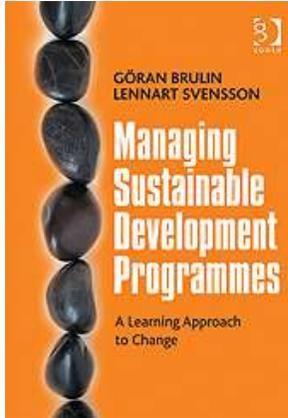

PM WORLD BOOK REVIEW



Book Title: ***Managing Sustainable Development***

Programmes: A Learning Approach to Change

Author: **Goran Brulin and Lennart Svensson**

Publisher: **Gower Publishing Limited**

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Reviewer: **Susan Riewe**

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Introduction to the Book

“*Managing Sustainable Development Programmes*” promotes the need for ongoing evaluation during the stages of a project and beyond, as well as the importance of using knowledge learned from projects to improve other projects and programmes – termed *sustainable development*. The book’s subtitle, *A Learning Approach to Change*, is a concise way of saying we can use learning from past projects to facilitate future projects.

The book cites examples from the authors’ environment – namely the EU and Sweden; however, projects everywhere have the same core characteristics and the reader will probably mentally insert their own. The argument for *sustainable development* through ongoing evaluation and sharing of knowledge is a universal project and programme best practice that can improve change worldwide.

Overview of Book’s Structure

This book is organized into eight chapters, the first four of which are focused on the need for *sustainable development*, while the next four discuss initiatives and innovation – products of *sustainable development*.

The authors make a strong case for developing on-going evaluation programs as an integral part of every large project in order to measure the effects of the project on regional growth. Quoting from the book – “*Ideally, education (an activity) should lead to learning which provides broader and more responsible work tasks (a result), which in turn contributes to developing the activity, that is, by it becoming more innovative and competitive (an effect).*” Evaluation begins at the start of a project and should continue

long after the project manager has moved on to new opportunities. The owners of the project use this learning approach to create greater focus on goals, results and long-term effects. The learning that is accumulated during a project term should not gather dust in a Lessons Learned folder. The learning should be utilized during the phases of each project and an exchange of the knowledge made part of the initial phases of future similar projects. The authors use the metaphor ‘walking on two legs’ to mean ‘taking action and learning from it’, adding that the action and learning need to be synchronized in order for them to be coordinated to take place at the right time.

Two initiatives used for nurturing innovation are co-location and incubators. The authors discuss the merits of companies and people in the same industries being situated in a limited geographical area and how this facilitates collaborative learning. *Knowledge spillover is greater where companies, organizations and individuals have confidence in each other.* Incubators are support agencies that help start-ups prepare to run as a company and assist in finding external financing. The authors walk the reader through several examples of Swedish/European projects (from the Social Fund in Chapter 6 and the Regional Fund in Chapter 7), explaining where they fell short in sustainability results and the reasons why. Chapter 8 presents a great summary of the concepts presented in the book – definitions, recommendations and theoretical conclusions.

Highlights: What’s New in this Book?

A missing component in the project management arena is ongoing evaluation, especially after project closure. The authors bring to light the need for ongoing evaluation to be made an essential step in project management in order to adjust the project during execution for more favorable outcomes and to measure the effects of projects after completion.

Although this book is based on project/programme experience in the European Union and seeks to affect change in European Regional and Social Fund projects, the recommendations are universal. The term ‘sustainable development’ is applicable to many large projects around the world. The sharing of knowledge, the benefits of collaboration and the resultant multiplier effect of positive change are very desirable aspects for project owners and project recipients.

The authors use the phrase ‘walking on two legs’ to signify the power of learning and evaluation. This book expands PMBOK’s Lessons Learned process into an umbrella covering the entire project life cycle and beyond.

Highlights: What I liked!

Here are just a few of the gems hidden in the pages of this book:

From Chapter 1: *The role of the project manager is important, but creating long-term effects from development work requires more than just efficient project management.* The figure on Page 18 shows that a project organization involves the target group, involved participants, competent management, professional steering, active ownership and demanding funders.

This statement in Chapter 3 really jumped off the page: *A project is a temporary organization that generates new knowledge, but the base organization often fails to absorb it.* How often do we forget the lessons we have learned!

Chapter 4: *An evaluation should 'stir up' the status quo, that is, question, problematize and criticize...Public debate about different programmes and projects creates a multiplier effect in itself since the very act of making it public creates interest among a well-informed populace about the tasks and problems that programmes and projects aim to solve.* I like the way the authors define evaluation and stress the importance of sharing knowledge. Here is an equation gleaned from this discussion: Evaluation = joint knowledge formation for long-term sustainable development = multiplier effects at local, regional, national and world levels.

In Chapter 5: *Innovative environments are not created in the system but through relationships.* All innovations require the voices and actions of multiple actors, whether those from the past from whom we are learning, those located in distant places or those in the same room. Relationships are the basis of human life!

Chapter 5: *The difficulty is maintaining collaboration when external financing and support cease. Experiences show that learning must be organized and supported if it is to be oriented to development and action.* This is the major obstacle.

Who might benefit from the Book?

All major stakeholders in large projects/programmes would benefit from the recommendations made in this book. Major stakeholders include the project owners, the project manager and team, the steering committee, the funders, the target group and any involved participants. Another group that would get value from this discourse is those who teach project management courses.

Conclusion

Including on-going evaluation as a part of every large project is the next evolution of project management. Using the knowledge learned to improve other projects and continuing to evaluate the outcome of the recently completed project is called sustainable development. Evaluation will lead to knowledge creating long-term sustainable development and fostering innovation – a path that ultimately leads to

positive multiplier effects happening in local communities all the way to world-wide change.

Collaborate – Evaluate – Innovate!

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Susan Riewe has been in the project management field for the past 15 years, and earned her PMP certification in February of 2008. Most of her experience has been with IT related projects for a major retailer. She is currently working as a contractor for a national pharmaceutical company in the Dallas/Fort Worth area of Texas, USA. Susan may be contacted at: msg4smr@gmail.com