

Course: Planning & Management of Distance Education (832)

Semester: Spring, 2022

Assignment No. 02

Q.1 Discuss five types of decision best made by a decisions-making complex (DMC).

Simply put, a DMC is just a meeting held for a specific purpose. However, for this type of meeting to produce the desired results, thorough planning, detailed research and flawless execution is required. The point of such a meeting is, first of all, to declare that project requirement decisions must be made and approved by the designated Decision Makers. The DMC allows you a format in which to get the required Decision Makers in the same room to go over the requirements and sign off on the approved requirements for this project. The preparation staff work for the DMC allows the delivery offices and stakeholders to review the decisions pending and prepare their Decision Maker for the DMC in advance.

A DMC is most appropriate for large complex projects with multiple delivery offices, but can also be used in smaller projects since it will always solidify requirements for any project. It can also be used to generate discussion and agreement on a specific issue that needs resolution and approval from all the delivery offices. You could apply this entire article to a DMC for one requirement if that requirement was complex or politically charged.

The length is highly dependent on the number and complexity of the decisions to be made during the DMC. The DMC for the fuel card project that I am using to frame this paper was scheduled for 3 days.

- Day One - introductions and review of the working document (more details on this later)
- Day Two - small breakout discussions to reach agreement between delivery offices
- Day Three - review the agreements and sign the Approved Functional Requirements (AFR)

The DMC can accomplish many things.

- Better communications among the team
- A clearer understanding of how the requirements from one delivery office affects the rest of the delivery offices and in fact the impact on the whole project is discussed
- New ideas and solutions due to the synergy created at the DMC
- Clarifies the way forward and produces project momentum

The deliverable from a DMC is the approved project functional and/or technical requirements.

The 4 “Cs” required for a successful DMC

The following four items are not presented in any particular order as each will be extremely important when it is needed. Combined and done well they will produce a strong positive impact on the DMC.

Concentration – the focus that you as the PM will need to provide. To be effective, a DMC cannot be lost in the weeds of everyday business activity. If it is, it will be seen as just another meeting to attend. You must manage the Decision Maker’s and stakeholder’s expectation that this concentrated time will produce positive results. It is best not to use your normal style when setting up this conference. Handling the scheduling of this conference differently will set it apart and give it a higher level of priority.

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On the fuel card project, this was accomplished by sending out individual pre-conference emails to each of the designated “Decision Makers”. It explained their role in the DMC and how critical it was for them to prepare for the DMC. It also noted that their preparation and participation in the DMC was identified as critical path items in the project plan.

Commitment – not only your own commitment to the project, but, more importantly, the commitment and support that you must seek and get from the sponsor and other senior executives.

On the fuel card project, this was accomplished by setting up a briefing for the Installation Management Agency - Europe (IMA-E), Regional Director (RD) in Germany. This provided an environment, in the presence of his direct reports, for me to introduce myself and explain my role as the project manager for the entire project, not just for the AAFES deliverables. It also allowed me to explain how applying the project management processes to this fuel card project could help deliver the project.

This briefing also gave the IMA-E RD the ability to endorse the project management processes and my role and establish legitimate authority for me to work with the other delivery offices as his agent. He issued a requirement for a quarterly progress report directly to him by me. In addition, he directed that critical path issues should be quickly elevated to him. This notified all the delivery offices that I now had a direct communication channel to the IMA-E RD. His demonstrated strong show of support for me and the project processes went a long way with the assigned resources. It also raised the priority they placed on this project.

Of course, this was pre-arranged and facilitated by the Chief of the Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) for Germany. His office was assigned as the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) tasked with delivering the project. The Chief, MWR, was identified as the Program Coordinator. He was also the person that requested that AAFES provide a Project Manager with responsibility for delivering the whole project across all delivery offices.

Cooperation – the professional attitude and open listening skills required of all attendees. This is also supported by the roles and responsibilities presented at the beginning of the DMC. It is critical that all of the attendees see you as the facilitator for the actual DMC. They will need to see you demonstrate the ability to control the discussion and flow of information. This will allow them to focus on the content of the discussion and not the discussion format.

This will put you in a position many project managers find uncomfortable. My experience is that most executives will follow the DMC rules if they know what the rules are in advance. You need to establish yourself as the Decision Maker for when to mark an item for small group solution discussions on Day 2 and move on to the next subject. This will help to keep you on-track to finish the requirements document and get it signed off.

By setting rules of engagement, you will be providing a professional environment where ideas can be discussed and Decision Makers can agree to disagree for the moment.

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Compromise – the expectation that their individual and/or organizational agendas can be merged and produce a better overall project. The goal is to get approved requirements. They may not be the ones you start the DMC with but they must end up being the ones the Decision Makers will approve. It is helpful to overtly state the goal of the DMC several times. I do it when we start and after each break.

Most of the compromising I have witnessed happens in the solution working groups. In most cases the compromise solution is far better than either stakeholder's position going into the discussion. Therefore, it is better to mark an item that you are unable to get quick agreement on for the solution discussions on Day 2. This will enable you to present a solution to the rest of the group on Day 3 and get full approval from the group.

Q.2 Discuss in detail the planning process from mission to implementation.

Every business should have a strategic plan—but the number of businesses that try to operate without a defined plan (or at least a clearly communicated one) might surprise you. Research from OnStrategy shows that 86% of executive teams spend less than one hour per month discussing strategy, and 95% of a typical workforce doesn't understand its organization's strategy.

Because so many businesses lack in these regards, you can get ahead of the game by using strategic planning. In this article, we will explain what the strategic planning process looks like and the steps involved.

In the simplest terms, the strategic planning process is the method that organizations use to develop plans to achieve overall, long-term goals.

This process differs from the project planning process, which is used to scope and assign tasks for individual projects, or strategy mapping, which helps you determine your mission, vision, and goals.

The strategic planning process is broad—it helps you create a roadmap for which strategic objectives you should put effort into achieving and which initiatives would be less helpful to the business.

Strategic planning process steps

Before you begin the strategic planning process, it is important to review some steps to set you and your organization up for success.

1. Determine your strategic position

This preparation phase sets the foundation for all work going forward. You need to know where you are to determine where you need to go and how you will get there.

Involve the right stakeholders from the start, considering both internal and external sources. Identify key strategic issues by talking with executives at your company, pulling in customer insights, and collecting industry and market data. This will give you a clear picture of your position in the market and customer insight.

It can also be helpful to review—or create if you don't have them already—your company's mission and vision statements to give yourself and your team a clear image of what success looks like for your business. In addition, review your company's core values to remind yourself about how your company plans to achieve these objectives.

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To get started, use industry and market data, including customer insights and current/future demands, to identify the issues that need to be addressed. Document your organization's internal strengths and weaknesses, along with external opportunities (ways your organization can grow in order to fill needs that the market does not currently fill) and threats (your competition).

As a framework for your initial analysis, use a SWOT diagram. With input from executives, customers, and external market data, you can quickly categorize your findings as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) to clarify your current position.

2. Prioritize your objectives

Once you have identified your current position in the market, it is time to determine objectives that will help you achieve your goals. Your objectives should align with your company mission and vision.

Objectives should be distinct and measurable to help you reach your long-term strategic goals and initiatives outlined in step one. Potential objectives can be updating website content, improving email open rates, and generating new leads in the pipeline.

3. Develop a plan

Now it's time to create a strategic plan to reach your goals successfully. This step requires determining the tactics necessary to attain your objectives and designating a timeline and clearly communicating responsibilities.

Strategy mapping is an effective tool to visualize your entire plan. Working from the top-down, strategy maps make it simple to view business processes and identify gaps for improvement.

Truly strategic choices usually involve a trade-off in opportunity cost. For example, your company may decide not to put as much funding behind customer support, so that it can put more funding into creating an intuitive user experience.

Be prepared to use your values, mission statement, and established priorities to say “no” to initiatives that won't enhance your long-term strategic position.

4. Execute and manage the plan

Once you have the plan, you're ready to implement it. First, communicate the plan to the organization by sharing relevant documentation. Then, the actual work begins.

Turn your broader strategy into a concrete plan by mapping your processes. Use key performance indicator (KPI) dashboards to communicate team responsibilities clearly. This granular approach illustrates the completion process and ownership for each step of the way.

Set up regular reviews with individual contributors and their managers and determine check-in points to ensure you're on track.

5. Review and revise the plan

The final stage of the plan—to review and revise—gives you an opportunity to reevaluate your priorities and course-correct based on past successes or failures.

On a quarterly basis, determine which KPIs your team has met and how you can continue to meet them, adapting your plan as necessary. On an annual basis, it's important to reevaluate your priorities and strategic position to ensure that you stay on track for success in the long run.

Track your progress using balanced scorecards to comprehensively understand of your business's performance and execute strategic goals.

Q.3 Discuss the importance of operational plans and budgets in distance education.

An operational plan is a practical document which outlines the key activities and targets an organisation will undertake during a period of time, usually one year. It is often linked to funding agreements as well as being linked overall to the organisation's strategic plan.

An **operational plan** outlines the activities and targets which the organisation will carry out in order to work towards achieving the aims and objectives set out in the strategic plan. It provides the framework for an organisation's day-to-day operations. An operational plan covers a one year period. Your strategic plan should be supported by annual operational plans. These will often be developed by senior staff members (where there are paid staff) but must be approved by the management committee. On the basis of reports against the operational plan, the Management Committee can then review progress towards meeting the strategic aims and objectives.

Every plan has a massive effect on all team members involved, and some of those can be to your company's benefit or to their detriment. If it's to their detriment, it's best to find out as soon as possible so you can modify your operational plan and pivot with ease.

But that's the whole point of operational planning: you get to see the effect of your operations on the business's bottom line in real time, or at every benchmark, so you know exactly when to pivot. And with a plan that's as custom to each department as an operational plan, you know exactly where things go wrong and why.

Since operational plans are built in an effort to allocate funds, resources and staff for each 1-3 year time period, all the steps that an operational plan needs to include should ultimately serve that effort.

Visualize the Operational Plan

As with any project plan, it's best to start with the vision. The main features of an operational plan therein include tasks to achieve particular, clearly defined goals, plus the management of your staff to ensure they're functioning at optimum levels. Identify your vision as it pertains to those levels, and then you can begin with the research phase.

You're going to focus that vision on more pragmatic details of the project once it has started. Project management software can help with Gantt charts that give you a project schedule and a high-level view of

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progress and performance. ProjectManager helps you visualize your operational plan by providing fully-featured Gantt charts, so you can build clean timelines with clear task assignments. Start your operational plan off right with ProjectManager. Try it free today.

Assign Budget and People

Once you've mapped out your goals, it's important to note that the budget for your operational plan comes from the yearly budget of your department. So, with that said, the budget is the top line to consider as you begin to assign tasks, resources and allocate budget for team members.

Get feedback at this stage, too, as you might have someone better suited for the role you've placed them in, or unnecessary stages you can cut from the process entirely.

Report on the Operational Plan

Once you've mapped out your operational plan—which should include clear objectives with deliverables, goals, timetables and staff necessary to achieve the plan—build out a process to report on all of it as the plan progresses.

Stakeholders, other department heads, and leadership will want to review your operational plan's progress at each benchmark—whether that be monthly, quarterly or project-based—so be sure to report on all of your findings and ensure that leadership is still on board. Project dashboards can be an easy solution for quick and accurate updates.

As with any well-planned project, you must always be ready to pivot. Hit a benchmark that delivered less than desirable results? With an operational plan, the activities are so drilled down that you can now know and understand exactly which part of the plan wasn't performing to optimal levels. Make adjustments, involve team members as needed, get buy-in from stakeholders and continue to the next benchmark with your newly-refined operational plan.

Such adjustments can be easily done if you had the foresight to make your plan using project planning software. If you have to make adjustments on a static Excel sheet or Word doc, all of the changes can take hours to update.

Project planning software, on the other hand, is a dynamic tool that lets you plan projects, assign work, track progress and make changes with ease. ProjectManager keeps all of your resources housed in one online location, changes automatically update through the software, in real time. No matter what feature you're using on our tool it will update throughout the software. For example, change the due date on the list view and it will sync up with the Gantt, kanban and calendar. Any updates automatically trigger email and in-app notifications to keep everyone on the same page.

Strategic Planning vs. Operational Planning

Operational planning is to strategic planning as a marketing team is to an organization—it's a part of a whole.

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Strategic planning encompasses those five questions listed above but exists on a company-wide level to work cross-functionally. Strategic planning is the company's process of defining organizational goals, missions and values (including its long-term direction) to better understand the resources and budget it needs to allocate to ensure the plan's efficacy. This can include defining which actions need to be taken to achieve those goals from a high level. It doesn't drill down any further than that—teams will assign their own directions as part of the operational planning to make that higher-level strategic plan succeed.

Operational planning is therefore built to support that effort with clear objectives for each department. This includes defining the roles of each team member, the goals each team has to better support the strategic plan of the organization and the budget and resources it needs to make it happen. For example, the budget for your strategic plan comes from your strategic budget, while your operational budget comes from your team's annual budget. As if that weren't straightforward enough, everything you map out for your operational plan will make everyone's roles for the next year crystal clear.

Q.4 Differentiate between planning and management with examples.

Planning is the primary function of all businesses. It is the first step on deciding what to do, how, where and when a specific work has to be done and complete a task successfully. Planning is important to process a project and get the expected result in an allocated time and budget.

Few points that describe why planning is essential for any organisation:

- It assists the management and employees to enhance future production.
- With planning, it reduces the risk and unpredictability in the future.
- It gives structure to the workflow of business and avoids overlapping of activities and eradicates unfruitful work.
- Provides direction to the employees work.
- It distinguishes and recognises future possibilities and threats.

A strategic plan usually relates to some part of the organization rather than to the totality; the concept of a master planner who constantly helps all part of the organization at some coordinated optimum is a nice concept an unrealistic one. **Strategic planning** is essentially irregular problems, opportunities, and bright ideas do not arise according to some- set timetable; rather, they are dealt with whenever they happen to be; perceived. The appropriate analytical techniques depend on the nature of the problem being analyzed, and no over all approach (such as a mathematical model) has been developed that is of much help in analyzing all types of strategic, problems emphasis on a systematic approach is quite likely to stifle the essential element of creativity. In strategic planning, management, works, now on one problem, then on another, according to the needs and opportunities, of the moment.

The estimates used in strategic planning are intended to show the expected results of the plan. They are neutral and impersonal. By contrast, the management control process and the, data used ins it are; intended to influence

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managers to take actions that will lead to desired results. Thus, in connection with management control it is appropriate, to discuss how tight an operating budget should be. Should the goals be set? So high that only an outstanding manager can achieve them, or should they be set so that they are attainable by the average manager? At what level; does frustration inhibit a manager's best efforts? Does an easily attainable budget lead to complacency? And so on. In strategic planning, the question to about figures is simple this the most reasonable estimate that can, most reasonable estimate that can be made.

Strategic planning relies heavily on external information that is, on data received from outside the company, such as market analysis, estimates of and other factors involved in building a plant in a new locality technological developments, and so on. When does from the normal information are used, they usually must be recast: fit the needs of the specified problem being analyzed. For example, current operating costs that are collected for measuring pricing and other operating decisions must be restructured before they are useful in deciding whether to close the plant. Another characteristic of the relevant information is that much precise. The strategic planner estimates what will probably happen of over a rather long time period. These estimates are likely to have a high degree of uncertainty, and they must be treated accordingly.

In the management control process, the communication of objectives, polices guidelines, decisions and results throughout the organization is extremely important. In the strategic planning process, communication is much relatively few persons; indeed, the need for secrecy often communication. Wide communication of the decisions that result from strategic planning is obviously important; this is part of the management control process.

Both management control and strategic planning involve top management but middle managers (i.e. operating management) typically have a much more important role in management content than in strategic planning. Middle managers usually are not major participants in the strategic planning process and sometimes are not even aware that is being considered. Many operating executives are by temperament not good at strategic planning. Also the pressures of current activities usually do not allow them to devote the necessary time to such work. Currently, there is tendency in companies to set up separate to gather the facts and make the analysis that provide the background material for strategic decisions.

Strategic planning and management control activities tend to conflict with one another in some respects. The time that management spends in thinking about the future is taken form time that could otherwise be used in controlling current operations, so in this indirect way strategic planning can hurt current performance. And of course the reverse also is true. More directly, many actions that are taken for long-run specific reasons make current profits smaller than they, otherwise would be. Research and some advertising expenditures are obvious examples. The problem of strong the right balance between strategic and operating considerations is one in the same problems in the whole management process.

Q.5 Differentiate between diagnostic and illuminative evaluation.

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Responsive evaluation Stake (1983) first uses the term responsive. He takes as organisers the concerns and issues of stakeholders. He emphasises the distinction between a pre-ordinate and a responsive approach. Many evaluation plans are pre-ordinate emphasising statement of goals and using objective tests. In responsive evaluation the evaluator should first observe the program and only then determine what to look for. The claims, concerns and issues about the evaluand that arise in conversations with stakeholders (people and groups in and around the program) constitute the organisers of responsive evaluation. With reference to the organisers of responsive evaluation Guba and Lincoln (1981) provide useful definitions accordingly. •Claims: Assertions that a stakeholder may introduce that are favourable to the evaluand. •Concerns: Assertions that a stakeholder may introduce that are unfavourable to the evaluand. •Issues: States of affairs about which reasonable persons may disagree. It stems that natural communication rather than formal communication is what is needed in order to address the above organisers in evaluation. In this sense Stake argues that responsive evaluation is an old alternative as it is based on what people do naturally to evaluate things: they observe and react. He identifies three ways in which an evaluation can be responsive: •If it orients more directly to program activities than to program intents •If it responds to audience requirements for information •If the different value perspectives of the people at hand are referred to in reporting the success and failure of the program.

Responsive evaluation Highlighting the recycling nature of this type of evaluation which has no natural end point, Guba and Lincoln state that “responsive evaluation is truly a continuous and interactive process.” (1981:27)

Illuminative evaluation In responding to the need for an alternative approach to evaluation, Parlett and Hamilton (1988) advocated a new approach to educational evaluation which they termed “illuminative evaluation”. As its title suggests the aim of this form of evaluation is to illuminate problems, issues and significant program features particularly when an innovatory program in education is implemented. This model is concerned with description & interpretation, not measurement and prediction.

Illuminative evaluation: Change The value I found in illuminative evaluation is the empowerment of all participants through interpretation of shared findings. This contributes to awareness, as to what is going on externally and self awareness as to what is going on in the inner world of the participants, which can result into their own decision making and acceptance of the need to change internally as individuals. And this will finally bring about change into the educational environment. As personal change is pursued throughout all stages of the evaluation process illuminative approach has much in common with consulting. Yet, unlike consulting, illuminative evaluation does not aim to proffer prescriptions, recommendations, or judgments as such. It rather provides information and comment that can serve to promote discussions among those concerned with decisions concerning the system studied, (Parlett, 1981:221). Put simply, this approach to evaluation aims to illuminate whatever might be hidden thus revealing the real reasons of failure and ultimately to serve the decision-making for improvement.

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Illuminative evaluation: The role of the evaluator. “The role of the illuminative evaluator joins a diverse group of specialists such as the psychiatrists, social anthropologists and historians and in each of these fields the research worker has to weigh and sift a complex array of human evidence and draw conclusions from it.” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1988:69) By sharing his/her findings with the stakeholders, the illuminative evaluator, facilitates the process of self awareness of all the participants. Self-awareness is pursued through illuminative evaluation and as in psychiatrics and counseling, it is through this stage that an individual would be willing to change and decide on his/her own free will to take remedial action. (Parlett & Hamilton, 1988, Kennedy 1988).

Illuminative evaluation Major working assumptions. (Parlett ,1981): A system cannot be understood if viewed in isolation from its wider contexts, Similarly an innovation is not examined in isolation but in the school context of the “learning milieu”. The investigator needs to probe beyond the surface in order to obtain a broad picture. The “learning milieu”, a term coined by Parlett (1981, is defined as the social-psychological and material environment in which students and teachers work together. Its particular characteristics have a considerable impact on the implementation of any educational program. •The individual biography of settings being examined need to be discovered. •There is no one absolute and agreed upon reality that has an objective truth. This implies that the investigator needs to consult widely from a position of “neutral outsider”. •Attention to what is done in practice is crucial since there can be no reliance on what people say.

Illuminative-responsive evaluation. The functional structure of both responsive and illuminative evaluation takes us to the consideration of formative versus summative evaluation. “The aim of formative evaluation is refinement and improvement while summative evaluation aims to determine impact or outcomes” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981:49). “formative evaluation does not simply evaluate the outcome of the program but on an ongoing evaluating process, from the very beginning, it seeks to form, improve, and direct the innovative program” (Williams & Burden, 1994:22).

Illuminative-responsive evaluation The functional structure of both responsive and illuminative evaluation takes us to the consideration of formative versus summative evaluation. “what is needed is a form of evaluation that will guide the project and help decision-making throughout the duration of the innovation. For this reason formative evaluation is often used where the very process of evaluation helps to shape the nature of the project itself and therefore increases the likelihood of its successful implementation” (Williams & Burden, 1994:22).

Step 1 Preparing the ground A. Teachers ♣ ♣ ♣ Raising awareness of problematic situation Identifying training needs to cope with specific requirements Introducing them to “Cause for concern forms” -positive attitude-positive self image Interviews 17

Step 1 Preparing the ground B. Heads of Schools – L.S.P Teachers, LSP coordinators – parents ♣ Informing them about project guidelines and regulations ♣ Discussing claims, concerns, issues C. Students’ Problem Solving framework ♣ Identification of students’ own problem ♣ Raising students’ metacognitive awareness ♣ Goal setting (assisted by teacher) ♣ Identification of appropriate tactics /strategies (assisted by teacher) ♣ Self

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evaluation (assisted by teacher) Group discussions Investigating perceptions questionnaire (Parts A B C D perceptions towards EFL & themselves as EFL learners) Individual advisory session or (Language Advising Interview) of students with evaluator (monitored, supported and assisted by teachers)

Illuminative/responsive evaluation of innovatory remedial program. Conceptual Framework Procedural/Operational Framework Step 2 Identifying the setting Understanding ♣Perceptions ♣Problems ♣Issues ♣Nature of the school reality or “learning milieu” within which the program is implemented •Students’ questionnaires (Parts E,F, Reasons for attending, Parental support) •Teachers’ interviews (claims, concerns, issues) •Students’ interviews •Group discussions (Heads, project coordinators) •Review of students’ personal information “cause for concern form” (documents and progress 19 files)

Illuminative/responsive evaluation of innovatory remedial program. Conceptual Framework Procedural/Operational Framework Step 3 SOS (sharing, observing, seeking) recycling technique •Sharing information gained •Observing •Seeking more specific information • Group discussions (Heads, project coordinators, teachers, parents) •Observing classes, episodes, incidents •Students’ questionnaire (Parts G H I, Perceptions towards LSP, LSP teacher, LSP environment) •Students’ interviews •Review of teaching material files

Illuminative/responsive evaluation of innovatory remedial program. Conceptual Framework Procedural/Operational Framework Step 4 The 3 Rs (reviewing, reflecting, remedying) technique •Reviewing information gained so far •Reflecting on action by answering “what, why” questions with regard to desirable outcomes •Remedying problematic situations or “illness” through collaboratively elaborated action plan •Teachers’ interviews (reviewingreported on - students’ self evaluation cheklists and “cause for concern” forms •Students’ interviews (suggestions) •Group discussions (Heads, project coordinators, teachers, parents)

Illuminative-responsive evaluation: Its contribution to autonomy. Through their active participation in program evaluation (critical reflection, decision making, self evaluation) students developed an awareness of their progress. This enhanced their self confidence enabling them to take control of their own learning in the EFL classroom and develop as autonomous language learners in other school subjects as well.

Implications for using this evaluation model in the field of education. This conceptual duet of responsive and illuminative evaluation aspires to make its own contribution to the field of educational evaluation. The underlying theory of the conceptual and operational framework , hopefully holds a significant potential for the evaluation of innovatory/remedial language learning programs and educational programs in general. The involvement of all participants at all stages can be very promising for the planning and implementation of educational programs which aim to follow a “bottom-up” process. The use of responsiveilluminative approach to evaluation serves the purpose of remedying the possible complications caused by a “top-down” process of implementation of educational programs.In this sense it is also expected to develop the sense of “ownership”(Kennedy, 1988) in the stakeholder and this is expected to result in the program effectiveness.