Most Significant Change (MSC)

Description

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What is MSC?

In brief: The most significant change (MSC) technique is a means of â??monitoring without indicatorsâ?• (but can also be used in evaluations)

MSC is a form of participatory monitoring and evaluation. It is participatory because many project stakeholders are involved both in deciding the sorts of changes to be recorded and in analysing the data collected. It is a form of monitoring because it occurs throughout the program cycle and provides information to help people manage the program. It contributes to evaluation because it provides data on impact and outcomes that can be used to help assess the performance of the program as a whole.

Essentially, the process involves the collection of significant change (SC) stories emanating from the field level and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or staff. The designated staff and stakeholders are initially involved by â??searchingâ?? for project impact. Once changes have been captured, selected groups of people sit down together, read the stories aloud and have regular and often in-depth discussions about the value of these reported changes, and which they think is most significant of all. In large programs there may multiple levels at which SC stories are pooled and then elected. When the technique is implemented successfully, whole teams of people begin to focus their attention on program impact.

MSC is most useful:

- Where it is not possible to predict in any detail or with any certainty what the outcome will be
- Where outcomes will vary widely across beneficiaries
- Where there may not yet be agreements between stakeholders on what outcomes are the most important
- Where interventions are expected to be highly participatory, including any forms of monitoring and evaluation of the results

Core reading

1. â??The Most Significant Changeâ?? (MSC) Technique: A Guide to its Useâ?• by Rick Davies and Jess Dart, 2005. If you only want to read one document, read this.
2. Order and Diversity: Representing and Assisting Organisational Learning in Non-Government Organisations Rick Daviesâ?? 1998 Ph.D. thesis, describing the method and its use in Bangladesh in 1994-5. See Chapter 8 for a detailed description of its use by CCDB

3. â??An evolutionary approach to facilitating organisational learningâ?• Rick Daviesâ?? original 1996 internet published paper providing the first public summary description of the method
4. A Dialogical, Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique. Dart J and Davies R (2003) American Journal of Evaluation 24(2): 137â??155. DOI: 10.1177/109821400302400202. The first published journal article on MSC

Online bibliography

- Go to the Zotero-hosted online bibliography of publications about MSC, to see a collection of 360+ documents, including journal articles, presentations, conference papers and handouts.

Translations

- The MSC Translations blog is now the central repository for communications and updates regarding translations into other languages.
- Here are some of the **translations completed to date**
  - French: With thanks to Lauren Naville <dcg@drylands-group.org>, working with the Drylands Coordination Group.
  - Spanish: With thanks to Pablo RodrÃguez Bilella for the 2011 update/revised version
  - Arabic: With thanks to Awny Morsy <awnyamer@live.com>
  - Hindi: Status of this version needs to be clarified. Hindi speakers, could you help me?
  - Sinhala: With thanks to Arunasalam Vaithialingam <spo2@cha.lk>
  - Tamil: With thanks to Arunasalam Vaithialingam <spo2@cha.lk>
  - Japanese: With thanks to Hiroshi Tanaka <nepalippine@gmail.com>and his team of volunteers
  - Chinese: With thanks to Lian X. X. <sabrinalian@hotmail.com> and Carmen Lee <lee.carmen.hk@gmail.com>
  - Indonesian: Location lost but search underway
- **Other translations underway**
  - Italian: Maria Fabiani <info@mariafabiani.eu> is currently working on it
  - Portuguese: Orlando JosÃ© Leite de Castro <ojcastro@gmail.com> is currently working on it
- **Other translations that have been considered, but we have no news on**
  - Malayam: Shaju Jospeh <shaju_v@rediffmail.com> has expressed interest
  - Urdu: Ehtisham ul Hasan (ehasan@savethechildren.pk) has expressed interest
  - Swahili: Kirogo Mwangi <kmwangi@path.org> has expressed interest
  - Russian: Alexander Karpov <Alexander.Karpov@ecom-info.spb.ru> has expressed interest

Email list

To join the MSC email list, answer these 4 questions and we will then add you to the email list

You can view previous messages posted to the MSC email list by following this link: https://groups.google.com/g/mostsignificantchange-msc-2020-email-list/

Trainers

- The most active MSC trainers are
  - Clear Horizon â?? Jess Dart and others, based in Melbourne
  - Fiona Kotvojs , based in New South Wales, Australia
  - Theo Nabben, based in Perth, Western Australia
  - Nur Hidyati, Results in Health, based in the Netherlands
- Others known to me include: Natalie Moxham, Tracey Delaney, and Claus Kjaerby
- New addition: SERA (Story-based Evaluation and Research Alliance) , 8 colleagues based in the UK
- InsightShare also provide MSC training in combination with the use of participatory video

Software

- The Text Cluster Analysis Lab: Enables custom design (but AI assisted) cluster analysis of MSC stories, and exploration of differences and similarities between clusters of MSC stories
- Most Significant Change database â?? no longer seems to be available

Selected PowerPoint presentations

- Bahasa Indonesian PowerPoint by Paul Boon, 40 slides based on the MSC Guide
- Content Analysis of Most Significant Change (MSC) stories. 40 minute PowerPoint presentation with audio commentary by Rick Davies, 2013
- [more content yet to be added here]

History

[From the MSC Guide, page 9] The most significant change (MSC) technique was invented by Rick Davies in an attempt to meet some of the challenges associated with monitoring and evaluating a complex participatory rural development program in Bangladesh, which had diversity in both implementation and outcomes. The program was run by the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), a Bangladeshi non-government organisation, which in 1996 had over 500 staff and worked with more than 46,000 people in 785 villages. Approximately 80 percent of the direct beneficiaries were women. The large-scale and open-ended nature of the activities posed a major problem for the design of any system intended to monitor process and outcome (Davies, 1996).

Rick developed the MSC technique as part of the fieldwork for his PhD on organisational learning in non-government aid organisations (Davies, 1996). Both the thesis and MSC were informed by an evolutionary epistemology. While you donâ??t need to know this background theory in order to use MSC, you can find out more about it in Chapter 7. It is also worth noting that Jess and others have analysed the use of MSC from different theoretical perspectives to that used by Rick. This flexibility is consistent with the underlying design of MSC. More information on the history of the use of MSC, including Jessâ??s role in its promotion in Australia, can be found in Chapter 8.â?•

Category

1. Uncategorized

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