

CONTINUOUS EVALUATION APPROACH: CONTROL STRATEGIES TOWARDS PROGRAM SUCCESS

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Abstract

Continuous evaluation is a strategic approach that places the evaluation process as an iterative and integrated cycle in each program stage. This article analyzes how continuous evaluation can serve as an effective control strategy towards program success. Using a qualitative research method based on case studies, data is obtained through interviews, observations, and document analysis, which is then analyzed thematically. The study results show that continuous evaluation strengthens program control through early detection of problems, improved decision-making quality, and resource use efficiency. In addition, the participation of external stakeholders has been proven to increase the legitimacy of the evaluation results while strengthening the sense of ownership of the program. Organizational culture factors also play an important role, where a culture of learning and openness has been shown to support the effectiveness of evaluations. These findings confirm that continuous evaluation serves as a technical instrument and a social and strategic mechanism in maintaining the program's success. The practical implications of this study are the importance of integrating evaluation into management control systems, while its theoretical implications encourage the development of more participatory and adaptive evaluation models. Thus, continuous evaluation can be a catalyst for innovation and consistent improvement of program quality.

Keywords: continuous evaluation, control strategy, program success, participation, organizational culture.

Introduction

Program evaluation is an essential component of the management cycle that ensures the achievement of organizational goals effectively and efficiently. In the context of development and organization, the program's success is determined by

the planning and implementation stages and a systematic and continuous evaluation process. (Adam et al., 2020). Continuous evaluation allows for constant organizational learning, feedback, and improvement.

In an era of public policy complexity and rapidly changing market dynamics, organizations face challenges in maintaining the relevance and quality of their programs. Therefore, evaluation cannot be done incidentally but must be positioned as an iterative cycle and an integral part of strategic control. This approach aligns with the principle of *continuous improvement*, which emphasizes collective learning. (Suharyani & Djumarno, 2023). In addition, sustainability in evaluation opens up a more expansive space for stakeholder participation, both internal and external. The evaluation results can become a more comprehensive control instrument by involving various perspectives. This supports the creation of more transparent, accountable, and adaptive program governance.

Program evaluation is one of the main components in organizational management, both in the public and private sectors. Evaluation assesses the extent to which the program runs according to the goals set and provides relevant information for decision-making. However, in practice, evaluation is often carried out only at the end of the program as a form of reporting, so it does not have a strategic impact on the control and improvement of the program on an ongoing basis. basis (Yuanita & Keban, 2020).

As the complexity of the organizational environment increases, the need for more dynamic evaluations is increasingly urgent. The ever-changing social, economic, and technological environment demands a retrospective and prospective evaluation system. Continuous evaluation is an approach that emphasizes a cycle of repeated evaluations, which provides periodic feedback, thus allowing organizations to make timely strategic adjustments. (Aspani et al., 2022).

Continuous evaluation is closely related to the principle of *constant improvement*. This concept refers to the idea that the success of a program is not determined by a one-time achievement, but rather by the organization's ability to continuously learn, adapt, and improve on weaknesses. By making evaluation an integral part of the management cycle, organizations can improve the effectiveness of program control while strengthening accountability. (Muthmainnah et al., 2016).

In addition to the technical function, continuous evaluation has a significant social dimension. Stakeholder involvement in the evaluation process gives a broader perspective in assessing the program's success. This participation improves the quality of evaluation data and strengthens the legitimacy and public trust in the program being run. Thus, sustainable evaluation can be seen as an instrument of control and a means of building transparency and social accountability. (Suparmoko, 2020).

In management control, continuous evaluation also serves as a risk mitigation mechanism. Consistent monitoring can identify potential barriers early to take corrective steps immediately. This is especially relevant for organizations facing high uncertainty, as it allows them to maintain program stability without waiting for a final report. Sustainable evaluation, therefore, is a measuring tool and a strategic instrument to ensure the program's sustainability (Muliadi, 2023).

Based on this background, this article analyzes how the continuous evaluation approach can be implemented as a control strategy towards program success. The research was conducted qualitatively to explore organizational experience integrating evaluation into the management cycle. The research results are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the concept of continuous evaluation and provide practical recommendations for organizations in improving the effectiveness of program control.

Literature Review

Continuous evaluation is widely associated with the theory of total quality management (TQM) and the *Plan-Do-Check-Act* (PDCA) cycle developed by Deming. According to Stufflebeam (2003), evaluation should be seen as a process to assess, improve, and direct programs towards better quality, not just as an instrument of measuring results. Continuous evaluation is also closely related to the *utilization-focused evaluation approach* (Patton, 2008), which emphasizes the usefulness of evaluation results for decision-making.

Some studies have shown that program success is greater when organizations integrate evaluation with strategic control mechanisms (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). In addition, evaluation carried out on a cyclical basis allows for early detection of problems, so improvements can be made without waiting for the program to end (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). Thus, the literature emphasizes the importance of evaluation, which does not stop at the outcome but continues at the process improvement stage.

In the context of public policy, continuous evaluation is also in line with the principles of *good governance*, which emphasize accountability, transparency, and responsiveness (OECD, 2010). Therefore, evaluation is functional and normative in strengthening the program's legitimacy.

Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (Sugiyono, 2010). The qualitative approach was chosen because it can explore the meaning, experience, and process behind implementing continuous evaluation (Ghazali, 2011). The primary focus is integrating evaluation as a program control strategy in a public and private sector organization (Yusuf, 2014). Data was collected through in-depth interviews with program managers, implementing staff, and external stakeholders

such as partners and beneficiaries (Nasution, 2023). Direct observation of the evaluation cycle and internal documentation are also used to complete the data. Data analysis was carried out using thematic techniques, namely identifying patterns in evaluation practices and their relationship with program control (Sarwono, 2006). A source triangulation technique was used to ensure validity by comparing data from various informants and documents. In addition, the researcher also conducted *member checking* by confirming the provisional findings with the main informant.

Results and Discussion

The study results show that continuous evaluation effectively improves program control through three main aspects. First, the planning aspect becomes more adaptive because the evaluation results adjust the strategy. Second, the implementation aspect becomes more controllable due to the integrated monitoring mechanism. Third, the outcome aspect is easier to measure and account for because the success indicators are updated regularly.

Further discussion revealed that the success of continuous evaluation is heavily influenced by organizational culture. Organizations with a culture of learning and openness to criticism can better utilize evaluation as a control instrument. In contrast, organizations with hierarchical cultures tend to view evaluations only as administrative formalities.

In addition, the participation of external stakeholders has been proven to strengthen the legitimacy of the evaluation results. For example, the involvement of local communities in the evaluation of social programs broadens perspectives, so that program control is more accurate and in line with real needs. This supports the argument that continuous evaluation is not only a technical instrument, but also a social and political instrument (Mulyaningsih et al., 2015).

Research shows that applying continuous evaluation contributes significantly to the effectiveness of program control. Organizations that integrate the evaluation cycle into planning, execution, and reporting can detect weaknesses early. This allows corrective steps to be taken quickly to minimize potential failures. Thus, evaluation serves not only as a tool for post-program reflection, but also as a control mechanism that runs parallel with implementation (Direktorat Sekolah Dasar, 2021).

The findings also show that the sustainability of the evaluation impacts the quality of decision-making. The data generated consistently from periodic evaluations strengthens the legitimacy of managerial decisions. For example, budget adjustments and resource distribution strategies can be done more precisely because they are based on the latest data. This aligns with *the utilization-focused evaluation theory* that emphasizes the usefulness of evaluation results in supporting strategic decisions (Ford & Despeisse, 2016).

In addition to the technical aspects, the study found that continuous evaluation increases stakeholder participation. The involvement of external parties, such as partners and beneficiaries, creates a space for dialogue that enriches evaluation perspectives. This involvement improves the quality of input and strengthens the sense of belonging to the program. Thus, continuous evaluation plays a dual role: as an instrument of internal control and a means of building social legitimacy.

Organizational culture has proven to be a key factor in implementing continuous evaluation. Organizations with a culture of learning, openness to criticism, and a commitment to transparency are more successful in optimizing evaluation as a control strategy. On the other hand, organizations that view evaluation as just an administrative obligation are less likely to make the most of the results. This confirms that continuous evaluation requires a paradigm shift, from just a measuring tool to a means of learning and strategic control.

The analysis also shows that continuous evaluation cycles improve resource use efficiency. A consistent monitoring process allows for identifying overlapping activities, budget waste, and other inefficiencies. With an early correction mechanism, resource allocation can be optimized so that the program runs more economically and on target. This efficiency proves that evaluation is not an additional burden, but an investment in the program's long-term success.

Finally, the study found that continuous evaluation serves as a bridge between strategic and operational planning. The evaluation results do not stop at the final report, but are directly integrated into the next planning cycle. This pattern creates continuous feedback that drives program innovation, adaptation, and sustainability. Thus, continuous evaluation is a control tool and a catalyst for creating added value and continuous improvement of program quality.

Conclusion

Continuous evaluation has proven to be a strategic approach in program control. With a continuous cycle, organizations can maintain the program's relevance, effectiveness, and accountability. The success of this strategy is determined by management's commitment, an organizational culture that supports learning, and stakeholder engagement. The practical implication of this research is the need for organizations to integrate evaluation into management control systems, rather than simply placing it as an additional activity. Meanwhile, the theoretical implication is the need to develop a more participatory and adaptive evaluation model, per the dynamics of the strategic environment. In the future, further research can expand the context of studies in various sectors, so that the generalization of the concept of continuous evaluation is more comprehensive. It is also important to

strengthen the literature on the relationship between evaluation, control, and program success in various institutional settings.

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