Leadership and Management: Case Studies in Training in Higher Education in Africa

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CHAPTER 6
AN EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Lauren Wildschut

6.1 Introduction
This chapter aims to describe and to reflect on some of the lessons learnt from the evaluation process of the three councils of higher education in Uganda (NCHE), Tanzania (TCU) and Ghana (NCTE). The description of the evaluation process is illustrated where possible with actual documentation. The intention is that this articulation of and reflection on the evaluation process will assist stakeholders in future implementation and evaluations of leadership and management training, particularly in developing countries.

6.2 Evaluation focus
In 2008, Carnegie Corporation of New York asked ERA to review project proposals for higher education and leadership programmes. The evaluators were not the only reviewers and at this point there were only two proposals under consideration. Feedback was provided on the proposals and the evaluation of these programmes began in August 2009. By this time the TCU had already begun training, but the NCHE and NCTE had not yet begun their programmes. This staggered implementation of the three training programmes was beneficial to the NCHE and NCTE as these two councils were able to learn from the earlier implementation by the TCU, but this made the evaluation more complex. ERA had not been involved at the start of the TCU programme, and when ERA did become involved, the programme already had a life of its own – with the intervention and monitoring systems firmly entrenched. This also meant that not all three councils would receive the same sort of evaluation input during the project cycle.

The initial aims of the evaluation were fairly comprehensive and consisted of five key components:

1. To conduct an evaluability assessment of each of the training programmes in order to establish conceptual clarity, internal consistency and empirical feasibility of the associated interventions.
2. To develop and assist in the implementation of an internal monitoring framework and plan for programme implementation.
3. To build an advanced and sustainable monitoring and evaluation research capacity within each of the training teams.
4. To undertake annual formative reviews and high-level dialogues of programme performance in order to advise on possible revision and improvement.
5. To conduct a summative evaluation study of each of the training programmes at the end of the respective grant cycles.
These aims were later reduced and the evaluation focused primarily on the evaluability assessment, process evaluation (with a high level of technical support) and the summative evaluation. This modified process is depicted in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Modified evaluation process

It is evident from the amount of activities indicated in the technical support component of Figure 6.1 that this became a core component of the evaluation process. The figure also indicates the prime importance of the evaluability assessment as the driver of the evaluation.

6.3 Evaluability assessment

An evaluability assessment is an assessment prior to an evaluation to establish whether a programme can be evaluated, and to identify whether there will be any barriers to the utilisation of the evaluation. It requires a review of the coherence and logic of a programme, clarification of the availability of data, and an assessment of the extent to which managers or stakeholders are likely to use the evaluation findings. The process of undertaking an assessment early on in the life-cycle of the programme can help clarify its logic and lead to fine-tuning or improvement before the programme has progressed too far. Evaluability assessments primarily assist programme managers to improve the coherence of the programme in general, and the intervention logic in particular, insofar as this is possible. Its first value, therefore, is to the programme team. However, the assessment also aims to ask hard questions about the feasibility of implementation, such as, “Are the required resources in places?”; “Have the required infrastructure and support been put in place?”; and “What are the most obvious threats to proper implementation, and have the required contingency plans been put in place?”. A properly conducted evaluability assessment is therefore also of significant value to the funder, as it is another element in the process of assessing and mitigating the risk of programmes.

The following discussion of the evaluability assessment component will use the engagement with the NCHE as an example, as ERA’s engagement with this council for this component of the evaluation was the most comprehensive.

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1 As mentioned earlier, not every council received every component of the evaluation process, but the model presents a comprehensive view of the evaluation process.

2 The term ‘evaluability assessment’ is attributed to Joseph Wholey (1990), an eminent programme evaluator in the USA. The term refers to the initial process in programme design and implementation where evaluators would typically assess whether a programme is ready to be evaluated. This implies that the programme has clearly formulated goals and expected outcomes and that appropriate resources have been allocated for the successful implementation of the programme.
The evaluability assessment process with the NCHE consisted of four key steps:

Step 1: Engaging with the original project proposal
Step 2: Providing feedback on the needs-assessment instrument
Step 3: Developing logic models
Step 4: Checking the alignment between the needs assessment and the training planned by the NCHE.

It must be noted that these steps did not occur in a linear manner but were iterative in nature.

**Step 1: Engaging with the original project proposal**

During early engagements with project teams it became evident that in some instances proposals were either unrealistic (the NCHE originally targeted 500 participants) or that proposals needed clarification. The evaluators did a critical reading of the NCHE proposal and then met with the project team to clarify key issues in the proposal. An excerpt from the discussion document is provided below.

**Figure 6.2: Excerpt from discussion document from ERA-NCHE meeting**

1. Who is/are the target group/s?

Leadership and managerial skills will be delivered through targeted training of trainable current and potential managers of higher education institutions including *vice chancellors, deputy vice chancellors, academic registrars, university secretaries, deans, directors of research and administrative units, heads of academic and administrative units and other potential leaders* agreed upon by the NCHE and the institutions.

The project will also target a limited number of *university policy makers including some university council members and a few officials from government departments* responsible for higher education policy formation and implementation (NCHE Proposal).

Questions to consider:

- *Can various needs of target groups be addressed in a generic training programme?*
- *How will the spread of 11 groups be addressed in the invitation to universities?*
- *What is the number of participants per training session?*
- *Will the materials supporting the training be generic or differentiated?*

This excerpt shows how elements of the proposal were highlighted (sections in **bold**) and then questions were posed by the evaluators (in *italics*) in order for the NCHE team to reflect on and firm up some of the elements of the proposal. This process led to a modification of the original proposal to include more realistic and achievable goals and objectives. This process also led to a review of training content. This clarificatory process is common in evaluations, as proposals are often completed in a short period of time and under pressure. The evaluability assessment (which is part of the clarificatory evaluation) provides project managers and staff with an opportunity to reflect on their proposal, and to refine and modify it into a realistic and achievable project.

**Step 2: Providing feedback on the needs-assessment instrument**

The councils all carried out a needs assessment as part of the training programme preparation to ensure that the programmes they developed were in line with the actual needs of the targeted university leaders of their respective countries. The TCU had carried out its needs assessment prior to the evaluation commencing but the evaluators provided feedback on the instrument to be used by the NCHE team. This instrument was also later utilised by the NCTE team in Ghana.
Step 3: Developing logic models

Initially, ERA thought that logic models would be a critical part of the evaluation process and during the first engagement with councils, logic models were developed for the TCU and NCHE. However, it became apparent that this process was not sufficiently detailed and the models were less useful than expected. An excerpt from the NCHE logic model is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Source of evidence/ instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Conduct needs assessment</td>
<td>1.1 Survey report</td>
<td>1.1 Critical leadership and management skills gaps in existing university leadership identified</td>
<td>1.1 Results of validation of survey findings</td>
<td>1.1 Feedback reports on survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Write training materials</td>
<td>1.2 9 modules</td>
<td>1.2 Training materials meet the needs of trainees</td>
<td>1.2 Peer review report</td>
<td>1.2 Peer review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Run training workshops</td>
<td>1.3 A certain number of workshops; 500 current and potential university leaders trained</td>
<td>1.3 Participants demonstrate an improved ability to lead and manage better</td>
<td>1.3 Results of assessment exercise at beginning and end of training</td>
<td>1.3 Trainers’ reports</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In retrospect, it would have perhaps been more valuable to develop theories of change to capture the variations in causal mechanisms in three different contexts.

Step 4: Checking the alignment between the needs assessment carried out and the training plans

Once the needs assessment had been completed and the report on the process had been submitted, the evaluators then checked the alignment between the findings and recommendations of the Needs Assessment Report and the NCHE training plans to ensure there was alignment between these two key processes. Excerpts from the alignment process are provided below in Tables 6.2 to 6.4 which show the various components of the process.

Table 6.2 shows how the report was analysed in order to ascertain which target group (shown in columns) had identified a particular need (shown in rows).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Academic managers</th>
<th>Financial and administrative managers</th>
<th>Deans of students</th>
<th>Senior academic staff</th>
<th>Included in training programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEADERSHIP NEEDS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing leadership in the university administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing leadership in teaching, research and community outreach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing leadership in fundraising strategies for the university/faculty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing leadership in budgeting for the university/faculty</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3 shows whether the needs identified in the Needs Assessment Report would be addressed by the NCHE training plan.

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3 Table 6.2 is an extract from a larger document.
4 Table 6.3 is an extract from a larger document.
Table 6.3: Alignment between needs identified and the NCHE training plans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills needed (as recommended by the needs assessment)</th>
<th>Included in training proposal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formulating strategic mission and vision statements</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating strategic policy</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formulating university/faculty bylaws and ensuring their implementation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representing the university/faculty to government line ministries</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It would have been impossible for the NCHE to cover all the needs identified in three training sessions, so a prioritisation of needs was critical, just as it was to focus on the needs of the target group rather than on the delivery of pre-fabricated intervention by the NCHE.

This detailed alignment process was an attempt to ensure that actual needs of participants were being addressed in HELM. Once the NCHE had received feedback on their draft training plans they could begin a process of ‘fleshing’ out the learning outcomes. Table 6.4 is an extract from a document from the NCHE in which an attempt was made to provide more detail on the content of training sessions.

Table 6.4: Detail of training content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content (as specified by the needs assessment)</th>
<th>Included in training proposal?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic management: this should include, why strategic management, strategy formulation and implementation, developing strategic vision, mission</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and change management</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality improvement</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The evaluability-assessment process in retrospect was a critical process. It allowed project managers and staff a period of reflection that resulted in the modification of the project proposals. This reflection and refinement of projects is only possible if organisations are able to critically reflect on their proposals and are able to forgo some aspects they felt were important at the time of writing the proposal. Also, it is only when funders are flexible enough to appreciate the importance of operationalising the (often abstract) components of original proposals and allow for some changes that greater focus can be achieved and the realisation of the outcomes becomes possible. Although the amount of modification permitted by funders differs, it is clear that the adjustments made by councils at this early stage of the process were critical, and that this ensured better implementation of the programme. The move from the conceptual to the concrete when changing proposals into plans is a critical one, and the role of evaluators in this process is essential. The evaluation team acts as an outsider and can promote reflection and force programme staff to justify their decisions in the programme design. It is therefore critical that evaluators are brought into the process as soon as possible, that funders are open to minor modifications to proposals, and that organisations are open to change.

6.4 Process evaluation

The process evaluation of HELM involved an ever-increasing component of technical support. This technical support occurred prior, during and post training.

Pre-training support

Training is not generally a core function of HE councils. The evaluation team found itself playing much more of a supportive role than anticipated. Research was carried out in order to provide the councils with sample training frameworks, checklists for frameworks and quality-assurance checklists for module materials. These were developed by the evaluation team and shared with the council project teams. Table 6.5 shows some of the support documents developed for the project teams.
Table 6.5: Documents to support project implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Full document provided</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sample training framework</td>
<td>To ensure that all assumptions behind the training programme are foregrounded, e.g. purpose, methodology selected, learning objectives and that these are all clearly linked to the needs assessment carried out.</td>
<td>See Figure 6.3 below and questions for accompanying narrative in Appendix C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checklist for a cohesive training programme</td>
<td>A set of questions to ensure alignment between training goals, plans and assessment. Questions also focus on effective and efficient implementation and quality assurance processes.</td>
<td>Appendix D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample checklist for reviewing materials</td>
<td>This checklist highlighted the need for standardisation of module materials and allowed for detailed feedback to module developers to ensure improvement of materials</td>
<td>Appendix E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extracts from the documents provided to programme teams are provided here and the full versions are provided in the Appendices.

Teams were provided with the sample training framework in order to highlight the overall alignment of key processes involved in developing a training programme. This document formed the basis for operationalising the ideas contained in the council proposals regarding the training of university leaders and managers.

Figure 6.3: Sample training framework overview
In addition, a detailed checklist (Appendix D) was developed not only for HELM but for future training interventions by the councils. The checklist covered the following eight areas:

- Needs assessment
- Training framework
- Training plans
- Training structure and content
- Training methods
- Training materials
- Training assessment
- Monitoring of training programmes.

The framework and checklist are both useful tools for programme design but they were not taken up in a substantial way by project teams. They were used more for monitoring and evaluation than for the actual design of programmes.

The NCHE with the assistance of ERA developed a broad plan for implementation. An excerpt is shown in Table 6.6. This provided loosely proposed dates for the training sessions but a more detailed training programme was required.

Table 6.6: Initial training plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modules</th>
<th>Sessions</th>
<th>Presenter</th>
<th>Training dates: Cohort 1</th>
<th>Training dates: Cohort 2</th>
<th>Training dates: Cohort 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National and global forces impacting on HE</td>
<td>i) Welcome and orientation to Training Programme for Senior Managers</td>
<td></td>
<td>13–15 September 2010</td>
<td>5–7 September 2011</td>
<td>6–8 September 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ii) Local (political) forces impacting on institutions of higher learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iii) Role of the NCHE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>iv) Global forces impacting on HE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the councils used presenters who had to be contracted and supervised. The NCHE had a training workshop for both presenters and facilitators. A sample checklist was also supplied to project teams for assuring the quality of materials written by outside contractors (Appendix E). An excerpt from this checklist is shown below.

Table 6.7: Extract from checklist to review materials

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure of training materials</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>N/A</th>
<th>Suggestion for improvement/Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the training material contain the following key components:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Title page?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Copyright page?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Table of contents?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• List of illustrations?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• List of tables?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• List of acronyms or abbreviations?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sections?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bibliography?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Suggested readings?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Glossary?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.7 continues
This tool was utilised more by the project teams than the training framework documents.

**During training**

ERA developed an Excel database for all the councils to capture and store their attendance data from workshops, which replaced the MS Word document formats they were using. This allowed for the analysis and sharing of the attendance data between programme staff and the evaluation team. While the development of standardised templates may sound like a simplistic exercise, it proved invaluable when comparing attendance across countries.

![Figure 6.4: Screen shot of attendance database (some columns hidden)](image)

The development of these standardised templates resulted in the council staff examining trends in attendance which they hadn’t done before.

### 6.5 Summative evaluation

The summative evaluations of the HELM training programmes involved interviews with programme staff and beneficiaries, and an online evaluation form. The development of the TCU survey is provided as an example of the development process carried out with all councils.
Developing the online training evaluation form

Due to the large number of delegates who attended the TCU training programmes, it was decided that an online evaluation form would be developed to get feedback from delegates on the programme they had attended.

The first step was to develop a questionnaire for the online survey. ERA developed a questionnaire (See Appendix B) and created a draft online survey using Checkbox Survey Software (http://www.checkbox.com/). Before delegates were invited to take part in the survey, Carnegie Corporation was given an opportunity to review the questionnaire and make recommendations.

Survey administration

TCU delegates were invited via email to complete the questionnaire. While it is possible to invite respondents to complete the questionnaire via the Checkbox website, this was not feasible for our purposes as a letter from the TCU needed to be attached to the invitation and this was not possible via the Checkbox website. Three emails were sent to the 358 delegates who attended training and 122 completed responses were received. The response rate was therefore 34%. Once ERA received sufficient responses, the data was downloaded into Excel and analysed accordingly.

Reflections on the online survey process

Utilising an online survey for the purpose of collecting evaluation questionnaires was beneficial for the following reasons:

- Training delegates were located at multiple sites. Administering a paper-based survey would therefore have been logistically difficult.
- Data does not need to be electronically captured from online forms, thus the cost and capturing time is reduced.

A few challenges were encountered while administering the survey. As surveys were anonymous, ERA did not know who had completed the questionnaire. Reminders to complete the survey therefore had to be sent to all the delegates, regardless of whether they had completed the questionnaire or not. This could have been avoided if it were feasible to use the Checkbox website for sending invitations, as the software only sends reminders to those who have not completed the questionnaire already.

6.6. Conclusions and lessons learnt

After the initial engagement with councils it became clear that some of the usual evaluation practices and processes would not work as anticipated in HELM. This meant that the evaluation team had to provide technical support in this regard, and ordinary evaluation processes were constrained to allow the evaluators to play a greater supportive role. Key findings and recommendations for future implementation and evaluations are presented below.

1. A short while into the evaluation, it became clear that the councils did not do training as a typical core activity and as a result did not have sufficient project management experience and would require more technical support than initially anticipated. The evaluation activities were heavily weighted towards technical support at the beginning of the projects but this decreased over time and the council project teams were able to plan, monitor and implement as expected.

   Recommendation: The lead-time for the implementation and evaluation of training programmes seated in councils of higher education needs to take a period of technical support into account.
2. The evaluability assessment carried out at the start of the project proved invaluable. This evaluation process uncovered key risks to the implementation of the training programme and these could be addressed timeously.

Recommendation: Evaluability assessments should be included at the outset of every evaluation and donors involved in the funding of leadership and management training programmes should ensure that both implementation and evaluation plans and budgets include this key process.

3. The evaluators believe that a needs assessment is a critical part of the implementation of a training programme and that it must become the basis for programme planning.

Recommendation: Programme staff should always include a needs assessment as part of the project plan when developing a training programme (of any type).

4. Logic models are often cited as key components of evaluability assessments and clarificatory processes. In this particular evaluation, the development of models was not particularly useful and this process should have included the development of theories of change so that key elements of the varying theories of changes could be tested.

Recommendation: In training programmes, particularly where they are various models of training being implemented, theory of change processes should be included in the evaluation – preferably at the point of design of the training programmes.

5. The cohesion of a training programme is critical. Training must meet actual, prioritised needs and the overall framework of the training requires a large amount of careful consideration. Materials developed to support the training must have a clear purpose, be of a high quality and again meet the needs of participants. As mentioned earlier, the councils needed support in the design of programmes, planning and the quality assurance of materials. While these are not standard evaluation inputs, the technical support provided to councils should ensure that they are well-prepared for future interventions.

Recommendation: Lessons learnt, materials developed and supporting documents developed should be shared among councils of HE and used in the development of future training interventions.

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