

Is Organizational Evaluation Competency Framework Contextually Relevant for Local NGO Strategy Measurement? Evidence from Uganda

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Abstract

Despite the assumed added value of localization, what remains unclear is the method and framework within which local non-governmental organization (NGO) strategies are measured. Owing to considerable difference between donor demands and local stakeholder's requirements, local NGO evaluation landscape in many developing countries including Uganda is characterized by disrupted systematic application of evaluation practices and standards. While there are considerable congregation towards ensuring standard evaluation, various evaluation models and frameworks; the proliferation of different donor donors' framework is increasingly making strategy evaluation as subject of varied imagination against localized norms and standards. This study sought to validate the contextual relevance of organizational evaluation competency (OEC) framework as a standard process upon which local NGOs could meaningfully be seen to contribute to the realization of national development plan and aspirations. In-depth key informant interviews were conducted with 16 respondents drawn from NGO executives, NGO managers, board members, consultants, and academicians from a wider spectrum of specializations. Findings revealed that the OEC framework is contextually relevant for strategy evaluation. Specifically, the findings revealed that matured NGOs strategies were positively impacted by utilization OEC framework as they consistently apply it compared to emerging new local NGO. The study highlight higher potentials in wider application of OEC framework by both matured and emerging NGOs. This implies policy engagement on capacity strengthening must urgently prioritize NGO network support towards a strengthened evaluation technical expertise and steering.

Keywords: *Localization, Strategy, Organizational evaluation competency framework, NGOs.*

Introduction

Local NGOs in developing countries are operating under increasing demand of wider stakeholder expectations such as community satisfaction, donor compliance, and regulatory compliance among others [1, 2]. As they respond to competing demands, the need to invest in strategy evaluation has seen many locals congregating at networks and forums to achieve common standards [3]. Recent and past scholars have alluded to the strategic importance of evaluation in terms of greater transparency, accountability, improved performance, and

improved funding [3-5]. Despite many articulated benefits of strategy evaluation, local NGOs evaluation practices in the past 25 years only tended to meet donor expectations at the expense of localized norms and standards. It is not apparently clear how local NGO strategy evaluation practices occur. This article attempts to validate the contextual relevance and use of organizational evaluation competency framework as systematic framework that can be optimized for strategy evaluation among the local NGOs in Uganda.

Organizational evaluation competency framework in this study was conceptualized as a

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broad framework at institutional and role level which prescribes clear institutional and individual steps which once executed provides consistent and well-articulated priorities for better organizational success. Secondary data sources consulted justified the application of organizational evaluation competency framework based on its wider application in multiple sectors including NGOs [5]. The paper draws from the adaptive management and performance theories of management which both concurs that organizations just like humans are capable to perform in extraordinary way.

Literature Review

Evaluation has become a critical activity within progressive public, private and non-government organizations worldwide. In a strategy performance landscape, it is becoming part of the culture to have continuous audits, benchmarking, research, and reviews. Currently, there is a greater emphasis on process evaluation rather than static evaluation practices. According to Martz [6], process evaluation is critical in the NGO sector because it is an open system which is affected by structures, operating conditions, employee characteristics and managerial policies and practices which requires periodic strategic responses.

To sustain a culture of continuous evaluation practice, several models have been developed to support the evaluation of NGO Strategies. These models have been widely used in the management undertaking and applied across disciplines. In the field of strategic management, five key strategy evaluation models have been widely used. These are:

The Analytical Evaluation Model

Several authors concur that the amount of information involved in strategic decision making comes with computational limitations of human decision makers [7]. The proponent of this model argues that strategy selection is a difficult task which requires technical expertise. The analytical evaluation model evaluates a

series of strategic alternatives by decomposing environmental opportunities and threats into internal, transactional, and contextual segments. In this model, the Strength, weakness, opportunity, and threats combined with Political, economic, social, technological legal and environment are used in reviewing the strategy.

The System Evaluation Model

In the systems approach the core elements of program evaluation should be analyzed in input, process, and output stages. In using the systems theory for evaluating performance the process components are equally embedded to consider the legality, morality, and fidelity of the organization's activities which are expected transformation values of interest to an NGO [8]. The system model has however been criticized because of lack of clear definition of boundaries of an organization.

Baldrige Evaluation Model

Baldrige's evaluation model is a national quality framework for American organizations. According to Dejong [9], Baldrige's performance model is one of the most successful performance excellence models that empowers organizations to reach its goals, improve results and become more competitive. The model lays emphasis on the leadership issues and these are fitted in all components of the organization to manage organization.

The Process Evaluation Model

These strategy evaluation models are majorly propagated by Hammer and Kaplan [10] According to the scholars, a process and enterprise maturity model acknowledges that there are five process enablers and four enterprise capabilities that facilitates organizational processes to perform well. The second component of process evaluation is the The balance score card which was introduced by Kaplan and Norton in 1992 and additional improvements were made in 1996. It is a multidimensional framework that considers the

non-financial and financial aspects of a strategy assessment.

Organizational Evaluation Competency Model/ Framework

Proponents of this model argues that certain issues on the operational definition including theoretical concepts that characterize evaluation approach remain unresolved, thus limiting its empirical application [11] To ensure such theoretical concepts are addressed, scholars recommended that a contextual procedure for measuring the competencies can be developed in association with quality agencies of a country in order to ascertain contextual validity and reliability.

According to Rodionova [12], tracking the contextual relevance of any model cannot be

done in isolation of structural analysis. Rodionova believes that many factors do influence the organizational structures within different agencies and as generalization of a competency without analysis of methods is counterproductive. Consequently, the use of evaluation model in any context should undergo contextual review.

In terms of methodology for assessment of evaluation competency, the common criteria for the organizational competency evaluation is usually developed based on the sector competency framework. According to Vin Meding [5], the major evaluation competencies of an NGO are focused around 6 main areas. Each of the area is illustrated below in figure 1 below.

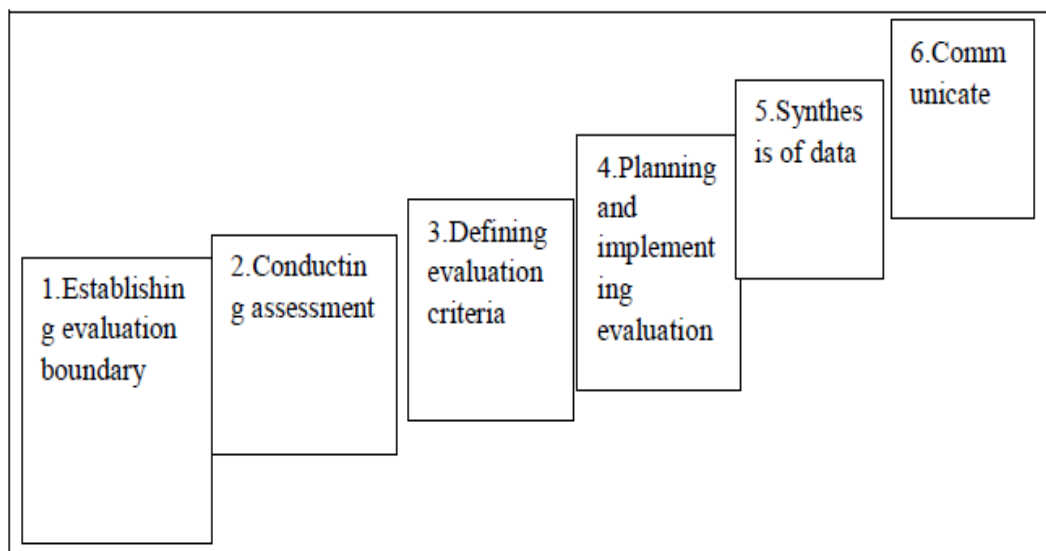


Figure 1. Evaluation Competency Model, Vin Meding et. al., (2009)

Stufflebeam [13] recommended that tools for examining the relevance of competencies should be developed using validated organizational competency checklists. An assessment of an NGO using the organizational evaluation competency model has been widely justified because of wider business application. The application of the model on the wider strategic goals has been less pronounced considering its wider application. Consequently, it leaves the goal and target determination in the hands of the different executives. The relevance of such goals

and strategies is seen as an internal dimension that NGO managers need to continuously determine and examine to avoid making evaluation a ritual [14]. In this study, testing the contextual relevance of the widely touted OEC framework was found to be critical for the sustainable future of localization and capacity building efforts towards improved strategy performance of local Ngo strategy.

Overall, literature objective reviewed has determined that various models of strategy evaluation have been innovated and applied to

different sectors. The models innovated were mostly applicable in high data driven organizations, public and private business. Contrary to the above application, this study will majorly focus on mid-size local NGOs. Literature pointed that there were more Eurocentric views on evaluation practices on the OEC framework and yet no appropriate model for examining local NGO strategy performance has been appropriately tested in Ugandan local NGO strategy discourse. The intention of this study article is to move towards a contextualized model of OEC model for optimizing strategy evaluation.

Methodology

The study design was informed of the coherent theory of truth which holds that empirical facts needs to be coherent as a set. Congruent with the coherent theories, the study applied the pragmatist philosophical foundation which believes that there were acceptable community facts about systems which may not be automatically accepted as truth because of

various conditionalities of the system [15]. The study chose to utilize the pragmatic approaches as organizational research tends to recognize the interconnectedness of knowledge and experiences which are contextually relevant and useful [16]. This philosophical foundation suits the current research because strategy evaluation is practiced in different organizations with different approaches and the different layers of staff and stakeholders tend to have different interpretation to the approaches.

To ensure an adequate coverage of the local NGO sector key informants, respondents were stratified as constituents which included consultants on localization, academia, donor agency and local NGO executives. These stratifications were based on the contextual appraisal of evaluation influencers within the local NGO landscape in Uganda. The study selected four key informants from each segment of influences. Overall, a total of 16 key informants were reached comprising of 12 males and 4 females. Table 1 below summarizes the category of key informants.

Table 1. Distribution of Key Informants by Category

Category	Location	Number
Consultants	Urban/ Regional	4
Academia	Urban	2
Donor	Urban	2
NGO executive	Urban/ Rural	4
Government	Urban	2
Total Number of Participants		16

All respondents were between the ages of 30-50 years with proven expertise of more than 5 years of work with local NGOs.

In the study, confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were ensured using pseudonyms based on the key informant codes. Key informant respondent's pseudo codes ranged from #001 to #016. Key informants are abbreviated as KI. Primary data was collected through an in-depth interview with the key informants. Documentary reviews used thematic analysis to generate relevant thematic issues

associated with local NGO strategies. The study also reviewed strategic plans, evaluation reports and policies.

Findings

Overall, the study intended to validate the contextual relevance on organizational evaluation competency (OEC) framework as a means for measuring strategy performance among local NGOs in Uganda. Organizational evaluation competency prescribes that a stronger evaluation practice in programming and strategy should be seen by how organizations apply the

followings: a) clear definition of scope b) purpose, c) clear articulation of criteria for evaluation, d) define sources of data c) clear definition of verification of progress e) communication.

To answer the study objective on the contextual relevance of OEC framework, the study sought to understand the followings: Firstly, elements of the framework which likely to be executed effectively with their associated challenges among the local NGOs in Uganda. Secondly, salient features for the success or failures of the OEC framework. Thirdly the perception of the key informants regarding the most appropriate context within which to apply the OEC framework at either program or strategy level. Finally, it concludes with a question on whether the model is appropriate in the context on Uganda NGO programming.

Elements of OEC Framework which are likely to Succeed

As seen from literature review, organizational evaluation competency framework has been widely used in both profit and public organizations to measure both projects and strategy evaluation but use in non-profits sector has not been widely backed by empirical evidence. Study, key informants were asked to elaborate on the key elements of the framework which are likely to be successfully applied in strategy and program evaluation.

Findings revealed that that there are many frameworks of evaluations which has been used within the local NGO setting including the systems framework, program OECD evaluation framework and organizational self-assessment frameworks. Most respondents concurred that they had interfaced with the OEC framework most time in their work although none could state clearly whether they used the OEC framework in their strategy evaluation process as most organizations tended to do summative strategy reviews with less documentations. This implies that there were limitations in the current

strategy evaluation frameworks which inhibits the use of OEC framework.

The use of different model was acknowledged by Uganda national NGO forum [17] in their strategy blueprint as a challenge occasioned by lack of skills in results management among local NGOs. The strategy forward plan recommends steps towards process evaluation improvement.

With it, we will be able to respond more effectively and efficiently to the changing context in which we work [17]

Local NGO executives, consultants and academia interviewed expressed various views on the different components of the framework. In an apparent counter argument against the use of elements in the OEC framework, Key informant #005 argued that small NGOs are likely to focus their strategy evaluation using simplified impact review level with simple strength weakness, opportunities, and threats rather than having a standard steps that guides the process as elaborated by OEC framework.

I have been on local NGO boards, and I saw small NGOs focusing on structured review for documentation as part of annual report for donor justification at the expense of local constituents (KI#005).

It implies that even if the OEC frameworks were used, it was majorly for meeting donor expectations such as bids for new projects etcetera at the expense of wider constituents' expectations.

In their justification of a simplified method of strategy evaluation, key informants also tended to agree that local NGOs were mixing everything described in the framework with other frameworks including organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD) evaluation criteria. Key informants revealed that a sound evaluation of strategy by local NGO should ensure appropriate steering mechanism that utilizes process evaluation in activities, outputs, outcomes which are aligned to strategy goals.

Although *communication* is the last element in the OEC framework, it has been highlighted

as a consistent area that determines a mature NGO from an emerging local NGOs. Key informants noted that success in the strategy implementation should be seen by the way an organization continuously harness experiences and feedback from stakeholders and context to stay attuned to meeting expectations. Respondents recommended that communication should be initialized in the program cycle of every NGOs.

Communication of evaluation findings should not be limited to evaluation itself; it should run in the project cycle, review and reporting process (KI# 001).

Respondents highlighted specific challenges around communication in terms of web crowding by many local NGOs, hoarding of strategy progress reports for fear of reprimand by donors and stakeholders. Stakeholder communication has been noted as an area of success for highly capacitated local NGO. Because clear communication defines space for project activities, local NGOs should analyze the stakeholders while also defining clear routine communication plan.

Stakeholders such as districts have a lot of influence in accepting or rejecting a given project. Poor communication planning leads to reduced synergies and project failure (KI#010).

Other factors that affect the success of communication includes lack of initiative, fear of regulators, fear of competition among others.

We do so much good work, but really, we don't put it out (KI#015).

The second element of the OEC model which has been highlighted as an area of success with associated challenge is *the Scope*. Key informants acknowledged that a clear definition of scope for strategy and project is paramount for any effective measurement. Respondents were however quick to warn that the scope and source of data for evaluation could turn into a nightmare if it's not appropriately conceptualized and institutionalized.

What I can say about it is that defining scope helps to focus and save time because you will not

be obliged to rely on any other data from elsewhere... You're going straightforward knowing the specifics (KI#012).

Respondents also reported that *purpose* is important because all parts of OEC framework works together to augment organizations to achieve their goals.

In a reverse appraisal by key respondents a *clear Criteria for evaluation* was highlighted as a challenging area because most of the strategic and programmatic criteria were increasingly being determined by donors against local stakeholders' expectations.

Respondents also noted that Coherence issues between government and local NGOs were also cited to be critical in determining appropriate evaluation criterion by local NGO.

NGO strategy evaluation criteria determination is caught in between either meeting donor interest or government interests. Prioritizing acceptable criteria may be a challenge for new inexperienced local NGOs (KI #09).

Key respondents reported that there were great success in the use of OEC framework on the *Source of data* in terms of primary data collection. Respondents reported lack of collaboration, the culture of secrecy and competition which inhibits local NGOs from utilizing appropriate sources of data. This has meant more costs and duplication of similar actions by many local NGOs.

One key respondent recommended that an evaluation of local NGOs strategy should be seen as a function of result-based management however there is lack of skills on applying result management process and principles due to poor institutional capacity especially for emerging local NGOs.

Most NGOs can articulate their scope of work and purpose for their strategic intervention, but they lack result-based management skills and methods which means they hardly track changes brought by the interventions as a result of failure to define data sources and scope of strategy measurement (KII # 014).

Findings on the poor institutional capacity was summarized as follows:

Local NGOs still prefer to collect primary data even when there is readily available secondary data(KI#09).

This could be attributed to the culture of competition and donor appetite for specific assessments in line with their expectations. The *scope and source of data* can be a challenge when no funding is available. Key informant #013 advised NGO executives to either adopt process/ routine reporting for strategy or annual reporting to ensure that issues are attended to in real time.

Another challenging element of the OEC framework is the means of *Verification*. Key informants reported that most local NGO strategies were being developed with unclear milestones and milestones which makes setting of means of verification subjected to multiple changes, hence inconsistent measurement. Respondents further acknowledged that matured local NGOs were less likely to develop their strategy without a clear result measurement plan which are consistent over the time.

NGOs with a strong culture of documentation should find a source of verification. They are more likely to utilize secondary data to report on strategy performance- KII #003.

Salient Issues Emerging from Key Informants Feedback on OEC Framework

Key findings generated from interaction with key respondents revealed interesting salient issues that aids success or failures of OEC framework as a means for strategy evaluation by local NGOs in Uganda.

Firstly, respondents concurred that **Strategy evaluation should overlap with program cycle:** Overall, as seen from the findings above; most key informants acknowledged that OEC framework overlap with many factors and as such its use in a linear form should not be encouraged. Key informants recommended taking strategy evaluation as a project cycle

management approach which are broken into smaller pieces for ease of implementation and oversights.

Strategy evaluation and review should be continuous instead of a summative process (KI #001).

Costs of implementing OEC framework tends to discourage utilization: Key informants also acknowledged that some elements of the OEC frameworks are less prioritized due to costs. Key informant #03 noted that in the past years there has been over emphasis on primary data collection as a means of verification and source of data and yet it is time consuming and costly.

Some local NGOs collect primary data on issues which are already assessed(KII#002).

This means that the dictates of donors or poor culture of sharing information in the interest of business case sensitivity are on the rise among the local NGOs. If left unchecked such unhealthy competition among the local actors, many community voices will insignificantly shape strategies and programs. Other key informants cited costs and mismatches between data sources.

Secondary sources of data may not answer the evaluation purpose and yet primary data collection is very expensive and time consuming given the many processes involved (KI #014).

Poor analysis at inception impacts negatively on strategy outcomes: Key informants reported that in most cases projects come with expert planning without involving the beneficiaries to really do an analysis. Poor analysis impacts negatively on evaluation criteria to be used.

There was a toilet construction project we implemented Katakwi District in Eastern Uganda without context analysis and consultation... but when we returned back to evaluate the utilization, we realized it was being used as a produce store...In fact, what may be good for the donor or organization may not be good for the communities if they don't participate in determining the success criteria (KII#008).

This implies that any success in strategy evaluation should also encompass community voice and participation in determining what success looks like.

Strategy tracking tools aids clear conceptualization of performance: Lack of a clear scope definition arises from poor conceptualization of a monitoring and evaluation plan details which are meant to be applied in strategy results plans. Key informants reported that most NGOs do not have a clear strategy tracking methods, tools, and definition of results. Most respondents also reported that because of clear definition of scope and purpose, strategy evaluation results are hardly used by local NGOs.

Lack of Capacity to execute evaluation affects strategy outcome verification: Key respondents reported that most high-level evaluations including strategies are handled by consultants. Appropriate definition of scope is a challenge for most NGOs can be a challenge as they usually do not have the knowledge or the capacity to execute an evaluation because they are done by consultants.

Local NGOs who are shadowed by consultants.... may lack the ability to conceptualize the problem, methodology, tools analysis and interpretation. So real success attribution on beneficiary wellbeing is left at the mercy of consultants- Key informant (KI#004).

Communication of evaluations are too technical to be broken down by local NGOs: Key informants acknowledged that both matured and emerging local NGOs were likely to face challenges in communications of technical strategy issues which will result into poor stakeholder's accountability.

Most local NGOs require technical communication support but often they are not utilized or consulted (KII #011).

Communication of evaluation results are sometimes a subject of restrictions: Key informants reported that there are sensitive areas of evaluation that are restricted due to business case sensitivity, security, and antiterrorism

restrictions, do not harm principles and competition. Respondents also noted that there were few donors willing to pay for internal strategy evaluation. One key informant also reported that NGOs rarely communicate their strategy impact due to fear of competitors.

Sometimes because of unhealthy competition, we keep the information to benefit when a call for proposal is announced by donors (KII #03).

This finding was further supported by another key informant who acknowledged that Strategic plans are public document, but unfortunately local NGOs hide them in the safe to avoid communicating business secrets.

Verification is also affected by common temptations of internal self-evaluation and self-reporting biasness: Respondents reported that many local NGOs were being lured to believe that internal self-assessments were adequate and yet conflict of interests were dictating on their assessment results.

You cannot design a strategy, implement, assess, or report. Chances are that you doctor the results and people will doubt it (KII #015).

This explains why most of the strategy reviews undertaken using self-assessments without external validations are doubted. The key informant admonished organizations to be open to negative feedback while focusing on continuous improvement.

Application on OEC Framework on Projects, Programs and Strategy Evaluation Practices

When asked to elaborate on areas where OEC framework is likely to be more impactful, key informant survey respondents reported mixed views. In a strict sense, key informant #005 acknowledged that the use of OEC framework is more impactful on project evaluations at the end of projects than on strategy evaluation. The key informant argued that all end of project evaluations contribute to the realization of strategy objectives and often the terms of reference are structured around OEC framework.

Another key respondent #08 also argued that the use of OEC framework can effectively serve strategy evaluation since projects and program evaluation contributes to the realization of strategy goals.

Although in strategy we have dashboards of key performance indicators, project evaluations contribute to the decision of directions and course of actions linked to strategy (KI #08).

Both findings above implies that respondents believed that all project evaluations should contribute to the realization of parts of the strategy. Another key informant disagreed with the assertion that OEC framework should be applied widely on strategy. Key informant #003 argued that Most NGOs are small, and projects may not be seen as part of the strategy.

Quite honestly, I think it's at the project level because strategy goals tend to be ambitious, people are hesitant to measure it. In fact, less than 30% of local NGOs do measure their strategy impact (KI#003)

The findings above implies that impacts in local NGO strategies were strictly seen in terms of indicators which are meant to be subjected to higher technical assessments, interpretation at the expense of simplified indicators such as numbers of beneficiaries reached. Another key informant also argued against the use of OEC framework in strategy evaluation due to limited funding for strategy evaluation. Key informant #10 wondered how an NGO would spend reasonable funding to support strategy evaluation without appropriate donor funding.

There are few donors doing long term organizational development for local NGOs in Uganda. Systematic Strategy evaluation which uses OEC framework is seen as a luxury by many local NGOs as priorities are placed on meeting staff costs and program costs (KI #010).

In a concrete suggestion on the extent to which OEC framework can be utilized in both strategy and program evaluation approach of local NGOs, Key informant #16 highlighted that strategy can have multiple projects which are subjected to evaluation using the OEC

framework and if they are appropriately steered by organization core, a process strategy evaluation reports can be generated. The respondent advised agencies to consider professionalization in carrying out evaluation such that there is coherence.

For us, we have a strategy of five years. In the past years, we sat and evaluated ourselves, but we realized that our goals were not realistic, yet it was not reviewed throughout the 5 years. If we had hired an external midterm consultant, we would have changed the course of our strategy (KI#016).

It implies that self-assessments can be deceptive and terminal evaluations are less impactful and hence professionalization if done well can support the steering core of local NGOs to utilize process data for decision.

Contextual Relevance of OEC Framework in NGO Strategy Evaluation

As elaborated above, the use of OEC framework in local NGO strategy evaluation has gathered mixed perception. When asked to state whether the model was appropriate for NGO strategy evaluation, 15 out of 16 key informants (93%) responded in affirmative. Key informants praised the OEC framework for aiding clear steps to be undertaken in designing evaluation with much emphasis on process monitoring. Other key informants recommended the framework with a caution that it should be used when there are clear results plans and frameworks for the strategy.

Strategy design should have clear indicator tracking plans just like a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan with clear measurement details and approaches (KI #013).

The framework has also been recommended by key informant to actualize both long term and short-term communication plan. Some of the key informants mentioned that effective local NGOs are seen by the extent to which they influence communication space.

The culture of poor communication among local NGOs points to poor utilization of OEC

framework at either project or at strategy level (KI #09)

Other key informants also recommended that the OEC framework should be used in full acknowledgement of other evaluation models and frameworks.

Yes, it is true that most NGOs have strategic plans usually for 5 years, but they are shelved. We could simplify evaluation by conducting annual reviews, self-assessments, independent audits as these helps to inform strategies (KI #014).

Although there was concurrence that the framework could apply on strategy evaluation, findings above pointed that its use is subject to multiple challenges such as capacity gaps, funding constraints and lack of technical approach and expertise to utilize the model.

One of the key informants who objected to the use OEC framework as a means for strategy evaluation argued that without capacity, it can be poorly misconceived and disastrous to the future of an NGO. Key respondent #11 recommended organizations to invest in in-house technical expertise and external technical expertise when it comes to matters of strategy design and evaluation.

Poor conceptualization of scope, criteria, means of verification may lead an organization to self-deception. NGOs are likely to set easy scope and criteria for themselves to polish themselves to be high performers... I think working with internal and external experts in strategy matters is paramount (KI #012).

Similarly, the context of an organization and organizational capacity has also been found to influences the use of OEC framework. Matured local NGOs are more likely to use the OEC framework compared to newly formed local NGOs owing to considerable capacity issues and lack of conceptualization of many factors including context within which the organization finds itself.

Matured local NGOs have clear progress tracking tools and information which aid their use of the framework. They can afford to hire

external consultant for strategy evaluation for independence (KI#007).

It implies that there were a concurrence that matured NGOs were likely to utilize the model in a comprehensive way compared to the new and emerging local NGOs.

Discussion

The linkage between evaluation practice and strategy performance among the local non-governmental organizations (NGO)s as a concept and a strategy is a relatively new and undebated phenomenon in localization studies. In practice, most evaluation competency due diligence requirements for local non-governmental organizations (NGOS) have traditionally been anchored on western evaluation paradigms which focused on meeting donor requirements and yet their contextual relevancies are dismissible in the national development cycles. Despite the greater importance of better evaluation practices to attain improved local NGO performance, limited empirical data is still available to inform policy and practice on localization. The article had hypothesized that organizational evaluation competency model has no effect on strategy performance of NGOs. Evidence from the findings above reject this hypothesis and concludes that organizational evaluation competency framework has a positive effect on strategy performance of NGOs. The findings supports the performance theory postulation that for any accomplishment to occur, there needs to be leadership and systems. Similarly, because mature NGOs were seen to be more impactful in their communication, the findings concludes that successful NGOs are seen by their fulfilment of needs which are usually seen by their communication of strategy results [18].

As observed from the findings, matured local NGOs were more impactful compared to emerging new NGOs with no clear leaderships and systems. In terms of adaptive management theory, the findings on the need to incorporate process evaluation confirms the argument of

Jacobson [19] who had postulated that top executives need to develop tools and indicators aligned to goals that can be continuously reviewed. The findings on weak steering core with limited capacity also implies that top executive with clear steering teams in matured were more likely to achieve better outputs compared to the emerging NGOs with no clear system.

The findings provides evidence to support the contextualization of organizational evaluation competency framework with a strong backing that matured or old local NGOs are more well positioned to utilize the framework both at process and summative review levels against the assumption of Baldrige's model which laid emphasis on leadership than experience [9]. This means that inept local NGOs are better positioned when they join networks and local NGO forums as part of their competency improvement.

Regarding application of the framework on either projects or strategy evaluation, the study has concluded that the OEC framework can apply in both levels. This findings also support the use of process evaluation which concurrences with the position of Martz [6] that NGOs as an open system should apply process instead of terminal evaluation. As noted from the salient issues around the use of the framework, process evaluation should be supported by technical teams and steering team members who can provide appropriate analytical skills. This supports the use of analytical models in strategy evaluation as alluded by Tavana [7] and Barr [21].

Conclusion

In this study, the contextual relevance of organizational evaluation competency was validated through four specific questions namely, what elements of the OEC models are likely to be executed successfully and unsuccessfully in the context of Ugandan? What are the salient issues that arise from the use of OEC framework in a local NGO undertaking?

Are OEC framework more likely to utilized at projects or strategy levels? What is the overall contextual relevance of the framework?.

The study has determined that OEC framework is contextually very relevant, but its use has been affected by serious internal and external challenges such as poor donor appetite to fund strategy evaluation, lack of technical expertise to ensure process monitoring and lack of independence.

Implications for Further Research

The study recognizes that organizational evaluation competency framework influences strategy performance of local NGOs in Uganda. It sheds green light on the need for setting standards for process evaluation of local NGO strategy and the need to link strategy outputs from local NGOs to national systems. The findings also raises the need for debates on the impact of peer mentorships in NGO networks and forums which has not been examined in this study. Further extension of this study could explore approaches for facilitating wider use of the OEC framework.

Limitation of the study

The study was conducted using the concurrence theory of truth and it also used the pragmatist philosophical foundation to construct meanings and as such large-scale quantifiable data was not considered. Secondly, the scope of study was at macro level involving a wider spectrum of stakeholders which may be limiting in terms of specifics. The study did not disaggregate a sample in terms of new and old local NGO and yet their experiences was found to be a strength in predicting the use of OEC framework. Future research could also include more international NGOs as key informants based on their assumed role as potential donors for local NGOs.

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Conflict of Interest Declaration

I declare that this is my original work and that this study was not funded by any local or international organization and throughout the assessment and reporting. I fully declare that there was no conflict of interest.

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