Week 8: NGO Management II—Program Development and Capacity Building

I. Proactive Program Management

The biggest challenge in the nonprofit sector face is sustaining or expanding successful programs. The program management has evolved from the complexities of project management. As projects became larger, more interrelated, complex and multidimensional, the need arise to have an approach that controlled project management while remaining focused on the strategic objectives of the business. Strange G. (n.d.-a) referred to that program management is the coordinated management of projects to achieve a set of organization objectives. It enables an organization’s strategy to be executed through the effective implementation of changes to the operation.

i. The concept of program management

Further, Strange G. (n.d.-b) provided “Program Management” definition that “The concept of Program Management is a method. Approaches may vary but definitions are relatively common. Program Management means to appropriately understand the ‘mission, goals and objectives’ of Program and then relate these to the Program you propose to develop.” Having completed the customization of the mission, goals and objectives of the program, Glenn Strange provided a framework for the program management. The first step is that all programs must have a well-defined baseline from which to measure costs and benefits resulting from investment into the program. The baselines provide the boundaries in which the program may operate and carefully define the scope of the program in order to facilitate change control. Lack of clear definition may lead many programs to run into difficulties and to become unbalanced.

The second step is moving from a current state to that of a desired state over a period of time. This step is accomplished in a structured and controlled environment with the option of making fine tuning adjustments throughout the program lifecycle.

ii. The model of program management

As the above-mentioned, we realized that the program management takes the output from an organization strategy and translates this into a series of projects to effect the changes necessary to support the strategy. To achieve the result, Strange G.
(n.d.-a) brought up a model for program management. This model includes four distinct stages (Fig.1).

1. Before the program commences
2. Establishing the program
3. Implementing the Program
4. Ending the program

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**Fig. 1 The four-stage model for program management. (Strange, n.d.-a)**

External factors typically drive the strategy, i.e. political, economical, sociological etc. These need to be harnessed into an organized program of events in order to implement the strategic objectives.

### iii. The application of program management in IBM

There is a case study that the four stage model of program management was applied in IBM in UK (Strange, n.d.-a).

**1. Before the program commences**

In the first stage, they considered aspects of organizational structures and provided a framework in which to examine the impact and benefit of change, as defined by the strategy. This stage associated with the planning process and the activities.
2. Establishing the program

This stage took the input from the program identification phase and sought consolidation of the program environment. It was from this point that the program manager assumed responsibility for the program and moving this forward. This stage sought to apply the appropriate level of controls and infrastructure in order to put the program in place. In this stage, they set the program procedures and defined the interdependencies between projects. Then, established a benefits management regime.

3. Implementing the Program

This stage carried out the plans that were documented in the program definition stage. They implemented projects in a series of groupings with periodic review points during the cycle of program implementation. The review points were places of stability where it was possible to take a critical examination of the program in order to ensure appropriate alignment with strategic objectives. They maintained communication channels and conformity to program objectives and ensured that the benefits and risks were properly managed throughout the program.

4. Ending the program

The fourth and final phase of their program management model examined the end of each trance in the program lifecycle, until ultimate completion. It may be considered a repetitive cyclical series of activities going through stages of refinement until the planned benefits have been realized to a level of satisfaction. In this stage, they sought additional areas of benefit providing any value added opportunities that result in the final program delivery and completed the learning process involved and ensured that this is fully communicated to all interested parties in the program. Finally, they closed the program down at the end of the final stage.

Program management seeks to combine projects that have common objectives and seek the same goal direction. These are combined as coordinated units in order to become part of a program.
II. Life Cycle Project Management

From last section, we can realize that program management tries to control program throughout the program life cycle. The ability to determine the disposition of a program will be influenced by the current position of a program in the program life cycle (Rossman & Schlatter, 2000). The program life cycle assumes that programs go through a transition analogous to birth, life and death.

i. Program life cycle

Viewing programs through a life cycle model provides the opportunity to increase program production efficiency. The efficiency comes through catching a program at the end of its maturity phase, before it reaches the decline phase. The program life cycle includes five phases (Boeling, 2001).

1. Conceptualization phase

This phase is characterized by the considerable amount of programmer effort needed to introduce and successfully launch a new program. During actual implementation, program developers must monitor the operation of a new service very closely to make certain that it is being delivered as intended by the program designer and work collaboratively with the program stakeholders.

2. Development Phase

In the development phase, there is heavy demand and tremendous growth. The program parameters and rough draft generated in the conceptualization phase are refined and solidified into a final product ready to be tested with
participants. The major task program developers face during this phase is to make certain that sufficient service is available to meet the demand.

3. Maturity phase

During the maturity phase, program is at their highest efficiency and program growth slows. Usually this is the longest stage for most programs. Thus, most programs will be in this stage and most marketing efforts will deal with mature programs.

4. Decline phase

In this phase, decline can be rapid or slow. Once a program begins the decline stage, the program developers will need to decide whether to try to revitalize the program, allow it to die, or allow the program to petrify. However, continuing a weak program can be very costly to an agency in both economic inefficiency and staff time. For these reasons, the program developers should seriously consider eliminating programs in the decline phase. Program evaluations can also be a good tool to use. If evaluation ratings are declining for no apparent reason, it may be time for program revision, redevelopment, or redefinition.

5. Termination phase

Once program participation has dropped to levels that make presentation either difficult or severely inefficient because of lack of participant interaction, the program should be terminated (Boeling, 2001). Sharing participation results with advisory committees and working with them to select and implement appropriate actions improves the quality of the decision-making process and builds support for difficult decisions.

It can be argued that program conceptualization and development phases also require significant resources and a high level of creative energy. Program revision, redevelopment, or redefinition takes less time if initiated at this critical point in the life cycle. Letting a program go beyond the maturity phase and into decline and termination is both inefficient and tiresome. Substantial time and energy are required to sustain a program that is in the decline phase.

ii. Life cycle implication

During the conceptualization phase, board members are often actively involved. With a stronger infrastructure of human talent that comes with successful growth,
board members may provide issue leadership, suggesting areas or activities for staff to consider or investigate. In a mature nonprofit organization, the board members perform issue evaluation, where board members evaluate the appropriateness of issues brought forward from the management staff (Werther & Berman, 2001).

Like people, organizations move through a life cycle as they mature. Each stage presents different challenge. How a nonprofit navigates these stage shapes its effectiveness and determines its very survival. And, the navigation of the maturation process takes place in many ways and on many levels.

III. Building of Learning Organizations

In the program management, we need learning process to improve our programs, because the level of performance and improvement requires learning, lots of learning. Many consultants and organizations have recognized the commercial significance of organizational learning – and the notion of the ‘learning organization’ has been a central orienting point in this (M. K. Smith, 2001).

i. The definitions of a learning organization

Learning organizations are organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together. According to Watkins & Marsick (1992), Learning organizations are characterized by total employee involvement in a process of collaboratively conducted, collectively accountable change directed towards shared values or principles. Though learning may be a fundamental human essence, the process of learning is quite complex. Learning itself includes three different activities: thinking, communicating and cooperating. When our capacities to think, communicate and cooperate are enhanced, so is our ability to learn. Thus, Bennis (1997) defined a learning organization that is one which fosters and enhances these activities for its members and members of the community in which it exists.

ii. The five axioms of a learning organization

A learning organization has profound implications and changing metaphors is no simple task. We could recognize that in changing metaphors virtually everything we had come to believe and hold sacred about organizing and managing no longer applies. Since that, Addleson (n.d.) has identified five axioms of a learning organization. These are five sets of ideas that emerge in thinking about communities, what communities mean for organization, and how learning occurs.
1. Organization is about relationships and collaboration

A learning organization consists of people who appreciate that organization and social interaction are inseparable. People learn from others, meaning that through their involvement with others opportunities are identified, decisions are made, and the work gets done. A learning organization emphasizes 'networking' and 'collaboration', both in and outside the organization, rather than 'meetings' and 'cross-functional teams'.

2. People's attitudes are at the heart of a learning organization

Encouraging a sense of responsibility towards others, and trust in them, establishes socially functional, robust organizations where creativity, flexibility, and individuals' sense of commitment flourishes. Encouraging and affirming a sense of community is key to the concept of managing.

3. Structure and strategic plans have little to do with getting things done

Strategic plans, executive decisions, missions, and the creation of an organizational structure has little to do with the activities that make up the day-to-day or year-by-year business which sustains an organization. People establish objectives, develop relationships, identify opportunities, deal with problems, and pursue new initiatives because they are conscientious, responsible, and have obligations to others, or because they are ambitious or are enthusiastic about what they can accomplish.

4. Organizational boundaries depend on people's relationships

A learning organization is characterized by efforts to use more effectively the knowledge and capabilities of an organization, to learn from others, and to develop new opportunities with them. This is accomplished by people establishing and extending relationships. In a learning organization individuals are prepared to change their conceptions of boundaries in the interests of cooperation aimed at exploring new or different opportunities.

5. Managing is situational not functional

What is clear is that the processes of 'organization building', which is the equivalent of managing in a learning organization, have little to do with either the functions or formal authority structures that we associate with conventional organizations. Issues pertaining to boundaries and relationships are also changing all the time. Being able to deal with these matters when and where
they arise simply means everyone has the authority to deal with them; in a learning organization everyone is a manager. Developing this orientation, and the capacity of each person to act as spokesperson or leader in different situations, is the hallmark of learning organization.

iii. Using Learning Organization Approach to Enhance ABE Development

An ABE program can best function as a learning organization if the program’s personnel challenge their prevailing assumptions and confront their own and others’ reluctance to challenge established ways of thinking. The ABE program’s mission and goals must be shared among all members of the organization. This suggests a team-oriented approach to professional development. Team learning, in turn, requires a systems perspective so that all members see themselves, and all teams that make up the organization, as interdependent. ABE programs organized as learning organizations create “teaching teams” consisting of a mix of expert, competent, and novice teachers who consult in a continuing, strategic, and goal-directed manner. Both the learning organization and the individual must change, however, if true growth is to take place. It does little good for ABE teachers to engage in professional development if the programs in which they practice remain inflexible and unresponsive. Finally, professional development also has an impact in several ways on the adult students who enroll in ABE programs. Their degree of satisfaction with the programs in which they are enrolled, the learning gains that they make, and the ways in which their behaviors change as a result of learning can all be linked to their teachers’ professional development activities (M. C. Smith & Rose, 2002).

Reference


