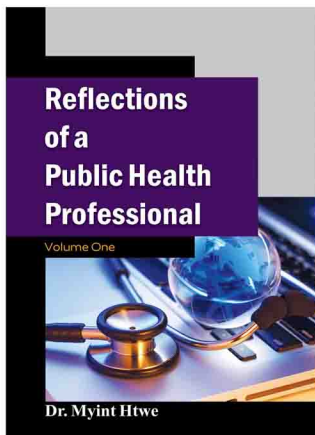


Basic Characteristics of a Good Health Programme



Dr Myint Htwe

16. Basic characteristics of a good health programme

There are several technical programmes in the Ministry of Health (MoH). Many programmes get funding and technical support from UN agencies, organizations, development partners, etc. It is important that the programmes must function effectively and efficiently to achieve the desired objectives and targets. The following characteristics should be there to run a health programme effectively and efficiently. Although there are several desirable characteristics, it is impossible to have all these in a programme or programme manager. Thus, the following basic characteristics are put forward for consideration from a practical perspective. It is to be noted that some programmes are specialized in nature and additional characteristics may be required. The characteristics are categorized into those related to programme managers (1-4) and some for the programme(5-15) itself.

1. *The programme manager should have good epidemiological thinking skill and know the principles of public health and public health ethics thoroughly.*
2. *The programme manager should have certain basic leadership skills, especially for creating a team spirit among the staff. Additional characteristics are possessing attitude of fact-finding rather than fault-finding; and a compromising attitude but decisive in taking action on irresponsible acts and gross negligence of staff in performing their duties working under him.*
3. *The programme manager must be able to network with various UN agencies, organizations, international NGOs, foundations, development partners for exploring funding and technical support through proper channel.*

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4. *The essential job description of different categories of staff working under the programme manager must be available and modified as per the requirement of programme delivery status and staff availability.*
5. *The programme must be linked and well integrated with allied programmes in MoH and those in relevant ministries.*
6. *The programme should have a simple and practical monitoring system for timely detection of important lapses and deficiencies in terms of technical, administrative, logistics, and management aspects.*
7. *Ready-made quick checklists to know the (i) staff performance; (ii) programme delivery status in terms of meeting the objectives and targets; (iii) fund utilization aspects; (iv) knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) of different categories of staff working in the programme must be available.*
8. *Brief six monthly evaluation meetings and yearly evaluation meetings must be in place. The format and modus operandi for discussion during evaluation meetings must be developed in advance involving all key staff of the programme. This is essential to achieve the desired objectives of evaluation meetings.*
9. *Annual report of the programme, including analytic part, must be produced regularly and the format for the report must be developed, taking into consideration various reports of other programmes in the country.*
10. *The format for recording staff duty travels, both in-country and outside the country, must be made available and mechanisms for reviewing them to take necessary supportive action must be there.*
11. *The programme should have regular staff capacity building programmes, both built-in, outside the programme and outside the country.*

12. *The programme should organize bi-weekly or, at least, monthly technical talks for concerned staff working in the programme on generic topics such as monitoring, evaluation, indicators, outbreak investigations, analytical and data presentations methods. This can benefit the staff even if he or she has been transferred to another programme. If all programmes are doing this activity, it can exert tremendous positive effects on the health care delivery system of the country.*
13. *The programme should have feedback presentation sessions by staff who have attended a workshop, meeting, seminar or conference, especially outside the country.*
14. *Mechanisms for anticipating and planning for action regarding expected funding availability, staff turn-over and human resource for health situation must be embedded in the programme. The programme must have a mechanism for monitoring budget utilization especially for funds received from outside the MoH. This can facilitate resource mobilization for the programme.*
15. *The goals, objectives, strategies, interventions or activities, targets and indicators must be rational and practical. The programme should not hesitate to change or modify the strategies and interventions as appropriate.*
16. *The programme staff should have good networks of linkages with state/ regional and township level professionals.*