

Book Reviews / Comptes rendus de livres

Chaplowe, S. G., & Cousins, J. B. (2016). *Monitoring and evaluation training: A systematic approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. ISBN 978-1-4522-8891-8.

Reviewed by Charles Lusthaus and Hussein Amery

Chaplowe and Cousins' book, *Monitoring and Evaluation Training: A Systematic Approach*, is a timely and useful addition to the growing field of evaluation capacity development. Building monitoring and evaluation capacity—creating evaluation units, identifying M&E roles and responsibilities, and developing key stakeholders' understanding of the use of M&E—is a challenge facing most countries today, particularly in light of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

To respond to this challenge, there has been a significant rise in the quantity and quality of formal and informal national and international training programs (including masters and Ph.D. level programs). Discussions about the accreditation¹ of individual evaluators, the establishment of International Development Evaluation Associations (IDEAs), national evaluation associations, and networks of evaluation associations are all important steps in building national and global monitoring and evaluation capacity. At the centre of much of this work are educators and trainers who can provide the knowledge and skills that would support the development of both the suppliers of monitoring and evaluation as well as those who need to be able to use evaluations.

This manual's contribution is systematically exploring and providing guidance on how to use the best education and learning practices to facilitate the learning of monitoring and evaluation theory and practice.

Overall, the book is a useful tool for trainers who seek to prepare and deliver M&E courses and a solid resource for M&E practitioners to draw upon in the delivery of technical assistance. The authors pursue a system approach for training that makes a difference, importantly pointing out that training does not happen in isolation but as part of a larger system composed of interdependent parts. As such, to understand any one part of the system, it is best to examine it in relation to the overall system. M&E training is thus a system within a system and is dynamic and changing.

The authors argue that delivering an effective training program requires orderly, careful planning to gather information, analyze training demand, needs, and resources, identify relevant objectives, and realistically evaluate these objectives.

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Part 1, “Key Concepts of M&E Training,” provides a road map toward an understanding of the key concepts for M&E training. It reminds us that monitoring, evaluation, and the skills associated with evaluative thinking are acquired competencies and as such can be understood within institutional and organizational contexts as well as the best knowledge associated with adult learning theory. This section does both and gets you thinking.

Importantly, the authors consider the larger program management system for M&E training from the perspective of Results-Based Management (RBM). They correctly point out that current M&E evolved from RBM in the 1990s, coinciding with the demands for performance accountability and the adoption of the logical framework approach to programming by the public sector and international development agencies. “By identifying in advance the intended results of a program and how to measure them, M&E becomes more straightforward, and related reporting becomes more relevant and useful” (p. 11). Useful figures on the Basic Project Cycle and the Project Cycle with examples of M&E activities make this concept understandable and help the reader appreciate how the system works and where M&E “fits.” This section is accompanied by cartoons and numerous terminology tips, to make sure the reader has clarity in appreciating differences in approaches, types, and contents.

Selecting the proper training approach is often the key to success. Guidance is provided in the section “What Kind of M&E Training?,” which details the differences between short- and long-term training, face-to-face, organizational v. nonorganizational, and inclusive M&E training. Alongside this are useful suggestions on the scope of training (Basic Volkswagen v. Luxury Mercedes Benz) and the design of training to meet specific types of learners. Table 2.2, “Comparing the Three Major Training Categories,” provides the readers with a clear vision of the differences between distance delivery (asynchronous and synchronous) and face-to-face delivery, enabling an understanding of which option is most suitable for selection.

Sections on M&E capacity building and adult learning further support understanding the importance of the differences between individual and organizational levels of capacity building and external environment capacity building. While the authors underpin this by pointing out the importance of capacity assessment and strategic planning, they indicate it is beyond the scope of the book; thus, only limited attention is given to this aspect. Extensive and well-detailed attention is, however, provided on how adult learning takes place, learner-centred training, and principles for effective M&E training. For those without experience and knowledge in andragogy, this section will be useful in developing and transferring M&E knowledge to adults. For experienced adult trainers, the section will provide a solid overview.

Part 2, “A Systematic Approach to M&E Training,” provides potential trainers with a systematic approach to providing training. After introducing a variety of frameworks, the authors present the ADDIE training framework and use this to explain in great detail the steps required to develop, implement, and evaluate

monitoring and evaluation training programs. This section is full of examples, activities, checklists, and interesting textboxes designed to support trainers' design and delivery efforts.

Starting with Chapter 6, "An Overview of the Addie Training Framework," Section 2 represents the depth of the book and its systems approach. Chapter 7 walks trainers through various aspects of training analysis that will enable the next step, Chapter 8, "Training Design." Following the authors' approach, design starts with identification and preparation of training and learning objectives, followed by organizing instructional content and designing training curriculum, culminating with designing training evaluation and follow-up. The strength of the book is once again exhibited with excellent and comprehensive models upon which to build, in this case an easy-to-understand example curriculum template for training planning and example topics for M&E training curriculum.

Chapter 9, "Training Development and Preparation," takes the reader to the workshop stage of the training process. Developing sound and usable materials are essential for uptake and application by learners. The authors emphasize that the key to ensuring the trainer is ready to deliver by noting the importance of material review and piloting to ensure preparedness. Examples of materials and resources for M&E training and outlines for training strategy, syllabus, and lesson plans are provided; importantly, the authors note that in each case these must be tailored to the needs and contexts of learners. This is nicely rounded out by a detailed training preparation checklist that supports facilitators in ensuring they are ready to deliver. Chapter 10, "Training Implementation," is well detailed and focused on delivery of training; however, this area of the book could apply to training in any context and not specifically M&E training.

Chapter 11, "Training Evaluation," focuses on the last stage of the ADDIE model for training. It is designed to ensure that training objectives are aligned with measurable results. The authors define training evaluation as a "systematic investigation of the worth or merit of training." They rightly point out the similarities to training debrief and, citing Michael Patton, they indicate the same three questions are being asked for evaluation: *what*, *so what*, and *now what*. This is the essence of their approach to evaluation and it offers a sequence of inquiry of what happens during training, what difference it makes, and what recommendations can be made for future training. A useful overview of training evaluation methods is provided, with particular emphasis on the "levels approach" to training evaluation, including examples from Kirkpatrick's 4 Levels and Guskey's Five Levels for Evaluating Professional Development. The authors provide an interesting example of a training logframe, which is a sound approach to developing results-based training. The appendices in the section contains substantial and useful tools for evaluation data collection methods, M&E learning development plans, training feedback forms, and training assessment forms.

Part 3, "M&E Training Methods and Techniques," provides the reader—and particularly M&E trainers—with a wide variety of exercises, facilitation and teaching techniques, learning methods, and assessment techniques. This part of the

book is a tool box with 99 real-life examples. These M&E training methods and techniques provide clear, practical, and useful advice on planning and delivering training. Sixteen different learning activity approaches are provided, alongside review assessment and M&E activities. The authors achieve their objective in this part of the book, which is a selection of activities to inspire active, engaging delivery of M&E. The learning games section introduces fun and innovative activities such as “M&E Masterpiece,” the “SMARTer” Indicator game, “M&E Puzzle Games,” and “M&E Jeopardy,” which are innovative and differ from the usual approaches. These are introduced alongside other more traditional approaches such as practicum, guest presenters, and independent learning activities. The strength of the section is the brevity, clear presentation, and ease of understanding, so anyone of the approaches could be easily applied after reading the book. Photos and visuals aid in understanding how such approaches might be put into practice.

The section on training closing activities reminds the reader of the importance of bringing proper closure to training and helping trainees organize and remember training content. The section is more of a menu to select from than an innovative introduction. As the authors point out, closing activities done poorly or in a rushed manner leave trainees with a negative impression of the experience. A variety of options are thus provided that can enable the trainer to select an approach that is suitable for the context. Fun approaches such as role-playing are mixed with more standard methods of Senior Management Debrief, the Evaluator Speech, “emptying the parking lot” (where pending items are dealt with), Affirmation, Mingle or Web, or the standard awards ceremony.

Training follow-up activities provides helpful guidance to demonstrate that delivering training doesn’t end at the workshop. Fourteen subareas ranging from suggestions for the use of social media platforms, peer-reviewed learning assignments or work samples, distance and e-learning follow-up, and trainee development plans to packaging M&E training as part of larger M&E capacity-building exercises offer the reader a useful roadmap to ensuring the completeness of service delivery to clients.

The lengthy references provided in the book will aid M&E professionals looking for additional reading to support their work in the field.

In general, this book is a good resource and reference for both organizational professional development and classroom education. As evaluation monitors and consultants, we have put together for our practice a wide assortment of material helpful for our training. However, we have been waiting for a book with this broad, in-depth coverage. Every aspect of the work of the trainer-evaluator is covered, and it is clear that both authors are personally experienced in this field. Overall, the book is very easy to use, with succinct colour-coded chapter summaries and recommended resources at the end of each chapter, which makes the book a useful one to anchor training delivery.

As in many such books, decisions needed to be made with respect to what should be included and left out. I was somewhat disappointed that more attention was not paid in Part 1 to the interwoven nature of monitoring and evalua-

tion, and similarly, the role planning and use play in the success of the evaluation enterprise. However, these can be the subjects of the next book written by these highly skilled authors.

As the authors note, the book was written to address potential obstacles and resistance to M&E training, a resistance that stems from a lack of understanding of the subject and the value of M&E. As such, the book is designed so that M&E training can be enjoyable, meaningful, and engaging for learners, so that it can be “understood, appreciated and used.” Chaplowe and Cousins have achieved this and delivered a comprehensive and easy-to-use learning tool. The numerous well-detailed figures, sample activities, tables of lesson plans, and examples of tools provider trainers with a plethora of options in preparing and delivering comprehensive M&E training.

NOTE

- 1 Canada is the first country to institute a national certification provided by its professional association.