Ethiopia has been experiencing a growing demand for good governance and effective decision-making, necessitating evaluation in different sectors of public management. This article aims to assess the status of development evaluation culture in Ethiopia using the approach of Furubo et al. (2002). The approach applies nine indicators of evaluation culture, giving a score to each after verifying the existence of empirical materials and assessing how well the country is doing according to the indicators. The score for each indicator is usually given through consultation between the rated entity and national researchers. However, for this article, I have rated the indicators by reviewing available research on Ethiopia. The findings of the research show a mixed result: Ethiopia has a low score with regard to the use of evaluation in many policy domains; a medium score on Degree of Institutionalization – Government; and a high score in the case of existence of professional organizations. From this we can conclude that an evaluation culture is not yet fully established in the country. On the basis of the analysis, I make some recommendations to strengthen the evaluation culture in Ethiopia.
Hailu Filmon, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant

Introduction

Development interventions need to be monitored and evaluated in order to show the impact of actual results, gain lessons from their implementation, and improve future design. This becomes practical when a proper analysis tool is used to assess changes attributable to the specific intervention in a given area or on beneficiaries. Among these tools, development evaluation is considered a prominent one.

Development evaluation is widely understood as the evaluation of development interventions to include projects, programs and policies. Patton (2012) defines development evaluation as a generic term for evaluations conducted in developing countries, usually focused on the effectiveness of international aid programs and agencies.

As a tool of analysis, evaluation has evolved and changed as development issues grow. Development evaluation has been practiced for more than 72 years in the developed world since the inception of the World Bank in 1944 (Imas and Rist, 2008). But, its application in developing countries for their own development interventions, tells a different story.

Ethiopia has been practicing evaluation (Musumba, 2018). However, the country has limitations in applying development evaluation extensively and in a structured manner. As a result, only a few studies have been undertaken so far that reveal the status of development evaluation and degree to which an evaluation culture has taken root in the country.

Materials and methods

Different institutions and researchers have tried to assess the status of development evaluation and evaluation culture within countries. Among the available research, this article follows the approach of Furubo et al. (2002), which helps to identify forces that affect the application of evaluation in different national contexts and the consequences these have
in promoting its use. The approach includes the following:

- Historical overview of supply and demand in relation to evaluation; shifts in institutional settings;
- Description of professionalization in the field of evaluation;
- Description of evaluation in the executive branch of government;
- Description of evaluation in the legislative structure;
- Concluding observations on where national systems are at present and where they may be going; and
- Investigate possible explanations for changes and trends, and implication of evaluation to national developments.

Furubo et al. (2002) also examined nine variables of evaluation culture, giving each a score between 0 (low), 1 (medium) and 2 (high), with all needing to be fulfilled before an evaluation culture can be completely established. Table 1 lists the variables.

### Assessment

I assessed Ethiopia on these criteria based on information collected from Alemu and Latib (2013) and the Independent Evaluation Office of the UNDP (2015), by making analysis and observations on Furubo et al.’s (2002) nine assessment criteria of evaluation culture. As a result, I have rated Ethiopia’s performance on the indicators as shown in Table 2.

#### Evaluation takes place in many policy domains

This score of 0 for this first criterion implies that evaluation activities in Ethiopia remain a separate function and are only concentrated in few sectors. There are no specific branch of government in charge of a national mandate of the evaluation function which could explain the lack or limited appetite for evaluation studies. Other possible reasons could include a lack of knowledge of evaluation and its contribution towards effective and evidence-based policy making.

#### Supply of domestic evaluators in different disciplines

The country has performed badly in this case. This is supported by the fact that there are currently almost no higher academic learning institutions which offer a curriculum for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) professionals in the country in various fields of study. This is expected, as the demand for evaluation is low at the policy making structure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Variables that assess evaluation culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Evaluation takes place in many policy domains.</td>
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<td>2 Supply of evaluators specializing in different disciplines.</td>
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<td>3 National discourse concerning evaluation.</td>
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<td>4 Existence of an evaluation sector that remains up-to-date on the norms and ethics of the profession.</td>
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<td>5 Institutional policies in the government for conducting evaluations and disseminating results to decision makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Institutional policies are present in parliament for conducting evaluations and disseminating findings to decision makers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Existence of different stakeholders commissioning and performing evaluations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Evaluation activities within the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI).</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Public sector evaluations that have program or policy outcomes.</td>
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</table>
As a result, it is hard to imagine and see that due attention is given, and resources allocated, to improve the supply of evaluators in Ethiopia.

**National discourse concerning evaluation**

The country scored the highest in this regard. The Ethiopian government is gaining experience from its implementation of public sector reforms adopted under results-based management to serve as the national strategy (Alemu and Latib, 2013). Adopting results-based management as a public policy management tool will have many implications for the demand and supply of evaluation.

Making government institutions more results-oriented would improve service delivery, the provision of public goods and the use of budget. This will also have implications in terms of accountability, giving space for learning in the process of improving the national governance of policies.

**Professional associations**

In this regard the country is doing well. The available evidence reveals that two professional associations operate in Ethiopia. These are the well-known Ethiopian Evaluation Association (EEvA) and a young professional society referred to as the Ethiopian Monitoring and Evaluation Association, established in 2009 and 2014 respectively.

EEvA has been vocal and active in creating networks with fellow societies in Africa as well as organizing professional conferences (EEVA, Annual Performance Reports 2013–2016a). It is also making efforts to introduce evaluation standards to develop the profession. Although it has done much in terms of increasing its visibility, EEvA’s contribution towards improving the demand and supply of evaluation in the country is quite minimal.

**Degree of Institutionalization – Government**

The score on this indicator is of medium value. The implication being, that even if there are efforts like the support provided by the AFDB through IDEV which strengthened the national M&E system from 2014 to 2018, the country still has limitations in creating the necessary permanent structures to facilitate the commissioning of evaluation studies within government offices and to disseminate findings.

Looking at the historical overview of demand and supply of evaluation in Ethiopia, it seems the country has some experience in the field of development evaluation. Research reveals ⬤

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**Table 2: Evaluation Culture Ratings in Ethiopia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Evaluation takes place in many policy domains</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Supply of domestic evaluators in different disciplines</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>National discourse concerning evaluation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Professional organizations</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Degree of institutionalization – Government</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Degree of institutionalization – Parliament</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pluralism of institutions performing evaluations within each policy domain</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Evaluation within the Supreme Audit Institution</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Proportion of outcome evaluations in relation to output and process evaluations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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that monitoring had special focus especially within the three five-year plans (1957-1973 European Calendar) under the Imperial regime. The available evidence further demonstrates that M&E of country development plans has been intensive in the case of public sector governance, especially during the military regime. However, M&E activities had less focus on impact evaluation during the Derg era (1974-1991 European Calendar). Since the change of the government in 1991, the country articulated an M&E framework which is described in its national development plan. Nevertheless, the focus on monitoring has not been changed over the years resulting in a minimal use of evaluation and evidence-based feedback systems (Alemu and Latib, 2013).

Recently, the Ethiopian Government established the National Planning Council and National Planning Commission by official decree (Regulation No. 281/2013). It has also issued a National Growth and Transformation Plan Implementation Council of Ministers Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline since January 09, 2018. In addition, delivery units have been established starting from the Office of the Prime Minister. These moves demonstrate the significant attention given to establishing an institutional structure that coordinates national level M&E activities and the adoption of a policy framework.

Degree of Institutionalization – Parliament

This indicator has a low score. It indicates that currently there are no permanent practices which are responsible within the legislative structure that facilitate the conduct of evaluation studies and dissemination of findings.

Members of the Ethiopian Parliament signed the Yaoundé Declaration of African Parliamentarians on Evaluation in 2014 (Rosenstein, 2015). Nonetheless, it is surprising that the Parliament has not exercised its power to call for any evaluation on government affairs up to now.

The Parliament has a big role to play in establishing evidence-based decision making since it serves as watchdog of executive activities. It also could have impact in terms of spreading pluralism and openness to new ideas in improving the country's evaluation culture by exercising its mandate. This has greatly affected the demand and supply for evaluation and its contribution in sustaining good governance in the country.

Pluralism of institutions or evaluators performing evaluations within each policy domain

The score on this indicator is 1. There are institutions which perform evaluations in Ethiopia; however, they are few. As the demand for evaluation is not existent in the policy domains of the country, it is clear there are not many firms and consultants specialized in the field. This is reflected by market rules.

Evaluation within the Supreme Audit Institution

The result for this indicator is zero. This means evaluation activity does not exist within the Office of the Federal Auditor General and it is not currently contributing to the creation of an evaluation culture in the country. Evaluation and audit are directly related. This is because both have the objective of establishing accountability in managing resources and promoting learning gained from the conduct of assessments.

There is a great interest by the parliament for annual reporting on the performance of government institutions by the Office of the Federal Auditor General, to the use of public resources; this has also attracted great media and public attention. However, these federal auditor reports could have been reinforced with more meaningful
impact, in terms of demonstrating the value added to the target group if evaluation studies were integrated within the audit office activities. There is a huge gap in this regard.

Proportion of outcome evaluations in relation to output and process evaluations

The indicator in this regard reveals a score of 1. The implication being that in Ethiopia, many outcome evaluations are not being carried out to show whether interventions had an impact on the problem they were intended to solve. Very few interventions perform outcome evaluations if they are attached to donor interest and donor support is involved. This is because there is a huge knowledge gap about what evaluation is and its contributions to effective decision making in the public sector.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on Furubo et al. (2002), this article has defined maturity in two aspects while analyzing the indicators of evaluation culture. The first aspect concerns the degree to which evaluation praxis is established and becomes an integrated part of the political and administrative system. The second feature focuses on the spread and pluralism of an evaluative culture and its openness to new ideas and impulses.

Research shows evaluation is directly related to open public discussion and the concept that policies are open to question. As a result, the Ethiopian government should encourage open public discussion and accustom itself to critical voices through creating opportunities for civil society intervention, including voluntary professional associations in evaluation, by establishing platforms and engaging them on a permanent basis. This is crucial to spreading pluralism and establishing an evaluation culture in Ethiopia characterized by openness and new ideas.

The overall result of the research implies that Ethiopia does not have a mature evaluation culture as there are gaps in certain areas, thus not satisfying all nine criteria. It seems there is recognition for the need of M&E as the institutional structure has been established, however, this commitment is not implemented to the level that it is integrated into the political and administrative system which makes the system functional and effective. Even if there are stakeholders who advocate for the use of evaluation, they are not influential enough to encourage pluralism and exchange of ideas.

"Ethiopia does not have a mature evaluation culture as there are gaps in certain areas, thus not satisfying all nine criteria."

What recommendations can we draw from the assessment to strengthen the evaluation culture in Ethiopia?

The first priority area to improve the evaluation culture relates to the adoption of a policy framework. In this regard, Ethiopia recently issued a National Growth and Transformation Plan Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Guideline through Council of Ministers on January 09, 2018 (FDRE, 2018).

The second focus area that should be worked on concerns designing programs to implement the policy directions which are stated in the national M&E guideline. In this case, Canada could be a good example, as it introduced the Results for Canadians Initiative whereby it generated demand for evaluation at the national level (Stolyarenko (c)). This is a government management agenda whose focus lies on improving delivery of results, responsible spending, greater transparency and accountability for results.
The third intervention that should be made is to identify evaluation champions. It would be good if these are situated with the government since it plays a leading role. Here, a good example could be Uganda where the President became the lead champion with the government for advocating the use of evaluation in the management of the public sector (Stolyarenko (a)). He also assigned resident district commissioners at the local level to serve as M&E champions. In addition, in Uganda the Office of the Prime Minister is the lead champion institutionally for M&E in the country.

The fourth instrument that should be taken on board is to establish a platform to create public confidence for openness and accountability among stakeholders. In this instance, the case of Colombia Lider, an independent platform of civil society partnership where representatives of the media, banks, foundations, and other organizations are gathered to discuss good governance and social control could be a good example (Stolyarenko (b)). It is used to highlight good performance of municipal mayors, and monitor government plans and spending, and analyze their impact on poverty.

Taken together, implementing these recommendations should improve Ethiopia’s performance on the indicators assessing the strength of evaluation culture in the country.

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