an intervention strategy in conflict resolution. It helps to assess the efforts put in and to adjust the strategies to use in accordance with the assessment so that practitioners in conflict resolution can determine how to respond to the many changes in conflict dynamics.

Moreover, they can readjust their efforts to be able to respond to present conflict dynamics and at the same time, make necessary corrections.

Formative evaluation also helps when it comes to monitoring implementation. This way, practitioners can redefine their strategies through the opportunities formative evaluation brings. If they involve parties in the formative evaluation, the practitioners can commit themselves to the participants and funders. Formative evaluation gives opportunities to involve everyone in the conflict resolution.

Thus it makes conflict resolution faster and more effective. Formative evaluation is important in strengthening conflict management systems because it offers the following: rapid feedback on the effectiveness of conflict management and resolution, documents of how conflict management and resolution proceed and the techniques used, and planning for revision to plans. Stages of Formative Evaluation A complete formative evaluation process has three stages: expert review, developmental test and field test.

Expert review is the involvement of experts in the field to check content for validity, relevancy, and quality of the content. The purpose of this stage is to check the validity, relevancy and currency of materials. In this stage, experts should be very knowledgeable in the subject area. Moreover, they should not be involved previously with the project to maintain objectivity.

Developmental test, on the other hand, is used to find out learners initial reaction to the materials and problems regarding presentation, instructions or tests.

Another purpose is to find out if your assumptions about the entry skills of the learners are valid. The third stage, field test, is conducted to find out if the instructional materials are ready for implementation or if there are still improvements to do. The field test should be in the real environment to simulate actual implementation. Data collection methods are used to determine what information will be gathered from the participants and how the data will be gathered. They are also frequently used in formative evaluation.

Surveys are used to gather information from a large enough sample of participants to consider them as a group. The results gathered from conducting surveys are more objective and scientific (McCarragher, Hoffmand ; Rycus, 2003). Surveys are appropriate to use during field test. Interviews are also used in formative evaluation, whether face-to-face or through telephone. Interviews are more appropriate to gather information from a selected number of people. Expert review uses this type of method.

Focus group is another data collection method used in formative evaluation. This can be conducted during the developmental test where a selected group of respondents share their ideas on certain topics. The User Acceptance Test (UAT) method is used during the developmental test stage. UAT test user background, perception attitude and also includes the monkey test. Observations are also used in the second stage (developmental test). Extensive notes based on the observation must be taken and learning performance on testing items must be observed.