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Performance monitoring for organizational learning at Management Sciences for Health, South Africa

Govender, Jerusha

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Performance Monitoring for Organizational Learning at Management Sciences for Health, South Africa

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management)

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Jerusha Govender (0605771J)

Supervisor: Thulile Zondi

Co-supervisor: Stephen Porter

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I am a student registered for MM-PDM in the year 2014

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Abstract

Theoretical models link organizational learning and performance monitoring. Organizations with strong performance monitoring systems and structures which are used in organizational learning are able to achieve improved performance, adaptability, and sustainability. This is of particular importance to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which are in a resource competitive, and donor-driven environment. However, few published cases have presented practical examples of the use of performance monitoring for organizational learning.

The aim of this study was to assess how performance monitoring was used by staff for organizational learning at Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa (BLC), a Management Sciences for Health (MSH) project in South Africa. A case study approach was selected. The methodology included open-ended interviews with seven staff members in the project, and document and data review. The documents reviewed included the project monitoring and evaluation framework, MSH-South Africa strategic plan, MSH-South Africa learning plan, and the results of an organization learning assessment conducted in 2012. Themes and sub-themes were identified and used to conduct directed content analysis using Atlas Ti Software.

The key findings of the study were:

- Performance monitoring and organization learning is valued by Management Sciences for Health. It is included explicitly as part of country strategic road maps, and projects are supported to develop performance monitoring plans and organizational learning plans.
- The MSH-BLC project has strong systems and structures for performance monitoring, and novel plans for organizational learning. However, these are donor-focused and Staff felt they have limited scope to influence and review them.
- The Staff felt that there is multiple performance monitoring practices but few of them use these for learning purposes. A learning plan was developed to

improve this, and there is an ongoing restructuring process to enhance information sharing across the project.

- Staff felt that they have limited opportunities and the culture does not permit them to critique performance monitoring information, make mistakes, or allow for space to review and think about performance information.
- Staff had varied levels of performance monitoring and learning capacity.

In conclusion, the current project culture and utilisation of performance monitoring presents opportunities for learning, but are not used optimally.

Recommendations made are to adapt the performance monitoring plan, strengthen implementation of current systems through leadership, and establish measures to encourage review and reflection on performance information. Additional research is recommended in the areas of: evaluative thinking and its use in organizational sustainability; determinants of organizational learning in NGO sector; assessing whether learning translates to individual and organizational success; and a review on the success rate of organizations that have performance monitoring and organizational learning systems.

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The friends who keep encouraging me to “Lean in”

List of Acronyms

ALPS	Accountability, learning and planning system
BLC	Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa
BSC	Balance Scorecard
HR	Human resources
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre
MDG	Millennium development goals
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MSH	Management Sciences for Health
NDoH	National Department of Health
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSDA	Negotiated Service Delivery Agreement
OECD	Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development
OL	Organizational learning
PMP	Performance monitoring plan
SA	South Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background

In South Africa and other developing countries, the Ministry of Health continuously reviews approaches to deal with unmet Millennium Development Goal (MDG) targets (NDoH, 2010-2014). Development partners committed to the South African Government to support delivery of national health outcomes through the Negotiated Service Delivery Agreement (NSDA) and the Aid Effectiveness Framework. These partners are expected to support a results-driven government agenda in line with the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda for Action (NDoH, 2010-2014; OECD, 2005/8). In these agreements, performance monitoring and its use for results-driven development are highlighted (OECD, 2005/8). The non-governmental organization (NGO) sector has a crucial role to play in supporting government to achieve national health outcomes by improving service delivery, capacity, and advocacy. Accountability to the NSDA and Aid Effectiveness Framework requires strong performance monitoring systems in all partners (NDoH, 2010-2014).

In order for NGOs to remain relevant in the South African context, they must ensure their systems support sustainability and clear accountability to national government outcomes. Furthermore, donors have set targets to reduce NGO funding in South Africa. For example, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has set a target of reducing funding to South Africa by 50%, by 2017[1]. NGOs face a survival challenge in this competitive environment. So how do NGOs adapt and evolve to survive?

[1] Life after PEPFAR? Presentation at South African AIDS Conference. 2013. Session convener: Saul Johnson

In the current context of limited funds and increased urgency for effective programming, learning plays a critical role in organizational success and innovation. In turn, NGO successes and innovations support government's efforts towards achievement of the MDGs. Hence, systems (survival mechanisms) for sound learning organizations are required to monitor performance, learn and adapt (Block, 2004; Kanter and Summers, 1987; Guijit, 2008; Letts *et al*, 1999, Taylor, 1998).

1.2 Performance Monitoring for Organizational Learning

Learning is a component of adaptive capacity and organizational effectiveness (Letts *et al*, 1999). This is also known as adaptive coping which includes the *"ability to detect complex patterns within events, identify causal relations between events, and intervene in events"* (Van Tonder and Roodt, 2008).

Performance monitoring presents a means to address the adaptation and effectiveness of organizations through organizational learning. It supports organizational learning directly, and by informing evaluative thinking (Campbell *et al*, 2008; King and Stevahn, 2013; Patton, 2011).

There is extensive theoretical background on organizational learning and the role of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) (Argyris, 1977; Berg, 2000; Britton, 2005; Crawford and Bryce, 2003; Gavin *et al*, 2008; Görgens and Kusek, 2009; Guijit, 2008; Lipe and Salterio, 2000; Kaplan and Norton 2001; Letts *et al*, 1999; Senge, 1990; Taylor, 1998; Van Tonder and Roodt, 2008). However, literature that focuses on organizational learning does not reflect on management principles such as the project cycle or life-cycle approaches.

Successful implementation of programs and projects are depicted to be cyclical. In its simplest form, it is represented as a process from planning, action, reflection, and learning, and the process repeats; in reality it is an iterative process between multiple components included in these categories (Taylor, 1998). Monitoring and evaluation are key components in organizational management as part of a project/program cycle. Each assesses performance according to goals at different levels through specific measurements and processes to ensure efficient

implementation of projects, programs and ultimately the organization as a whole. They contribute to efficient implementation and use of funds, and ensure that broader project goals are met. These two areas are interrelated and presented in program and or project management cycles (Britton, 2005; Görgens and Kusek, 2009).

Monitoring is a frequent step found throughout the project cycle. Among NGOs, most effort and resources are given to monitoring for accountability to donors in comparison to evaluation. Evaluation is conducted less frequently or not at all among NGOs. However, the purpose of monitoring is broader than accountability alone, also functioning in performance management, communication and learning, and contributing to evaluative thinking. The interrelationship and iterative nature of these components of performance monitoring and evaluative learning is anchored in the project cycle from evidence informed design, decision making, progress review, corrective action, to broader planning and strategic direction. The relationship is emphasised in *"Finding out requires more than simply collecting and analysing monitoring data or undertaking and using evaluations, since monitoring data on its own might not tell a full story, and evaluations might not anticipate and respond to all relevant questions."* (Levine, in Griñó *et al,* 2014, p4). Quinn (in Griñó *et al,* 2014) further describes this as systematic results oriented thinking. For this to occur enabling environment, organizational and individual factor are required to support this. This would include both performance monitoring systems and organizational learning.

The role of monitoring in consolidating data, reporting, tracking performance, accountability and communication are key to organizational learning processes (Taylor, 1998). However, the learning opportunity is often overshadowed by focus on the use of monitoring for accountability (Guijit, 2012).

The purposes of monitoring are for accountability, performance management, and communications. Monitoring achieves these purposes through data collection and analysis. The information generated provides lessons on gaps, challenges and successes in implementation. The manner in which organizations enable use of

monitoring information, and how individuals interact with the information, contributes to organizational learning and in turn improved organizational performance. These purposes and uses of monitoring overlap as organizational learning purposes. A case study of the NGO Management Sciences for Health is presented in this research report to analyse the application of the framework described.

1.3 Problem Statement

Performance monitoring within NGOs are used largely for accountability purposes, and not organizational learning (Britton, 2005; Taylor 1998). This is due to the NGO sector being placed under pressure to better manage limited resources and implement activities which the NGO has committed to the donor to achieve. Performance monitoring systems have limited resources dedicated to them, hence are used to a limited extent and are often focused on routine information consolidation and not broader uses of monitoring.

In South Africa, Public Health is a dynamic, competitive and knowledge-driven sector. Therefore, organizations in the sector also need to be dynamic and ensure that they are responsive to national goals. Organizations with strong systems, structures and a culture of learning are able to achieve such responsiveness through improved performance, adaptability, and sustainability of the projects.

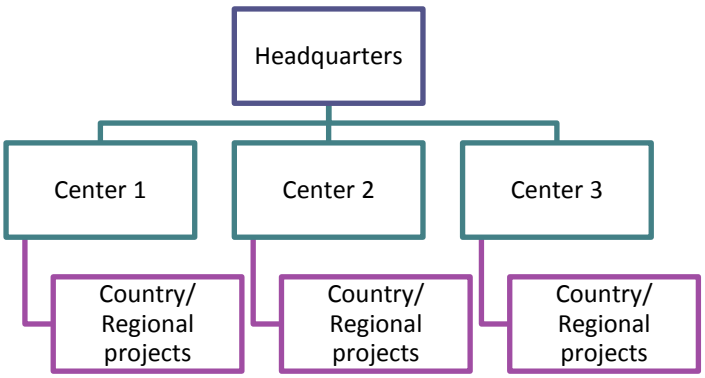
Theoretical models present a relationship between monitoring and learning organizations (Argyris, 1977; Senge, 1990). In this research report, learning is measured based on reported use of information and knowledge to improve individual, team or project performance, and to understand the direct and underlying factors which influence performance, based on the two theoretical models.

Published evidence of application of this theoretical relationship has presented few case studies of the link between performance monitoring and organizational learning in an NGO. Only five relevant cases were found, namely International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), ActionAid International, International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), Slum/Shack Dwellers International, and Oxfam International (Alps, 2011; Ben, 2011; Patel and Patel, 2011; Oswald, 2011; OXFAM,

2013). All present limited descriptions of the systems, structures and culture in place for performance monitoring and organizational learning. Management Sciences for Health (MSH) is a global health NGO which is largely funded by USAID. As an international organization, it is at risk of reduction of funds in light of the current Aid Effectiveness Strategies in South Africa and other developing countries. It is necessary to become a strong learning organization to adapt in the evolving environment of the NGO sector.

Management Sciences for Health includes a headquarters based in the United States of America, three centres (programme level), and several projects under each centre (**figure 1**). Each project has an average implementing period of five years, is based in the country of implementation, and functions semi-autonomously.

Figure 1. Diagrammatic representation of Centre and Project structure at MSH



Management Sciences for Health has included organizational learning as a strategic goal and has begun planning for organizational learning activities in MSH project offices. The key pillars for organizational learning considered by MSH are: concrete learning processes, leadership that reinforces learning, and a supportive learning environment. A case study of an MSH project in South Africa – Building Local Capacity for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa Project – would provide a comprehensive view of the practical application of the theories on monitoring and organizational learning.

1.4 Purpose Statement

The purpose of the study was to assess the use of performance monitoring for organizational learning at MSH South Africa.

The objectives included:

- Assess the presence and application of performance monitoring and organizational learning systems at a MSH South Africa project in line with MSH's organizational learning plan
- Assess the mechanisms in place to facilitate the use of performance monitoring for organizational learning
- Assess the use of monitoring data and processes for organizational learning at a MSH South Africa project

1.5 Hypothesis

Performance monitoring is not used for organizational learning in the NGO sector

1.6 Research Question

How is performance monitoring at a Management Sciences for Health (MSH) project in South Africa being used by staff for organizational learning?

1.6.1 Sub Questions

i. What are the current performance monitoring and organizational learning practices used by MSH South Africa project staff?
ii. How has performance monitoring use and organizational learning at MSH South Africa been aligned with the MSH organizational learning plan?
iii. What are MSH South Africa staff perceptions on the status and use of monitoring and organizational learning?
iv. What are the enabling factors and barriers to utilization of performance monitoring for learning?
v. What changes have been implemented as a result of organizational learning using performance monitoring?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

There is a significant body of research which defines and discusses the role of performance monitoring and evaluation. In this proposal the focus is placed on the role of performance monitoring and organizational learning. The literature review presents a critique of monitoring and organizational learning and a review of the theories on the relationship between the two areas. This will form the basis of assessing the NGO case use of monitoring for organizational learning.

2.1 The Nature of NGOs

The NGO sector supports government in service delivery and advocacy to achieve national outcomes. Non-governmental organizations have the opportunity and a critical role for civic action in particular (Edwards *et al*, 1999). The paradox of the NGO is that these organizations provide a significant contribution to social services yet face a more volatile environment, and are at great risk of not surviving. Taylor (1998) reflects this situation in his statements on NGOs: *"There are no blueprints to follow, there is no benefit of having "simple bottom lines", and there are no guaranteed recipes for success. The development sector has to use its very limited resources highly efficiently to generate truly creative and innovative learning which can address the societal problems that those much closer to the resources and power are incapable of doing."* (Taylor, 1998, p2)

The volatility of the NGO environment also presents unique characteristics in the sector, such as the ability to innovate and adapt. Non-governmental organizations are now sought for understanding innovative capacity, which in comparison to governmental structures are less restrictive and positively influence ability to perform optimally. In order for NGOs to have an impact in their area of focus, they need the right organizational characteristics (systems, structures, and culture) and mechanisms to foster innovation (Edwards *et al*, 1999). Additional requirements for

innovation are described to be effective partnerships, cultural sensitivity, and organizational learning (Fyvie and Ager, 1999). The innovations in turn influence the NGOs' ability to perform.

Performance monitoring is an area where NGOs have presented both success and lessons learned relevant to other NGOs, civil society and government. This literature review further critiques the characteristics of NGO monitoring and its use for organizational learning.

2.2 Performance Monitoring

Monitor, transitive verb: to watch, keep track of, or check usually for a special purpose[2]

2.2.1 Defining Performance Monitoring

As the basic dictionary definition states, monitoring is about keeping watch or track of progress. It is built into organizational survival and all basic life activities. In the context of organizational management, performance monitoring is described as the tracking of activities and outputs, whereas evaluation assesses progress according to outcomes and impact predicted in a theory of change (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). Performance monitoring can include some outcomes measure and usually supports evaluation. The monitoring process also includes elements of analysis and learning (Guijit, 2008).

Monitoring is often coupled with evaluation given the complementarity in measurement of progress for various uses. The evaluation theories can be used in understanding how monitoring functions. Evaluation theory has been defined as *"the process of determining the merit, worth and value of things, and evaluations are the products of the process"* (Scriven, 1991, p1). Görgens and Kusek (2009) include scientific terms: attribution and causality, for defining the merit. Evaluation theory is

[2] Monitor. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster.com*. Retrieved August 31, 2013, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/monitor

set out as a framework to incorporate lessons learned into decision making (Weiss, 1995). Due to the complementary role of monitoring with evaluation, developmental evaluation is meaningless without strong monitoring systems.

The Logic Framework and Balance Scorecard are commonly used approaches to performance monitoring. Logic Framework approaches have been developed to detail the components of an organization's theory of change; within these components, we are able to identify a clearer role of monitoring at the level of inputs, outputs and some outcomes (Crawford and Bryce, 2003). These models have been critiqued for their restrictive nature, which is not practical within the NGO sector. The Balance Scorecard (BSC) is another approach to measure progress linked to strategy. It is described that *"[the] use of BSC should improve managerial decision making by aligning performance measures with goals and strategies to the firm and the firm's business units"* (Lipe and Salterio, 2000, p2). BSC measures the performance components: financial performance, customer relations, internal business processes, and organizations learning and growth activity. It is described as means to test the approach to implementing the strategy as part of a strategic learning loop, which informs any changes needed to strategy, and is aligned with budget review processes (Kaplan and Norton, 2001b). The approach to performance monitoring was developed for corporate use, and has been adapted in the public sector. NGOs' measurement of performance is often focused on the processes or outputs to fulfil the mission, instead of a focus on long-term results of the processes (Kaplan and Norton, 2001a). These approaches indicate the role of performance monitoring in tracking progress and that there is an aspect of learning and adaptation required.

The four core purposes of monitoring can be summarized in the areas of accountability, performance improvement, learning and communication (Britton, 2005). Essentially performance monitoring is described as the foundation for generation, consolidation and dissemination of information in all areas of a project, program or policy, to present what works, what does not work, and share lessons learned (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). The variants of the project management cycle presents monitoring as an exclusive phase in project management. It is initiated

during program design, through to its implementation, and contributes to evaluation as well as informing re-design. Optimal use of all of the components supports successful project and program management. If all four core purposes of monitoring are maintained, the monitoring component can positively influence the overall cycle. In an organization, there are multiple projects and hence multiple cycles at different stages. At optimal functioning of the components, achieving the core purposes of monitoring, an organization will function effectively and efficiently. Letts *et al* (1999) highlights the importance of monitoring *"to ensure that its programs are really advancing the organization's mission, and the organization's need to continuously assess and improve its performance"* (Letts *et al*, 1999, p22), which influences program outcomes, efficiency, effectiveness and mission impact.

2.3 Organizational Learning

Learning, noun: 1. the act or experience of one that learns, 2. knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study, 3. modification of a behavioural tendency by experience (as exposure to conditioning)[3]

2.3.1 Defining Organizational Learning

The terms 'organizational learning' and 'learning organizations' are used interchangeably in literature; in this proposal, the term 'organizational learning' will be used. Definitions explain organizational learning as the use of experience to improve organizational activities as defined by the organizational strategy (Taylor, 1998). It is also referred to as *"knowledge translation into operational reality"* (Berg, 2000, p1). Organizational learning is a continuous iterative process between sourcing information, analysing, making decisions and activity adjustments to effectively achieve organizational goals (Guijit, 2012, p281).

Organizational learning requires a learning culture and employees with learning behaviour. Individuals with learning behaviour are able to practically include

[3] Learning. (n.d.). Merriam-Webster.com. Retrieved August 31, 2013, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/learning

knowledge generation and sharing as part of their role to improve their own and their team's performance. Yang (2004) found that a *"sharing-and-retaining knowledge"* culture of an organization was proportional to the level of organizational performance. This means that the people of an organization must be accustomed to sharing knowledge. Subsequently they should be able to utilize the lessons learned to inform the way they react to business operations (Yang, 2004). In Yang's (2007) regression analysis, a strong positive association was found between knowledge sharing and organizational learning, predicting organizational effectiveness as an outcome (Yang 2007).

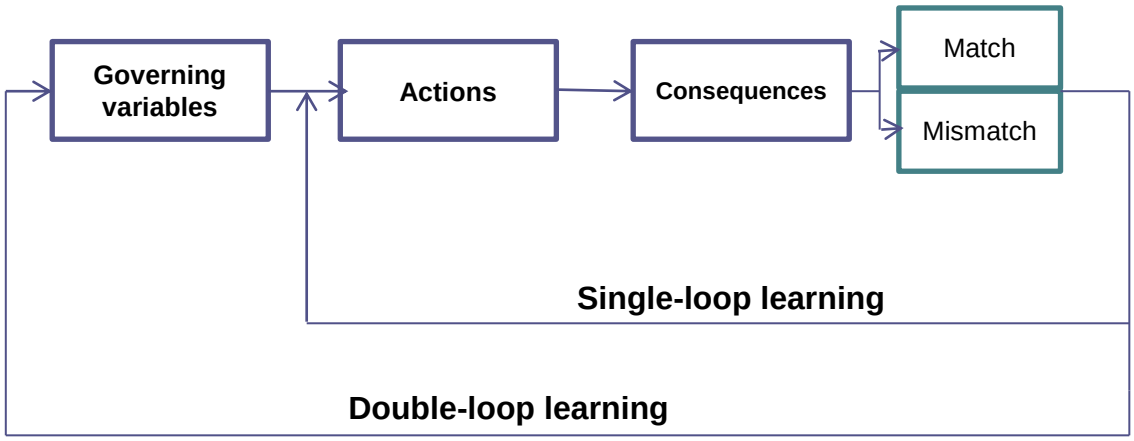
At an individual level, learning necessitates being self-reflexive and self-critical, or the ability to analyse information (Guijit, 2008). In addition, Guijit (2008) includes decision on actions based on the information analysed. Similarly, Gavin *et al* (2008) summarizes learning employees as *"skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge"* (Gavin *et al,* 2008). It is also defined as *"a group of people continually enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create"* (Senge, 1990). Lastly, van Tonder and Roodt (2008) list the components required for successful organizational learning as the ability to detect changes in the external interface system, transmit information, convert systems into responses, generate new outputs, and generate new feedback.

A learning culture and individual learning behaviour form pillars for learning organizations. Systems and structures which support learning, such as leadership enforcement, platforms for information exchange, and building an environment which encourage learning, are also needed to ensure that the culture and learning behaviours are maintained and functioning optimally. The organizational learning theories present concepts of systems and structures required.

Early theories on organization learning sought to describe learning as a process. Argyris (1977) presented two models of learning processes. The first model describes the organizational learning process as the use of information to change an approach, but not including underlying questioning – termed single-loop organizational learning. The second model states that an additional step of

questioning underlying values is required for more robust organizational learning: this is termed double-loop learning (**figure 2**). For an organization to adopt both the double and single loop learning process, it requires valid information for informed choice, personal responsibility, and conclusions publicly accessible (Argyris, 1977).

Figure 2. Depiction of single and double loop learning (Adapted from Argyris, 1977)



The theory on the organizational learning process is useful in identifying different levels of learning and presenting a simplified iterative process. However, it falls short of elaborating on the supporting or influencing variables for these models to work. In NGOs, one key influencing variable is competing priorities. As described in the description on monitoring, these are often organizational vs. donor priorities. Quinn (1988) presents information processing styles, with the ability to organize different information sources and decision making as the key variables to address competing priorities and management mastery. These are variables which would influence the flow of either the single- or double-loop models – as depicted in **figure 2**.

Senge (1990) presented a conceptual framework detailing the key disciplines for organizational learning. In so doing, the view of learning from a process focus was shifted to a matrix of organizational learning functions. Senge (1990) has since been seen as a pioneer of organizational learning

The disciplines for organizational learning include the following (Senge, 1990):

i. Shared mental model – nurturing shared values
ii. Shared vision – nurturing a commitment to a specific vision
iii. Personal mastery - perpetually attempting to improve understanding of personal vision and means to achieve it
iv. Team learning – the ability of team members to think together and improve approaches to achieving team results
v. "Fifth Discipline", a systems perspective. This requires an organization to consider all four disciplines and develop systems which allow employees to interrelate them.

The Fifth Discipline elaborates on the gap in previous theory, and on the broader functions or disciplines which influence organizational learning. It however leaves out a clear process to support application of the theory and ideally the process perspective, which Argyris (1988) presented. Development processes are neither linear systems, nor are the organizations able to implement high level systems under resource constraints. In NGOs, there is a need for an iterative organizational learning system where simple systems are strengthened to support learning processes.

There are multiple definitions related to learning, learning employees and organizational learning. Those found most applicable to this proposal are covered by the two leading theorists on organizational learning: Argyris (1977) and Senge (1990) as presented. The theories discussed are based on the assumptions that organizational learning enhances organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Edwards (1997) states that *"continuous learning is the sine qua non of being able to respond and intervene effectively"* (Edwards, 1997, p236).

2.4 Key Concept Summary

The key areas required for learning are described as systems, structures and culture which support individuals and teams to:

1. Generate, collect, interpret and disseminate information
2. Assess performance or achieve expected results

3. Critique and test actions influencing performance
4. Critique underlying variables influencing actions
5. Skills development to enhance performance
6. Shared values and vision aligned with learning and reinforced by leadership

In addressing the research question, these are the themes which were critiqued when reviewed. The **double-loop learning model** will be considered as the framework for processes for organizational learning. In addition, the **Fifth Discipline** will be used as the framework for individual and team factors required for organizational learning.

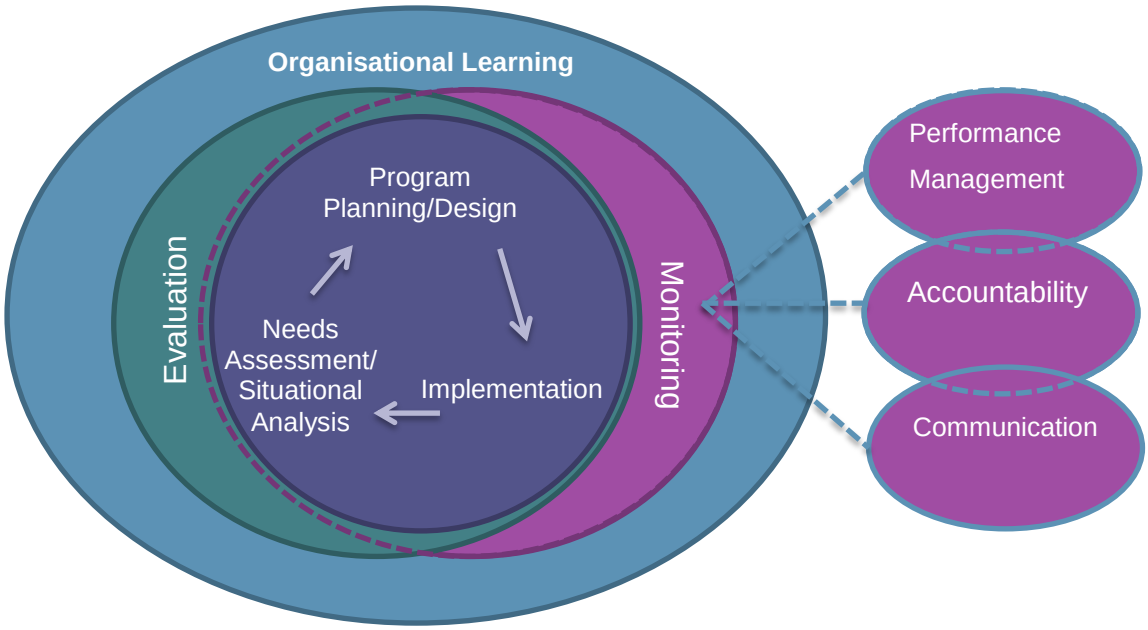
2.5 Linking Performance Monitoring and Organizational Learning

It is unquestionably clear that the central stream which runs through monitoring and organizational learning is the generation and use of information (Argyris, 1977). There are multiple systems and structures for the generation and use of information. These can be seen as similar to knowledge management practices such as: content management, submission and indexing, sharing and enrichment, communities of practice, incentive schemes, storage and retrieval, and dissemination of information (Uriarte, 2008). It can be predicted that good monitoring as a practice and system influences improve the use of information for organizational learning, which is positively associated with organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Kusek and Görgens, 2004). The links identified through the literature review can be categorized into the three areas defined as purposes of monitoring by Britton (2005): performance management, accountability, and communication. Britton (2005) included learning as a unique purpose, but in fact, it is interrelated to the three core purposes, as well as found at each point within the project cycle.

These address learning at all levels of the environment in which an NGO functions, and within each, requires both the process of learning as described by Argyris (1977) as double loop learning, and the Fifth Discipline for these links to function optimally. Guijit (2008) describes this as "*moving from an information-focused interpretation of monitoring, to an acceptance that it encompasses individual perceptions, emotions and behaviour"* (Guijit, 2008, p40). The diagram linking monitoring and organizational

learning is depicted in **figure 3**. In the sections to follow, the specific areas which depict the link between monitoring and organizational learning are explored.

Figure 3. Diagrammatic representation of monitoring use and link to organisational learning (Adapted from Argyris, 1977 and Senge, 1990)



2.5.1 Performance Management

If monitoring data analysis is designed well at project planning and design phase, it can determine the level of achievement against specific targets. Once provided with the systems to source this data, organizations should be able to analyse, learn, and adapt activities accordingly during implementation phase. Such monitoring information allows for early detection of challenges and successes, and provides formative evaluation information as well. Furthermore, the lessons learned from performance management information will inform project adaptation or improvement.

The timeous availability of information and the learning processes ensure that the organization functions effectively and efficiently, avoiding resource wastage. Monitoring use in organizational learning has been related to "*immediate responses to performance feedback*" (Krohwinkel-Karlsson, 2007). This is of particular importance among NGOs under pressure to ensure cost-effectiveness. In comparing monitoring to evaluation, at the point of evaluation, it may be too late to address findings of no or low effectiveness. This area relates to Senge's (1990) Fifth

Discipline, particularly the team learning component, as well as single- and double-loop learning process (Argyris, 1977) in that it requires both the learning behaviour and culture to utilize available performance management information and systems for generating the necessary information at appropriate intervals of the project cycle. Britton (2005) discusses this relationship further, as *"learning provides a real purpose for gathering monitoring data – indeed many would argue that learning directed at creating immediate improvements to project implementation constitutes the most important purpose for monitoring"* (Britton, 2005, p10).

2.5.2 Accountability

The purpose of monitoring in accountability is an important aspect coupled with organizational learning. As described in organizational performance management, accountability is a measure of performance to the donor, or for internal processes. This purpose of monitoring occurs mainly at the implementation phase. The information generated through monitoring reports allows donors and management the opportunity to question NGO approaches and even identify means to support the NGO for improved return on investment. The monitoring link expands within and beyond organizational learning for collective action in response to information presented for accountability. Guijit and Proost (2002) had supported this research, stating that "*in theory monitoring can support collective action through collective learning"* (Guijit and Proost, 2002, p216). There is a large number of publications which criticise the role monitoring has played solely for donor accountability. Authors, such as Guijit (2008 and 2012), advocate for a change in purpose of monitoring as organizational learning focused instead of accountability-driven monitoring. This area relates to Senge's (1990) share vision discipline, as well as single- and double-loop learning process (Argyris, 1977). The challenge now is how theory is transformed into action.

2.5.3 Communication

Communication externally and internally is a means to convey the lessons learned through performance management and accountability. At the organizational level, monitoring influences human connectedness and a culture of self-reflection (Dlamini, 2006). In order for the organization to be learning, all individuals and teams require relevant data to assess their own performance, to communicate their experiences,

and to share information on lessons learned (Britton, 1998). At a broader level, monitoring allows key stakeholders access to information on progress, and is used to communicate a snapshot of the return on investment, reflecting confidence in project implementation. Communication is needed at all stages of the project cycle, especially when immediate action and adaption is required to ensure the success of the organization. Senge (1990) covers communication indirectly in the aspects of team learning through internal information and knowledge exchange.

2.6 Cases of Monitoring for Learning

Five cases/descriptions of organizations which present their use of monitoring for learning were identified through a literature search of case studies. All the organizations which were identified (IFAD, ActionAid International, INTRAC, Slum/Shack Dwellers International, and Oxfam International) are international organizations which have implemented integrated monitoring and learning systems, and cases were all documented from 2010 (Alps, 2011; Ben, 2011; Patel and Patel, 2011; Oswald, 2011; OXFAM, 2013). The descriptions of these cases are summarised in **table 1**. ActionAid has the most comprehensive case. The organization developed and documented the accountability, learning and planning system of ActionAid International (Alps, 2011). It has a comprehensive list of policies and structures to support monitoring for accountability and learning. This is not apparent among the other organizations. There also appears to be a focus on the use of M&E systems alone, with no detail on specific activities related to monitoring and learning. Furthermore, only ActionAid and IFAD indicate consideration of culture related factors influencing the systems and structure (Alps, 2011; Oswald, 2011).

The limited number of cases identified and the embryonic stage of this field is an indication of the need for more publication of cases demonstrating practical application.

Table 1. Cases of implementation of performance monitoring for learning systems

No.	Source	Organization	Summary of case of performance monitoring used for organizational learning		
			Structures	**Systems**	**Culture**
1	Oswald, 2011	International Fund for Agricultural Development	• Not described	• Managing for impact in rural development • Log frames and other M&E system process not specifically defined	• Current challenges in culture of monitoring for learning described as: "*silos of monitoring, evaluation, and planning, and a lack of 'buy-in' from senior management*"
2	Alps, 2011	ActionAid International	• Uses triple loop monitoring for learning approach • Monitoring and evaluation requirements • Multiple performance management, monitoring and learning structures: appraisals, strategies, strategic plans, annual plans and budgets, annual reports, participatory review and reflection processes, strategic reviews, partnership policy, governance review, associate/affiliate review, assurance policy, audit, open information policy, complaints and response mechanism framework, staff climate survey, supporting frameworks	• Accountability, learning and planning system of ActionAid International • Detailed diagrammatic summary of accountability and learning flow at level of international secretariat, program and country level with defined purpose and process of each	• Indication of consideration of culture, but not defined. "*Alps can only be effective if our staff, volunteers, activists, board members and partners hold attitudes and behave in ways that fit with our shared vision, mission and values"*

No.	Source	Organization	Summary of case of performance monitoring used for organizational learning		
			Structures	**Systems**	**Culture**
3	Ben, 2011	INTRAC – case focuses on NGO partners in Kenya and Ethiopia	• M&E Plans	• Participatory M&E training • M&E system not clearly defined • Coaching • Learning sessions • Technical team meetings	• Not defined
4	Patel and Patel, 2011	Slum/Shack Dwellers International	• Not defined	• Internal systems for monitoring, learning and evaluation • Capacity building funded by Rockefeller foundation	• Not defined
5	OXFAM, 2013	Oxfam International	• Global Performance Framework	• Monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning • Systems not clearly defined, but described as: systematic monitoring against program indicators, building organizational knowledge and accountability, and feeding learning into decision-making	• Not defined

2.7 Challenges and Gaps

The purposes of monitoring described are the ideal, and researchers have found that the opportunity in monitoring is not always valued and used effectively (Guijit, 2008). NGOs still struggle to use monitoring to *"know when you are doing well"* and to *"make changes or redirect resources when not doing well"* (Kanter and Summers, 1987).

Dlamini (2006) has criticized the current use of monitoring as focused on urgency to present results, and its use from a managerial approach limits analysis to outputs, activities and specific indicators which are not adapted for organizational learning, but rather donor accountability. This is largely due to monitoring systems in the NGO sector being a requirement by funders and being designed based on funder interests (Bornstein, 2001; Guijit, 2008, Kanter and Summers, 1987). Bornstein (2001) describes this role of monitoring as, "*Systems to enhance accountability are a prominent feature of emerging development management, and most often are designed to demonstrate outcomes to those providing the funding."* (Bornstein, 2001, p3) Often the monitoring systems in place do not generate information in a manner which informs improvement in implementation, and becomes a data collection task (Guijit, 2008; Weiss, 1995). Such systems will also not provide funders with sufficient information to justify return on investment in the long term (Weiss, 1995).

From the perspective of beneficiaries as the central stakeholder, it is important that NGOs are able to *"improve decision making, lead to the planning of better programs, and so serving program participants in more relevant, more beneficial, and more efficient ways"* (Weiss, 1972, p3). Producing a continual flow of feedback and data, monitoring systems help decision-makers manage more effectively (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). Such a system is one which not only looks at the theory of M&E, but includes practical means for inquiry and assessing factors affecting the intended outcomes (Bamberger, Rugh, and Mabry, 2012; Owen, 2007; Scriven, 1991). In order for monitoring to be used to its potential, organizational adaptation is needed which is *"building organizations around information and communication"* (Block, 2004).

NGO cases of monitoring or learning lack a strong example of the relationship between the two areas. There appears to be a gap in publication practical cases of NGOs implementing the theories linking monitoring and organizational. Guijit (2008) describes the challenge, stating: *"Given the dependence of learning on diverse forms of monitoring, there is a fundamental disconnect between the rhetoric about the need for learning in development and the reality of the monitoring procedures."* (Guijit, 2008, p2). With accountability to donors at the core focus of monitoring, all other uses are forgotten and in turn organizational learning forfeited (Bornstein, 2006; Guijit, 2012). Often monitoring systems or components thereof are present, but NGOs do not use the information to improve results. The complex and ever-changing nature of NGOs focused on social development make it challenging to do so, and deter NGOs from developing systems beyond accountability (Weiss, 1972; Weiss 1995). Systems for monitoring are associated with blame, fuelling the non-use of data in organizational learning, as well as a lack of funding to implement such systems (Aarnoudes, 2009; Görgens and Kusek, 2009).

Culture plays a significant role in the use of monitoring; it has been found that monitoring systems are viewed as systems for specific monitoring staff and experts, or feel their efforts are undermined, not for the use of learning (Ebrahim, 2005; Wallace and Chapman, 2004). In order for monitoring to be used as a system for organizational learning, the organization must adapt a "*culture of inquiry and investigation, rather than one of response and report"* (UNDP, 2002). This notion is also presented in Kusek and Görgens' (2009) results-based management model. In the model information is presented as a requirement to improve results, in addition to external contributing factors such as relevant plans, human and financial resources, partnerships, communications and culture.

2.8 Summary

By definition, monitoring encompasses the collection and collation of data to generate information for use in performance tracking, accountability and learning. A common thread in these uses is the need for learning.

The theoretical frameworks by Argyris (1997) and Senge (1990) present two perspectives on organizational learning. Each have aspects which are superimposable with monitoring processes and uses, such as the collection of data, review of information and use to improve performance. Agyris (1997) focuses on the systematic flow of information and critique as part of learning processes. Senge (1990) considers the individual and team level aspects required for learning.

The limitations of application of the theoretical model linking performance monitoring and organizational learning includes practical and capacity constraints, economic and political trends, context, culture and simplicity (Guijit, 2012). There are also few cases of the practical application of performance monitoring use in organizational learning among NGOs.

In order for performance monitoring to support organizational learning, NGOs need an understanding of the current culture of learning, individual learning behaviour, and the systems and structures which support a learning culture, including the role of leadership. These may be related to monitoring systems which support the generation, dissemination and access to tacit and explicit knowledge.

2.9 Conclusion

The theories considered present performance monitoring as a component of organizational learning. There are multiple uses of monitoring which support learning in different forms, and these require systems, structures and an organizational culture to support them. Global experience shows that monitoring is being built in some NGOs with the intention of supporting organizational learning (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). However, there is limited number of publications of these experiences. The literature presents theory of utilizing monitoring for organizational learning, explanations of the challenges in its utilization, and cases of M&E (not solely monitoring) being used in organizational learning. A gap lies in understanding examples of where the theories are applicable in reality, particularly presenting the systems, structures, and cultural aspects which influence the relationship in a case study. To this end, this research report serves to present a body of knowledge to

address the gap. The framework used included the double-loop process of learning which outlines the systems and structures required for organizational learning (Argyris, 1977), and the Fifth Discipline, which identifies the individual and team components of organizational learning (Senge, 1990). Moreover, it views the use of monitoring in performance management, accountability and communication as nested in organizational learning systems, structures and culture as described by the theories presented by Argyris (1977) and Senge (1990).

This research report presents the findings of an assessment of the use of monitoring, its role in organizational learning, and presents a case to analyse the theorized relationship. A literature review on the role of performance monitoring to support organizational learning was explored in order to form the basis of the theoretical relationship, and to identify key areas for assessment in the study.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Background

This chapter of the research report describes the research methodology used to conduct the case study. A case study approach was selected to respond to the research question and sub-questions based on the type of study unit, measure of influencing factors, and form of the research question.

The research question entailed an assessment of a specific study unit (MSH South Africa Office), and the study required an in-depth understanding of monitoring and learning processes of the unit. Hence qualitative methods of inquiry were most relevant to understand documented processes and staff perceptions on processes. In addition, given that it required a critical view of one unit rather than multiple units for generalizing findings, a qualitative analysis provided a detailed view of the sub-systems within the unit. Both primary and secondary quantitative data was collected to assess organizational performance and learning.

The utilization of monitoring for learning in an NGO is extensive and requires consideration of multiple mediating and confounding factors (e.g. organization life cycle stage, donor influences, available resources, staff complement, etc.) Many of these factors cannot be controlled for as in experimental approaches. Therefore, an approach was taken which reviews descriptive areas related to the research question.

The research question focuses on ‘how’. The research question concentrates on the identification of the presence of monitoring systems and assessing how they are utilized for organization learning, using the theoretical models which link the two areas (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Rowley, 2002; Tellis,

1997). The study made use of the double-loop learning process (Argyris, 1977) and Fifth Discipline (Senge, 1990) theories of organizational learning, specifically focusing on the role of performance monitoring in these theories and in the case study. The key message of double-loop learning is that organizational learning requires the ability to access monitoring information on progress to achieve intended consequences from actions and understand the reasons for not achieving the intended consequences at the point of action, as well as the underlying processes (Argyris, 1977). Given the process nature of this theory, monitoring processes to access and analyze the relevant information on achievement and non-achievement of consequences supported single and double-loop learning process. The theory does fall short of describing the underlying organizational factors which influence learning as well as the iterative nature of learning and use of monitoring for performance management and accountability. Hence the Fifth Discipline provides a complementary theory where the key message is that learning requires a combination of shared values and vision, personal mastery and team learning (Senge, 1990). The use of monitoring supports these areas in providing the information and processes for performance management for an individual and team, accountability for the organization, and communication on successes and challenges in implementation.

The study of use in a single unit allowed for more detailed assessment to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the 'how' factors. A quantitative survey approach, with generalizable results and statistical power was not necessary for this study. Johansson (2003) describes the case as a "*complex functioning unit*" where survey methods cannot be used to understand the detailed influencing factors. Management Sciences for Health is the selected study unit, with a particular focus on a project based in South Africa. It is an international NGO, including centers (program level) and projects. The organization strategic road map includes organizational learning as a strategic goal, and monitoring systems are a requirement for implementation. It poses a useful case to explore the research question.

3.2 Research Design

The case study was explanatory, responding to a research question on 'how' two systems are used in a single study unit. The study employed an abductive method of reasoning to compare the theoretical constructs supporting utilization of monitoring to learning to practical application in an NGO.

3.3 Research Method

Case studies require triangulation of data from multiple sources to respond to the research questions (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Gerring, 2004; Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). This included mainly qualitative data from primary sources including interviews and document review. Limited quantitative data was used through analysis of secondary data generated from an internal staff survey on organizational learning systems. The triangulation and mixed method approach ensured comprehensiveness and validity of case. The sources of data and data collection methods for the case study are included in the following **table 2.**

Table 2. Research Methods

Key area	Research question	Data Source	Data collection method
Systems and culture to improve performance through key learning areas	1. How is performance monitoring at a Management Sciences for Health (MSH) project in South Africa being used by staff for organizational learning?	• MSH center and project strategies or plans, policies • Organizational learning draft plans • Organizational learning workshop report • Organizational and project budgets • M&E plans/frameworks • Interview transcripts	• Document review • One-on-on one interviews with M&E staff, and key implementing staff
Systems and culture to generate, collect, interpret and disseminate information	i) What are the current performance monitoring and organizational learning practices used by MSH South Africa project staff?	• Interview transcripts	• One-on-on one interviews with M&E staff, and key implementing staff
Systems and culture to assess performance, critique influencing actions, and underlying variables	ii) How has performance monitoring use and organizational learning at MSH South Africa been aligned with the MSH organizational learning plan?	• Interview transcripts	• Thematic analysis of one-on-one interviews
Systems for skills development, structures to support shared values, culture of shared values; and improve performance through key learning areas	iii) What are MSH South Africa staff perceptions on the status and use of monitoring and organizational learning? iv) What changes have been implemented as a result of organizational learning using performance monitoring systems?	• MSH organizational learning survey • Interview transcripts	• Secondary data sourcing • One-on-on one interviews with M&E staff, and key implementing staff
	v) What are the enabling factors and barriers to utilization of performance monitoring for learning?	• MSH organizational learning survey • Interview transcripts	• Secondary data sourcing • One-on-on one interviews with M&E staff, and key implementing staff

3.4 Research Procedure

The following research steps were taken for the study:

1) Requested permission to conduct case study on NGO program and one recommended project
2) Requested access to key documents for review and survey data
3) Reviewed documents and document findings, and survey data based on research topic area listed in table 2 into database
4) Requested interviews with the M&E director, one advisor, two implementing staff, and an Organizational Development staff member (if present) from program level and project level
5) Conducted a series of interviews with each selected staff member (requesting consent for participation and recording)
6) Stakeholder validation of results
7) Transcribed interview content into database
8) Data analysis and reporting

3.5 Sampling

The case considered an MSH Project based in South Africa to assess performance monitoring use for organizational learning based on global expectations and organizational learning plans.

Purposive sampling was used to select staff members from the center and project for interviews. In a qualitative assessment, sample size is not critical, but fair representation of the population of interest is important, such as including various categories of staff in the sub-sample. The sampling method was selected due to the study focus in a single unit, which has a small number of staff relevant to the research area and restricted staff availability.

3.6 Primary data

3.6.1 Key informant interviews

A guided one-on-one, key informant interview was used as the instrument to collect the primary data. Signed and informed consent was requested prior to conducting the interviews. All interviews were recorded for transcription purposes. The interviews focused on understanding the systems and cultural dimension of utilization of monitoring for organizational learning. This covered all research questions, including questions related to:

- Perceptions on current monitoring and organizational learning practices and use
- Perceptions on barriers (structural, system, cultural) to the use of monitoring for organizational learning
- Examples of performance management, accountability, and communication using monitoring information (theorized monitoring uses)
- Examples of monitoring use for shared mental model, shared vision, personal mastery, and team learning (theorized organizational learning forms)

The interview guide is attached in Appendices 1-3.

3.6.2 Secondary data

Document Review

A document review was conducted to assess the systems and structures in place to address monitoring, organizational learning and their linkage, and examples of how they intend intended to be implemented. This drew focus onto the systems and structures in place to support monitoring systems and their utilization for organizational learning.

The key documents reviewed were:

- Organizational learning strategy
- Organizational learning plans and budgets
- M&E strategy
- Monitoring database

- Knowledge management systems
- Documentation on project performance review and management
- Existing reports: A survey was conducted in January 2013 to understand staff perceptions of organizational learning. The results of this were reviewed to identify related responses to perceptions of organizational learning practices, enabling factors and barriers. This data was assessed perceptions of environmental, leadership and process aspects related to the research question.

The document review addressed the research questions on identifying the monitoring and organizational learning practices and intended use according to plans, identify differences in plans between center and project, and assess how the plans and strategies enforce or restrict the practices and use.

3.7 Criteria for Evaluating Social Research

3.7.1 External validity

External validity requires measures for generalization of findings (Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). The case study approach is mainly applicable to the context in which it was conducted, and not concerned about generalizability in that it is focused on a specific case, and does not account for the complexity of influencing factors which differentiate it from other NGOs. However, the use of a case study protocol which includes specific thematic analysis approach, triangulation of data sources and comparison between program and project level are somewhat generalizable across NGOs of similar scale, scope and implementation context (Gerring, 2004; Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997).

3.7.2 Internal validity

Internal validity includes developing an explanation for a causal relationship and the influencing factors (Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). Internal validity was controlled through a triangulation method of comparing themes and pattern matching of interviews, secondary data review, and document review data. In addition, stakeholders within the organization were requested to review the results.

3.7.3 Ecological validity

Ecological or construct validity aims to reduce subjectivity through linking the data collection questions and methods to the research question and theoretical frameworks (Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). The case study presents a practical view of theoretical constructs which is relevant to NGOs similar to the case analyzed. It is relevant to current organizational review of organizational learning, and results can be utilized by the organization to improve utilization of monitoring for organizational learning. The use of triangulation and mixed methods to develop the chain of evidence supports this. Key stakeholders also provided a review of the draft case study report.

3.7.4 Reliability

Reliability refers to the measures in place to ensure the ability to repeat the study and achieve the same results (Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). A specific theoretical framework, tools and processes guided the data analysis. These include an interview guide and external review of analysis. All data sources were maintained in a case study database, in addition to detailed record keeping and systems for backing up documents.

3.7.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study refers to the relevance in practical contexts. The case study presents a useful study for the NGO's current efforts, and has a practical purpose. It also presents a case to donors and government for improved utilization, and adds novel information on a comprehensive case specifically focusing on monitoring use for organizational learning.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

- Case studies do not detail the multiple context factors, hence limiting generalizability to only very similar NGOs.
- Critiques of the influencing factors are limited in the scope of this study. Analysis considered retrospective data from 2013 and current uses and practices in line with the plan developed in 2013, but did not access factors at the baseline of the project.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted after ethical approval from the University of Witwatersrand. Signed consent was requested from all interviewees. All interviewees will remain anonymous. Written permission from key staff members was received in order to conduct document review and access the survey data. Publication of this information will only be done with approval from the organization.

3.10 Analysis

A case study requires understanding of a specific case through triangulation of various methods and data sources. Triangulation ensures that various perspectives, including key stakeholders, are considered and rigorous review of data is used to ensure validity of the case study developed (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Rowley, 2002; Tellis, 1997). The data collected is managed in a case study database, and this is used to formulate a chain of evidence (Rowley, 2002). The chain of evidence is formulated through an abductive mode of reasoning. Abductive mode of reasoning is the synthesis of facts in the case and creating the linkage between reality and the theoretical background in constructing the case study (Johansson, 2003). The data was collected through mixed methodology to include quantitative and qualitative data. The mixed methodology supports triangulation of all forms and sources of information, including secondary survey data, documentation and primary qualitative insights from employees.

Data was collected from two sources of data: primary data from key informant interviews and secondary data from key documents. The interview data was analysed according to the themes and sub-themes. This included use if the theoretical frameworks to develop the themes and coding for analysis. This approach is termed constant comparison analysis or directed content analysis (Hsieh, 2005; Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2007). The themes selected are listed in **table 3**. Sub-themes were developed and used for forming codes, such as ‘monitoring practice’ and ‘learning values’.

Table 3. Research themes and sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
I. Information management	i. Systems and structure ii. Practice and culture
II. Performance monitoring and learning	iii. Performance assessment and critique
III. Learning environment	iv. Skills development v. Shared values and vision vi. Leadership

Barriers and enablers for utilizing monitoring for organizational learning were identified through review of relevant documents, systems and structures. All documents were stored and coded for themes using Atlas Ti Software. The thematic analysis results were tabulated and compared to the perceived practices presented in the interview thematic analysis and survey data.

The survey data report was reviewed for information related to the thematic areas listed for the one-on-one interviews. These results were also stored in Atlas Ti Software.

The specific steps followed for the data analysis were:

Step 1: Develop coding
Step 2: Capture and upload all interview transcriptions and case documents into Atlas Ti
Step 3: Group quotations into various codes
Step 4: Create code reports and review convergent and divergent themes
Step 5: Compare findings to relevant published cases and theoretical frameworks

The results of the analysis are the basis of the case study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

Using the double-loop and Fifth Discipline model as a framework for organizational learning, it was possible to identify and critique how the MSH Building Local Capacity in for Delivery of HIV Services in Southern Africa (BLC) Project uses performance monitoring for organizational learning. The sample of staff interviewed included the staff listed in **table 4**. Seven staff members were selected based on their role in developing systems and structures for learning and/or monitoring, and staff members that are required to use monitoring for performance management, accountability and communication.

Table 4. Staff interviewees

Job title	Role in systems and structure development		Role in monitoring use			Number
	Organizational learning systems	Monitoring systems	Performance management	Accountability	Communication	
1. Deputy Project Director	X	X	X	X	X	1
2. M&E Director	X	X	X	X	X	1
3. Technical Director	X		X	X	X	1
4. M&E Advisor		X	X	X		1
5. Communications Associate	X				X	1
6. Advisors/ implementing staff			X	X	X	2
Total interviewees						7

The practices are related to the single- and double-loop components. This includes information management systems, structures, and practices. The culture and

environmental factors as part of the Fifth Discipline components form the foundation of functional double-loop learning. This includes staff perceptions about the use of performance monitoring and organizational learning, enabling and barriers to use of performance monitoring for learning, and the role of leadership. In this chapter the findings are presented and discussed.

4.1 Information management for performance monitoring and learning

4.1.1 Structures and systems

With a focus on monitoring systems and their role in organizational learning, there was a need to identify specific systems for performance management, communication of progress and results, and systems for accountability. The systems and structures identified are the M&E unit, M&E framework, and the M&E systems. All areas show a structural attempt to link performance monitoring and organizational learning. The gaps lie in its donor focus and uni-directional data flow.

Project organogram

The BLC project organogram is designed to integrate a team of two M&E staff, three communications staff, and one knowledge management staff member. Their roles are to support the processes of generating and collating data, analysing and disseminating information. The roles and responsibilities for all implementing staff include aspects of monitoring and learning, with the M&E unit providing a supporting role. The structure of the project was criticized for having systems and structures are set by the centralized to a team of directors, which are poorly informed by the team of implementing advisors. This is viewed as a reason for the disconnect between strategies and reality. Interview I5 stated, "*The structure of the project makes learning mechanical. There are discussions to better integrate, and have organic learning.*" (I5, Interview, 18 December 2013) Organizational learning has been a key focus area to address in multiple projects in alignment with the global and national development strategies. Hence MSH-BLC has begun efforts to restructure the project to create a de-centralised structure which encourages learning across project areas. It also ensures the role of monitoring performance is shifted to team leads, possibly changing the M&E unit-driven performance monitoring.

M&E Framework

An M&E framework was developed by BLC's M&E unit in 2013. It is presented as steps in the project cycle and the role, process, and tools for monitoring and/or evaluating at each point. The document focuses on accountability, stating donor requirements and performance management by tracking achievement against targets. The purpose of the document is: *"to guide partners and projects on implementing the* M&E *systems and processes consistent with USAID/RHAP and MSH* M&E *standards. Adherence to this framework promotes accountability that will improve relationships with key partners including our donors and the government and CSOs with whom BLC works."* (MSH-BLC, M&E Framework 2013, p4) The objectives of the M&E framework indicate it is systems-focused, including emphasis on development of guidelines, data management, storage, and data flow.

There are also aspects of culture considered in supporting data analysis, guiding data for decisions and communicating to key stakeholders. This is evident in the objective: "*Ensure that BLC, CSO, and government partners' staff has appropriate skills and knowledge on planning, monitoring, evaluation, reflection, and reporting."* (MSH-BLC, M&E Framework 2013, p4) There is an attempt to address aspects of communications by including "*writing boxes*" which describe key messages at each point in the project cycle. In addition, a communications strategy was developed which details the key messages and approaches to documenting and disseminating information. The key messages are aligned with project monitoring areas, and utilize monitoring data and data processes in developing the communications products. It also relates to the broader role of M&E in the description of the situational analysis, where it is summarized that *"partner organizations to constantly scan the environment to adapt appropriately"* (MSH-BLC, M&E Framework 2013, p7).

The framework combines monitoring, review and reflection: "*Monitoring records enables the measurement of inputs and activities to project outputs, outcomes and impact, as well as documents successes and challenges. The information generated describes progress made towards targeted results which is important to both internal and external stakeholders. The information can then be used for reflection and*

informing any improvements to project implementation" (MSH-BLC, M&E Framework 2013, p14). However, the specific reflection or review activities are not detailed. In addition, the data flow diagram is a single loop process (Appendix 2). The process includes collection, collation and reporting. The reporting channel is focused on donors, demonstrating the strong donor influence on the monitoring process. The M&E system also includes the use of a performance monitoring plan (PMP) which guides the data collection. Furthermore, MSH-BLC has implemented a web-based monitoring system to improve the process for capturing and collating information.

Organizational Learning Plan

An MSH-South Africa learning plan was developed through a workshop in September 2013 with all key MSH-South Africa team members. This was part of the approach to address the global strategic goal of being a learning organization, and as part of the learning activity listed in the global strategy: *"learning and knowledge exchange plan in place*" (Goal 7). The M&E framework and the practices described by staff are aligned with the learning plan area of *"concrete learning processes*". In particular, one aspect of this area is listed as teams generating, collecting, interpreting and disseminating information.

A Strategic Road Map Goal 7 Advisory Committee was set up which includes team members from all global centres, Human Resources, and Strategic Development and Communications. A fact sheet located on the intranet specifies that there is an organizational learning team which is located at the Office of Strategic Development and Communications. It includes a MSH librarian, internal communications, knowledge management, and platform development and support. There is no clear linkage to performance monitoring or integration of the team with the global M&E leadership.

A detailed list of resources and guides are provided which are categorized by MSH's three areas of focus. The only monitoring aspect is the individual performance plan, review and development process. All other processes are specifically for exchange across projects. None are relevant to routine monitoring or organizational

performance management. These are useful tools, but there is no indication of utilization.

MSH-South Africa Strategic Roadmap

The MSH-South Africa goals presented in the MSH-South Africa strategy are linked to a specific implementation plan, with activities related to all goals, including those influencing monitoring and organizational learning. Excerpts of the specific activities are listed in **table 5** below.

Table 5. Budget excerpt from MSH-South Africa Strategic Road Map

Key strategic area/activity	**Budget allocated (US$)**
Goal 2: Leadership and governance	
- Cross-project technical working groups specific to leadership and governance are formed.	2,000,000 (years 1-3)
- MSH South Africa has partnerships with universities/academia to develop and/or deliver courses on leadership and governance.	None allocated
Goal 5: Optimize use of resources	
- Performance is monitored (people, processes, systems)	1,000,000 (year 1)
Goal 6: Leverage local talent	
- Skills gaps are identified and addressed to strengthen technical resources	22,000,000 (years 2-3)
Goal 7: Learning and Knowledge Exchange Plan in Place	
- Knowledge exchange platform is established	12,000,000 (years 1-2)
- Team has a learning plan for knowledge sharing in place	None allocated

The planned activities and allocation of budget in table 6 indicate intentions to ensure monitoring systems are implemented as well as used in organizational learning. These however do not indicate implementation. There has not been any report on progress on planned activities since adoption of the strategy. Since the development of the strategy there have been steps taken to develop an organizational learning plan.

Though budget was not allocated to an organizational learning plan, funding was sourced and utilised for the development of the MSH-South Africa learning plan. This is an indication of opportunities to mobilize resources to these areas. The MSH-South Africa learning plan includes key activities and an M&E plan aligned to implementation. The learning plan includes the following specific intended activities:

i. Three quarterly MSH sharing series held
ii. Monthly time schedule allocated for Brown bag events (knowledge exchange presentations)
iii. Reporting format for conference attendance developed and used
iv. One seminar held
v. Plans for annual share fair developed
vi. Intranet established
vii. Technical review meetings are held twice by each of the MSH-South Africa programs
viii. Induction program reviewed and revised to support Goal 7

All activities are targeted for completion in 2014 and there is currently no budget allocation. All are focused on addressing learning processes (monitoring and/or learning practices), which according to the team input was not a main concern. Further data collection is required to clarify how the plan will address gaps in leadership and culture, or if the assumption is that these are addressed though the planned activities.

4.1.2 Practice and culture of performance monitoring for learning

The staff interviews allowed further assessment of the actual practices of monitoring. This included what they described as practices of individual, team, and organizational monitoring, and the current culture around the use of the practices described.

In 2013, MSH headquarters conducted an assessment on the MSH staff views on the learning practices within the organization. MSH's median score was determined and used as the benchmark to group staff scoring into quartiles (i.e. scores 0-25%

below the median are in the 1st quintile, whereas scores 75-100% above the median are in the 4th quintile). The results from MSH South Africa are summarised in Appendix 5. It presents ranking in the areas of: supportive learning environment, concrete learning processes and practices, and leadership that reinforces learning. All areas are ranked in the 2nd quintile. This is the same ranking for eight of the nine sub-components in the areas. Only "time for reflection" was ranked in the 3rd quintile. The survey results are an indication that learning systems, structures, and culture is perceived as weak in South Africa. These results mirror the findings from the study interviews to a large extent. It is only the sub-component on time for reflection where the interview results contradict this: interviewees reported having little time for reflection. It is possible that during the period between the survey and this study, circumstances changed and influenced the change in this one sub-component.

The interviewees indicated that the systems for monitoring at MSH-BLC are largely for performance management and accountability. The performance management practices which cut across accountability were: (i) team development of an annual work plan, (ii) performance monitoring plan including specific indicators for each project area/funding stream, and (iii) a web-based monitoring system. These are practices which support data collection for interpretation and use. Staff felt that systems and structures are adapted based on donor requirements and form part of the donor agreement: there is a "*contract with donor with requirements laid out*" (I5, Interview, 18 December 2013). Practices which are adapted specifically for accountability to the donor are data collection tools, data capture/record systems, quarterly monitoring reports to donor, and meetings with the donor to review expectations. Team review meetings and individual performance reviews are set to interpret data collated; however, there is a gap between the accountability requirements and team performance management needs. Staff felt that monitoring practices are quantitative-focused and lack tracking of quantitative areas, which are areas of interest and information required for tacit knowledge, such as beneficiary perspectives on quality of services. Interview I1 stated, "*There is a disconnection between donor expectations and how teams are aligned*." (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013).

The donor-driven nature of the systems encourage a donor-focused culture which builds a barrier between teams and use of information for more efficient performance management. The staff culture discussed is strong in areas of collecting and generating for donor reporting, but weak in areas of performance management and communications. All processes are driven by the M&E and communications team. Staff felt the need for these roles to be shared, but there are current challenges with the spread of skills. Furthermore, staff perceptions on their ability to question monitoring practices are varied, but it was clear among all interviewees that there are aspects of monitoring practices which cannot be questioned, particularly those related to donor commitments, such as activities and indicators set in the work plans. This creates a barrier in the use of monitoring for purposes beyond accountability. Interviewee I1 stated, "*It's not easy to adjust way things are done. Tools are there, but the challenge is with the understanding of what needs to be done and how it is measured. This is seen at all levels of staff. The challenge being the translation of the donor expectations into our strategic planning and what is expected." (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013)*

4.2 Performance monitoring for organizational learning

4.2.1 Performance assessment and critique

The structures in place – particularly the M&E framework – are intended to support the assessment of performance. As mentioned under the theme on information management, the expected results are donor expected results, and could be enhanced by assessing broader performance areas. In addition, the recent development of the web-based monitoring system would influence future ability to assess the broader areas of performance. The use of the M&E framework and PMP were also designed to maintain clear monitoring and performance management.

The ability to assess performance and achievement is an aspect of organizational learning. It requires reflection of single and double loop processes and generation of knowledge to improve performance. When asked to provide examples of learning practices related to performance monitoring and learning, staff discussed: (i)

meetings (senior management team, technical teams, directors); (ii) sharing series (series of topics of interest relevant to work presented bi-weekly); (iii) informal documentation/information sharing; (iv) document management platform; (v) quarterly reviews/reports; (vi) emails on key achievements, updates and links to resources; and (vii) intranet (global platform to share information accessible by all staff). There are multiple platforms to discuss performance and disseminate information: at meetings and presentations, and documented in reports which are disseminated to donors and staff. The use of performance assessment and its dissemination to improve performance is not clear to the interviewees. One staff member referred to the meetings as "*not intentional*" (I6, Interview, 18 December 2013), explaining that they are set to discuss progress, but there are no clear activities at the end.

Even though staff did not feel strongly that performance monitoring was used for learning at MSH-BLC, they were able to give a few examples of where in fact performance monitoring was used to some extent for learning. They were also able to indicate what changes were seen as a result of this usage. These examples are summarised in **table 6.** The examples show that the processes for monitoring have supported learning.

Table 6. Examples of uses of performance monitoring and learning in MSH-BLC (Source Interviews I1-7)

Performance monitoring finding	Learning	Changes implemented	Results
i. Target number of communications products under-achieved	Through quarterly review of the PMP, discussions and meetings with teams, it was identified that the teams were struggling to develop the tools due to limited skills in communication, and limited number of communications staff to support the teams	Additional communications staff were recruited to support the development of communications products	Able to identify the team needs and reasons for the poor performance. There has been increased production of communications materials and level of analysis in developing the products since the changes were made
ii. Underperformance of beneficiary reach in Lesotho	Data collection and collation challenges, and gaps in service provision approach	Development of an acceleration plan	Rapid increase in reach and record of beneficiaries reached over a period of 2 years
iii. Delays in performance according to PMP	Through consultation and process review, identified current structure hinders implementation	Organizational structure amended to streamline implementation	Restructure in process
iv. Delays in performance reporting	Current system of reporting time limiting, more rapid system of data collation needed	Development of web-based database	Reduced time to access performance monitoring data

The inconsistent use of performance monitoring for learning is due to the infrequency of relevant practices and the weak culture of critiquing information. Most areas of learning occur when identifying issues in the PMP, which currently are only reviewed

by teams on a quarterly basis, followed by review and discussions driven by the M&E and communications team. The system of monitoring does not allow for the teams themselves to regularly review and discuss performance. In cases where teams meet, the relevance of discussion to performance is not apparent. Interview I1 reported that the structure of discussions and learning is not ordered. Furthermore, the size of the meetings does not enable specific technical discussions which are disseminated to other teams. Lastly, the content of the meetings do not address the level of critique needed for learning; in other words, are not facilitated to delve into underlying variables and actions affecting performance. Interview I1 describes this: "*We have some small technical meetings.* [however] *How much is brought to the attention of others?*" and "*The agenda is sometimes skewed, other items discussed.*" (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013). The culture has also been described as internal learning focused: "*Active learning is not happening, we are internal focused*" (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013).

4.3 Learning environment

4.3.1 Skills development

At an individual level, all staff members have performance development reviews which include specific measurable deliverables. A 360 degree approach is used to assess staff performance and the process includes development goals where there are performance challenges. A staff member reported that the current individual performance development process poses a challenge to project performance monitoring. The individual development plan is completed only on an annual basis, the results inform skills development, but the *"individual loses purpose…[and] focuses on monetary reward"* (I3, Interview, 13 December 2013). As a result, the skills development process does not support project performance: *"[We] separate ourselves from the project, not linking individual performance to objectives in plan."* (I3, Interview, 13 December 2013). Therefore, M&E support staff still find challenges in implementing monitoring systems: *"*M&E *understanding varies, it is not easy to introduce ideas to staff with different backgrounds and understanding."* (I6, Interview, 19 December 2013). The support M&E staff are skilled, but focus should be placed on skills development among implementing staff (I5). Suggestions were made to

concentrate on building research capacity, technical review (I1, I3-7), and *"harvest qualitative learning"* (I2, Interview, 12 December 2013). The suggested skills which need to be developed to improve monitoring and learning are critical thinking, analysis, strategic thinking, and aligning work with the project vision (I1-7). There as some team-specific attempts to strengthen skills development, such as the use of Lominger[4] competencies to assess skills gaps, a book review group, and online courses and resources. The MSH survey on learning practices was aimed at identifying perceptions on the gaps and skills development needed. As the ranking of the sub-component "concrete learning processes and practices" represents, education and training is ranked in the 2nd quintile, as well as information collection, analysis, and information transfer (appendix 5).

4.3.2 Shared values and vision

Initiatives such as the online courses described in the previous section not only develop individuals and teams, but also build the values and reinforce the vision of the project staff. The values which staff described would improve monitoring and learning include:

- Ability to question the status quo and approaches
- People guided by results vs. hours worked
- Respecting one another and allowing others to make mistakes
- Being proactive
- Acknowledgement of deficiencies and seek training to address them
- Curiosity and looking for new things
- Creativity
- Continuous learning

Most values described are aspects of personal mastery, where individuals should

[4] Lominger competency model is an approach to talent management. It includes the assessment of staff capacity in key areas for competitive advantage, and provides approaches to strengthening the various areas. http://youremployment.biz/competency/lominger-competency-list/ Accessed March 28, 2014

review approaches, feel open to do so, and continuously look at ways to improve oneself, teams and overall project performance. These values are not consistent across the MSH-BLC project, but are apparent among some staff. One proposition was to identify a champion of monitoring and learning to disperse these values across the project (I5, Interview, 18 December 2013).

4.3.3 Leadership

Leadership forms a central role in ensuring systems and structures and the culture in organizations. The MSH-BLC project leadership was involved to some extent in development of the key strategies and staff structures. Staff perceptions of the role of leadership were positive (I1-7). They reported that they feel leadership does encourage innovation, has shown commitment in provision of resources for monitoring and learning, and is encouraging (I3 and I6). Staff all agreed that the first role of leadership is to demonstrate the use of monitoring and learning. In other words, "*the top sets the tone*" which shapes the culture in the organization (I1). In addition, leadership must motivate staff to become *"critical consumers of information received"* (I5). Staff recommended ways in which leadership could enhance performance monitoring and learning (I1-7):

- Recognise and reward improved performance and learning
- Enforce accountability to performance management and learning activities (e.g. learning plan)
- Promote performance management and learning practices
- Allow time to reflect
- Create physical spaces to think and write

4.4 Summary

The MSH-BLC project has comprehensive systems and structures in place for both performance monitoring and organizational learning. These include relevant strategies, frameworks, and systems for data collection, collation and dissemination. These are areas of strength in the project. However, the findings indicate that in practice the systems and structures are utilised at a single-loop level and not at the level of critiquing underlying factors. Furthermore, staff described factors related to

the culture of the project and environment as hurdles to the use of performance monitoring for learning. These factors are related to the disciplines described by Senge (1990).

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

5.1 Performance monitoring and learning practices

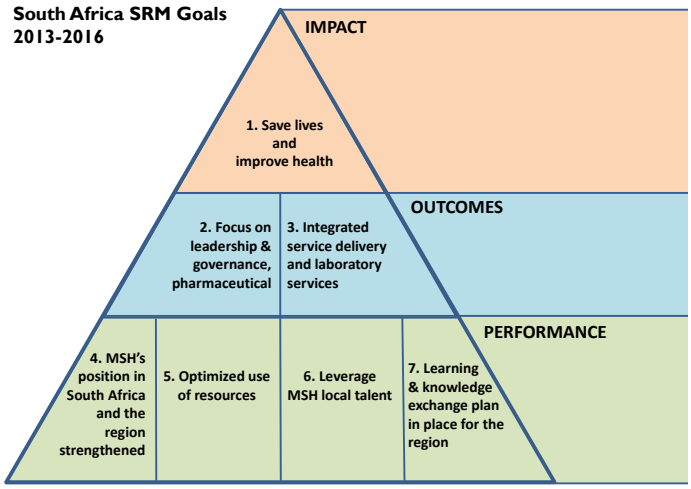
5.1.1 Systems for performance monitoring and learning

The systems of monitoring at MSH-BLC are reported to be used for performance management, accountability, and communications at varying degrees. Examples of this include the use of a performance monitoring plan, donor reporting, and the integration of M&E and communications staff. The practices at MSH-BLC are in line with the key purposes of monitoring: performance management, accountability, and communications (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). The systems, structures, and practices are well developed for comprehensive monitoring systems. The systems to monitor performance are aligned with a results framework, and there are methods to collect data and analyse and disseminate performance monitoring information. These are well documented and detailed in the M&E framework. However, as described by authors as a current challenge in NGO monitoring, the practices for monitoring are donor-focused (Taylor, 1998; Guijit, 2008; Guijit, 2012). All staff expressed that performance monitoring is restricted by donor requirements, which limits the focus of performance monitoring. These are in alignment with the arguments by Kanter and Summers (1987), Bornstein (2001), and Guijit (2008), who described current M&E systems as donor-driven and developed for the donor's interest.

5.1.2 Structures for performance monitoring and learning

The MSH-South Africa strategy and learning plan, and MSH-BLC M&E framework are examples of how the organization has attempted to implement performance monitoring and learning systems. The inclusion of learning as a global organizational goal is also an indication of commitment to achieving organizational learning (strategic goals and learning goal depicted in figures 4 and 5). Taylor (1998) stated that it is important that organizational learning is aligned with the organizational framework.

Figure 4. MSH-South Africa Strategic Roadmap Goals (Source: MSH Strategic Roadmap 2013-2016)



In the MSH-South Africa Organizational Learning Plan, the learning vision set at a global level is: "*By 2017, MSH plans for all countries, centres, and offices to have a learning plan and for 80% of staff to report regularly using our knowledge exchange platforms and systems as a critical foundation to be able to improve Program technical quality, Diversification, Value for Money.*"

Figure 5. MSH Global organizational learning approach (Source: MSH internal presentation on Strategic goal 7)



5.2 Perceptions on the use of monitoring for learning

5.2.1 Systems in practice

In practice, performance monitoring and organizational learning should be an iterative process - systems should allow for critique of actions and underlying variables as presented by Argyris (1997). As Letts *et al* (1999), and Tonder and Roodt (2008) describe, the capacity to adapt requires systems to collate information and assess influencing and underlying factors affecting results. This is critical to ensure performance of the organization. One organization, ActionAid, published its use of the Argyris model in adapting its systems for learning (Alps, 2011). ActionAid has multiple systems and structures through all areas of the organization to support their accountability for learning program. Such an approach is useful in aligning the relationships among systems.

MSH-BLC has made significant practical efforts to encourage learning in practices reported (meetings, sharing series, informal documentation/information sharing, Cloud-based document management platform, quarterly reviews/reports, email updates, and global intranet). Implementation of the systems supports both monitoring and learning as it allows for the opportunity to critique actions and underlying variables (Argyris, 1977). Moyinhan (2005) indicates that such organizational learning systems and practices strengthen the use of information for learning.

Interviewee I1 critiqued the use of current systems: "*Review meetings and discussions need to be strengthened. The depth of analysis and capturing the learning is not organized...It is important that at the monthly project meetings, the key lessons are picked up.*" (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013). Efforts to use the systems and the culture of performance monitoring for learning are weak. The available systems for performance assessment can be optimized for use in learning if the staff interest is reviewed and a shift is made to consider a focus on both the donor and staff performance management. Van Thiel and Leeuw (2002) discuss the gaps seen in use of performance monitoring, indicating that systems designed based only a specific group's needs result in systems not being used to improve

performance. The authors termed this the “performance paradox”. Similarly, van Helden *et al* (2012) states the importance of developing a user-based performance monitoring system to ensure it is utilised as expected.

The results of the MSH learning survey confirm that practices are weak. Learning process composite was ranked in the 2nd quintile (appendix 5). These included information collection and analysis. Most areas were rated higher in South Africa in comparison to the global MSH results. The global survey results reported the sub-components of information collection and education and training as ranked in the bottom (1st) quintile.

5.3 Learning environment

In terms of implementation, not all staff are able to relate the learning to practical application. Interview I4 refers to the development of organizational learning strategies at the headquarters and its implementation: *“At the project level it [organizational learning] is valuable. What I have not seen is how [what has been facilitated] at the central level, has turned into practical at the local level”.* Another interviewee states that *“There is no mechanism for learning about the environment [in which MSH-BLC operates]. Other things are shifting around us…we are lost without the active learning”*. (I1, Interview, 11 December 2013). Similar views are presented among the interviews, acknowledging the need but indicating that this is not implemented, *“Monitoring and learning is a constant flow and exchange. This is ideal.” (I7, Interview, 20 December 2013).* Van Helden *et al* (2012) emphasise a user-focused approach to performance monitoring design, and denote such challenges as a result of the system design. This perpetuates the aforementioned “performance paradox”.

The sub-components in the MSH learning survey included: psychological safety, appreciation of differences, openness to new ideas, and time for reflection. Only time for reflection was ranked in the 3rd quintile, but all other sub-components were ranked in the 2nd quintile (appendix 5). These support the current views on the environment as not supportive for learning. In comparison, the global MSH results

reported psychological safety and openness to new ideas as ranked in the bottom (1st) quintile.

Culture

With the extensive systems and structures available, staff felt that they do not critique actions influencing performance. In other words, staff perceptions indicate that monitoring is not intentionally used for learning.

The discussions by staff show that there is interest and willingness to implement systems for monitoring and learning, but the culture is not yet optimal. Staff suggested either expanding the detail within current senior management meetings and team meetings or ensuring that there is a technical aspect within the meetings where the detail of actions can be discussed. Interviewee 2 suggests, "*Technical reviews would be useful for team learning." (I2, Interview, 12 December 2013).* The likely reason that staff does not feel they have the opportunity to discuss how actions influence the performance is that they do not perceive an acceptance of making mistakes. One interviewee felt, "*There is no room to make mistakes…There is a reliance on perceptions and a pressure to perform.*" *(I2, Interview, 12 December 2013)* This is indicative of a culture which may not encourage learning. It is currently an environment focused on ability to report on performance, where some staff do not feel comfortable to openly review the actions.

Staff discussed the need for "spaces" for thinking. In an open plan office, the space is not conducive for completing online courses or being able to review and reflect. Such factors are limiting for nurturing the disciplines for learning described by Senge (1990), particularly team learning and personal mastery. The cases of ActionAid and IFAD make clear use of Argyris and Senge learning models in describing the culture requirements for implementation, making mention of the need for shared vision and values.

Skills development

According to Senge (1990) building a shared mental model and shared values among staff are components of building organizational learning. The culture of the staff can be strengthened through skills development. If staff had an improved understanding of their roles and expectations, and well as the ability to monitor, they will improve performance and organizational learning. The Fifth Discipline model (Senge 1990) includes disciplines on personal mastery and team learning.

Skills development to enhance performance is not explicit in the documents reviewed. However, broad skills development is included as part of Human Resources policy and procedures. Berman and Wang (2000) and Gavin *et al* (2008) state that for performance management to function, the technical capacity to use the systems are needed. These must be integrated into the design and implementation of the system. Such skills development opportunities are available through online resources and other opportunities for learning, and leadership encourages utilization of these resources. Staff felt there are structural areas which can be improved to support learning, such as increased study leave.

Leadership

The role of leadership is critical in motivating the use of performance monitoring and reviewing the approach (Melkers and Willoughby, 2005). Leadership and staff emphasised the limited ability to adapt systems and the need to maintain systems according to donor requirements. For example, the interview criticism that the performance monitoring is quantitative focused without qualitative aspects is likely due to this not being the interest of the donor. It is evident from the interviews that the donor-focused nature has a negative influence on the performance monitoring and learning culture of the organization. This has been described as viewing monitoring as a *"data collection task"* (Weiss, 1995; Chapman, 2004; Ebrahim, 2005; Guijit, 2012). Dlamini (2006) described such output-focused monitoring as managerial, which does not support learning. Nonetheless, some staff reported that in their experience, leadership has encouraged the use of performance monitoring

and learning. In contrast, the MSH learning survey reported “leadership reinforces learning” as ranked in the 2nd quintile (appendix 5).

5.4 Summary

Comparing the results of this case study to a previous assessment of organizational learning in MSH-South Africa (conducted in January 2013), there is the same indication that the environmental, procedural and practical, and leadership factors overall are rated poorly – all ranked in the 2nd quintile (appendix 5). In contrast, staff did rate time for reflection in the 3rd quintile. However, the case presents time for reflection as an area of weakness. Many of the areas are ranked as weak, and the overall rankings are consistent with the global MSH overall results. However, there are four sub-components (psychological safety, openness to new ideas, information collection, and education and training) which are ranked in the 2nd quintile in MSH-South Africa, in comparison to being ranked in the 1st quintile globally.

The MSH-BLC case study provides valuable information of application of systems for learning. MSH is a global organization, and the MSH-BLC project has utilised global and national strategies to support its performance monitoring and learning systems. Nonetheless, it does provide a unique example of a country-level case of performance monitoring and learning. International organizations are more likely to have the resources in place to develop and implement such systems. However, MSH-BLC shows the potential of developing systems and structures with scarce budget allocated to this area. It does fit the Argyris model in terms of process and systems in place for critique; however, there are significant gaps in areas described by Senge (1990). For the MSH-BLC team, individual, and cultural aspects require strengthening.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion and Recommendations

Performance monitoring contributes to broader evaluative thinking. Related literature places a focus on evaluative thinking which encompasses various evaluations and monitoring. This literature alludes to an alignment in performance monitoring use in organizational learning and evaluative thinking discussions (Campbell *et al,* 2008; King and Stevahn, 2013; Patton, 2011). Patton (2011) linked evaluative thinking to its use in single and double-loop learning within organizations, and Campbell et al (2008) has further related it to a triple-loop learning (critique of organizational values and vision which influences actions). Furthermore, evaluative thinking literature associates this area with the sustainability of an organization. Patton (2011) describes evaluative thinking as critical in the re-organization component of an organization's adaptive cycle. It is specifically focused on how developmental evaluation approaches allow for a continued source of new information to explore, create, generate, and emerge and reorganize an organization's approach.

The international NGO sector is at a stage where reviewing current approaches will be critical in aligning to the current donor interest in funding local rather than international organizations. This means that international NGOs like MSH must adapt and have systems for learning to align to meet the changing donor focus. International NGOs require systems, structures and a culture of evaluative thinking, which includes performance monitoring and learning. Similar to the measures identified at MSH, some practical approaches to achieve evaluative thinking are proposed: most significant change, appreciative inquiry, after action review, horizontal evaluation, impact logs, formal surveys, rapid appraisal methods, and performance indicators (Campbell et al, 2008).

The findings presented in this research report emphasize the criticism that NGO performance monitoring systems are donor-driven. Even with comprehensive

performance monitoring and learning systems and structures, MSH-BLC lacks a culture of learning. The double-loop and Fifth Discipline models stress the use of information for learning. Ultimately, learning individuals, teams and organizations should have improved performance and survival.

The key lessons drawn from this case study are that the following aspects must be considered in order to use performance monitoring for learning in the NGO sector:

Improve performance monitoring practices. Systems and structures form the backbone of organizational learning through performance monitoring. The core gap in this area at MSH-BLC is its donor focus. It is proposed that the performance monitoring plan is reviewed to ensure inclusion of all staff views and additional indicators and qualitative measures of interest. Another challenge in this area is the poor implementation of monitoring and learning practices. This can be enforced though leadership and developing the skills of staff in these areas.

Foster a culture of critiquing actions and underlying factors. The most common reasons for poor implementation of systems reported by staff are: staff felt there is limited opportunity and culture of critiquing performance monitoring, staff do not feel open to make mistakes, and staff do not feel they have the physical space to think. The available systems present opportunities to generate information for critical thinking. The next step is for management to encourage the use of information for discussion, review and reflexion without criticism. Leadership also plays a significant role in this area to drive the use of strategic information and demonstrate how it can be used in decision-making. In addition, a physical space should be created where staff are able to step away from distractions and review performance.

Nurture shared performance monitoring values. Staff felt that performance monitoring is solely for donor requirements restrict their views of its broader purpose. Technical teams can nurture values of performance monitoring and learning by regularly providing information on the uses of performance monitoring and learning in staff-specific contexts. Furthermore, talent management approaches should be

used to foster possible change agents who have the values described by the interviewees (e.g. creativity and questioning the status quo). Reward and recognition systems can support such activities.

Place teams at the centre of performance monitoring and learning capacity. The staff had varied levels of performance monitoring capacity but collaboratively have significant skill and knowledge in this area. Technical teams and leadership could support teams in understanding the core skills required, assess current team capacity, and delegate roles within teams rather than to a single individual. Teams can be further strengthened by including aspects of performance monitoring and relevant skills development in individual progress reviews.

In conclusion, MSH-BLC presents an example of strong systems and structures for performance management and learning. The utilisation of performance monitoring for learning can be improved with change in the current culture, leveraging current practices and enhancing the role of leadership in enforcing the use of performance monitoring for learning. In project-based organizations, the ability to adapt is crucial. If the use of performance monitoring in learning is improved, this has benefits across projects and to the global organization. In an environment of reduced funding, learning will be key to the sustainability of the projects and organization.

Additional research is needed in the area of assessing cases of evaluative thinking and assessing how performance monitoring use in learning compares to that of evaluation. There is also a gap in research documenting concrete evidence of the factors which influence evaluative thinking and its use in organizational sustainability; determinants of organizational learning in NGO sector; assessing whether learning translates to individual and organizational success; and a review on the success rate of organizations that have performance monitoring and organizational learning systems.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview introduction and description sheet

Interview guide: Utilization of monitoring for organizational learning

Introduction by interviewer

My name is _____ working for Management Sciences for Health and a student at the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.

I am conducting interviews with MSH staff as part of my Master's dissertation study. The interview will be used to identify perceptions of monitoring system utilization for organizational learning among MSH staff.

I hereby request you to answer the following questions as objectively as possible. Please note that this interview is voluntary and confidential, so you are not obliged to participate and your name will be kept strictly private. We will not use your name in the actual questionnaire nor any reports coming out of this assessment. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes.

Please understand that you are not being forced to take part in this study and the choice whether to participate or not are yours alone. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not take part in answering these questions, you will not be affected in any way. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

I will not be recording your name anywhere on the questionnaire and no one will be able to link you to the answers you give.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns:

If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the University of Witwatersrand on (011) 717 7108.

Appendix 2: Consent form

Informed Consent

I hereby consent to responding to the questions in a one-on-one interview, and understand that my responses will be treated with strict confidentiality, and that only a fictitious name maybe be linked to my responses in the report and citations.

I also acknowledge my freedom to terminate this interview should I feel uncomfortable answering some or all of the questions asked.

I am assured that there is no harm that I may be exposed to due to this interview.

I voluntarily wish to participate.

I understand that if at all possible, feedback will be given to my organization on results of the completed research.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally.

I have received the telephone number of a person to contact should I need to speak about any issues which may arise in this interview.

I understand that this consent form will not be linked to the questionnaire, and that my answers will remain confidential.

_____
Name of Respondent

_____ _____
Respondent's Signature Date

_____
Name of Interviewer

_____ _____
Interviewer's Signature Date

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Section A *(completed before interview begins)*

Date and time of interview:	Interviewer name and surname:	Place of interview:

Section B: Background Information

(Completed after providing introduction; mark with X where option selection required)

No.	Question	Response			Code[5]
1.1	What is the interviewee's gender?	Male	Female		none
1.2	At which organizational level is the interviewee employed at MSH?	Center	Project		ii
1.3	What is the interviewee's current job title?				ii
1.4	What is the interviewee's employee level?	Junior	Mid	Senior	ii
1.5	How long has the interviewee been employed at MSH? (years and months)				ii

Section C: Detailed questions

No.	Question and Notes	Code
2.1	How would you define the purpose of monitoring in the context of MSH (BLC project)?	i, iii
2.2	What are the current monitoring practices at MSH (BLC Project)? 2.2.1 Do you use any of these? 2.2.2 What do you feel is the core use of monitoring at MSH?	i, iii

[5] *Code used for thematic analysis and linkage to research question. Code and research question key is provided at end of interview guide.*

	2.2.3 Do you feel you are able to question areas of performance monitoring, and try new ways to improve performance? Please describe. 2.2.4 Provide at least one example related to performance monitoring (program management, accountability, and communication)	
	Examples:	
2.3	How do you think the project's performance monitoring is aligned with to the organizational strategic plan, M&E framework, and organizational learning strategic goal? 2.3.1 How do you think performance monitoring supports the organization vision?	ii
2.4	How would you define organizational learning in the context of MSH (BLC Project)? *[if interviewee unable respond, provide definition]*	i, iii
2.5	What are the current organizational learning practices at MSH (BLC Project)? 2.5.1 Do you use any of these? 2.5.2 What do you feel is the core use of monitoring at MSH (BLC Project)? 2.5.3 Provide examples of organizational learning practices at MSH (BLC Project). 2.5.4 Are you aware of the organizational learning plan?	i, ii, iii

	Examples:	
2.6	How do you think organizational learning systems are aligned the organizational strategic plan and organizational learning strategy? 2.6.1 How do you think organizational learning supports the organization vision?	ii
2.7	Describe learning initiatives that you have been involved with at MSH. 2.7.1 Are these initiatives working? Have they improved performance? 2.7.2 Provide examples where the initiatives require monitoring systems? 2.7.3 Have these changed since the implementation of the organizational learning plan?	ii, iii, v
2.8	Do you feel there is a relationship between monitoring systems and organizational learning systems at MSH (BLC Project)? 2.8.1 Please explain. 2.8.2 Provide examples of these at MSH, if any. 2.8.3 What do you feel is the importance of the relationship between the two areas? 2.8.4 Is this reflected in the organizational learning plan?	1, ii, iii, v

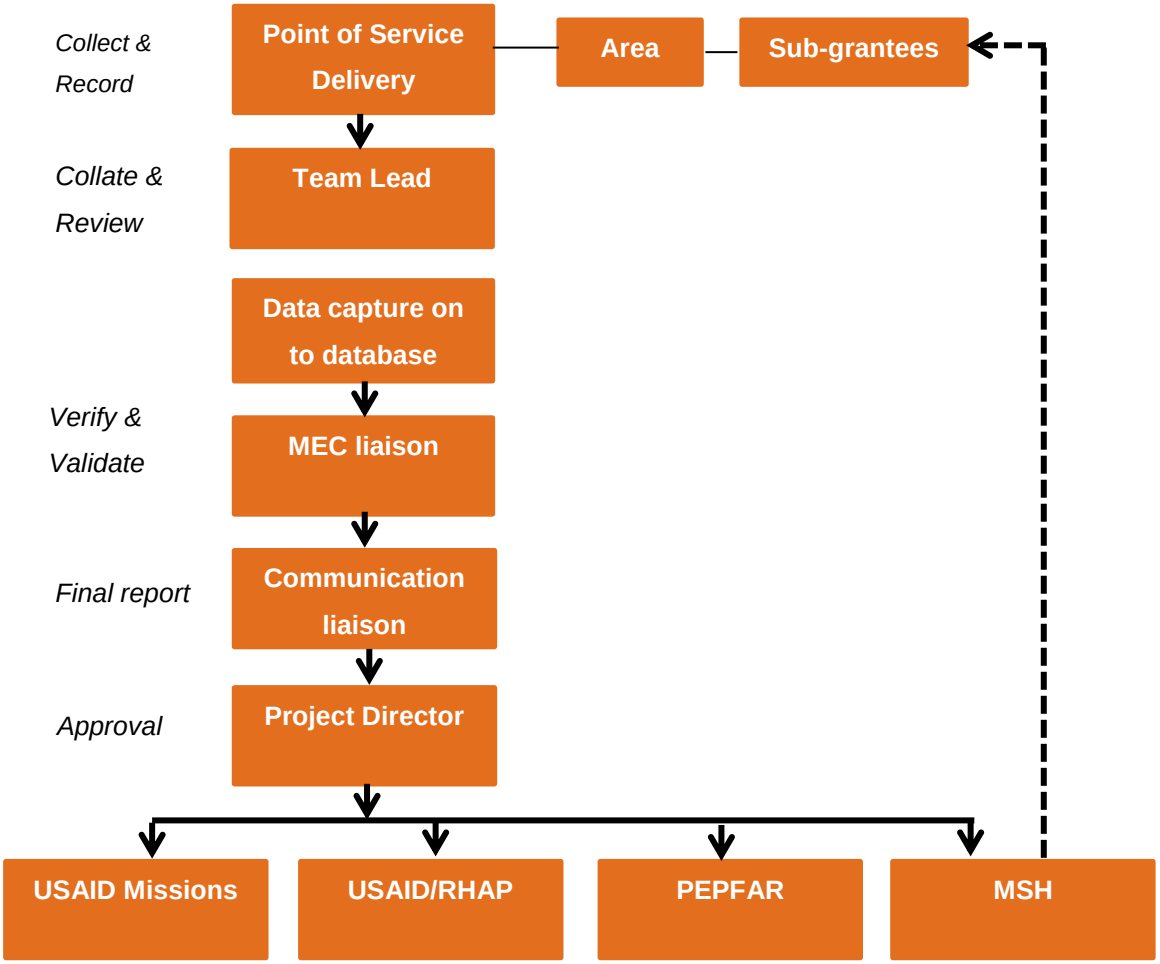
2.9	What factors enable your use of monitoring for organizational learning? (systems, structures and cultures) 2.9.1 What values do think underpin the use of monitoring for learning? Which of these values do you feel are personally important? 2.9.2 What skills do you think are required and are available to use monitoring for learning? 2.9.3 How do you think performance monitoring influences individual learning in comparison to learning in a team? 2.9.2 How would you describe the leadership role in enabling the use of monitoring for organizational learning?	iv
2.10	What are the barriers you face to using monitoring for organizational learning? (systems, structures and cultures)	iv
2.11	What needs to be done to improve use of monitoring for learning at MSH (BLC Project)?	iv

Thank you

Code key *(for thematic analysis purposes):*

Code	Research question
1	How are monitoring systems being used for organizational learning at Management Sciences for Health (MSH)?
i	What is the current monitoring and organizational learning practices and uses by MSH?
ii	Is monitoring use and organizational learning in MSH South Africa in line with the MSH organizational learning plan?
Iii	What are MSH staff perceptions on the importance of the use of monitoring and organizational learning?
iv	What are MSH staff perceptions of enabling factors and barriers to utilization of monitoring for learning?
v	What changes have been implemented as a result of organizational learning using monitoring systems?

Appendix 4: Data flow (M&E framework)



Appendix 5: MSH-South Africa organizational learning survey results

	Bottom quartile	Second quartile	Third quartile	Top quartile
Supportive Learning Environment				
Psychological Safety		X		
Appreciation of differences		X		
Openness to new ideas		X		
Time for reflection			X	
Learning Environment composite		X		
Concrete Learning Processes and Practices				
Experimentation		X		
Information collection		X		
Analysis		X		
Education and training		X		
Information transfer		X		
Learning Processes composite		X		
Leadership that reinforces learning				
Leadership composite		X		

- End -