

Flexible Work Arrangements Program Implementation Evaluation

Yongjin Sa

Assistant Professor, Keimyung University, Daegu, Republic of Korea

ABSTRACT

This research primarily focuses on construction of the program evaluation proposal for the flexible work arrangements. In order to make the program evaluation design, this paper specifically discusses evaluation questions and data collection analysis regarding three kinds of evaluations including needs assessment, implementation evaluation, formative evaluation, and summative evaluation. Furthermore, the expected positive effects and main functions of the flexible work arrangements program evaluation are also suggested.

Keywords: Flexible Work Arrangements, Needs Assessment, Implementation Evaluation, Formative Evaluation, Summative Evaluation

INTRODUCTION

This research is to make a program evaluation proposal for the flexible work arrangements including part-time work, flex-time work, and at-home work. Specifically, this study constructs the evaluation design through developing needs assessment, implementation, formative, and summative evaluation designs. In addition, the appropriate evaluation questions and data source for each evaluation design are developed and suggested in this study.

EVALUATION DESIGN & QUESTIONS

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Evaluation Questions

1. What are problems regarding work-family balance, self-development opportunities, and overall quality of life issues government employees currently have?
2. What are needs of government employees for those problems in implementing the “flex-working” programs?

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary objective of the needs assessment is to assess and identify what government employees need relative to the “flex-working” programs in terms of maintaining the work and family balance, expanding self development opportunities, and improving the quality of life (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). In addition, the needs assessment is able to evaluate whether the “flex-working” programs implement and satisfy those needs identified successfully. Government employees who have a high level of needs and interests for the work and family balance policies, self-development activities, flexible work schedule and the quality of life have been increased steadily (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). However, although the three kinds of “flex-working” programs have been implemented since 2005 in order to address those government employees’

needs, there are still the unmet needs government employees have. This is a fundamental reason why the evaluation design will firstly conduct the needs assessment before of doing implementation, formative and summative evaluation.

To collect exact comments and feedbacks on government employees' needs relevant with the "flex-working" programs, this study will conduct focus-group interviews with four focus groups. First, the evaluation team will conduct focus group interviews with the "flex-working" program design board members who initiated and designed the programs as well as have primary responsibilities to manage and implement the "flex-working" programs. The board members include government officials affiliated to the Ministry of Public Administration and Security (MOPAS) and the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) and experts relevant with the "flex-working" programs.

Second, the evaluation team will conduct focus group interviews with the ministers and top decision-makers in each department of the Central Government of Korea. Since they directly manage the "flex-working" programs and evaluate their employees' work performances and personnel matters, the evaluation team will expect to collect meaningful and practical feedbacks on the needs and problems relevant with the "flex-working" programs.

Third, the focus group interviews with government employees who have experiences to use the "flex-working" programs will be able to collect information on what they do need as well as what unmet needs related to the programs are.

Finally, the evaluation team will conduct focus group interviews with government employees who do not have experiences to use the "flex-working" programs. Based on the assumption that there will be different perceptions and comments between employees who do and don't use the programs with regard to the needs and problems of the programs, the evaluation team will be able to collect balanced feedbacks and suggestions through conducting those two groups of focus interviews. The evaluation team will randomly select the focus group interviewees from the two groups of employees in order to enhance the external validity of the evaluation design. All focus group interviews will use the two evaluation questions mentioned above. The outcomes of feedbacks and comments from the focus group meetings will be major components of the needs assessment. The final product of the needs assessment will be presented to the whole evaluation teams so that the team members have consensus on the needs and problems regarding the "flex-working" programs and conduct the remaining evaluation steps smoothly and consistently.

IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation Questions

Overall Function and Implementation

1. Are the "flex-working" programs serving the intended users of public government employees?
2. Are other public government employees rather than the intended users currently participate in the "flex-working" programs?
3. Are inputs (e.g., funds, human resources and promotions) allocated to achieve the outputs and goals of the "flex-working" programs efficiently and smoothly?

1. Understandings and Awareness
4. Are the specific contents of the “flex-working” programs such as “part-time work”, “flex-time work” or “at-home work” clearly understood?
5. Are you satisfied with the clarification of current guidelines and promotions for the alternative work programs?
6. How many times do you get opportunities such as promotions and trainings to learn about the programs in your organizations?
7. Are you satisfied with opportunities and workshops provided to you to get information on the programs in your organization?
8. Are you satisfied with current ways or tools your organization has in order to ask your questions about the programs or report any problems or disadvantages?

Obstacles and Concerns

9. Do you perceive that your “concern about disadvantages on promotion or career” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
10. Do you perceive that your “concern about any possibility to shift your work to your co-workers” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
11. Do you perceive that your “concern about reduction of your income and welfare payment” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
12. Do you perceive that “a heavy work load” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
13. Do you perceive that “your supervisor’s negative perception on the programs” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
14. Do you perceive that “your current tasks and responsibilities” are not appropriate to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
15. Do you perceive that your “concern about citizens’ inconveniences and complaints due to the government employees’ absences” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?
16. Do you perceive that your “concern about constraints to cooperate with other departments or institutions” is a critical obstacle to apply and use the “flex-working” programs?

Data Collection and Analysis

The fundamental purpose of the implementation evaluation is to assess and verify if the “flex-working” programs serve the intended public government employees as well as fulfill their primary uses. In addition, the implementation evaluation is to identify the constraints and problems in implementing the “flex-working” programs which cause the current low rate (2.28%) of applying the programs in the Central Government of Korea (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). The implementation evaluation will be conducted by combining the qualitative and quantitative analysis approaches with four groups identified earlier. To address that, the qualitative and quantitative implementation evaluation teams will collect and analyze the data separately in the process.

As shown above, the implementation evaluation questions are categorized into three groups- 1) overall function and implementation (Q.1-3), 2) understandings and awareness (Q. 4-8), and 3) obstacles and concerns (Q. 9-16). First part of the questions regarding overall function and implementation will explore the current state of implementation of the “flex-working”

programs in the general perspective. The evaluation team will be able to have in-depth comments and feedbacks in order to estimate whether the “flex-working” programs currently are serving the intended or unintended users of government employees as well as several necessary resources to implement the programs are allocated appropriately to implement well. To address, the qualitative implementation evaluation team will conduct the focus group in-depth interviews with the “flex-working” program design board members and the ministers/top decision-makers in each department, randomly selected at the earlier stage of the needs assessment.

Second part of the implementation evaluation questions regarding the understandings and awareness will estimate the degree to which government employees understand the major contents, information and guidelines about the “flex-working” programs as well as how well government employees are satisfied with current promotions and trainings to educate the programs. Those four questions (Q4, 5, 7 and 8) will be measured by a Likert-type five-point scale from “very poor” or “strongly disagree” (1) to “very good” or “strongly agree” (5). The question 6 will be measured by open-ended question. The quantitative implementation evaluation team will distribute those questions to the two groups of government employees who have and do not have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs. And then, the outputs will be summarized and presented through narrative statement and table/ figure.

Third part of the implementation evaluation questions is to explore the obstacles and concerns which might cause the current low rate (2.28%) of applying the “flex-working” programs (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). As shown earlier, eight potential obstacles and concerns were considered through reviewing previous literature on the alternative work programs and work-schedules in public sectors at the initial stage of this program evaluation proposal (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). Those eight questions will be measured by a Likert-type five-point scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5). The quantitative implementation evaluation team will distribute those questions to the two groups- the “flex-working” program design board members and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs. In doing so, the evaluation will be able to explore the relatively different perspectives between the programs design group members and direct users of the programs with regard to the obstacles and concerns about implementing in the “flex-working” programs. Finally, the evaluation design will be able to explore and suggest more feasible and practical suggestions to address problems and obstacles in implementing the programs.

The outcomes of the implementation evaluation study will be presented to both the implementation and formative evaluation team. Furthermore, the results of the implementation study and feedbacks from the presentation will be used as fundamental inputs to the formative evaluation design and study.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation Questions

Quality of Necessary Components/ Systems

1. Do you think that “job-sharing” which is one of the necessary components to implement the “flex-working” programs is implemented well in your organizations?
2. Do you think that your organization has a well-organized network of emergency contact to fill out your co-workers’ absence resulted from using the “flex-working” programs?

3. Do you usually inform well your co-workers of your working schedule and tasks?
4. Do you think about your supervisors or managers support positively the “flex-working” programs?
5. How do you think that employees’ performance evaluation system in your organization is well developed and implemented?

Appropriate Types of Work for the “At-Home” Work

6. How do you think that “planning and mediation” tasks are appropriate to the “at-home work”?
7. How do you think that “research and investigation” tasks are appropriate to the “at-home work”?
8. How do you think that “evaluation and auditing” tasks are appropriate to the “at-home work”?
9. How do you think that “data proof and coding” tasks are appropriate to the “at-home work”?
10. How do you think that “judge and screening” tasks are appropriate to the “at-home work”?

Problems or Challenges & Suggestions or Comments

11. What are primary problems or challenge to be addressed do you perceive in order to increase the rate of using the “part-time work” program?
12. What do you think about suggestions and comments in order to address those problems and obstacles as well as increase the rate of using the “part-time work” program in terms of both organizational and personnel perspectives?
13. What are primary problems or challenge to be addressed do you perceive in order to increase the rate of using the “flex-time work” program?
14. What do you think about suggestions and comments in order to address those problems and obstacles as well as increase the rate of using the “flex-time work” program in terms of both organizational and personnel perspectives?
15. What are primary problems or challenge to be addressed do you perceive in order to increase the rate of using the “at-home work” program?
16. What do you think about suggestions and comments in order to address those problems and obstacles as well as increase the rate of using the “at-home work” program in terms of both organizational and personnel perspectives?

Data Collection and Analysis

The main purposes of the formative evaluation study is to suggest appropriate comments and guidelines for the improvement of the current “flex-working” programs as well as enhance the uses of the programs effectively and feasibly. The formative evaluation will be conducted by combining the qualitative and quantitative analysis approaches with two target groups including the ministers/ top decision-makers in each department and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs. To address, the qualitative and quantitative implementation evaluation teams will collect and analyze the data separately in the process.

As shown above, the formative evaluation questions are categorized into three groups- 1) quality of necessary components and systems (Q.1-5), 2) appropriate types of work for the “at-

home” work (Q. 6-10), and 3) problems or challenges and suggestions or comments (Q. 11-16). First part of the questions will estimate the degree to which the components and systems that are necessary to implement the “flex-working” programs efficiently are well organized in each department. To explore that, the quantitative formative evaluation team will distribute those questions (Q1-5) to the two groups including the ministers/ top decision-makers in each department and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs. In doing so, the evaluation team will be able to collect meaningful and practical information on those necessary components and systems for the “flex-working” programs as well as understand the relatively different perceptions between the ministers/ top decision-makers in each department and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs with regard to those survey questions. Based on the assumption that manager and employees will be likely to perceive on the same policy and behave very differently due to their different positions and supervisory levels, the results from the formative evaluation should be meaningful to design and implement the “flex-working” programs. Those five questions will be measured by a Likert-type five-point scale from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5).

Second part of the formative evaluation questions (Q6-10) will explore the appropriate types of tasks for the “at-home” work. The evaluation will be able to recommend what types of tasks might be efficient and effective if conducted by the “at-home” work based on the survey respondents’ suggestions. The survey groups and the five-point rating scales will be conducted in the same manner as described above.

Third part of the questions (Q11-16) will explore the government employees’ perceptions on the critical problems or challenges which might cause the low rate of applying each of the “flex-working” programs such as “part-time work”, “flex-time work”, and “at-home work” as well as suggestions or comments in order to improve the programs. To address that, the qualitative formative evaluation team will conduct the focus group interviews with the two groups including the ministers/ top decision-makers in each department and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs. In doing so, the evaluation will be able to collect in-depth feedbacks and comments to address the particular areas that need improvement of the current “flex-working” programs.

The quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the formative evaluation study will be presented to the formative and summative evaluation team simultaneously. In addition, the results of the formative evaluation study and feedbacks from the presentation will be used as fundamental inputs to the summative evaluation design.

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION DESIGN

Evaluation Questions

Organizational Outcomes

1. Do you think that participating in the programs has positive effects on responsiveness for civil needs and complaints?
2. How many civil complaints and petitions were reduced in your work?
3. Do you agree that participating in the programs improves your performance?
4. Do you agree that participating in the programs improves your job satisfaction?
5. Do you agree that participating in the programs improves your commitment?

6. Do you agree that participating in the programs reduces your turnover intention?
7. Do you agree that the programs have positive effects on creating job opportunities in your organizations?
8. How many positions were filled out by new “part-time” or “at-home” employees in your organizations?
9. Do you think that the programs can contribute to the expansion of providing public services before/ after the regular working schedule?
10. Do you agree that your organizational costs for offices and equipments are reduced by employees who participate in the “part-time work” or “at-home work”?

Individual Outcomes

11. Do you think that participating in the programs has positive effects on “the reduction of commuting costs, time and traffic congestion”?
12. How many hours do you save to commute work every day?
13. Do you think that participating in the programs has positive effects on “the enhancement of childcare and family affairs”?
14. How many hours do you have more to spend time doing childcare and other family affairs such as communication and family activities?
15. How do you feel that participating in the programs enhances your family relationships?
16. How do you feel that participating in the programs improves the overall quality of your life?
17. Do you agree that participating in the programs increase the self-development and leisure activities?
18. How many hours do you spend for self-development activities such as classes, language learning and certification for career development early in the morning or late afternoon?
19. How many hours do you spend for leisure activities early in the morning or late afternoon?
20. Do you think that participating in the programs enhance overall the balance between family and work?

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary purpose of the summative evaluation study is to identify the extent to which each of the “flex-working” programs achieve its anticipated outputs and outcomes based on the “Flex-working” program theory model shown at Table 1. This summative evaluation will use the quantitative analysis approach and distribute the survey questions above to the two groups including the ministers/ top decision-makers in each department and government employees who have experiences to use the “flex-working” programs in the same manner as the formative evaluation will do.

As shown above, the summative evaluation questions are categorized into two groups- 1) organizational outcomes (Q.1-10) and individual outcomes (Q. 11-20). First part of the questions will estimate the extent to which the “flex-working” programs accomplish the intended and expected goals and objectives in terms of organizational outcome variables such as responsiveness for civil needs and complaints, organizational performance, satisfaction, commitment, turnover intention, creation of job opportunities, and organizational costs (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). The eight questions (not including question 2 and 8) will be measured by a Likert-type five-point scale from “strongly disagree” or “very poor” (1) to “strongly agree”

or “very good” (5). Two remaining questions (Q2 and 8) will be measured by the open-ended way.

Second part of the summative evaluation questions will explore the extent to which the “flex-working” programs achieve the goals and objectives in terms of individual outcome variables such as commuting costs, family-work balance, overall quality of life, self-development and leisure activities, and family relationships (MOPAS & MOEL, 2012). The six questions (Q11, 13, 15, 16, 17 and 20) will be measured by a Likert-type five-point scale from “strongly disagree” or “very poor” (1) to “strongly agree” or “very good” (5). Four remaining questions (Q12, 14, 18 and 19) will be measured by the open-ended way.

The summative evaluation team will use the ordered probit regression analysis since the dependent variables in this study are measured by five-point Likert type scale, in order to explore the causal linkages between the “flex-working” programs and the outcome variables described earlier. One of the primary advantages of using the regression analysis is to estimate the unique effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable by including the relevant control variables in the regression model. In other words, through employing the regression method, the summative evaluation team will be able to compare the different effect of each type of “flex-working” programs on both individual and organizational outcome variables. In doing so, the evaluation proposal will be able to include and demonstrate empirically the causal relations discussed by the “flex-working” program theory model.

CONCLUSION

The evaluation proposal will try to explore the significant constraints and obstacles relevant with the implementation failures and difficulties as well as provide constructive suggestions and recommendations in order to address those problems identified. Finally, the evaluation proposal will also estimate the effects of the “flex-working” programs on the expected individual and organizational outcome variables by both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In doing so, the evaluation plan will be able to contribute that both public managers and employees have a higher level of perceptions on the positive effect of the “flex-working” programs on various outcomes as well as the programs can accomplish the work and family balance and improve the quality of life of government employees.

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