An Evaluation Model for the Performance Improvement of Community-Based Education Organizations

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present an evaluation model for the performance improvement of community-based education organizations, by developing a theoretical framework and verifying the quality of the model utilization based on reflection form key stakeholders. The result-based monitoring and evaluation system for the performance improvement of the community-based education organizations has three components: 1) The evaluation concept including rationale, goals, evaluation conditions, and mechanism 2) The evaluation framework, consisting of 5 components and 19 indicators. These included dimensions corresponding to stakeholder needs, organizational strategy, organizational operation, organizational capability, and stakeholder engagement; and 3) The evaluation approach focusing on evaluation process, learning form evaluation results, and using evaluation results. According to the model's quality verification results, it was found that it has the potential to encourage performance improvement and promote organizational learning. However, the process of stakeholder analysis should be included at the outset in order to encourage more diverse stakeholders to participate in evaluating the community education management. It is also important to develop information management systems that are consistent with community constraints and contexts, as well as enhancing appropriate evaluation capabilities tailored to the evaluation team who operates on a voluntary basis.

Keywords

Community-based education organization; Evaluation Mode; Performance Improvement

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Introduction

Community-based education (hereafter CBE) is an educational arrangement that places importance on stakeholder participation in educational decisions, from setting the educational goals, managing learning processes, to mobilizing educational resources, including evaluations. It focuses on the use of community social capitals, such as resource capital as a source of learning, cultural capital, and intellectual capital. The goal of CBE emphasizes both community and individual development in order to increase capacity that meets the needs, and impacts the development of all stakeholders in the community so everyone can benefit as a whole.

In Thailand, CBE is one of the tools that address educational inequality by enabling community capability to manage education, with the emphasis on building partnerships and mobilizing resources from various partners to develop education that is consistent with the context and conditions of the area. Community-based Education Organizations (hereafter CBEOs) in Thai society have different forms, most of which are non-profit, small community-based organizations managed by community leaders or NGOs, using resources from civil society sector, receiving funding from organizing social activities and community support. These organizations are currently incorporated into the CBE Network with the goal to encourage the learning exchange and expanding the CBE initiative to create continuous learning for the community, as well as driving public policies that contribute to the development of CBE in Thai society.

Recent situations according to the CBE network meeting suggested that CBEOs in Thailand are facing major problems that affect their viability: 1) quality management issues where the results of the educational arrangement have not been credibly reflected. Not having clear accountability has resulted in a lack of confidence among stakeholders in participating in and supporting this type of education. 2) Organizational learning issue that have not yet led to the operational improvement and innovation to address educational problems within the modern social context (The Youth Network to Inherit Local Wisdom, 2010; Community-based Education Network, 2015, 2016; Community-based Education Network Coalition Project, 2016).

Lessons from abroad and knowledge in modern organizational development suggest that in order to survive in modern social contexts, it is necessary for a CBEO, which is a non-profit organization, to adjust itself in at least three areas: 1) Performance improvement. It is highly necessary for the organizations to deliver clear results, demonstrating accountability towards the use of resources and response to stakeholder needs. These are conditions that will lead to stakeholders' confidence and decisions to support and participate in managing this type of education in the future; 2) Learning organization. This relies on tools that enable stakeholders to develop their own capacities and build operational knowledge to improve their operations and ability to adapt within ongoing changing contexts; and 3) Collective impact. This way of working requires diverse resources and wisdom from different perspectives to build

an approach that enables stakeholders to work collectively in order to create changes at a local level.

Internal evaluation is a tool that has capability to support organizational management and can be used for those involved to build knowledge and use it to continuously improve organizational performance (Love, 2007). However, traditional evaluation conducted by CBEOs in Thailand do not have sufficient capacity to drive the adjustment needed in three areas as mentioned above. This is due to 1) the most used CBEO evaluation methodology is called After Action Reviews (AARs), which is mostly useful in improving activities, and therefore cannot provide useful feedback for strategic work that requires an overview of information and knowledge. 2) The lack of comprehensive stakeholder engagement throughout the evaluation process, preventing those involved to perceive problems and find common solutions. 3) The focus on delivering the results of operational performance at the end of the project to funding sources rather than supporting learning and improving performance during project implementation (The Youth Network to Inherit Local Wisdom, 2010; Community-based Education Network, 2015).

The developing approach to improve the CBEO's evaluation model in Thailand that will help CBEOs develop their capability to overcome critical barriers needs to be consistent with a community-based education philosophy, as well as the organizational conditions and constraints. More importantly, the evaluation model should have the capacity to support organizational management to achieve clear results (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009; UNDP, 2007). This includes supporting knowledge management to enhance organizational learning that enable them to continuously improve, innovate, and adjust (Marquardt, 2002; Preskill & Torres, 2001) as well as encouraging stakeholders mutual reinforcement to make them aware of the situation and ability to find common solutions (Collective impact forum, 2016, 2017).

Based on these reasons and needs, the researcher has conducted a study and developed "An Evaluation Model for the Performance Improvement of Community-Based Education Organizations". The research questions concerned how evaluation concepts, frameworks, and approaches should be. The main objectives were to identify the CBEO's evaluation model that can demonstrate credible accountability to stakeholders, the one that allows them to learn and adapt to modern social context as well as encouraging more stakeholder contribution in managing community-based education. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to lessening the gap in literature on evaluation design with the capability to support organization's administration, knowledge management, and partnership building all together. The scope of the study was under the context and conditions of small, non-profit organizations, with limited resources, personnel, time, and capacity to conduct evaluation. The developed model is expected to provide these CBEOs with tools to regularly monitor and develop their performance as well as increase capability to manage education and demonstrate accountability continuously.

This article aims to present the development of an evaluation model for the performance improvement of community-based education organizations, which consists of the evaluation concept, framework, and approach. Including the quality verification outcomes of the developed model in terms of its utilization based on the evaluation results and process, in order to identify ways to improve and further developed the evaluation model in the future.

Literature Review

The process of developing an evaluation model for the performance improvement of community-based education organizations is divided into 2 phases: Phase 1, the development of the theoretical framework, which is divided into 3 stages based on the evaluation model's elements, namely 1) the development of the evaluation concept, 2) the development of the evaluation framework, and 3) the development of the evaluation approach. Next, Phase 2, the quality verification of the model in terms of its usage. The implementation details of each phase are as follows:

Phase 1 Theoretical Framework Development

Evaluation concept development, A key challenge in developing the evaluation model is that such evaluation must serve to promote and support CBEOs in three areas: (a) supporting the organizational administration and management to achieve its goals; (b) supporting knowledge management to encourage stakeholders to develop a common learning culture; and (c) encouraging stakeholder mutual reinforcement to achieve common goals. The development of this evaluation model, therefore, integrated two types of evaluation: result-based evaluation approach and learning-based evaluation approach in order that the newly developed evaluation model can function efficiently.
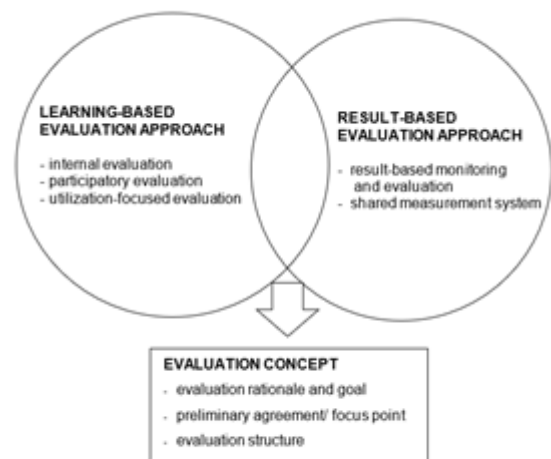

Figure1 Rationale in developing evaluation concept

Evaluation theory and relevant literature has been reviewed and divided into two groups: Group 1, Result-based Monitoring and Evaluation, and Shared measurement system (Collective impact); and Group 2, Evaluation that based on learning and development, including Internal evaluation, Participatory evaluation, and Utilization-focused

evaluation. The tool for investigating the evaluation approach covered analytical framework in 4 areas respectively: rationale, goal, preliminary agreement/focus point, and structure.

Evaluation framework development, the development process of the evaluation framework began with studying CBEO's performance framework, since there are several forms of CBE in Thailand and there is no clear knowledge on what kind of performance should be considered for this type of organization. As a result, the researcher conducted a study based on the performance prism concept (Andy Neely, Chris Adams, & Mikw Kennerley, 2002). This was used as a framework to synthesize the CBEO's performance framework within the Thai context. This concept looks at the performance of non-profit organizations and is a framework developed from a stakeholders-based concept, which is consistent with the nature of the CBEO in Thailand. Data collection was divided into 2 parts as follows.

1. Interviews with those involved in managing CBE, using an interview schedule and performance analysis matrix of modern CBEOs under the Thai society context. The data came from three sources: Group 1, representatives of agencies and relevant parties at the policy level consisting of seven organizations namely, governmental agency overseeing national education standards; agency overseeing non-formal and informal education; private sector that supports and drives education related work; research funding source; agency that supports the work of civil society; and Group 2, those involved at the operational level, consisting of CBEO leaders, where two of them cane from the organizations that operated individually and another two from the organizations that operated in the form of a network; and Group 3, focus group discussion with community-based education network leaders and alternative education association.

2. Literature review, employing the results analysis of the modern CBEO under the Thai society context as an analytical framework. The data came from three sources: (a) theoretical concepts about community-based education; (b) CBEO's strategy analysis within the Thai society context, drawing from relevant research on the work experience of Thailand's CBE network; and (c) Future social context analysis, encompassing global changing trends, sustainable development concept, Thailand's master plan and development strategy, as well as the research from the country's Think Tank organizations.

The information obtained was then synthesized into a performance framework to establish evaluation framework and indicators. The stakeholder satisfaction was determined as a result, while the performance dimensions in terms of organizational strategy, organizational process, organizational capability, and stakeholders contribution were determined as critical success factors. After that, literature and relevant knowledge review were performed in order to draft definitions and indicators for each element so that the organizations' leaders from the case study could jointly review the evaluation framework, definitions, and all the indicators. This also included defining evaluation criteria for each indicator, and preparing an indicator dossier as a

tool for conducting joint evaluation with those involved within the organization.

Evaluation approach development, The evaluation approach was developed by reviewing theoretical concepts from documents and research on knowledge management evaluation as an approach to build knowledge and provide recommendations for the operation (Dickel & Moura, 2016); utilization-focused evaluation as an approach to create learning from the evaluation process and establish mechanism to support and encourage the use of evaluation results in order to continuously improve and enhance the operational performance (Cetta, 2012; Patton, 2008); result-based monitoring and evaluation as an approach that enables evaluation to fully support results-oriented management (Morra-Imas & Rist, 2009; Poate, 2007; The Development Assistance Committee: Enabling Effective Developmet, 2018; UNDP, 2007), and a shared measurement system for a collective impact approach to ensure that all parties are equally aware of the situation and in a timely manner, which can contribute to a joint problem-solving efforts (Collaboration for Impact, 2017). The evaluation approach analysis tool was used to examine the evaluation process, lessons learned, and the utilization of the evaluation results promotion.

Phase 2 Quality verification of the evaluation model utilization

The quality verification of the evaluation model was based on two parts; the utilization of evaluation findings in enhancing organizational performance and the utilization of the evaluation process in promoting organizational learning. The model was experimented with two CBEOs: an organization that manages education individually and an organization that operates based on a network structure with an establishing process that enable communities to manage education in multiple areas. Lessons learned were used to collect data on the quality of the evaluation model from the real-life experiment. With lessons-learned, the organizational evaluation team, leaders, and those involved in each organization's evaluation process came together to reflect on the benefits of evaluation in supporting organizational management and learning, as well as providing suggestions for improving the evaluation system in the future.

Results

Result-based Monitoring and Evaluation System for the Performance Improvement of CBEOs

According to the research result, it is found that the evaluation that contributes to CBEOs in Thai society to continuously improve their performance should have the capacity to support organizational operation in 3 areas: result-based management, knowledge management, and collective impact ways of working, with the following evaluation concept, framework, and approach:
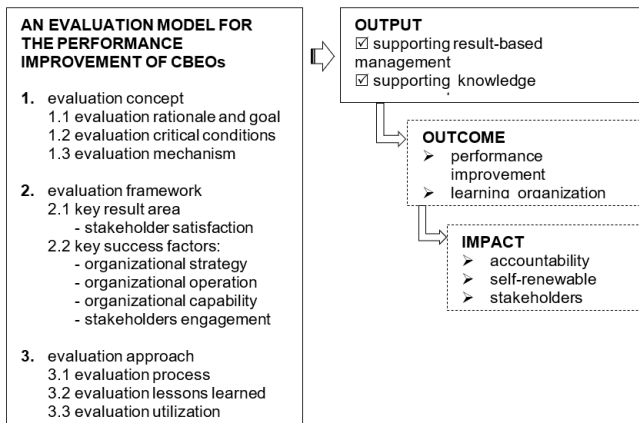
Figure 2 An Evaluation Model for the Performance Improvement of CBEOs

Evaluation concept

Evaluation rationale and goal

Evaluation rationale, an evaluation that has the potential to encourage an organization to clearly demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, while also supporting individual worker capacity building, should take into account two fundamental principles: 1) Evaluation as a systematic mechanism that is integrated into the learning and development cycle within organization's day-to-day operational structure. The self-assessment should be carried out by members of the organization in order to support the mindset that views learning and working as the same issue. This is a condition that allows the organization to evaluate itself, to draw lessons learned and to incorporate the knowledge gained from the assessments into its management processes, in order to solve problems and improve their work continuously. 2) The evaluation process should be incorporated at all stages and it should focus on encouraging interested parties and users to learn to work together on the basis of equality and respect, through participatory evaluation processes.

Evaluation goal, Based on the above evaluation rationale, three evaluation goals were identified: 1) to support result-based management that enhances organizational capability to demonstrate their accountability towards stakeholders; 2) to support organizational learning that enhance their self-renewal to adapt under the complex and dynamic context appropriately; 3) to encourage collaboration to create collective impact. These will allow organizations to overcome the limitations regarding insufficient educational resources and social acceptance issues, which are common problems that drive alternative education in Thailand.

Evaluation critical conditions

For the evaluation to be fully functional, it should be based on at least three critical conditions: (a) Stakeholders or organizational leaders must place importance on result-oriented management which means having a "sense of excellence" mindset and a commitment to use evaluation results to improve performance to achieve organizational goals; (b) Stakeholders must be involved throughout the

evaluation process in order to create co-ownership. During the implementation phase, it is important to encourage constructive collaboration and the use of the evaluation results in learning and decision-making process. When the stakeholders are involved throughout the process, they will be empowered to see the changes they create, which can affect their confidence in managing future issues on their own; and (c) the atmosphere of evaluation process must be conducive to mutual learning. This requires the setting of several conditions: the assessment must be based on equal relationships, having respect for each other, recognizing value of diverse perspectives. Moreover, the evaluation must be objective, it should not be used as a tool to reward or penalize any individual, there should be a facilitator that organizes the process and encourages mutual learning exchanges. In addition, the evaluation process must be simple and consistent with the organizational culture.

Evaluation mechanism

The evaluation structure in relation to organizational evaluation consists of (a) evaluators, who are external evaluation experts acting either as consultants or mentors for the organization/community/group evaluation team; (b) evaluation team, consisting of members of the organization/community/group who are interested to learn, possess a participatory working skills, and are ready to assume evaluation responsibility, and (c) key stakeholders, referring to those directly affected, both positive and negative, by the CBE arrangement. They have a role to engage in the evaluation process at all stages and apply the evaluation results to improve the strategy and develop a new action plan to guide the collaborative operation; and () network partners, referring to relevant agencies/organizations both inside and outside the community. Their roles are to participate in all stages of the evaluation process, from creating/reviewing collective agreement in assessing organizational performance, drawing lessons learned and applying the findings to improve the strategy and develop a new action plan to guide the collaborative action.

Evaluation framework

In order for the evaluation to properly reflect performance at the organizational level, the evaluation framework should encompass two parts: (1) key result areas of the organization, stakeholder satisfaction is considered an indicator that reflects the ability to meet the expectations of stakeholders on CBE, both in terms of learning and community development dimensions, and (2) key success factors including organizational strategy, organizational process, organizational capability, and stakeholders contribution. Consequently, the evaluation framework for the performance improvement of CBEOs consists of 5 elements and 19 indicators, which are detailed in Figure 3.
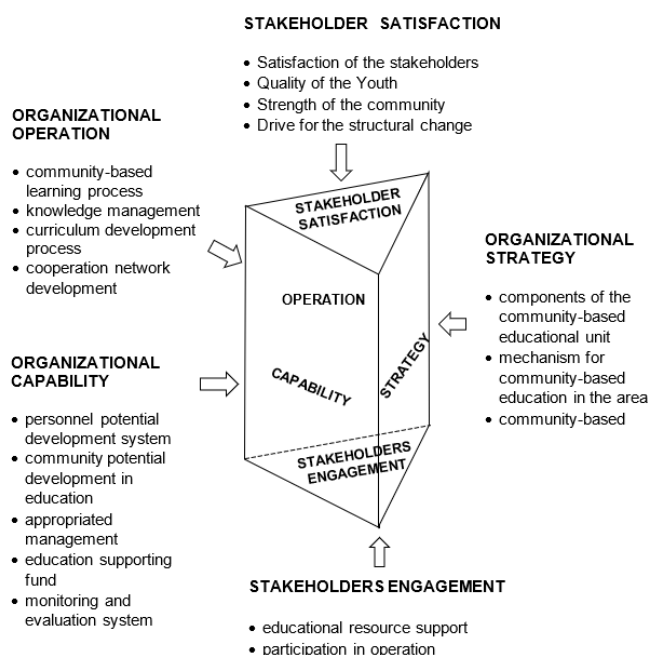
Figure 3 The Evaluation Framework for the Performance Improvement of CBEOs

Evaluation approach

The development of a result-based monitoring & evaluation process for the performance improvement of CBEOs integrated the concepts of knowledge management, participatory evaluation, and result-based management in order to create the evaluation system that can support results-oriented management and promote organizational learning simultaneously. This model is designed to enhance organizational performance continuously through learning and development cycles, which consist of three main processes: evaluation, drawing lessons from the findings, and results utilization. Each process is described as follows:

Evaluation process

The evaluation process is an evaluation based on the CBEO performance framework indicators, assessing both KPI-Results and KPI-Critical Success Factors, which have three key steps:

1.   Reviewing evaluation collective agreements, particularly with respect to neutrality, where the outcome is considered a shared responsibility of the whole organization without addressing individual/any party specifically. Subsequently, a joint review on evaluation goals, framework, indicators definition, and evaluation criteria will take place so that the stakeholders and evaluation team can understand these topics in the same way.

2.   Evaluation Planning. This is the primary function of the evaluation team to jointly plan the assessment, by reviewing the indicator dossier, designing tools/questions, preparing for the team readiness, coordinating, and establishing action plans for data collection.

3.   Data collection, following evaluation plans where data collection processes prioritize stakeholders participation and shared learning.

4.   Data analysis and Evaluation findings summary. The evaluation team is responsible for analyzing data by comparing evidence against evaluation criteria.

5.   summarizing evaluation results of each indicator, and preparing evaluation reports. The findings are presented in three groups: indicators with high, medium, and low score groups, in order to help classify the ranking within the lessons learned. The aggregated data should be analyzed as an organizational overview, without disclosing data sources, so the informants can have confidence and courage to reflect their opinions as close as possible to realities.

Evaluation lessons learned

Learning from the evaluation results is an important step in building stakeholder shared learning. The knowledge is created by turning stakeholder's tacit knowledge at the operational level into explicit knowledge to develop and improve the educational management. It is also considered as an organizational knowledge that can be useful for the CBEOs' operation and results extension in the future. Lessons learned comprised of two types: (a) drawing lessons to develop and improve the operation. Using KPI-Results from the low and medium scored groups to analyze, linking results to different factors, as well as brainstorming from diverse stakeholders. This helps provide recommendations that are in line with the organizational contexts and conditions which are practically feasible; and (b) drawing lessons to synthesize knowledge. Using KPI-Results from the high scored group, which represents organizational good practice. The knowledge is synthesized and kept for future work or to disseminate it in order to expand the community-based education coalition in other contexts.

Utilizing evaluation results

This is an important step towards improving organizational performance by using the knowledge/lessons/proposals from the lesson learned process as a guideline to improve organizational strategy and create a new action plan to achieve the goals. After that, the plan should be implemented, the evaluation team will then be responsible for monitoring performance in two areas: the effectiveness of the outcome based on KPI-Results and based on the efficiency, on how well the action plan is being implemented, as well as to keeping stakeholders informed of the situation at regular organizational monthly meetings.
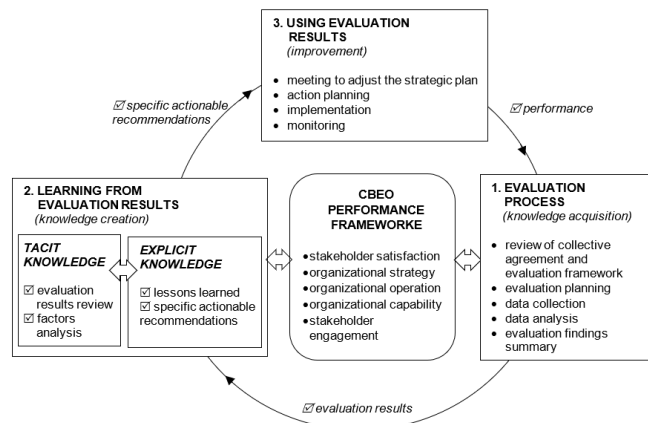
Fig.4 The Result-based Monitoring & Evaluation Process for the Performance Improvement of CBEOs

Conclusion

An evaluation system that helps increase CBEOs' capacity to continuously improve its performance should address both accountability and organizational learning. Therefore, results-based and learning-based evaluations should be balanced. Furthermore, as a community-based education, community involvement in evaluations is critical and essential. For the evaluations to reflect organizational performance, its framework should be aligned with the nature of nonprofit organizations, and driven by stakeholder participation. Comprehensive indicators should include stakeholder satisfaction, organizational strategy, organizational operation, organizational capacity, and stakeholder engagement. In addition, an evaluation approach should be a learning cycle that can serve as a true performance reflection and a knowledge management process for the organization to build knowledge and use that knowledge to continuously improve their operations. This requires three elements: an evaluation process, learning from evaluation results, and using evaluation results.

An Evaluation Model for the Performance Improvement of Community-Based Education Organizations was developed to fill the evaluation's literature gap by applying the learning-based evaluation to offset the weaknesses of results-based evaluation, where the emphasis on results was shifted to organizational learning and increased staff capacity, which can impact the sustainability of organizational evaluations (Vähämäkiand & Verger, 2019). This evaluation approach was designed to integrate participatory evaluation and knowledge management concepts. As a result, the developed evaluation model had both the capacity to support results-based management to reliably and continuously demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, and to promote a culture of organizational learning that is crucial for "learning organizations". This is important for modern organizations in order to be able to adapt and develop in the midst of complex and rapidly changing contexts, both in the present and future (Collison & Parcell, 2004; McHargue, 2003; Preskill & Torres, 2001). Based on the developed model quality assessment results in comparison with the World Bank evaluation model (Kusek & Rist, 2004) and the OECD's country evaluation model,(Vähämäkiand & Verger, 2019) it was found that, to make the evaluation sustainable, it is important to improve two areas: 1) stakeholder engagement within the evaluation process. Since the approach for stakeholder analysis was rather unclear, this has resulted in the lack of stakeholder diversity, which could impact the shared learning outcomes and diminish their ability to contribute to community education management issues. 2) Evaluation capacity development. Without a clear evaluation capacity development system, there is a risk that organizational leaders will not have sufficient capacity to provide guidance for its members. Consequently, this will have implications on the continuity and quality of evaluation operations.

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