

AN EXPLORATORY SURVEY ON ORGANIZATIONAL READINESS FOR EVALUATION IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

In designing Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) programs in a country, it is vital to know the baseline situation. A necessary step is to reveal the status of current understanding and practices of evaluation. The objective of the paper is to explore the evaluation readiness of organizations in Turkey. Following the literature on organizational culture on evaluative inquiry, the study reports on the development and administration of a structured questionnaire with particular focus on various dimensions of organizational readiness for evaluation such as culture, leadership, resources and existing evaluation practices, if any. The survey sample includes 71 representatives of government agencies and, domestic and international NGOs in Turkey. Although evaluation is regarded and perceived as a tool for organizational learning and improved organizational performance, the culture, leadership and structure of the organizations do not show supporting characteristics on the implementation and use of evaluation in organizations. The results reveal a necessity of positioning evaluation as a major tool for efficient use of resources and organizational learning in Turkish organizations.

Keywords: *Evaluation Readiness, Evaluation Capacity, Turkish Case.*
JEL Codes: L2, M14, L31

TÜRKİYE'DE KURUMLARIN DEĞERLENDİRME KONUSUNDA HAZIR OLMA DURUMLARI İLE İLGİLİ KEŞİFSEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

ÖZ

Bir ülkede değerlendirme kapasitesi geliştirme (ECB) programlarını tasarlarlarken, mevcut durumu bilmek önemlidir. Mevcut durumu ortaya koymak, hâlihazırdaki anlayış ve değerlendirme uygulamalarının durumunu belirlemeyi gerektirir. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de kamu kurum ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarının değerlendirmeye hazır olup olmadığını araştırmak üzere oluşturulmuş bir ön (keşif) çalışmadır. Amaç, kurum kültürü, liderlik, kaynaklar ve varsa mevcut değerlendirme uygulamaları gibi örgütsel özelliklere bağlı olarak kurumların değerlendirmeye hazır olup olmadığını araştırmaktır. Anket yapılan örneklem, Türkiye'deki devlet kurumlarının ve ulusal ve uluslararası STK'ların 71 temsilcisini içermektedir. Değerlendirme örgütsel öğrenme ve iyileştirilmiş örgütsel performans için bir araç olarak görülse de, kurumların kültürü, liderliği ve yapısı, değerlendirme faaliyetlerinin uygulanması ve kullanımı için destekleyici özellikler göstermemektedir. Sonuçlar, değerlendirmeyi Türkiye'de kamu ve sivil toplum kuruluşlarının kaynaklarının etkin kullanımı için önemli bir araç olarak konumlanmasının ve değerlendirme kapasitesinin geliştirilmesinin gereğini ortaya koymaktadır.

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JEL Kodları: *L2, M14, L31*

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), “an evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, program, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders.” (UNEG, 2017).

Turkey lags behind other European countries in terms of the extent to which evaluation is considered as a fundamental component of governance and organizational decision making. Although there have been a range of projects and activities intended to put evaluation into use in Turkey, there is a need for an improvement in evaluation capacity.

Established in 2013, the Turkish Monitoring and Evaluation Society (TMES) aims to bring together professionals to practice and foster monitoring and evaluation culture across all institutions. As a registered voluntary organization for professional evaluation (VOPE) in the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), TMES aspires to develop a network of evaluators in Turkey and to share knowledge about evaluation with organizations that would potentially benefit from evaluation use. In recent workshops and consultations with stakeholders, TMES identified that a major problem is low demand for evaluation that creates weak capacity to do and to use evaluation. Moreover, weak capacity restricts the possibilities for evaluation to be considered as an important learning tool in creating resilient societies.

In designing evaluation capacity building (ECB) programs, it is important to know the baseline situation. A necessary step is to reveal the status of current understanding and practices of evaluation in Turkey. The paper will add-on to the findings of existing studies (such as Segone and Ocampo (2006) and Rugh and Segone (2013)) on VOPEs by presenting the baseline demand for evaluation for a newly established VOPE. Moreover, the paper aims to contribute to the understanding of evaluation capacity in a country where VOPE is newly developing.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Evaluation capacity at the national level is an important component of enriching accountability of the institutions as well as provide a learning tool for better governance. In majority of developing countries, evaluation is usually initiated by multilateral agencies with an aim of evaluation of development projects. Tarsilla (2012) discusses several factors that hinder the effectiveness of activities that support evaluation capacity in

developing countries. For example, in developing countries, the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in evaluation development capacity building is low which limits the technical skills and practices of evaluation professionals. Another factor is that number of local firms that provide evaluation services to the Government organizations and NGOs are low that result with lack of operational tools for evaluative activities.

Organizational readiness for evaluation is a term that is used to describe an organization's or program's ability to successfully implement an evaluation project or framework (Morario, 2012). Documenting the evaluation capacities has been a topic of interest by evaluation scholars as well as evaluators and decision makers. There are numerous reports on evaluation capacity in developed countries such as Canada and the EU (Cousins, et.al., 2008; Estep, 2006). Additionally, literature builds on evaluation capacity on the developing world, such as Sub Saharan African countries, Egypt, Romania and East Asia (Kusek, 2011; Tarsilla, 2012).

Preskill and Torres (1999) refer to the importance of readiness in organizations for evaluative inquiry. Organizational readiness is significant in effective implementation and use of evaluation. Before implementing policies and programs for evaluation capacity building (ECB), the primary factor is to understand the organization's readiness level for evaluation. Following Preskill and Torres (1999), ROLE (The readiness for organizational learning and evaluation instrument) is designed to help an organization determine its level of readiness for implementing organizational learning and evaluation practices and processes to support evaluation. Morariu, Reed and Brennan (2012) offers another instrument to assess readiness for evaluation and learning with an emphasis on culture leadership and resources, systems, structures and processes of the organizations. CORE (Capacity and organizational readiness for evaluation) tool is designed to help organizations assess readiness for evaluation and learning. Following the discussions above, this study is designed to assess the organizational readiness for evaluation under four components (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Readiness for Evaluation in Organizations

METHODS

The population consists of NGO's and Government organizations operating in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. We selected 30 NGOs from each of the three cities. The selection criteria were ease of accessibility and convenience in approaching the organizations. The sample also included 48 respondents that work for different government organizations. Similarly, the selection was made on the basis of ease of approaching to the organizations. The sample therefore should be taken with caution since it may not represent the population of total NGOs and government organizations in Turkey. The study is therefore exploratory in nature.

We conducted face-to-face interviews in Izmir and submitted the online version of the survey to the NGOs in Ankara and Istanbul and the Government organizations in Ankara. In the beginning of the survey, the participants were asked to read the definition of evaluation as suggested by United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG, 2017).

As discussed above, the aim of the survey is to investigate the organization's readiness for evaluation. The survey included 27 questions among which 5 is for identification of the profile of respondents, 11 is for awareness for evaluation, 5 is for organizational culture, 4 is for leadership and 2 is for organizational structure.

The questions on perceived benefits of evaluation are drawn from Preskill and Torres (1999), "The Readiness for Organizational Learning and Evaluation (ROLE) Instrument". As presented above, ROLE Instrument is designed to help an organization determine its level of readiness for implementing organizational learning and evaluation practices and processes that support it. The ROLE instrument includes questions grouped into six major dimensions. These include: Culture, Leadership, Systems and Structures, Communication, Teams, and Evaluation. This study uses the questions related to evaluation that are included in the ROLE survey questionnaire.¹ "Capacity and Organizational Readiness for Evaluation (CORE) Instrument" contains questions that are centered on exploring the organization's culture/learning environment, organizational leadership, resources, systems, structures, and processes (Morariu, Reed and Brennan, 2012).²

RESULTS

Respondents Profile

There is a total of 71 completed surveys. Among the survey respondents, %58.6 are male and %41.4 are female. Majority of the respondents (92.9%) are University graduates among which 30% have graduate degrees (Table 1). The average working year in the organizations is approximately 9 years (Table 2). Out of 71, 46 respondents report that they did not receive any training about evaluation practice (Table 3). % 85.9 of the organizations have been operating more than 10 years (Table 4). 48 (% 67.6) of

¹ For details, please refer to: <https://www.fsg.org/tools-and-resources/readiness-organizational-learning-and-evaluation-instrument-role>

² For details, please refer to: <http://www.pointk.org/resources/node/593>

responses belong to public organization and 23 (%32.4) responses belong to NGO's (Table 5).

Awareness and Perceived Benefits of Evaluation

Although almost all of the respondents think that evaluation culture is important (%97.2), only 49 (%69) respondents report that their organizations practice evaluation activities (Tables 6 and 7) consistent with the UNEG definition. Table 8 lists the reasons for absence of evaluation practices, where lack of organizational awareness on evaluation practices (%27.7) stands out as the most important. The second reason is the absence of top management request (%21.3), followed by limited time (%19.1), cost constraints (%12.8), absence of demand of the external stakeholder (%12.8) and lack of trust on results (%4.3). Activity reporting (%24.2) and strategic planning (%19.5) are the most common evaluation activities performed by the institutions where the respondents work (Table 9).

Table 10 shows that evaluation is generally implemented in organizations via units that are established within the organization (%69.8). However, when we look at the practices, the current activities do not quite match with the above definition of evaluation (UNEG, 2017). The responses are as diverse as strategic planning (%23.3), financial control (%21.6), management policy (%19.8), internal audit (%18.1) and projects (%16.4) (Table 11).

The questions with the aim of exploring perceived benefits of evaluation are structured by using a 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). The results reveal that overall, the responses tend to group towards agree or strongly agree. In total, %56.8 of the participants chose "agree (4)" and %23.2 chose "strongly agree (5)" for their answers to the questions on perceived benefits of evaluation. For each question in this section, the mean values of the responses lie between 4.32 and 3.56 with significant statistical differences. For example, the respondents' answers with regards to the benefits of evaluation for decision making and daily work practices are 4.32 and 4.17 ("agree" or "strongly agree") while the answers related to employee support for evaluation is 3.56, more towards "no idea" (Table 12).

Culture

Creating an evaluation culture in an organization has a vital role for effective and accurate evaluations and thus for healthy organizational development, as it will create and increase the capacity and usage of evaluation. To create and increase evaluation culture of organizations, information sharing between workers and managers, opinions of individuals and groups, being open to learning, supporting data and taking lessons from mistakes are very important.

This part of the survey is structured according to Likert Scale which includes five choices from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Results show that almost half of the respondents (%49.2) and a small group (%13) agree that their organizations have evaluation culture (Table 13). Most of the organizations uses supporting data for decision-making. Mean in this question is 3.77 in which %57.7 responded as "agree" and

%14.1 responded as “strongly agree”. Answers to the questions on culture are between 3.77 and 3.24, indicating that the respondents are not well aware of a culture for evaluation where “no idea” is the general answer.

Leadership

Organizational leadership is one of the key elements for evaluation activities. Naturally, if the managers and decision-makers possess the leadership properties in terms of evaluation, it will be easier to develop and implement evaluation processes in the organizations.

Similar to the replies related to evaluation culture, the answers on leadership for evaluation are between 3.60 and 3.46, indicating that the respondents are not well aware of the importance of leadership for evaluative assessment in the organization. According to survey results in Table 14, the overall mean of this section is 3.53 where %64 of participants “agree (%50.5)” and “strongly agree (%13.5)” that their organizations’ managers show leadership about evaluation processes. Respondents revealed that managers have willingness to form the evaluation capacity (%47.9 agree, %14.1 strongly agree, mean 3.60). Specifically, the importance of obtaining feedbacks for managers and their organizations’ having a job definition about systematic and sustainable evaluation implementation have a mean of 3.53. On the other hand, the mean of the question whether their managers have willingly also to institutional learning, evaluation and evidence-based decision-making is 3.46 which is the lowest score in this section.

Resources, Systems, Structures, Processes

The last section of the survey is about organizational structure for evaluation, also measured by Likert Scale. This section is also important for the readiness to implement and to use evaluation activities in organizations.

In spite of the fact that respondents think their organization have a structure for evaluation activities (%57.7 agree, %9.9 strongly agree), overall this section has the lowest mean which is 3.45 (Table 15) compared with the other sections. Their answers are also dramatically lower when they evaluate their organization in terms of effective information sharing among the units of organization (%42.3 agree, %11.3 strongly agree).

CONCLUSION

The study reveals lack of awareness on the significance of evaluation, lack of evaluation practices and misunderstanding of the purpose of evaluation as opposed to auditing in Turkish organizations. The results reveal that there is a confusion with regards to the understanding of the practice and use of evaluation in organizations. Evaluation is commonly confused with strategic planning and activity reporting. When asked why organizations do not conduct evaluation, the respondents gave lack of awareness on the significance of evaluation as the main reason. Other reasons were lack of top management request for evaluation, lack of stakeholder demand for evaluation, limited time and cost. Although evaluation is regarded and perceived as a tool for organizational

learning and improved organizational performance; the culture, leadership and structure of the Turkish organizations do not show supporting characteristics on the implementation and use of evaluation in organizations. As such, there is a need to position evaluation as a major tool for efficient use of resources and organizational learning in Turkey.

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Table 1: Respondents Profile

Age	Gender	N (%)	Middle school	Associate degree	Undergraduate	Graduate	Doctorate	
18-39	Male	26	1	0	17	6	2	
18-39	Female	13	0	0	7	6	0	
18-39	Missing	1	-	-	-	-	-	
40-62	Male	15	0	0	11	4	0	
40-62	Female	16	0	1	9	5	0	
40-62	Missing	1	-	-	-	-	-	
Total	Male	41	1	0	28	10	2	Chi square: 6.453 Sig: 0.265
	Female	29	0	1	16	11	0	
	Missing	1	-	-	-	-	-	
	Total	71	1	1	44	21	2	

Table 2: Respondent's Years in Organization

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean years in organizations
67	1	30	8.97

Table 3: Have you or the person responsible for evaluation in your organization received training on evaluation?

	N	Percent	Mean
Yes (1)	21	%29.6	0.31
No (0)	46	%64.8	
Missing	4	%5.6	
Total	71	%100	

Table 4: Age of the Organization

	N	Percent	Mean
New (less than or equal to 5 years) (2)	6	%8.5	0.23
A little new (between 5 and 10 years) (1)	4	%5.6	
Old (more than 10 years old) (0)	61	%85.9	
Total	71	%100	

Table 5: Type of the Organization

	N	Percent
Public Sector	48	%67.6
NGO	23	%32.4
Private Sector	0	%0
Total	71	%100

Table 6: Do you think that establishing an evaluation culture in the area of your organization is important?

	N	Percent	Mean
Yes (1)	69	%97.2	0.97
No (0)	2	%2.8	
Total	71	%100	

Table 7: Does your organization have practices that are consistent with the definition of evaluation above?

Yes (1)	No (0)	Total	Mean
49 (%69)	22 (%31)	71 (%100)	0.69

Table 8: If your answer in Table 7 is “no”, what are the reasons? (check all that apply)

	N	Percent
Lack of awareness with regards to evaluation	13	%27.7
Lack of demand for evaluation by the top management	10	%21.3
Limited time	9	%19.1
Cost	6	%12.8
Lack of demand for evaluation by the external stakeholders	6	%12.8
Lack of trust on the evaluation results	2	%4.3
Other	1	%2.1
Total	47	%100

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Table 9: If your answer in Table 7 is “yes”, what types of practices (basis for evaluation) are implemented in your organization? (check all that apply)

	N	Percent
Activity reports	46	%24.2
Strategic plans	37	%19.5
Internal audits	32	%16.8
Internal controls	31	%16.3
Performance program	24	%12.6
Comprehensive monitoring systems	15	%7.9
Other	5	%2.6
Total	190	100

Table 10: If your answer in Table 7 is “yes”, how does your organization implement evaluation function? (check all that apply)

	N	Percent
Through a department responsible for evaluation within the organization	44	%69.8
Through outsourcing	12	%19
There is an independent evaluation unit within the organization	7	%11.1
Total	63	100

Table 11: If your answer in Table 7 is “yes”, why does your organization implement evaluation? (check all that apply)

	N	Percent
Necessity arising from the strategic planning	27	%23.3
Obligations related to financial control	25	%21.6
Impact and efficiency assessment of projects	23	%19.8
Internal audit	21	%18.1
Obligations of the projects through foreign donors	19	%16.4
Other	1	%0.9
Total	116	%100

Table 12: Perceived Benefits of Evaluation

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	No Idea (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Chi Square Statistic	Mean	Total	
The integration of evaluation activities into our work has enhanced (or would enhance) the quality of decision-making	0 (%0)	1 (%1.4)	0 (%0)	45 (%63.4)	25 (%35.2)	115.69***	4.32	71 (%100)	
It has been (or would be) worthwhile to integrate evaluation activities in our daily work practices.	1 (%1.4)	2 (%2.8)	3 (%4.2)	43 (%60.6)	22 (%31)	94.27***	4.17	71 (%100)	
Managers and supervisors like (or would like) us to evaluate our efforts.	4 (%5.6)	6 (%8.5)	5 (%7.0)	36 (%50.7)	20 (%28.2)	54.05***	3.87	71 (%100)	
Evaluation helps (or would help) us to provide better programs, processes, products and services.	2 (%2.8)	6 (%8.5)	10 (%14.1)	43 (%60.6)	10 (%14.1)	76.1***	3.75	71 (%100)	
Doing (more) evaluation would make it easier to convince managers for needed changes.	5 (%7)	6 (%8.5)	5 (%7)	43 (%60.6)	12 (%16.9)	75.4***	3.72	71 (%100)	
There would be support among employees if we tried to do more (or any) evaluation work.	1 (%1.4)	10 (%14.1)	18 (%25.4)	32 (%45.1)	10 (%14.1)	36.6***	3.56	71 (%100)	
F-Statistic (ANOVA)							7,27***		
Total	13 (%3.1)	31 (%7.3)	41 (%9.6)	242 (%56.8)	99 (%23.2)	3.89		426 (%100)	

*** significant at the $\alpha < 0.001$ level

Table 13: Culture

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	No Idea (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Chi Square Statistic	Mean	Missing	Total
Employees use data, information, and evidence in decision-making to both support and challenge the work of the organization.	1 (%1.4)	4 (%5.6)	15 (%21.1)	41 (57.7)	10 (%14.1)	71.47**	3.77	0	71 (%100)
The organization builds in time for individual and group reflection about services, products, and processes.	2 (%2.8)	12 (%16.9)	13 (%18.3)	35 (%49.3)	9 (%12.7)	43.28**	3.52	0	71 (%100)
Employees continuously look for ways to experiment and innovate to improve services, products and processes.	4 (%5.6)	14 (%19.7)	6 (%8.5)	34 (%47.9)	12 (%16.9)	40.02**	3.51	1 (%1.4)	71 (%100)
Employees regularly engage in knowledge sharing and transfer.	6 (%8.5)	14 (%19.7)	7 (%9.9)	36 (%50.7)	8 (%11.3)	44.57**	3.37	0	71 (%100)
Employees' constructive mistakes are reviewed as opportunities for learning, not punishment.	6 (%8.5)	12 (%16.9)	18 (%25.4)	28 (%39.4)	7 (%9.9)	23.16**	3.24	0	71 (%100)
F-Statistic (ANOVA)							2.048***		

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	19 (%5.4)	56 (%15.8)	59 (%16.7)	174 (%49.2)	46 (%13)		3.48	354 (%100)	
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*** significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.001$ level; * significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level

Table 14: Leadership

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	No Idea (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Chi Square Statistic	Mean	Missing	Total
Leaders support capacity building for evaluation and learning and devote necessary resources/time.	1 (%1.4)	11 (%15.5)	12 (%16.9)	34 (%47.9)	10 (%14.1)	42.18***	3.60	3 (%4.2)	71 (%100)
Leaders demand appropriate and authentic evidence for decision-making from staff.	5 (%7.0)	11 (%15.5)	4 (%5.6)	42 (%59.2)	8 (%11.3)	71.15***	3.53	1 (%1.4)	71 (%100)
Leaders create/support staff positions to be responsible for systematic and ongoing evaluation and learning	1 (%1.4)	15 (%21.1)	10 (%14.1)	31 (%43.7)	11 (%15.5)	33.74***	3.53	3 (%4.2)	71 (%100)
Leaders walk the talk and demonstrate commitment to evaluation, organizational learning, and evidence-based decision-making.	2 (%2.8)	12 (%16.9)	15 (%21.1)	32 (%45.1)	8 (11.3)	35.89***	3.46	2 (%2.8)	71 (%100)
F-Statistic (ANOVA)					0.204				
	9 (%3.3)	49 (%17.8)	41 (%14.9)	139 (%50.5)	37 (%13.5)		3.53	275 (%100)	

*** significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.001$ level

Table 15: Structure

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	No Idea (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Chi Square Statistic	Mean	Missing	Total
There are structures and systems in place to systematically gather, store, analyze, and use data.	1 (%1.4)	13 (%18.3)	6 (%8.5)	41 (%57.7)	7 (%9.9)	71.34**	3.59	3 (%4.2)	71 (%100)
Organizational departments effectively share information.	4 (%5.6)	17 (%23.9)	10 (%14.1)	30 (%42.3)	8 (%11.3)	29.45**	3.30	2 (%2.8)	71 (%100)
F-Statistic (ANOVA)							2.466**		
Total	5 (%3.6)	30 (%21.9)	16 (%11.7)	71 (%51.8)	15 (%10.9)		3.45	137 (%100)	

*** significant at the $\alpha \leq 0.001$ level