Opportunities and Challenges for Professionalizing Monitoring and Evaluation Practice: A Global Overview and Perspectives

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Abstract

Organizations and countries have, in the last one decade or so, been undertaking different efforts and strategies to professionalize monitoring and evaluation as a strategy to improve the quality of its services, and to defend and protect the welfare of commissioners and professionals. This article provides the global trend of professionalization of the field of monitoring and evaluation. The article has generally shown that professionalization of monitoring and evaluation is a necessary strategy for improving the quality of services and products and wider monitoring and evaluation. The adoption of professionalization is determined by a number of factors; and particularly political will, institutionalization, level of maturity of monitoring and evaluation associations and networks, results-based culture, and the maturity of capacity building programmes. Comparatively, North American countries have recorded tremendous achievements in the professionalization of monitoring and evaluation; with Canada reaching the stage of accreditation. Generally in Africa, South Africa, and to a certain extent Ghana, have recorded significant achievements in professionalizing monitoring and evaluation due to the factors just mentioned. In East Africa, the level of monitoring and evaluation professionalization and institutionalization is relatively higher in Uganda and Kenya compared to Tanzania where, despite a few obstacles, there has been a combined effort from the government, TANEA, members of parliament and training institutions to professionalize and institutionalize monitoring and evaluation. Substantial achievement has been made, including — but not limited to — improvement of lobbying and support from both the parliament and the president's office, increased number of short- and long-term training programmes and atheist partial institutionalization of monitoring and evaluation within the government systems.

Keywords: higher learning institutions, professionalization, capacity strengthening, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), Tanzania

1. Introduction and Background

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is increasingly being acknowledged as an important governance and management tool in both public and private sectors (Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; Porter & Goldman, 2013). It is from this backdrop that donor agencies and countries consider M&E as a yardstick for judging the wealth and performance of different types of interventions. Thus, according to Ayoo (2020) and Cavin (2016), efforts and strategies to increase credibility and relevance of the evaluation has triggered the need for promoting professionalization and

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professionalism of M&E both as a profession, discipline and a field of study (UNEG, 2018, 2016; Giammalvo, 2008). Hence, the growth and development of monitoring in any country will largely depend on the willingness of key actors to professionalize, institutionalize and promote professional conduct within the field (Triantafyllis, 2012; Kaulio, 2008). Following this observation, organizations and countries around the world have, in the past few years, attempted to transform M&E into a profession by establishing frameworks, accreditation and codes of conduct to embrace and promote quality and integrity to the highest standard (Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; Better Evaluation, 2016). Although with different scope and methodological approaches, associations in different parts of the world such as America, Canada, Australia, Latin America, Asia and Africa have, in the recent past, been implementing several initiatives to professionalize and strengthen M&E systems (Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; Lahey, 2015). Ayoo (2020) has identified Canada as the only country in the world that has recorded the highest level of professionalization of M&E by putting in place systems and standards for accreditation of M&E professionals.

The need for professionalizing and strengthening M&E has also been prompted by several global frameworks and declarations (Ayoo, 2020; Cavin, 2016; World Bank, 2005). The United Nations declared 2015 as an international year of evaluation, and at the same time called for governments in the world to adopt rigorous, high-quality data and evidence-based information to track and review progress made from the Millennium Challenge and Sustainable Development Goals (Ayoo, 2020, UN, 2018). Accordingly, United Nations' systems and programmes have, in the recent past, emphasized for a robust national M&E system as a strategy for ensuring accountability to citizens, improvement of the implementation of national policies and strategies, and the passing of evidence-based decision-making. Other UN-based organizations—particularly international development organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP and UNICEF—have, for long, prompted the professionalization, strengthening and institutionalization of M&E as a strategy for promoting a results-based management philosophy at different levels of programme support (Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; World Bank, 2015; Better Evaluation, 2016).

1.2 Debates over M&E Professionalization

Worldwide, there are increasing debates and discussions over what characterize and constitute a profession, especially in emerging and practical-based professions such as project management, evaluations and data sciences (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Partners, 2016; IEG, 2015; Giammalvo, 2008). Such debate has been dominated and informed by three major discourses. The first discourse and conception about the profession comprises those who believe that M&E—as a profession, academic discipline or industry—need to be subjected to rigorous assessment of accreditation and qualification, including formal certificates,

certifications, procedures and processes that will enable professional persons to effectively and efficiently perform their duties and responsibilities (IEG, 2015; Triantafyllis, 2012; Giammalvo, 2008). Based on this perspective, to become an M&E professional requires professionals to adhere to certain codes of professional conduct and professionalism. Assuming other factors remaining constant, such credentials are expected to create confidence in the profession, while protecting potential harm and losses to the evaluators, commissioners and subjects of evaluation (Ayoo, 2020; Cavin, 2018; IEG, 2015).

Eval Partners (2016), IEG (2015) and Levin (2017) noted that efforts to professionalize and make M&E a distinctive profession should be associated with quality assurance and control standards to guide the operation of other professions, including—but not limited to—established patterns of a tertiary education system to be completed by each member of the M&E, have graduate professional practices, and carry out M&E for continued improvement and experience. This will be supported by strong and recognized professional associations that enforce and reinforce standards, including regular training to update their M&E knowledge and skills, and to put in place legislation responsible for setting out requirements to deal with any legal malpractice. In the same line of argument, the Global Evaluation Agenda identified enabling environment, institutional capacity, and individual capacity as critical path areas for professionalizing and strengthening M&E systems (Eval Partners, 2016).

Yet, despite the relevance of all the three aspects, more emphasis was still put on individual capacity building. Thus, according to Ayoo (2020), Eval Partners (2016) and UNEG (2016), among other organizations, building the capacity of M&E individuals as part of the professionalization process is expected to develop an adequate number of qualified evaluators drawn from a diversity of relevant disciplines who will be able to conduct high quality evaluation in all countries and sectors; develop evaluators with knowledge and skills to make appropriate use of generally accepted principles, theories, methods and approaches; and to develop evaluators with high levels of professionally and culturally-sensitive value propositions.

The second discourse takes the stance that M&E is not only practical knowledge, skill and tool, but also an open access discipline or industry constituted by innovative practitioners with practical experience, who are capable of executing M&E exercises as required by M&E consumers. As noted by Patton (2012), IEG (2015) and World Bank (2005), key to this perspective is the argument that M&E is a multi-disciplinary sector, which is expecting to draw people from different sectoral, academic, professional and academic backgrounds. Thus, according to IEG (2015), Patton (2015), and Better Evaluation (2016), such diversity and differences make it necessary for evaluators to equip themselves with special methodological perspectives and competencies to engage and evaluate different interventions at global, regional

and national levels. This perspective is also shared by the Global Evaluation Agenda, which stipulates that given the wide differences of cultural contexts and operating M&E requirements, no standard blueprint approach and perspective would fit all situations and in all countries. This calls for the need for each evaluation community of practice to design and promote their own qualification system (Eval Agenda, 2020; Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; Eval Partners, 2016; Levin, 2017). A comparative study by Ayoo (2020) in Canada and America, for example, observed differences in programme evaluation between countries, geographical locations, and between organizations.

The third discourse—and probably the most appealing school of thought—comprises those who believe that M&E is both a science and practice that may need practitioners to be versatile and adhere to both scientific, practical experiences and standards, so as to ensure quality, relevance and utility for its products and services (Ayoo, 2020; UNEG, 2016; Patton, 2012; IEG, 2015). We subscribe to a lot of this discourse; yet, given our academic orientation (as university dons), we are inclined more towards the science part so that the practice, experiences and interactions with fellow M&E professions are used as supplements for professional and carrier development. This position is probably supported by previous authors—including Stockman (2016), UNEG (2015) and Worthen (2003)—who, for different periods, had concerns over the possibility of developing M&E into a fully-fledged profession without proper guidelines on how its practitioners would demonstrate their competencies in some M&E as a specialized body of knowledge, while conforming to technical or ethical standards employed in professions.

As explained elsewhere in this article, because of the increasing realization of the importance of M&E, organizations, firms and individuals have increasingly been involved in M&E practices either as managers, consultants or data enumerators (Tarsilla, 2014). As noted by Stockman (2016), UNEG (2016), Piccot (2011) and Worthen (2003), such trend might have been triggered by the assumption that M&E is an open-access, multidisciplinary field and profession. Such an understanding poses a problem for determining the criteria, requirements and characteristic features of M&E both as a profession and field of study. Observers such as Ayoo (2020), Stockman (2016), IEG (2015) and Porter and Goldman (2013) warned that the lack of clear rules and criteria for professionalization and professionalism of M&E as a profession and practice may have significant consequences on the growth and development of M&E, and ultimately poor quality of M&E services. While Lahey (2015) noted that poor management and performance of several ILO big projects were affected by ill-informed decisions attributed to malpractice in M&E exercises, other observers such as IEG (2015) identified the problem of lack of confidence in M&E as a result of professionalism and poor M&E undertakings. In Tanzania, recent studies by Bayway (2022), Migira (2021), and Kilagura (2018), have identified

the problems of partial M&E institutionalization, poor M&E reporting, poor accountability, and the lack of M&E culture as indicators of the lack of professionalism and professionalization of M&E in the country.

From the preceding observations, one can argue that professionalization and professionalism in M&E is expected to benefit the profession, professionals, evaluators and the end user of M&E products (Ayoo, 2020; Levin, 2017; Cavin, 2016; World Bank, 2005).

1.2 Conceptualizing M&E as a Profession

The biggest challenge for the professionalization of M&E emanates from M&E professionals themselves. Studies by Ayoo (2020), Giammalvo (2008) and Zwerman et al. (2004) highlighted several debates and concerns on the possibilities of professionalizing contemporary and practical fields such as project management and evaluation. Thus, as noted by Giammalvo (2008), the need for professionalism of M&E is often triggered by the desire to purposefully subject these fields to the standards of well-established professions such medicine and teaching. It is from this backdrop that Ayoo (2020) and Piccot (2011) considered M&E as an infantile and pre-mature field that may need to evolve over time before developing into a full-fledged profession or discipline. This understanding is premised on the argument that the multi-disciplinary nature of M&E subjects it to be more of a tool and skill to employ in other professions.

Before responding to the question whether M&E is a profession or not, one may need to conceptualize the defining features of a profession (Giammalvo, 2008; Zwerman et al., 2004; Piccot, 2011). Several authors have attempted to define a 'profession' with a relatively different wording and focus. For example, Giammalvo (2008) adopted the Austrian Council of Professions' definition of a profession as a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to certain ethical standards and who hold themselves out, and are accepted by the public as possessing special knowledge and skills in widely recognized body of learning derived from research, education and training at higher level and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interests of others (Zwerman et al., 2004; Piccot, 2011; Giammalvo, 2008; Evetts, 2003). Other observers such as Caza and Cleary (2016) and Cruess et al. (2004) in Giammalvo (2008), focused their definition on individuals, to define a professional as a member of a profession. Borrowing ideas from nursing, they stipulated that members of a profession are supposed to be governed by a code of ethics, and professional commitment to competence, integrity and morality, altruism, and the promotion of the public good within their expert domain; and are accountable to those who are served and the society.

On the other hand, other commentators such as Evetts (2003) and Freeman (2003) identified a profession by looking at the key attributes that are important in distinguishing one profession from another. One way of differentiating one profession from the rest may be to use several criteria such as organized bodies of

experts, elaborate systems of instruction and training, possession and enforcement of a code of ethics or behaviour administered by their members, clear standards and processes for entry and licensure, and operation from a recognized and defined knowledge base (Ayoo, 2020; Giammalvo, 2008). Yet, Ayoo (2020) considered the definition and perspective of Piccot (2011) and Freidman (1970) as the most practical and encompassing definition of a profession and professionalism.

1.4 Determining the Professional and Carrier Pathway in Monitoring and Evaluation

Determining professionalization pathways is one of the contentious and often debated issues in professionalizing any field of study. Probably this is expected to be more challenging for an M&E with no clear competence framework (Ayoo, 2020; Peersman & Rogers, 2017; Eval Partners (2016). Different M&E professional associations and VOPES have employed different pathways and approaches to professionalize their regions and countries. The study by Peersman and Rogers (2017) identified more than 41 approaches employed by different VOPES and associations globally. Such observation may explain two things. First, the level of professional maturity, seriousness and commitment differs between and among associations, VOPES, regions and countries. Secondly, developing a professional carrier pathway may need to adopt a more pragmatic approach, and that, as opposed to other field and profession efforts, to establish a universally or even a regionally accepted professional and carrier pathway in M&E is likely to face a lot of difficulties (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Partners, 2016; UNEG, 2015).

As part of the efforts to professionalize and ensure quality in M&E services and its practitioners, UNEG (2015) suggested a comprehensive framework for guiding both the profession and practice. Through this framework, it was suggested that:

(a) M&E professionals should be identified from a well-established education system to be completed by each member of the M&E profession;

(b) Well-established internship systems and programmes should be put in place to enable new graduates to continue learning and practising under identified supervisors;

(c) M&E profession and professionals should be guided by a strong and recognized professional association to enforce and reinforce standards, and where necessary, to undertake regular trainings to update their knowledge and skills; and

(d) Legislation should be put in place to set out the requirements and provide the basis for legal action in case of malpractice.

Alternatively, UNEG (2015) suggests that promoting professionalization and professionalism in the field of M&E could require subjecting M&E professionals to rigorous assessment and standards, applied in a closely related field like

auditing, which follows well-established globally-accepted standards. Yet, as explained elsewhere in this article, subjecting M&E to standards employed in other professions like auditing, nursing and teaching may be constrained by the fact that M&E professionals are normally drawn from different sectors and fields (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Partners, 2016). Equally, as noted by Migira (2021), M&E differs with auditing in the sense that while the former seeks to improve a programme, the latter focuses more on ensuring compliance and quality control measures.

Slightly different from the UNEG proposition, IOCE and Eval Partners suggested a more relaxed professionalization pathway (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Agenda, 2020; IOCE website). According to the IOCE taskforce, professionalization in M&E needs to be a gradual, long-term, context-dependent process geared towards:

(a) improved access to quality education and training;
(b) dissemination of evaluation knowledge and good practices;
(c) harmonization of ethical guidelines and guiding principles for evaluators;
(d) agreed evaluator capabilities or competencies frameworks; and
(e) legitimate ways of recognizing the fundamental knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to carry out work to an adequate standard of quality.

In this regard, Eval Agenda 2020 developed three strategies, shown in Figure 1, to promote professionalization.
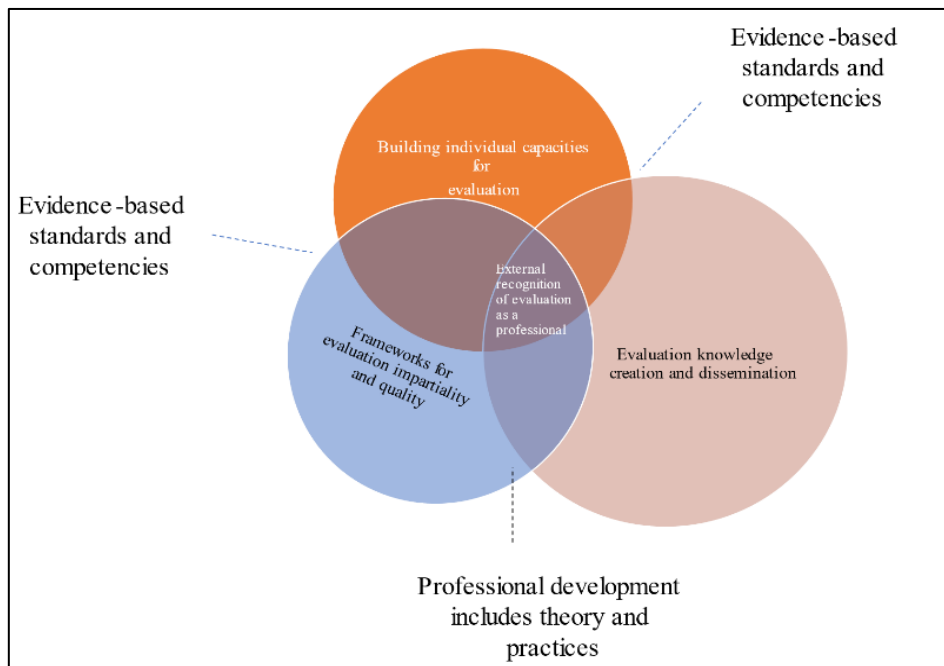

Figure 1: Three Strategies of the Eval Agenda, 2020
Source: Modified from Global Evaluation Agenda, 2020

The five propositions of M&E pathways, to a large extent, agree with the recent professionalization pathway suggested by Eval Agenda developed in 2020, as shown in Figure 1. Slightly different from the former, the latter calls for the need to have universally accepted evaluation professionalization pathways (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Agenda, 2020). Thus, according to the 2020 Eval Agenda, efforts to professionalize the M&E sector should aim to promote the following:

(a) Competencies and evidence-based standards;
(b) Creation of the evaluation of knowledge and dissemination;
(c) Professional development, including the theory and practice of M&E;
(d) Frameworks for evaluation impartiality and quality;
(e) Evidence-based mechanisms to identify capable evaluators;
(f) Building individual capacities for evaluation; and
(g) External recognition of evaluation as a profession.

2. Methodology

Like many desk review studies, information and data for this article were obtained through a systematic review of literature. This involved critical reading of articles, studies and reports within the field of M&E, with a particular focus on professionalism, professionalization, and to a certain extent, institutionalization of M&E. Academic and professional search engines such as Google Scholar and Reference Desk were used to obtain relevant literature on professionalization, professionalism and trends of M&E at global, regional and national levels. At the country level, various reports from the government were critically assessed and reviewed to establish elements and trends of M&E strategies and policies towards the professionalization of M&E in different regions and countries across the globe. In general, the study used content and discourse analysis to uncover meanings and issues raised through published and unpublished reports including—but not limited to—journal papers, theses, dissertations and reports focusing on the professionalization of M&E at different parts of the globe. Information obtained from this process is arranged into themes and subthemes to reflect different issues and subtitles reflected in the current article.

3. Findings and Discussions
3.1 Professional Pathways in Selected Countries and Regions

Countries, through their respective national M&E associations, have achieved and employed different levels and types of M&E professionalization and pathways (Eval Agenda, 2020; Eval Partners, 2016; Ayoo, 2020; Piccot, 2011). This section presents selected cases from selected countries to demonstrate different levels and types of professionalization efforts and approaches. According to Ayoo (2020), Canada has often been cited as the best-case scenario with probably the most articulated systems of M&E accreditation and other qualifications. Other countries with clearer and comparatively more matured

M&E professionalization include the USA and Japan (Eval Agenda, 2020; Ayoo, 2020). In Africa, M&E professionalization is more evident in South Africa; and to a certain extent in Ghana, Uganda and Kenya. In Tanzania, despite the observed delays and limitations, in the past five years or so there have been tremendous efforts to professionalize and institutionalize M&E through the combined efforts by TANEA, the government of Tanzania, and development partners such as the UNDP and USAID (URT, 2021). Table 1 summarizes different levels, approaches and strategies for professionalization from different countries. To provide a global picture, countries are selected to represented different regions such as America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Table 1: Levels, Approaches and Strategies for Professionalization in Different Countries

Region	Selected Countries	M&E Coordination's and Associations	Efforts, levels of Professionalization Achievements	Limitations
North America	Canada, USA	Canadian Evaluation Society, American Evaluation, Arizona Evaluation Network	M&E as a field of study and profession is relatively mature compared with the rest of the world; Strong M&E Associations & Networks; big progress towards accreditation of M&E particularly in Canada; Strong VOPE and Evaluation communities; High level of M&E culture; Strong M&E Research and Training Institution; Strong M&E postgraduate Training and strong lifelong training programmes; Strong Evaluation Journals and strong publications in M&E compared with other parts of the world	Poor Harmonization of M&E Competence Frameworks, Poor M&E Trainings at lower cadre
South America	Mexico Brazil	Brazilian M&E Frameworks, Mexico Evaluation Society	Good progress towards institutionalization of M&E, Good Progress towards institutionalization of M&E	Lack of M&E competence framework, relatively weak M&E Trainings programmes
Europe	United Kingdom Denmark German	Flemish Evaluation Society	Relatively stronger M&E systems; big step towards institutionalization and coordination of M&E; moderate progress towards accreditations; relatively stronger M&E Trainings programmes; relatively stronger M&E journals and publications	Lack of Competence Framework, More focus on Postgraduate Trainings

Asia Pacific	Austria, Japan, India	Development Evaluation Society of India, Evaluation, Evaluation Society of Japan Community of India	Relatively stronger M&E systems; Japan has made high progress towards accreditations of M&E; strong regional networks; relatively stronger M&E training programmes; relatively stronger coordination of M&E	With the exception of Japan, there is little progress towards accreditation of M&E
Latin America		Brazilian Evaluation Framework	Moderate achievements in many elements of professionalization such as coordination, regional and national networks and capacity building	Lack of M&E Competence framework, as compared to their counterpart North America countries this region has relatively weaker M&E systems, relatively weak results-based M&E culture
Southern Africa	South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe	South Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Association, Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Society, Zimbabwe Evaluation Society	With particular reference to South Africa and as compared with the rest of the continent this region has relatively made progress in M&E professionalization in terms of relatively stronger M&E association, stronger M&E systems, high level of M&E institutionalization and coordination, strong Trainings and Capacity Building Programmes and stronger, good progress in M&E publications and Journals, good progress towards results-based M&E and M&E culture	Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation Competence, with exception of South Africa relatively weak M&E systems, lack of the results based and M&E culture and lack or poor M&E code of ethics.
Northern Africa	Egypt Nigeria	Egypt Association of Evaluation	Relatively stronger M&E system especially in Egypt, relatively stronger Associations, good progress towards M&E publications	Lack of M&E competence framework, relatively weak M&E systems compared to South Africa and other developed countries, lack of results-based culture, ethical related problems particularly in Nigeria?
East Africa	Uganda, Kenya	Uganda Evaluation Association,	Relatively strong regional network, i.e. members African Evaluation Association. Uganda has strong institutionalization of	Lack of M&E competence framework, weaker M&E systems, lack of professio-nalism including lack of

		Kenya Evaluation Association	M&E compared with Kenya and Tanzania; Moderate Journal Evaluation; long-term engagement in capacity building compared to Tanzania; moderate progress in M&E publications and national wide conference.	evaluation ethics leading to corruption and quality related problems, with exception of Uganda improved M&E coordination other countries like Kenya are facing coordination problems.
Tanzania	Tanzania	Tanzania National Evaluation Association	Member of African Evaluation Society. Some progress towards institutionalization of M&E, moderate M&E trainings through postgraduate and short courses, moderate progress in M&E publications and journals, moderate progress in M&E networks through regional and country conference, good progress in M&E advocacy and communication	Relatively poor institutionalization of M&E as compared to Uganda, weaker M&E capacity, lack of M&E and Results Based culture as compared with Kenya and Uganda, M&E is a relatively younger as compared to Uganda and Kenya, poor use of M&E results and dissemination, lack of code of ethics

Source: Adopted and Modified from Eval Agenda, 2020

As highlighted elsewhere in this article, the information in Table 1 demonstrates that the degree and efforts to professionalize M&E differ between and among regions and countries. For example, compared to other regions, North America—through Canada and USA—has recorded tremendous achievements towards the professionalization of M&E. In Africa, South Africa is leading the rest of the region and countries in many aspects of M&E professionalization. The degree of M&E professionalization will largely be determined by the degree of adoption of the results-based management and M&E culture at national level, the level of national economic development, the maturity of the M&E associations, and M&E training programmes. This trend has also revealed that the lack of an M&E competence framework is the major problem affecting the professionalization of M&E across the globe (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Agenda, 2020; Eval Partners, 2016).

3.2 Developing an M&E Competency Framework
There is an increasing agreement among academics, professionals and practitioners that the effort to professionalize M&E needs to be backed up with a strong and well-established competence framework (Ayoo, 2020; Eval Agenda, 2020; UNEG, 2016). However, as concluded in the previous section, and

according to Ayoo (2020) and Piccot (2013), efforts to establish a universal and even national M&E competency framework has been constrained by the lack of agreement on the focus, content and modalities of implementing the framework. Yet, some observers such as Ayoo (2020), UNEG (2016), Nigachi et al. (2015), Patton (2012), and IEG (2015) insist that improving the quality and the utility of evaluation would require the sector and professionals to raise their professional ladder and standards. Also, raising the M&E quality and standards need to be acquired through work experience, and developed through purposeful training and mentoring. Thus, despite the expected debate over what should constitute an appropriate M&E competence framework, Negandh et al. (2015) suggest that competent M&E personnel should demonstrate the ability to:

(a) develop M&E theory and tools;
(b) choose and apply an appropriate evaluation design;
(c) design frameworks and indicators, and link the two;
(d) identify and develop indicators;
(e) identify the sources of data; collect, manage, analyse and interpret data;
(f) identify and employ ethical conduct during M&E exercise;
(g) assess and maintain quality;
(h) explain the key concepts and the importance of M&E;
(i) design M&E systems and plans;
(j) critically appraise M&E systems;
(k) lead and manage M&E teams;
(l) identify and engage stakeholders,
(m) write, use and disseminate evaluation findings; and
(n) use M&E data to support decision-making, advocacy and other purposes.

To a great extent, we agree with the observations made by Negandhi and his team. Negandhi's analysis and classification take us further to identify key knowledge and skills to be considered in developing meaningful M&E competence skills. These are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Knowledge Areas and Skills Needed to Develop a Meaningful M&E

Key M&E knowledge Area	Key elements	Skill Needed	Experience
M&E Science, Theories	M&E Concepts and Principles, Theory of Change and Logical Models, M&E System, M&E Plan, Developing indicators	Conceptualization and analytical skill	Not applicable
Project Management	M&E in the Project Life Cycle and their data needs	Analytical and conceptualization skills	To have worked with projects for at least 1 year or more

Research Methodology	Evaluation Design, Sampling Design and procedures, data collection methods	Analytical and conceptualization	To have participated or directly been involved in basic evaluation
Data-related Knowledge	Data analysis, use of software, establish and manage	Analytical and practical	
Leadership and Management	Stakeholder analysis and engagement, Transformative, motivation, rewarding, controlling	Leadership and management skills	Participating and assuming M&E leadership and management roles at the organizational and project levels or leading and supervising an M&E team as consultant
Resource Mobilization and Networking	Mobilizing Funds and budget for M&E activities and advocacy, Mobilizing Human Resources, acquire and retain networks	Analytical and Writing Skills	Being a member of an M&E network and association, Participating in different M&E conferences, workshops and tasks,
Lobbying and advocacy	Influencing skills, influencing policies and policy makers, Disseminating the M&E finding, M&E and results culture	Influencing skills, presentation skills	Being a member of any M&E association, network, group and participating or leading a national or regional wide task force/technical committee
Writing and Evidence-based M&E report	Report Writing, Audience Analysis	Writing skills	Participating or leading an Evaluation Reporting team
M&E approaches	Results-based M&E, participatory M&E and the traditional or conventional or implementation-based M&E	Conceptualization and Theorization	Participating in any one of the three exercises, involved in training or designing of any of the three approaches.

Table 2 reveals that M&E competencies involve diverse knowledge, skills and experiences that may not necessarily be acquired from a single source system of knowledge and skills acquisition. Yet, this does not discern the need for developing more comprehensive and systematic training and capacity building in key M&E knowledge and skills, particularly those that cannot be obtained in a free knowledge system. In less developed countries, and Tanzania in particular, where M&E is still at an infancy stage, professionalization of M&E may require a more guided process (Ayo, 2020; Mpemba, 2015). Other observers perceive the professionalization of emerging disciplines and professions like M&E as non-directional, country- and organizational-specific career path and professionalization. In view of this, Giammalvo (2008) and Zwerman et al.

(2004) seem to suggest that because of their multiple uses and their practical nature, contemporary professions and disciplines—in this case M&E—should not be guided by strict theory-based rules and guidelines.

This argument corroborates the earlier supposition by Ayoo (2020), Eval Agenda (2020), and Eval Partners (2016); all of whom called for more relaxed, gradual, organizational and VOP-specific approaches to M&E professionalization and career development. Johnson et al. (2018) and other supporters of practical and problem-solving learning models such as Baldwin and Huang (2010) and Clardy (2018), propose the use of 70-20-10 career and this case a professional development framework as an effective strategy for enhancing transferring knowledge and skills at the workplace. On the basis of this framework, professionals and managers are expected to gain most of the knowledge and skills for addressing work and task-related problems (70%), social interaction with colleagues including attending professional meetings and conferences (20%), and formal or class-based training which constitutes only 10% of the knowledge and skills possessed and utilized by many individuals at the workplace. Despite some criticism, especially on the lack of enough research and evidence, the 70-20-10 rule framework has over the last few years gained much impetus, especially in organizations and individuals who believe more in practicalities than formalized education models. As noted earlier, we are of the view that this framework could be integrated with other suggested career and professional development assumptions and pathways to come up with a formidable, reliable and appropriate M&E competence framework.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations
The discussions and arguments raised in this article have generally demonstrated that despite different perspectives over different pathways towards the professionalization of the M&E industry, professionalization is a critical factor for the development and growth of the M&E sector at the global and national levels. Depending on the development level of M&E, different countries and organizations have—and may—adopt different professional and career development pathways. In Tanzania, despite a few obstacles, there have been significant efforts to improve the functioning, institutionalization and professionalizing of the M&E sector as reflected through collaborative efforts by the government, TANEA, members of parliament and training institutions to professionalize and institutionalize M&E. This has resulted into recorded achievements such as:
- an increased number of M&E training programmes at different universities and non-academic training institutions;
- increased publications and studies in the field of M&E;
- establishment of M&E units at different government institutions;
- the presence of relatively strong associations and networks;
- improved M&E discourse in the National Development Agenda;
- strong M&E advocacy programme and strategies;

- increased political will and commitment on the government side including the recent declaration by the President on the need of promoting and using M&E as a tool for improving governance and accountability in government interventions; and
- the appointment of the M&E commissioner.

Either, the professionalization of M&E, especially in least developed countries like Tanzania, need to be preceded with a number of supporting frameworks and strategies including, a strong political will and support, a results-based and M&E culture within the government machinery, institutionalization of M&E within public sector, developing legal supporting frameworks such as policies and acts, developing a comprehensive M&E competency framework, a comprehensive curriculum review, and rigorous capacity building programmes at different levels of government and institutions.

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