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Factors Affecting Evaluation Influence in the Public Sector of Cam Lo District, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to answer what factors may affect evaluation influence in the public sector of Cam Lo District in Vietnam. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to extract factors that may affect evaluation influence. This procedure returned five factors, including involvement of evaluation partners, evaluation capacity, evaluation plans and methods, generation of evaluation report, and dissemination evaluation findings. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to verify whether the measured variables that were written to reflect the identified factors are reliable and valid. Path analysis was then conducted to investigate the relationships between the factors identified and evaluation influence. Survey data collected from 275 staff of in 2015 Cam Lo District highlight that two out of the five factors (i.e., evaluation capacity along with evaluation plans and methods) identified on the basis of the proposed conceptual framework have a statistically significant effect on evaluation influence.

Keywords: Evaluation Influence, Evaluation Use, Research on Evaluation, Theory of Evaluation Influence, Vietnam
JEL Classifications: J24, H70

1. INTRODUCTION

Demonstration of accountability to the public is one of the major management challenges in within the public sector. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are often-used tools for this purpose in the developing world. In the Vietnamese context, specifically, monitoring provides the public sector management with regular and periodical information on the implementation of the socio-economic development plan (SEDP) - a government's macro socio-economic management tools. Evaluation provides the means to examine the extent to which the SEDP has been implemented effectively. Both are expected to provide inputs for decision-making and to highlight lessons learned. However, despite the Government of Vietnam's recent growing interest in the use of M&E, both appear to remain underused. This is likely due to underdeveloped linkages between M&E and budget allocation practices (Hwang, 2014). Let us further explore this issue in terms of who the primary users are, their views about the purpose of M&E, and the extent to which they use M&E.

First, the primary users of M&E information in Vietnam include the Ministry of Planning and Investment, some sector ministries (e.g., Ministry of Industry and Trade), and the legislative branch of government (e.g., the People's Councils). Users of M&E information see it as an important tool that aid the management of particular development projects or programmes. For example, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development substantially uses M&E information in their planning process, with the intention of integrating the ministry's 2011-2015 5-year sectoral plan into the national SEDP (Hwang, 2014). In contrast, the M&E systems of those who do not use (or, minimally uses) M&E findings remain underdeveloped. This is partly due to the unavailability of a coherent M&E framework as well as a lack of a systematic and consistent set of M&E guidelines from the relevant authorities (Asian Development Bank, 2006). This may result in making the government less accountable. For example, the Ministry of Finance is not yet engaged and not currently utilizing the M&E information produced in its budget decision-making process (Hwang, 2014). In short, use of M&E, particularly the use of evaluations for effective SEDP implementation and demonstration of accountability to the public is currently still a major challenge in Vietnam. This paper seeks to identify factors which may affect evaluation influence in the public sector of Cam Lo District in Vietnam.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Interests in the use of M&E findings are increasing in Vietnam, particularly in the public sector. To bolster poverty reduction and implementation of the SEDP, several reports have been made available to policy makers and international donors to support their use of M&E results. Examples include the Annual Progress Reports for Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy[1] and the SEDP Annual Reports. The former typically covers assessment of achievements and challenges remained from the previous year, including assessment of macro policies, programme implementation process and outputs achieved as regards economic growth and poverty reduction. The latter covers assessment of SEDP implementation progress of the previous year and estimates for the following year. Evaluation reports that cover other topics such as anti-corruptions efforts, large-scale transport infrastructure, and general budget support are also available (see for example Bartholomew et al., 2005; Mitsui, 2004; Poate and Vaillant, 2011). These reports which were made available stimulate the government to use evaluation results in making informed decisions.

2.1. Evaluation Use versus Evaluation Influence

Previous research has extensively been carried out since the 1970s on evaluation use. Various studies classified evaluation use by purposes, and the five most common types include instrumental, conceptual, persuasive, process and imposed uses (Greene, 1988; Alkin and Taut, 2003 and Mark, 2003; Patton, 1997; Preskill et al., 2003; Shulha and Counsins 1997; Weiss et al., 2005). These types of evaluation use dominated the evaluation literature between 1960s and 2000s. The study and distinction of different types of use helps to improve knowledge and understanding of evaluation use and thus promote appropriate actions (Alkin and Taut, 2003). The acknowledgement of the fact that the notion of evaluation use was rather limited in scope, and needed to be broadened started from the 2000s onwards (Alkin and Taut, 2003). Some scholars have attempted to expand the concept of evaluation use to a broader construct called "evaluation influence" (Henry and Mark, 2003; Kirkhart, 2000; Mark and Henry, 2004). Compared to evaluation use, research on evaluation influence is more recent and dates back to the 2000s. Among the scholars who call for a better concept than evaluation use, Mark (2011. p. 113) defines that "evaluation influence explicitly includes both changes that take place at the location and general time frame of the evaluation and changes that take place elsewhere and later." Furthermore, Mark and Henry (2004) developed the theory of evaluation influence with the intention to capture the change processes through which evaluation findings and processes influence attitudes, motivations and actions, which in turn translate into social betterment.

2.2. Factors Affecting Evaluation Use and Influence

Understanding of factors that may affect evaluation use or influence would improve the possibility of stimulating these factors and as such evaluation use/influence. In reviewing 65 studies in education, mental health and social services, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) identified 12 factors affecting evaluation use in which six factors were classified under evaluation implementation (including evaluation quality, credibility, relevance, communication quality, findings and timeliness), and the other six factors under decision/policy setting (including information needs, decision characteristics, political climate, competing information, personal characteristics, commitment and/or receptiveness to evaluation). Another review by Johnson et al., (2009) which also applied the Cousins and Leithwood 1986's framework confirmed these 12 factors, and further found an addition of one new category i.e., stakeholder involvement, and one new characteristic i.e., evaluator competence under the category of evaluation implementation.

Empirical research on evaluation influence are still limited but available, including those by Weiss et al. (2005), Christie (2007), and Gildemyn (2014). The first two studies, which were conducted in the education sector, reported that all three types of evaluation information (including large-scale evaluation study data, case study evaluation data, and anecdotes) "influence decision makers' decisions" (Christie, 2007. p. 22), and "evaluation evidence travelled to influence decisions about D.A.R.E[2]" (Weiss et al., 2005. p. 27). Gildemyn's study (2014) found that the presence of interface meetings seems to have positive effects in stimulating evaluation influence.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

In light of the fact that discerning factors affecting SEDP implementation can be a complex phenomenon, we seek to identify which factors may affect evaluation influence at district and commune levels. Our exploration was guided by the following research question: "What are the factors which may affect evaluation influence at the district and commune levels of Cam Lo District as perceived by the staff involved?"

3.1. Hypotheses

This study has employed structural equation modelling (SEM) procedure to test the direct relationships between the factors that were identified and assessed during EFA and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) processes (Hair et al., 2010). We identified the following as factors which may affect evaluation influence: Involvement of evaluation partners, evaluation capacity, evaluation plans and methods, generation of evaluation report and dissemination of evaluation findings. In order to assess these relationships, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

H1: The involvement of evaluation partners is positively associated with evaluation influence

H2: The evaluation capacity is positively associated with evaluation influence

H3: The evaluation plans and methods is positively associated with evaluation influence

1 This is similar to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) that is used in some other countries.

2 D.A.R.E stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education programme.

H4: The generation of evaluation report is positively associated with evaluation influence

H5: The dissemination of evaluation findings is positively associated with evaluation influence.

To better understand this issue, we conducted surveyed district and commune staff in the Cam Lo District, Vietnam, in 2015. The survey enabled us to measure staff's perceptions about the factors that affect evaluation influence in Cam Lo District.

3.2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework underpinning our study was developed from the theory of evaluation influence (Mark and Henry, 2004). In their theory, Mark and Henry (2004) proposed various dimensions under two broad notions of evaluation inputs and activities that potentially produce effects on different types of outcomes (i.e., general influence, cognitive and affective, motivational and behavioural) at individual, interpersonal and collective levels. We selected some key dimensions that are relevant to the context of our study. The rationale for our selection was discussed below.

First, we have opted to primarily focus on behavioural types of process or outcome at individual level because:

1. It is essential to see what evaluation inputs and activities of interest as interventions affect intermediate and long-term outcomes in the context of SEDP implementation (Figure 1)
2. To contribute to the existing body of literature on evaluation use and influence which is limited in lower middle-income and developing countries e.g., Vietnam.

Second, we have translated, grouped and chosen evaluation inputs and activities that are considered the most critical in the public sector context of Vietnam from Mark and Henry's proposed framework into seven relevant items to fit with the study context, including (1) evaluation plans and methods, (2) evaluation lessons learned/best practices, (3) participation of programme partners in evaluation, (4) evaluation capacity, (5) involvement of programme holders in evaluation processes, (6) generation of evaluation reports, and (7) dissemination of evaluation findings/reports. The selection of these inputs and activities is more particularly related to the fact that:

1. A participatory approach in SEDP planning and implementation is introduced and encouraged by the government, and it is particularly relevant to see how this approach is exercised in the evaluation context of the public sector
2. Given Vietnam has started to use M&E information for SEDP planning and implementation, it is important to see exactly what factors may affect evaluation influence in the district.

Bringing these different building blocks together leads to the conceptual framework as specified in Figure 1.

In the above figure, evaluation inputs and activities are expected to influence the intermediate and long-term outcomes at individual level (Mark and Henry, 2004). For example, findings from evaluation reports and dissemination are expected to influence decision makers to coordinate and manage socio-economic programmes, or improve programme implementation at individual level. There are also factors which inhibit, or facilitate, or even compete with evaluation influence processes (Mark and Henry, 2004). For example, the positive cooperation from local citizens in the evaluation of a service delivery programme implemented by a district section can be considered a facilitating factor for the whole process.

4. METHODS

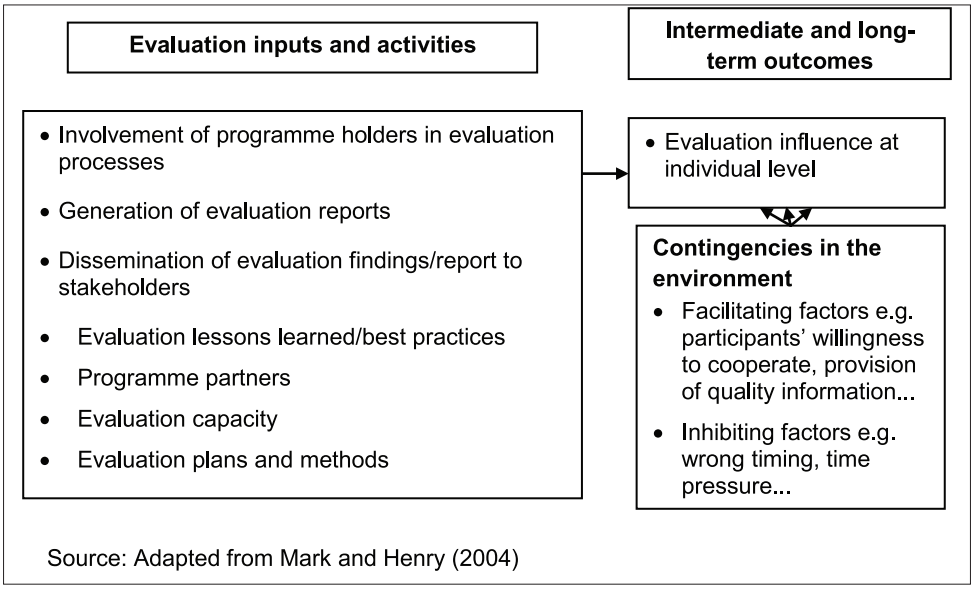
This study was conducted at Cam Lo District. The survey data helped to determine the potential predictive power of factors which may affect evaluation influence.

4.1. Participants, Setting and Study Design

4.1.1. Participants

All staff working in the district and communes of Cam Lo since 2008 (N = 312) were invited to participate in the survey. This was to ensure a relatively sufficient amount of time for evaluation

Figure 1: Conceptual framework to study evaluation influence at Cam Lo district



influence to take place. This study adopted a total population sampling technique (Cheung et al., 2006; Raheel and Naeem, 2013). A questionnaire was sent out, with assistance of the district statistics section, to all staff who was asked to complete and return the questionnaire in 2 week's time.

4.1.2. Setting

Cam Lo is a rural district of Quang Tri Province in the North Central Coast region of Vietnam. District and commune staffs are basically civil servants working in various sections, including finance-planning, inspection, home affairs, education and training, justice, health, education, culture and information, etc. These staff are responsible for the state management and implementation of the SEDP in the locality.

4.1.3. Study design

The study adopted a cross-sectional design (de Vaus, 2007).

4.2. Data Collection

The questionnaire was developed with reference to Bourgeois and Cousins (2013), Brandon (1999), Greene (1988), Lafleur (1995), and Weiss et al. (2005).

Participants completed a pilot-tested questionnaire which was designed to capture participants' opinions and attitudes as regards the influence of selected evaluation inputs and activities on intermediate and long-term outcomes of socio-economic development programmes in Cam Lo. The self-reported questionnaire included eight dimensions: Involvement of programme holders in evaluation processes, generation of evaluation reports, dissemination of evaluation findings/reports to stakeholders, evaluation plans and methods, evaluation lessons learned/best practices, programme partners, evaluation capacity, and evaluation influence. The questionnaire includes 39 items that were measured on a 7-point Likert scale in the eight above-mentioned dimensions, ranging from 1 = "not true/valid at all" to 7 = "100% true/valid," or 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree," (Appendix A).

4.3. Data Analysis

Participants' answers to separate items on each survey dimension were analysed using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) with IBM SPSS 20 to identify possible factors which may affect evaluation influence as perceived by the staff involved in the evaluation processes. Prior to the analysis, assumptions of EFA (sample size, factorability of the correlation matrix multivariate linearity and multivariate outliers) were examined using procedures outlined by Hair et al. (2010) and Pallant (2011). Principal axis factoring with promax rotation was performed as our data are non-normal (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) and Barlett's test of sphericity were evaluated (Hair et al., 2010). Factor loadings that are <0.35 were suppressed for identification of significant factor loadings (Hair et al., 2010). Numbers of factors to be retained which was determined by parallel analysis method (Horn, 1965) was labeled.

Then CFA was used to test construct validity and reliability using criteria adopted by Hair et al. (2010), including composite construct reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), maximum shared variance (MSV), and average shared variance (ASV) as presented Table 1.

After all, SEM analysis procedure is applied to test all proposed hypotheses of the study. This study further used Amos 20 for analysis, and applied the maximum likelihood (ML) method to assess the measurement model and the structural model, so as to check whether the path coefficient of concerned variable is significant, and validate the hypotheses. The study used the indices suggested by Arbuckle (2007) and Hair et al. (2010) as presented in Table 2 to assess the fit of model.

5. RESULTS

From 312 eligible participants, 275 responded accounting for 88.1% of the response rate. This high response rate reduces the possibility of response bias (Cheung et al., 2006; Raheel and Naeem, 2013). The staff who did not return the questionnaire were ill, travelling, or attending in-service training.

Of the 275 questionnaires completed by participating staff, none of the survey items was there missing data. Data screening detected and removed 14 outliers. MSA values were 0.749 which exceeded the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010), and Barlett's tests of sphericity were significant at 0.000 level.

5.1. EFA

Prior to EFA process, a common method bia1s (CMB) test was conducted to assess if CMB might present a problem. For this test, all measured variables in this study are loaded into EFA with

Table 1: Cut-off guidelines for assessment of validity and reliability

Reliability and validity	Cut-off guideline
Composite reliability	≥0.70
Convergent validity	Factor loadings≥0.50 AVE≥0.50
Discriminant validity	MSV<AVE ASV<AVE

Source: Hair et al. (2010)

Table 2: Fit indices reported in this study

Fit indices	Criteria
Chi-square statistic (CMIN)	Significant P values even with good fit
CMIN/df	<3 good; <5 sometimes permissible
RMR	The smaller RMR, the better. An RMR of zero indicates a perfect fit
CFI	>0.95 great, >0.9 traditional; >0.8 sometimes permissible
TLI	>0.95 great, >0.9 traditional; >0.8 sometimes permissible
RMSEA	<0.05 good; 0.05-0.10 moderate; >0.10 bad
AIC	AIC values closer to zero indicate better fit and better parsimony. In model comparison, one chooses the model with the smallest value

Source: Arbuckle (2007); Hair et al. (2010). RMR: Root mean square residual, RMSEA: Root mean square error of approximation, AIC: Akaike information criterion, CFI: Comparative fit index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis index

extraction of only one fixed factor and without rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicated that the single factor accounts for 30.82% of the variance i.e. not a majority. In other words, CMB seems not to be a problem in our factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003; Podsakoff and Organ, 1986).

The EFA process resulted in six factors representing 67.7% of the variance in the data. The rotated solution revealed the presence of a "simple structure" with five factors showing a number of strong loadings and all variables loading substantially on one factor (Thurstone in Pallant, 2011. p. 185). Nine items loaded on the first factor, which was subsequently labelled "involvement of evaluation partners" factor (named PARTNER). Five items loaded on the second factor, which was labelled "evaluation capacity" factor (CAPACITY). Four items loaded on the third factor, which was labelled "evaluation plans and methods" factor (METHOD). Three items loaded on the fourth factor, which was labelled "generation of evaluation report" factor (RPT). Three items loaded on the fifth factor, which was labelled "dissemination of evaluation findings" factor (DISSEM). Finally, four items loaded on the sixth factor, which was labelled "evaluation influence" factor (EVALINF). Factor labels, item codes, factor loadings and descriptive statistics of the six factors under study were presented in Table 3.

5.2. CFA

The SEM methodology was used to verify the relationship between measured variables and latent constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Our data violated multivariate normality assumption, and transformations were attempted but unsuccessful. We ultimately applied bootstrapping method to assess the stability of our estimated path coefficients (Efron and Efron, 1982).

The results of CFA showed that the standardized factor loadings were all >0.7, except four measured variables (i.e., q7_4, q7_3, q7_1 and q7_2). These variables do not well represent its respective latent construct (i.e., evaluation partners factor), and thus are removed to improve construct convergence (Hair et al., 2010). The improved measurement model is presented in Figure 2.

The AVE values associated with these groups are also greater than the 0.50 cut-off guideline (Hair et al., 2010). The reliability estimates all exceed 0.7. AVE values exceed respective MSV and ASV values supporting discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). Table 4 presents the values of the standardized factor loadings, CR, AVE, MSV and ASV after removing the items that did not pass the cut-off guideline (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that the 24 items representing six latent constructs, including (1) involvement of evaluation partners in evaluation processes, (2) evaluation capacity, (3) evaluation plans and methods, (4) generation of evaluation report, (5) dissemination of evaluation findings, and (6) evaluation influence satisfied the criteria for construct validity and reliability. The first five factors are considered exogenous variables and the last factor as

Table 3: Factor labels, item codes, factor loadings and descriptive statistics of six factors under study

Factor labels	Item codes	Factors						Mean ± SD
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Involvement of evaluation partners in evaluation processes	q8_2	0.910						5.10 ± 1.114
	q8_3	0.895						5.11 ± 1.108
	q8_1	0.774						5.12 ± 1.120
	q8_4	0.731						5.12 ± 1.150
	q7_4	0.631						5.77 ± 0.806
	q7_3	0.623						5.77 ± 0.784
	q8_5	0.620						5.13 ± 1.186
	q7_1	0.511						5.73 ± 0.644
	q7_2	0.507						5.74 ± 0.709
Evaluation capacity	q9_2		0.895					6.05 ± 0.999
	q9_1		0.809					6.11 ± 0.928
	q9_3		0.783					6.14 ± 1.029
	q9_4		0.702					6.11 ± 1.053
	q9_5		0.607					6.18 ± 1.040
Evaluation plans and methods	q6_2			0.860				5.54 ± 1.024
	q6_1			0.840				5.58 ± 0.976
	q6_3			0.820				5.61 ± 1.012
	q6_4			0.678				5.72 ± 0.973
Generation of evaluation report	q4_2				0.934			5.46 ± 0.874
	q4_3				0.769			5.47 ± 0.782
	q4_1				0.732			5.35 ± 0.858
Dissemination of evaluation finding	q5_3					0.832		5.19 ± 0.754
	q5_2					0.800		5.29 ± 0.769
	q5_1					0.584		5.22 ± 0.811
Evaluation influence	q10_2						0.905	5.71 ± 1.052
	q10_3						0.891	5.82 ± 1.005
	q10_1						0.831	5.73 ± 1.021
	q10_4						0.772	5.95 ± 0.945

SD: Standard deviation

Figure 2: Results of structural equation model

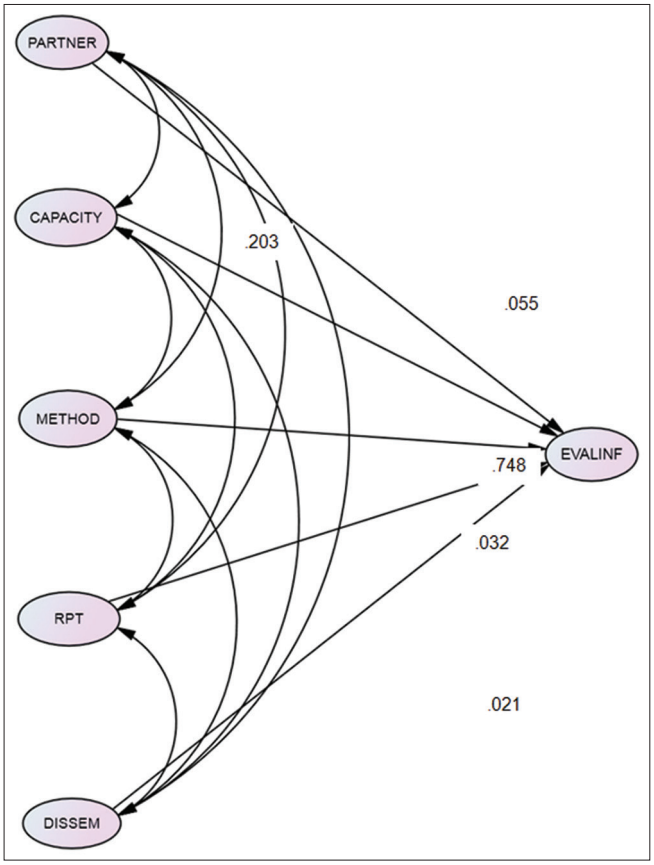


Table 4: Improved factor loadings, AVE and CR of five factors affecting evaluation influence in Cam Lo

Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
q8_2	0.861					
q8_3	0.875					
q8_1	0.807					
q8_4	0.843					
q8_5	0.820					
q9_2		0.889				
q9_1		0.837				
q9_3		0.910				
q9_4		0.869				
q9_5		0.852				
q6_4			0.740			
q6_1			0.866			
q6_2			0.921			
q6_3			0.876			
q4_3				0.716		
q4_1				0.753		
q4_2				0.855		
q5_3					0.836	
q5_2					0.715	
q5_1					0.866	
q10_1						0.854
q10_2						0.931
q10_3						0.851
q10_4						0.727
CR	0.924	0.914	0.941	0.820	0.849	0.908
AVE	0.708	0.728	0.760	0.604	0.653	0.712
MSV	0.085	0.702	0.397	0.244	0.027	0.702
ASV	0.053	0.270	0.212	0.135	0.006	0.256

Source: On the basis of own findings. AVE: Average variance extracted, MSV: Maximum shared variance, ASV: Average shared variance

endogenous variable enter SEM for hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2010). Details of these factors are presented below.

5.2.1. Involvement of evaluation partners

This 5-item scale assessed participants' perceptions on the need to include evaluation partners in evaluation in order to have multiple sources of data, ensure improved decision making processes, coordination and management practices, and ensure successful socio-economic programme implementation and good quality programme proposals.

5.2.2. Evaluation capacity

This 5-item scale assessed participants' perceptions of competent evaluation capacity that facilitates achievement of credible evaluation, improvement of programme proposals, coordination and management practices, programme implementation and programme success.

5.2.3. Evaluation plans and methods

This 4-item scale assessed participants' perceptions on guiding evaluators through each step of the evaluation process, being necessary conditions for credible evaluation, identifying the type of information the evaluation team needs, and identifying the best methods and strategies for getting the needed information.

5.2.4. Generation of evaluation report

This 3-item scale assessed participants' perceptions on assisting in decision making processes about programme implementation, coordination and management practices, and efforts towards achieving better programme implementation methods.

5.2.5. Dissemination of evaluation finding

This 3-item scale assessed participants' perceptions on assisting in efforts to better programme coordination and management practices, decision making processes on programme implementation, and efforts of achieving effective socio-economic programmes.

5.2.6. Evaluation influence

This 4-item scale assessed participants' perceptions on the change in coordination and management of socio-economic programmes, programme continuation, cessation or expansion, proposal development, and socio-economic programmes.

As regards model fit, this study obtained a statistically significant chi-square value indicating good fit by the chi-square goodness-of-fit test. The fit indices of CFI and TLI range from 0.712 to 0.753 indicating weak fit to the data. The root mean square error of approximation fit index is 0.156 indicating poor model fit. The value of root mean square residual is 0.046 which is rather small, an indication of reasonable fit. It should be noted that a good-fitting model is not necessarily a valid model (Kenny, 2012). In our study, we have placed more emphasis on a valid model; model fit is not our primary goal.

Examination of the standardized path coefficients indicated that 2 of the 5 hypothesized relationships were significant and in the predicted directions (Figure 2). Specifically, evaluation capacity, and evaluation plans and methods had significantly positive effects

on evaluation influence, and the standardized path coefficients were 0.203 ($P < 0.001$) and 0.748 ($P < 0.001$), respectively. In other word, H2 and H3 were supported. Thus, the more effective the evaluation capacity, the higher the evaluation influence and this relationship also holds for evaluation plans and methods. Involvement of evaluation partners, generation of evaluation report, and dissemination of evaluation findings were found statistically insignificant i.e., H1, H4 and H5 were not supported. The result of squared multiple correlation shows that 73.7% of the variance of evaluation influence is explained by the combined effects of evaluation capacity, and evaluation plans and methods.

5.3. Applying bootstrapping method for parameter estimates

In assessing whether the bootstrap ML standard errors are similar to the original ones, a critical ratio test can be used by using the bias divided by the standard error - bias. If critical ratio is equal or smaller than ± 1.96 (at 95% confidence interval), then the bias is small enough, and it can be said that the model parameter estimates can be reliable (Arbuckle, 2007).

In request of 500 samples using the ML estimator (Byrne, 2010; Cheung and Lau, 2008), the calculated values of critical ratio are −1.00, 1.67, −0.67, −0.50, and −0.50 for EVALINF and PARTNER, EVALINF and CAPACITY, EVALINF and METHOD, EVALINF and RPT, and EVALINF and DISSEM, respectively. All critical ratio values are smaller than ±1.96 indicating all the parameter estimates are reliable.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1. Evaluation Capacity

Our findings confirm that evaluation capacity positively and significantly contributes to evaluation influence in the context of Cam Lo District (Mark and Henry, 2004). Respondents agree that evaluation capacity facilitates achievement of credible evaluation, facilitates the elaboration of programme proposals, the improvement of programme coordination and management practices and programme implementation.

In Cam Lo District, evaluation capacity helps to produce reliable and convinced evaluation conclusions and therefore increase the likelihood of achieving credible evaluation. District SEDP implementers, based on these evaluation conclusions, exercise the required changes accordingly.

In their research within the context of the Canadian federal government departments and agencies, Bourgeois and Cousins (2013. p. 316) identify evaluation capacity in terms of six dimensions, including (1) human resources, (2) organisational resources, (3) evaluation planning and activities, (4) evaluation literacy, (5) organisational decision making, and (6) learning benefits under two broad categories: (1) Capacity to do evaluation, and (2) capacity to use evaluation. Similarly, the respondents in our study highlighted that evaluation capacity facilitates achievement of credible evaluation, which is in line with Bourgeois and Cousins' first category of evaluation capacity, i.e., capacity to conduct evaluation. Furthermore, our respondents also maintain that evaluation capacity facilitates the improvement of programme coordination and management practices, programme implementation, programme proposals, and that it helps to contribute to programme success. This finding is in line with the second broad category of capacity as defined by Bourgeois and Cousins (2013), i.e., capacity to use evaluation for programme improvement.

Another study by Clinton (2014), which was conducted in the context of public health, reported results that were consistent with our findings on evaluation capacity. More specifically, Clinton's study (2014) provided empirical evidence in support of the notion that programme stakeholders' willingness and capacity to engage in evaluation activities are critical to the achievement of programme outcomes and programme sustainability.

6.2. Evaluation Plans and Methods

Statistically, our findings confirm that evaluation plans and methods positively affect evaluation influence in Cam Lo District (Mark and Henry, 2004). Respondents reveal that not only are evaluation plans and methods necessary conditions for credible evaluation, but they help to guide evaluators through each step of the evaluation process as well. Further, they are used to inform decision-making about the types of information needed and to identify the best possible methods and strategies for obtaining that information.

In Cam Lo District, evaluation plans and methods help to shape evaluation assignments and ensure the success of evaluation activities. Examples of these assignments include evaluation of water and sanitation programmes for school children, or evaluation of a livelihoods programme for farmers. A sound evaluation plan proved to clarify the direction which the evaluation should take, and helped to organise resources needed for an evaluation. The resources can be time, skills, materials, human and financial inputs needed to accomplish the evaluation. A valid evaluation methodology facilitates identification of appropriate and relevant data collection methods in order to obtain good data and information, data analysis and eventually accurate evaluation findings. This enhances credibility of report findings and, in turn, facilitated use of evaluation. Usually, evaluation plans are elaborated and implemented on an annual basis by district sections, including the inspection section. Evaluation methods are decided upon among evaluators/inspectors. District evaluators/inspectors are professionally trained on how to use evaluation methods. The training could be prior to their job appointment or while being in-service. Training topics include how to design and implement an evaluation, and how to promote participatory evaluation.

As far as the importance of evaluation plans and methods is concerned, our finding is consistent with previous studies about effect of evaluation method or approach on evaluation use. For example, Ayers's study (1987) claimed a positive relationship between use of evaluation approaches and instrumental and conceptual use. More specifically, participants reported positive attitudes toward the process and direct use of the evaluation report as measured by implementation of the report's recommendations.

In addition, our finding is also in agreement with Lafleur's (1995) findings which showed that a participatory programme evaluation approach helped to improve evaluation instrumental and conceptual use in the context of a Canadian school district.

This study generated several new directions for future research relating to identification of factors which may affect evaluation influence in the district public sector settings. First, our study adopted the cross-sectional design using retrospective interviews to inquire about evaluation influence that had taken place in the past years before the time of the study. However, it was sometimes challenging for the interviewees to recall detailed evaluation processes in which they were involved. Future research could use a longitudinal research design to capture perceived changes at the different stages of the evaluation processes (Leviton and Hughes, 1981). Such measurement of changes over time, which may result in better understanding of evaluation influence, may be particularly helpful in improving policy activities of SEDP implementation that can be emphasized at a particular point of time e.g., baseline, mid-term, and end-term in the district. Second, given the fact that no prior research has been conducted using SEM in the public sector of developing countries, and the relatively poor fit indices of the structural model, future studies may focus on establishing a model, especially for the public sector settings by adding more variables to the model. Such variables could be administration support, data collection and analysis (Mark and Henry, 2004). Finally, this study provided evidence of evaluation influence that are useful in SEDP implementation in Cam Lo at individual level. Future research could be conducted at interpersonal and collective levels in Cam Lo to achieve a complete picture of evaluation influence in SEDP implementation in the district.

7. CONCLUSIONS

This study used the conceptual framework developed from the theory of evaluation influence (Mark and Henry, 2004) as its theoretical basis and employed the SEM methodology to analyze factors that affected evaluation influence in Cam Lo. This study found that evaluation capacity, and evaluation plans and methods positively affect evaluation influence in the public sector of Cam Lo. Consistent with previous studies (Ayers, 1987; Bourgeois and Cousins, 2013; Clinton, 2014; Lafleur, 1995), our results quantitatively identified evaluation capacity, and evaluation plans and methods as the primary factors affecting evaluation influence in Cam Lo.

According to the results of this study, evaluation plans and methods has a stronger impact on evaluation influence than evaluation capacity. This study provided evidence of evaluation influence that is useful in SEDP implementation in Cam Lo at individual level.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Dimensions and survey items

Dimensions	Item	Code
Involvement of evaluation holders in evaluation processes	• My involvement in evaluation processes helps to improve quality of programme proposals	q3_1
	• My involvement in evaluation processes helps to improve programme coordination and management practices	q3_2
	• My involvement in evaluation processes helps to improve my decision making on programme implementation	q3_3
	• My involvement in evaluation processes has contributed to a better selection of stakeholders	q3_4
Generation of evaluation reports	• Evaluation reports have influenced programme coordination and management practices	q4_1
	• Evaluation reports have influenced my decision making processes about programme implementation	q4_2
	• Evaluation reports have influenced my efforts towards achieving better programme implementation methods	q4_3
	• Evaluation reports have influenced my efforts to have better partnerships with relevant stakeholders	q4_4
	• Evaluation reports have influenced my efforts to reach target beneficiaries maximally	q4_5
	• Evaluation reports have influenced my efforts to facilitate community participation better	q4_6
Dissemination of evaluation findings/reports to stakeholders	• Dissemination of evaluation findings/reports has influenced programme coordination and management practices	q5_1
	• Dissemination of evaluation findings/reports has influenced my decision making processes on programme implementation	q5_2
	• Dissemination of evaluation findings/reports has influenced efforts of achieving effective socio-economic programmes	q5_3
	• Dissemination of evaluation findings/reports has influenced a better understanding among stakeholders and improved partnerships	q5_4
Evaluation plans and methods	• The evaluation plan and implementation methods are necessary conditions for successful evaluation	q6_1
	• The evaluation plan and implementation methods help to guide you through each step of the evaluation process	q6_2
	• The evaluation plan and implementation methods help to decide what type of information the evaluation team needs	q6_3
	• The evaluation plan helps to identify the best possible methods and strategies for getting the needed information	q6_4
	• The evaluation plan and implementation methods help to frame the timeline for evaluation	q6_5
	• The evaluation plan helps to avoid wasting time gathering information that is not needed	q6_6
Evaluation lessons learned/ best practices	• Lessons learned/best practices help to improve programme coordination and management practices	q7_1
	• Lessons learned/best practices provide a good source of information for decision making processes	q7_2
	• Lessons learned/best practices are important sources of information for successful socio-economic programmes	q7_3
	• Lessons learned/best practices are important sources of information for quality programme proposals	q7_4
	• Lessons learned/best practices are important sources of information for improved partnerships	q7_5

(*Contd...*)

Appendix A: (*Continued*)

Dimensions	Item	Code
Programme partners	• Sufficient inclusion of relevant programme partners in evaluation is necessary for successful socio-economic programme implementation	q8_1
	• Sufficient inclusion of relevant programme partners in evaluation is necessary for quality programme proposals	q8_2
	• Sufficient inclusion of relevant programme partners in evaluation helps to have multiple sources of data which allows data triangulation which improves quality of decision-making	q8_3
	• Sufficient inclusion of relevant programme partners in evaluation ensures improved decision making processes	q8_4
	• Sufficient inclusion of relevant programme partners in evaluation ensures improved coordination and management practices	q8_5
Evaluation capacity	• Good evaluation capacity helps to achieve credible evaluation	q9_1
	• Good evaluation capacity helps to improve quality programme proposals	q9_2
	• Good evaluation capacity helps to improve programme coordination and management practices	q9_3
	• Good evaluation capacity helps to improve programme implementation	q9_4
	• Good evaluation capacity helps to ensure programme success	q9_5
Evaluation influence	• Evaluation influence has positively changed my practice towards better socio-economic proposal development	q10_1
	• Evaluation influence has positively changed my practice towards better coordination and management of socio-economic programmes	q10_2
	• Evaluation influence has positively changed my practice towards evidence-based programme continuation, cessation, or expansion	q10_3
	• In general, evaluation influence has resulted in improved socio-economic programmes	q10_4