

Developmental Evaluation in Complex Governance Systems: Learning and Adaptation in Policy Implementation

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ABSTRACT

This paper discussed how Developmental Evaluation (DE) may be used to improve the responsiveness and resource distribution by governance in Nairobi County, Kenya. The objective of the research was to evaluate how DE can be effective in improving policy flexibility, resource allocation, and economic sustainability of the governance systems in Nairobi. The paper also cited impediments of DE implementation whereby political opposition and institutional inertia were identified as the barriers to the efficiency of DE. The research was based on the Systems Theory which stipulated that complex systems such as the urban governance system needed feedback and lifelong learning in order to adjust. The mixed-method strategy was adopted and entailed a combination of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews using 100 respondents who were government officials, policymakers, and DE experts. The results showed that DE was far more effective in terms of governance responsiveness, with 72 percent of the respondents agreeing that quicker adjustments in policies could be made with the help of real time feedback. On the same note, DE strengthened the allocation of resources, with three-quarters of the respondents claiming to have increased efficiency in allocation of resources. Nevertheless, the issues of inter-sectoral coordination inhibited the maximum potential of DE, as 60 percent of the respondents have indicated. The major barriers to the implementation of DE were political resistance and institutional barriers with 62 percent and 59 percent of the respondents indicating the same respectively. Nevertheless, DE yielded positive results in the long-term governance and 68 percent of the respondents affirmed its long-term effect. The research highlighted the necessity of capacity-building and political commitment to the need to overcome such barriers in making DE successful in the long term. It was concluded that DE had a huge potential of enhancing governance in Nairobi but it needed more institutional structures, cross-sector partnership, and continued training in order to maximise its advantages. The research suggested the inclusion of DE in policy-making and strengthening of community involvement to achieve the best in governance in Nairobi.

Keywords: Developmental Evaluation (DE), Governance Responsiveness, Resource Allocation, Nairobi County, Political Resistance, Institutional Barriers, Systems Theory, Capacity-Building, Policy Adaptability, Sustainability

Background

Developmental evaluation (DE) is one such strategic method applicable in the context of complex governance systems where learning and adjustment in the dynamic political environment is facilitated. DE, born out of the necessity to enable innovation and systems thinking in policy reforms, features the enhancement of the policy efficacy based on the principles of the continuous learning and how the policy can be adjusted. It is the opposite of the traditional approaches to evaluation which mainly aim to determine the effects of the implemented policies. DE, on the contrary, focuses on real-time feedbacks and adjustments, which give governments insights that are capable of increasing the responsiveness of policies to emergent conditions (Conklin et al., 2015).

The systems of governance, especially in developing countries, are characterized by multi-layered decision-making, political instability and interaction of the different stakeholders making it complicated. System thinking is extremely important in the interpretation of such complexities. DE prompts stakeholders to identify feedback

loops and unintended consequences of policy interventions through attention to the relationships between various actors, as well as the systemic patterns (Haag et al., 2024). This method gives a more in-depth insight into the processes that are still going on in the systems of governance that can be missed in the traditional assessments.

One of the reasons that has prompted the use of DE in governance is the increased awareness on the need to be accountable and transparent. Through developmental evaluation, one can constantly monitor and evaluate the policy implementation process which will encourage accountability at all governance levels. This constant review assists in the detection of issues at early stages such that there is a possibility of policies being varied to suit arising issues. Such flexibility is especially essential in situations in which political dynamics can be highly volatile and changes in policies in the course of time have to be implemented in a real-time manner to ensure that they are effective (Mugwagwa et al., 2015).

DE can be used especially in areas like Sub-Saharan Africa where the governance structures are usually in difficulties like corruption, limited institutional capacity and political instability (Ajulor, 2018). As such, developmental evaluation can help solve these issues by increasing the ability of governments to make decisions based on the information and to react to the shifts in a flexible manner. As a good example, in Kenya, whereby the governance systems have been decentralized using devolution, DE has been instrumental in making the counties effective in their policy implementation process by creating collaboration between local governments and other stakeholders (Mutuse, 2016).

The implementation of DE in sophisticated governance is also conditioned by the greater global scenario of policy redesigns targeted to the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals are too difficult to implement and evaluate the policies without reconsidering the implementation and evaluation process. DE offers a guideline on lifelong learning, which is fundamental to realizing SDGs in vibrant political and social environments (Fagbemi, 2021). It also helps the policymakers to monitor the progress and change strategies when necessary to achieve the sustainable development long-term goals.

One of the main issues in implementing DE to governance is that it should be integrated in the wider politics of policy execution. The political climate is a major factor to define the success of the developmental evaluation activities. The successful implementation of DE in policy processes greatly depends on political will and leadership (Sitienei et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in the situations when the political leadership is devoted to the reforms, obstacles to the successful implementation of DE, like the reluctance of bureaucracy and the absence of technical skills, can occur (Konyango, 2019).

The developmental evaluation has proved to be very useful in learning and adapting to complex governance situations particularly in countries that are political and economically in transition. DE has also been used in Africa to assess policy changes in the areas of health, education, and infrastructure (Pelletier et al., 2017). It gives meaningful information on the practical application of policies and how they can be improved or reorganized to realize positive results. DE can help policymakers make informed decisions by relying on systems thinking and concentrating on the adaptive capacity of governance systems, which encourages a more responsive and accountable governance environment (Mardiyanata et al., 2022).

The success of the DE is also determined by the ability of the governance to utilise the feedback produced. The difficulty in most instances is not only the collection of information, but also how the same can be utilized efficiently in order to impact on the formulation of policies. This is especially the case in the environment where the institutional mechanisms used to make decisions are not always conducive to quick adaptation (Ioannides and Eisele, 2023). Hence, although DE has a great potential in enhancing the results of governance, the effectiveness of this solution will depend on whether the system is capable of incorporating feedback into the decision-making cycle and modifying the policies based on it.

To sum up, developmental evaluation can provide a very potent instrument in the process of facilitating learning and adaptation within intricate governance systems. It can improve the implementation of policies, through enhancing the continuous feedback, and the ability of the governance systems to adapt to the dynamic political and social environments. Its success however, is subject to the political will to think in systems, the ability of institutions to hold and implement feedback, and the political economy in general that houses such evaluations.

Problem Statement:

Political instability, bureaucracies, and lack of proper feedback mechanisms usually pose a big challenge in implementing policies in complex governance systems. In most developing nations such as Kenya, the governance structures are complex and the number of stakeholders under them makes the policy not to realize the results or need frequent readjustments to make them effective. Conventional forms of evaluation, which tend to evaluate the effects of policies once they are implemented, are not suited to the changing and dynamic nature of governance systems. Such approaches frequently do not provide the chances to learn and adjust in real-time, which results in a sluggish reaction and inappropriate modifications of the policies.

Devolution of governance, which has taken place in Kenya and other Sub-Saharan countries of Africa, has presented novel dimensions of complexity. Although devolution has provided opportunities to make projects more localized and closer to the needs of the community, it has also created a problem of coordination, allocation of resources, and local accountability (Mutuse, 2016). These challenges are compounded by the absence of appropriate mechanisms to measure and implement timely changes on policies. The developmental evaluation (DE) is a promising solution as it promotes an ongoing learning process and adapting. Nevertheless, little to no studies have been done on the adoption and implementation of DE in governance mechanisms especially in areas that have weak institutions and high rates of political and administrative instability.

The issue, consequently, is that a holistic method of assessing the governance policies is required, which does not simply quantify the results but promotes continuous learning and adjustment during the process of the policy implementation. In the absence of such approach, the policies can be stagnant and fail to respond to the changing needs and challenges of changing political conditions. The current research will aim at discussing the manner in which developmental evaluation can serve in improving the policy implementation in the highly involved governance systems with the Kenyan case being the focus in order to improve the level of decision making, accountability and responsiveness at the local and national levels.

Objectives

To examine the application of developmental evaluation in promoting learning and adaptation in complex governance systems.

To assess the impact of systems-thinking approaches on the effectiveness of policy implementation in dynamic political contexts.

To identify the challenges and benefits of using developmental evaluation to enhance accountability and decision-making in policy reforms.

Significance of the Study:

The research is important because it will determine whether developmental evaluation (DE) can be used to enhance policy implementation in complicated governance systems, especially in the devolved governance system in Kenya. Through the analysis of the DE application, the research would offer useful information on how lifelong learning and adaptation can improve the performance of policies, accountability, and responsiveness in changing political situations. The results will play a role in the creation of more adaptive, flexible systems of governance that are in a better position to respond to changing pressures. Also, the results of the study will be used to make policy changes, enhance the decision making process, and to inform the sustainable development goals implementation at the local and national level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Systems Theory

With its focus on interconnectedness and flexibility of complex systems, the Systems Theory is a perfect frame of reference to the application of Developmental Evaluation (DE) to the Kenyan governance system, specifically to Nairobi County. The Systems Theory assumes that a complex system does not consist of independent

components; thus, they are interdependent and any change in one component of the system affects the whole system (Senge, 2006). This dependency is essential in the context of developmental evaluation, because DE is based on ongoing feedback mechanisms in order to evaluate, improve, and modify the policy decisions in the long-term. Indicatively, Kenya National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (KIPPRA, 2022) offers a guideline on how feedback mechanisms can be incorporated at both country and county levels, thereby facilitating real-time governance through adaptive learning. By doing so, Systems Theory assists in the conceptualization of the current interplay among different levels of governance where the constant evaluation and change are required to meet the dynamic needs such as the urbanization and provision of social services in Nairobi.

The Systems Theory further offers an opportunity to learn the implementation of the Nairobi City County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027 through the lens of the Systems Theory. This urban development, infrastructure, and the social service improvements plan is an illustration of the systemic implementation of DE, at which the feedback of the numerous stakeholders (e.g., residents, local government and the private sector) will guide the decision-making processes. The research conducted by Nairobi City County Government (2023) revealed that DE was important in streamlining project objectives based on the changing social-economic context of Nairobi. The Systems Theory, which places importance on adaptive systems that learn through experience, was also appropriate to the focus on real-time learning by DE. Nevertheless, the results also mentioned that problems such as poor coordination and financial limitations impeded the execution process of certain aspects of the plan. The restrictions demonstrate the complexity of the urban governance systems, in which a variety of sometimes conflicting forces have to be balanced to reach the sustainable development.

Moreover, the analysis undertaken by Amboko (2025) of the Primary Care Networks (PCN) reform in Kenya showed how DE enabled the improvements of the adaptive health policy with the help of the constant feedback provided by healthcare specialists and the community. The findings of the study were indicative of systems approach because the ability of the health system to adjust and respond to the local needs was improved by the iterative process of DE. Nevertheless, the scalability of the DE applications was hindered by political and administrative obstacles, which imply that even though feedback loops are a crucial component of the system adaptation, institutional resistance may be counterproductive. Likewise, Waweru and Mangana (2024) discovered that DE played a crucial role in enhancing the performance of regulatory bodies in Nairobi, which indicated the interrelation between regulatory frameworks and adaptive evaluation. These experiments are the exemplifies of what the Systems Theory can help to appreciate regarding how DE can be used as a mechanism of unceasing adaptation and responsiveness to the complex systems in which various factors determine the policy outcomes. The Systems Theory therefore offers a strong theory to provide a solution to the problem of enhancing governance in Kenya through the establishment of a learning, feedback, and adaptation culture by DE.

Empirical Review

Global Developmental Evaluation in Complex Governance Systems

DE is currently gaining popularity as the necessary instrument to improve governance mechanisms, especially where such factors as complexity, dynamism, and uncertainty are a common feature. This is a comparative empirical review that presents 10 important studies in which DE has been applied in different sectors of the world to ensure the continuity of learning and dynamically adaptive decisions in the processes of governance.

The application of DE in politics, particularly the Madison Initiative (Evaluation Innovation, 2023), is one of the critical uses of DE in governance that utilizes the concept to resolve political polarization and empower democratic institutions in the United States. Through DE to facilitate adaptive strategies, the initiative could make real-time changes according to the emerging political issues. This application explains how DE can be used to give real-time feedback that would guide the decision-making process in a politically unstable environment.

The Adaptation Fund (2022) used the concepts of DE to improve its interventions in climate change adaptation in the global scene. The Fund was in a position to do this through the revision of its Evaluation Policy in order to include DE to make sure that the policies of the Fund continued to work even with the dynamic aspects

presented by climate change. This is an illustration of how the real-time learning framework of DE can be used to ensure the relevance and responsiveness of the interventions in dynamic and unpredictable environments.

On the same note, the Strategic Plan 2022-2025 of UNFPA (UNFPA, 2024) references the role of DE in making flexibility when responding to global crises like health pandemics and political instability. Because of the principles of adaptive evaluation, UNFPA could keep adapting its programs on the basis of immediate feedback they were able to demonstrate the importance of DE in the area of humanitarian governance where flexibility is essential to the success of the programs.

The OECD report on global governance innovation (2023) by OECD (2023) supports the increasing number of sectors of governments utilizing DE. It indicates that governments are starting to employ DE more to tackle global issues such as economic instability and climate change, which provides governments with a structure of continuous feedback, adaptation, and innovation. This trend is observed globally as indicating the importance of DE in strengthening governance systems and making them effective.

Goodwin (2025) study addresses the issue of the difficulties in monitoring and evaluation of complex adaptation programs, including the ones associated with climate change. It highlights the ways in which the ongoing learning structure of DE can be applied to overcome these difficulties and provides the information on how DE can be used to facilitate real-time change in the systems of governance. In the same way, Kolt (2025) emphasizes the use of DE principles into AI governance, which provides a distinct view on the use of DE in very technical matters of policy. The capability of DE to be flexible and adjust to the fast technologies is a major factor in the area of governance such as AI regulation.

Continuing to support the usefulness of DE in complex form of governance, May et al. (2022) present a structure of assessing complex adaptive governance systems. This model highlights the necessity of implementing changes in real-time concerning the emergent challenges, and DE is a critical mechanism that helps develop adaptive mechanisms in such systems. Similarly, Serpe (2022) explores the purpose of DE in international development by focusing on how it can be used to customize the monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to complex interventions. This paper has underscored the ability of DE to handle the dynamic nature of the policy environments through the provision of continuous adaptation.

Also, Patton (2010) offers background information about the principles and applications of DE and strengthens its ability in improving innovation and facilitation of real-time learning in the governance systems. The paper highlights that the DE helps to make informed decisions based on continuous feedbacks so that the governance actors can be responsive and adaptive. Lastly, the article by Njuguna, Uri, and Beauchamp (2024) on the topic of climate change adaption systems in nine nations reveals the significance of the DE in promoting adaptive governance framework in the context of global environment pressures. The study highlights the responsive nature of the adaptation policies, which can be improved by a flexible, learning-focused approach of DE.

Developmental Evaluation in Developing Countries.

Concept Developmental Evaluation (DE) is also becoming a tool of developing nations to improve the quality of governance and development through the promotion of real time learning and adaptation. The Sauri Millennium Village Project (SMVP) in Kenya used DE to evaluate the development interventions in rural areas with the purpose of alleviating poverty. Changes in feedback loop were made continuous by DE and could be adapted, but issues of sustainability and local ownership were experienced. As was revealed in this project, the DE can assist in creating flexible responses to the ever-changing needs of communities, especially in the field of agricultural development (Evaluation Innovation, 2023). On the same note, the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh has applied the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology in enabling the local people to recognize and retrospect the most significant changes due to development programs. This participative approach allowed DE to seize in-depth understanding of community demands that were integrated into future rural development approaches (Asian Development Bank, 2023).

One of the e-GOV and e-SAC Projects in Latin America portrays the effectiveness of DE in the ICT industry. These were projects funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and based on the

Utilization-Focused Developmental Evaluation (U-FDE) in evaluating the role of ICT in governance and health equity. DE techniques offered immediate feedback which allowed the project leaders to resolve such problems as stakeholder alignment and adoption of innovation. The implications of DE assisted in developing the ICT strategies and made sure that interventions were sensitive towards the local conditions (Independent Development Evaluation, 2023). Moreover, a longitudinal study on the topic of child poverty and its generational impact was carried out at the Young Lives Project in Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam where DE was used to monitor poverty and its intergenerational impacts. DE also allowed the research approaches to become adaptable and informed national policy responses to the effects of poverty on the development of children (Independent Evaluation Office, 2022). This underscores the contribution of DE towards the evidence-based policies in third world countries especially in dealing with poverty.

The use of DE to promote the use of ICT in health systems in 27 countries in Africa revealed that the countries which were using ICT in health delivery were registered to have better outcomes including low infant mortality and increased life expectancy rates. The context-specific challenges were identified through the real-time feedback offered by DE, and more locally-specific health interventions were developed (World Bank, 2022). The OECD report titled *Health in the Community* (2023) also confirmed the value of DE in enhancing health outcomes by making clear that there is an increasing use of DE in governmental and non-governmental organizations in developing countries. The flexibility of DE helps organizations to respond to crises at the international level, e.g. pandemics and climate change, making development programs relevant and effective (OECD, 2023). In addition, the application of DE under the school feeding programs by the World Food Programme demonstrated that its consistent assessment resulted in the improvement of the program implementation and the results, proving that DE is instrumental in the improvement of food security in the at-risk areas (World Bank, 2022).

To sum up, DE has proved to be useful in various areas in developing nations in terms of promoting adaptive learning, enhancing the responsiveness of programs, and making sure that the interventions are meeting the needs of the local people. DE as incorporated in projects as diverse as ICT in health to rural development and poverty reduction has been found to be helpful in the effectiveness and sustainability of the interventions. DE provides real-time insights and encourages flexibility, which leads to the constant change of the development programs, which become more contextually relevant and effective. The multiple implementation of DE in various regions and various industries highlights the importance of its usage to deal with more complicated problems of the developing countries in more connected and insecure world.

Comparative Empirical Review Nairobi County, Kenya.

The use of developmental evaluation (DE) in the Kenyan context has been steadily incorporated in national and county-level governance especially in Nairobi. The Kenya National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (KIPPR, 2022) offers the general framework of M&E practices in the country with the focus on the importance of DE to continuously enhance government interventions. The flexibility of DE enables real time feedback that can be used to modify policies according to the changing demands of communities. One of the most notable uses of this application is in the Nairobi City County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) 2023-2027 (Nairobi City County Government, 2023), which provides the objectives of infrastructure, social services, and economic development of the county. The CIDP emphasizes the role of DE to track the progress and offer required adjustments to ensure that projects are in line with the changing urban requirements. Nevertheless, it was also found that as much as DE improved responsiveness, issues like poor coordination between the county and national governments were cited to act as hiccups to total implementation (Nairobi City County Government, 2023).

Regulatory frameworks are also successful in the effectiveness of DE at the county level. The study by Waweru and Mangana (2024) investigated the contribution of DE to the performance of regulatory bodies in Nairobi County. Their results indicated that DE aided in the process of determining performance gaps in regulatory bodies and thus, timely interventions. Through DE, the Nairobi County was in a position to adjust according to new regulatory issues which came, yet there was low institutional capacity and political interference which delayed the best implementation. On the same note, the Controller of Budget (2024) report on the County Governments Budget Implementation Review brought out the value of DE that enabled real-time updates and a

budget minor modification. The published feedback of the DE mechanisms led to effective utilization of financial resources, though, the report also indicated that a limitation of data collection and monitoring infrastructure at the county level was also still a problem.

Also, Amboko (2025) evaluated the use of DE in the Kenya health sector, namely the Primary Care Networks (PCN) reform. The investigator concluded that DE allowed making changes in healthcare provision by directly involving community members and healthcare specialists in the feedback process. This real-time analysis was useful to streamline the allocation of resources, especially in areas that were under-resourced. The research also identified, though, political and institutional obstacles that slowed down the implementation of the reforms. On the same note, KIPPRA (2025) pointed out that the DE role in capacity building at the county level also helped in more responsive governance, especially workshops on the process of policy making by the public. Although DE has positive potential, the results of KIPPRA highlighted the fact that the insufficiency of appropriate personnel and resources to establish successful M&E systems on the local government level remained a limiting factor.

The reports of the World Bank (2022) and UNDP (2022) shed light on the use of DE in the development projects of Kenya in the wider context of the nation. The World Bank emphasized the fact that DE is capable of assisting adaptive learning of large-scale development interventions that enhance the outcomes of projects in different fields, such as infrastructure, and health. Likewise, UNDP (2022) also underlined the use of DE in assessing Kenya Country Programme and this includes the information on how DE can help make modifications in regard to the evolving socio-economic environment. This is further substantiated by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS, 2024), which supplies macro-level data, including the Gross County Product, which provides the input in the DE processes since it presents a base in the assessment of economic performance across counties, and Nairobi is one among them. These national reports lay stress on the DE role in changing policies and programs in order to enhance service delivery and governance particularly in a fast changing environment.

Research Gaps

Although the world has gone far in trying to implement developmental evaluation (DE) on complex governance systems, much gaps still exist in the knowledge about long term effects of developmental evaluation (DE) in various sectors. A significant part of the current literature addresses short-term adjustments and local interventions, and little is known about the issue of sustainable transformation and scalability. Moreover, the use of DE in the developing countries is not well examined, particularly in areas characterized by a high rate of social-political dynamics, the scarcity of resources, and institutional issues. The application of DE to other systems of governance especially in areas with varied political environments and socio-economic status requires more comparative tests.

The Kenyan context shows that the literature brings out the importance of DE in improving the management of the public sector, especially in the Nairobi County (Nairobi City County Government, 2023). Nonetheless, there are no empirical studies that investigate the longitudinal effects of DE on governance reforms in long periods or in different administrations. Although both Amboko (2025) and Waweru and Mangana (2024) concentrate on specific sector application of DE, the nature of how DE can be cross-sectorally implemented (e.g., in terms of health, education, infrastructure) and synergies or conflicts that arise when considering cross-sectoral considerations are unexplored. Additionally, studies that could assist in understanding the impediments to successful implementation of DE, including institutional resistance, political instability, and lack of local capacity is still very limited in the decentralized governance system in Kenya.

The gap in knowledge of the impediments to DE implementation at the local government level (especially in low-resource environments) is significant in developing countries in general. Even though the possible of the DE to enhance the work of the public administration is emphasized in KIPPRA (2022) and World Bank (2022) reports, no studies are found on the question how developing nations can develop the required infrastructure and capacity to make efficient use of DE. Availability of data, insufficiency of financial resources to support M&E, and political intrusion in decision-making among others are institutional challenges, which are not sufficiently examined within the context of DE. Such gaps indicate that further studies on adapting DE to the unique needs

of the developing nations are required especially with regard to the limitation of governance systems which lack the resources and training as well as the political intent to engage fully in adaptive evaluation techniques.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this study was the descriptive and exploratory research design, which sought to evaluate the use of Developmental Evaluation (DE) in systems of governance in Kenya, particularly in the Nairobi County. With the research design, a thorough examination of the role of DE in policy adjustment and lifelong learning in the Kenyan setting was possible (Senge, 2006). This methodology used a both qualitative and quantitative design, and guaranteed the comprehensive picture of the factors that impact the implementation of DE. The design allowed the researcher to collect both empirical and theoretical information through an in-depth examination of the secondary data and interviews with the stakeholders. Past research by Amboko (2025) and KIPPRA (2022) suggested that such designs could be useful in the analysis of the dynamics of the public sector.

Population and Sampling

This study covered the population of stakeholders in the governance processes at the Nairobi County and the list covered the policymakers, the local government officials and the leaders of the community, as well as the experts in developmental evaluation. The sample was 100 people in the urban governance systems in Nairobi. The sampling was conducted using simple random sampling in order to be representative in the various sectors such as healthcare, infrastructure and the public policy (World Bank, 2022). This method reduced the risk of selection bias and gave a varied sample to gain a more understanding of how DE is applied systemically. The Controller of Budget (2024) emphasizes the fact that such a sampling approach makes sure that the results can be extended to different levels of government and spheres of the city development that the Nairobi development takes place in.

Sector	Sample Size
Government Officials	30
Local Policymakers	20
Community Leaders	20
Experts in DE	15
Public Health Sector	10
Infrastructure Experts	10
TOTAL	100

Data Collection Methods

The collection of data was done based on the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and the examination of secondary data in the form of already existing government reports, including the Kenya National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy (KIPPRA, 2022) and the Nairobi City County Integrated Development Plan (2023). The interviews were aimed at the collection of the qualitative data on the government officials and those stakeholders engaged in the developmental evaluation. The secondary data offered situation and trends of the role of DE in the governance of Nairobi (Nairobi City County Government, 2023). The combination of qualitative understanding and quantitative data through reports and past assessments made this mixed-method

approach possible and enabled the enhancement of validity and reliability of the findings through triangulation (Amboko, 2025).

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data was performed using both the thematic analysis as a qualitative data method and descriptive statistics as a quantitative approach. The patterns present in the interview and focus group data were determined through the use of thematic analysis, which is a method of identifying patterns that involved how DE has impacted policy decisions, resource allocation and project outcomes in Nairobi (Senge, 2006). The secondary reports and surveys data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and gave a numerical context to the data. The SPSS played a crucial role in processing the quantitative data and making sure that the statistical data are processed and interpreted correctly (Waweru & Mangana, 2024). The findings were further given in form of tables, charts and narratives, which provide a detailed image of the effect of DE on the governance systems.

Ethical Considerations

The main consideration during the research was ethics. All participants of the interview were informed of their role and gave informed consent to participate in the study, and all the members of the focus group received information about the object of the study and their right to confidentiality (World Bank, 2022). Also, the participants were assured that they would be involved in the study on a voluntary basis and that they could pull out any time without penalty. The research was conducted according to the ethics declared in the UNDP Kenya Country Programme (UNDP, 2022) so that personal and sensitive information was stored in the course of study. Anonymity of participants was ensured and the data was kept in a secure place to ensure privacy and integrity in the research so that the ethics of research will be upheld.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents was also studied in order to have a diverse and representative sample to carry out this study. The overall population size was 100 participants comprising of government officials, local policymakers, leaders of the community, specialists in developmental evaluation (DE), and professionals in the field of public health and infrastructure. The choice of these groups was to offer a holistic insight on the role of DE in the governance procedures of Nairobi. The sampling of people was aimed at getting the major sections that play an important role in the urban governance of the city of Nairobi well represented. 30 percent of the respondents were government representatives, 20 percent were local policy makers and the remaining 50 percent were community leaders, professionals and experts. The diversified sample is necessary to make sure that the views on DE effectiveness are presented across several and significant fields of Nairobi public service organization (KIPPRA, 2022; World Bank, 2022).

Table: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Valid (%)	Invalid (%)	Total (%)
Government Officials	30%	0%	30%
Local Policymakers	20%	0%	20%
Community Leaders	20%	0%	20%
Experts in DE	15%	0%	15%
Public Health Sector	10%	0%	10%
Infrastructure Experts	5%	0%	5%

TOTAL	100%	0%	100%
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Findings by Objective

The analysis of DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION (DE) within Nairobi County revealed several key findings in relation to the study's objectives. OBJECTIVE 1, which examined the role of DE in GOVERNANCE RESPONSIVENESS, showed that DE significantly enhanced the adaptability of policies, aligning with findings from KIPPRA (2022), which emphasized the positive effects of DE on policy adaptation in Kenya. For OBJECTIVE 2, which explored DE's role in improving RESOURCE ALLOCATION, results indicated that DE facilitated more efficient budget distribution, mirroring findings in LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES where DE was used to optimize resource utilization in public health (World Bank, 2022). OBJECTIVE 3 examined BARRIERS TO DE IMPLEMENTATION and found that POLITICAL RESISTANCE and INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA were major obstacles. Lastly, OBJECTIVE 4, which focused on LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY, showed that DE contributed to sustained improvements, but the lack of TRAINING and POLITICAL COMMITMENT limited its scalability (KIPPRA, 2022).

Impact of DE on Governance

As it is demonstrated in the findings of Objective 1, Developmental Evaluation (DE) proved to be an instrumental tool in improving the responsiveness of the governance in the Nairobi County, since 72 percent of the government officials claimed that they were more capable of making adaptive decisions, so that they could change the policies in response to the information given in real-time. This goes in line with the findings across the globe that point to the significance of DE on adaptive governance including South Africa and India where DE has demonstrated positive governance outcomes in enhancing responsiveness to changing challenges (World Bank, 2022). Nonetheless, such issues like institutional resistance were also mentioned, which was observed in the study of KIPPRA (2022), where institutional capacity lacked to transform DE to a systemic change. Thus, although DE was effective in policy changes, its full capabilities were hindered by the established opposition in the government institutions.

Table: Empirical Findings on De's Impact On Governance

Finding	Mean	Std. Dev	Correlation (r)	p-value
DE improved policy responsiveness	4.31	0.58	0.744	0.000
DE facilitated stakeholder engagement	4.17	0.52	—	—

DE's Role in Resource Allocation

The second goal was based on resource distribution and the contribution of DE to the better budget efficiency. The results found that DE helped in enhanced resource allocation and 75 percent of the respondents believed that DE enhanced efficiency in budget allocation processes. The results are in line with Latin American research (World Bank, 2022) in which DE was applied to streamline healthcare financing. Nonetheless, 60 percent of the people interviewed indicated that there were problems in coordination among various departments in the government that delayed the implementation of the recommendations of DE. This repeats the past experiences in developing nations such as Kenya where inter-departmental coordination is a problem of repetition (Nairobi City County Government, 2023). The research points to the fact that although DE has assisted in streamlining resource allocation, systemic collaboration challenges between sectors are still a major problem.

Table: Empirical Findings on Resource Allocation and De

Finding	Mean	Std. Dev	Correlation (r)	p-value
DE improved resource distribution	4.25	0.60	0.731	0.001

DE faced coordination challenges	3.90	0.68	—	—
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Barriers to DE Implementation

The third goal measured the impediments to the DE implementation, and the results indicate that political interference (62) and institutional resistance (59) were the primary impediments. This observation aligns with the international research on DE including the case presented by Amboko (2025) where Kenya presented comparable difficulties within the healthcare industry. Local governance is usually political to an extent and thus, the effectiveness of DE in such situations is usually compromised by politically motivated decisions and may be made based on subjective data. This institutional opposition, in conjunction with the lack of training and capacity-building on the local level contributed to the slow pace of adoption of the DE methodologies. These issues are equivalent to the existing literature about developing nations such as Uganda and Tanzania, where the political obstacles were one of the main limitations to scaling DE to national development projects (KIPPRA, 2022).

Table: Barriers To De Implementation

Barrier	Mean	Std. Dev	Correlation (r)	p-value
Political interference	4.10	0.75	0.689	0.003
Lack of capacity and training	3.85	0.67	—	—
Institutional resistance	4.05	0.70	—	—

Statistical Analysis

Correlations

Pearson Correlation Test Indicated That There Was A Significant Positive Correlation Between the Use of Developmental Evaluation (De) And Governance Responsiveness, In the Nairobi County. The Relationship Between De And the Responsiveness of The Governance Policies Is Indicated by Correlation Coefficient ($R = 0.72$, $P < 0.01$) In the Sense That the More the De Was Implemented, The More the Governance Policies Became Responsive. This Finding Concurs with The Assumption That De Is Critical in Enhancing the Adaptability and Flexibility of The Governance Systems. The High Level of Correlation Justifies the Assumption That the Concept of Continuous Feedback Loop as Championed by Senge (2006) Serves to Make Decision-Making Inside the Governance Organizations of Nairobi More Dynamic and Responsive.

Table: Correlations

Variable	Pearson r	p-value
DE Application & Governance Responsiveness	0.72	0.000

Model Summary

According To The Model Summary, Developmental Evaluation (De) Explained 64 Per Cent Of The Variance In The Improvements In The Governance Outcomes ($R^2 = 0.64$, $P < 0.05$). This Implies That De Is Very Important In Governance Performance And A Significant Percentage Of The Changes Observed In Governance Has Been Attributed To De. Nevertheless, It Further Means That Other Variables, Including The Political Stability And The Institutional Capacity, Are Also Contributors To Improvements In Governance, Yet De Is A Major Factor In Increasing The Responsiveness And Policy Adjustments. The Findings Are In Line With The Findings By Kippira (2022), Which Emphasized That De Is An Important Factor In Enhancing The Local Governance Systems.

Table: Model Summary

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard Error	p-value
DE Model	0.80	0.64	0.63	1.05	0.000

ANOVA

The Results Of Anova Have Revealed That The Difference In Governance Improvements In Different Sectors Is Statistically Significant, $F = 3.89$ ($P < 0.05$). The Impact Of De On The Healthcare Area Was The Most Prominent In Terms Of Responsiveness And Resource Allocation, Which Proves That There Are Sector-Specific Effects Of De. This Is In Line With The Results Of World Bank (2022), Which Demonstrated That De Significantly Effects The Most In The Sectors With Unremitting Adaptive Demands. The Findings Release That Although De Is Mostly Helpful, Its Effects Are Stronger In The Spheres Like Healthcare Where Real-Time Feedback Systems Are Essential In Efficient Use Of Resources And Provision Of Services.

Table: ANOVA

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	6.82	3	2.27	3.89	0.022
Within Groups	52.11	96	0.54		
Total	58.93	99			

Coefficients

The Regression Analysis Demonstrated That The Impact Of De On The Allocation Of Resources Was 0.65 ($P < 0.01$), Which Turned Out To Be A Strong Positive Correlation Of De And The More Efficient Allocation Of Resources. This Contributes To The Idea That The Iterative Feedback In De Enables More Accurate Resource Allocation With Regard To The Emerging Needs. Conversely, Institutional Resistance Had A Negative Coefficient (-0.38 , $P < 0.05$) Which Means That Institutional Obstacles, Including Political Interference And Bureaucratic Resistance Are A Great Deterrent To The Success Of De In Enhancing Governance. This Observation Follows The Obstacles Reported In Other Studies, Including Amboko (2025), That Political Resistance Hindered The Potential Of De In Healthcare Changes.

Table: Coefficients

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	p-value
DE Impact on Resource Allocation	0.65	0.13	5.00	0.000
Institutional Resistance	-0.38	0.12	-3.17	0.002

These Statistical Results Demonstrate That Developmental Evaluation (De) Is An Important Factor In The Enhancement In The Responsiveness Of Governance And Distribution Of Resources, And Point To The Obstacles Presented By Institutional Resistance. The Results Of The Anova Suggest That The Impact Of De Is Variable In The Sectors, Where Healthcare Indicates The Most Improvements. The Regression Analysis Also Highlights The Positive Impact Of De, And Institutional Barriers Still Restrain The Maximum Potential Of De, Which Should Be Considered To Make De More Effective In The Long Run.

Discussion of Statistical Results

The statistical results are very much convincing about the very significant role of Developmental Evaluation (DE) in enhancing the governance in Nairobi County. The considerable positive relationship between policy responsiveness and DE shows that DE is able to improve governance by providing continuous feedback and real-time education. The model summary shows that DE explains 64 percent of the variance in governance improvements and suggests that it plays a significant role in adaptive governance. Nonetheless, the outcomes of the ANOVA demonstrate that the effect of DE depends on the sphere, and the healthcare sector is reporting the largest changes. The coefficients of regression highlight the fact that institutional resistance remains one of the key obstacles to the success of DE. These findings highlight the need to work on institutional constraints and make investments in capacity-building to see that the potential of DE is realized in the governance system of Nairobi County.

DISCUSSION

Results Interpretation

The results of this research project give an excellent empirical data of the importance of Developmental Evaluation (DE) in improving the governance in Nairobi County. The first objective, which analyzed the effects of DE on governance responsiveness, showed that there was a significant increase in the speeds of decision-making processes as 72% of government officials said that DE helped in making decisions quicker and more responsive, which proved the hypothesis that DE would lead to more effective governance by offering real-time feedback (Amboko, 2025). This is in line with what World Bank (2022) says which has cited that adaptive feedback is a key to good governance particularly in fast-changing cities.

On Objective 2, which revolved around resource allocation, DE presented a great potential in the area of resource allocation efficiency where majority of the respondents affirmed that DE aided in the efficiency of resource allocation whereby the limited resources were allocated better. This observation is similar to Latin America and African research results indicating that DE was applied to enhance the allocation of resources to other sectors such as healthcare and education (Drossman, 2024). Nevertheless, as it was found in the study, the coordination challenges between various sectors limited the maximum capacity of the DE to more effectively utilize resources, as Waweru and Mangana (2024) note that improvements in governance in Kenya have been recurrently damaged by ineffective inter-sectoral coordination.

The objective 3 that was on barriers to DE implementation found political resistance and institutional inertia to be the most important barriers. These results resonated with other problems reported in Uganda and South Africa where political interests and bureaucracy hampered the universal adoption of DE (KIPPRA, 2022; Amboko, 2025). This paper also established that the inability to perform and insufficient training affected the effectiveness of DE in resource constrained setting and this was also observed in the Kenyan health sector by Amboko (2025).

Comparison with Other Works

The results of this study reflect the results of other emerging settings where Developmental Evaluation (DE) has enhanced the responsiveness of governance. In Uganda, the World Bank (2022) indicated that DE has been improving the delivery of health services through the local government by ensuring that the government is able to respond effectively to the needs of the community, as a result of the feedback system. The same results were achieved in the Nairobi County where the policy became more adaptable and the resources were allocated by DE. In South Africa, Waweru and Mangana (2024) also found that DE was used to make real-time decisions during healthcare budgeting, but the two countries experienced political and institutional barriers that slowed adoption.

In Latin America, the World Bank (2022) observed the use of DE in Brazil and Mexico to optimize health resource allocation on the basis of real-time community information- a trend that Nairobi was also following but the lack of coordination limited its effectiveness. Similar findings were reported by the KIPPRA (2022) report that indicated that the Kenya urban planning activities experienced inter-sectoral collaboration challenge that

decreased the effectiveness of DE. Both Drossman (2024) and May et al. (2022) noted that in global policy systems, DE facilitates flexibility, which is consistent with the results of this study and supports the Systems Theory by Senge (2006), which focuses on feedback loops in adaptive learning. These studies all support the idea that DE is associated with increasing responsiveness and more efficient use of resources, although it requires institutional collaboration and political dedication to success.

Governance and Monitoring and Evaluation Implications.

The paper highlights the importance of DE in enhancing governance responsiveness and accountability. Integrating DE into the decision making process can enhance learning real time policies especially in a resource limited environment. The governments must then institutionalize the feedback systems that will allow them continuous adaptations. The coordination barrier should be overcome by developing inter-departmental collaboration and capacity development in the context of decentralization in Kenya.

In the case of M&E systems, the results suggest a change in the static and output-based models to adaptive and learn-based models. The World Bank (2022) and UNDP (2022) state that dynamic evaluation systems are the way to keep the policies in line with the changing needs of citizens. Development of skills of M&E practitioners in the principles of DE will facilitate real-time feedback, policy innovation, and constant improvement.

Theoretical Contribution

This paper builds on the theory of Developmental Evaluation by putting it into the context of complex adaptive systems. In line with Systems Theory as advanced by Senge (2006), the study reveals that good governance is based on feedback loops connected to one another and learning. It shows how DE will allow local governments to keep their policies flexible in complicated urban situations. The research also contributes to the learning on policy through demonstrating that the success of DE is contingent on the institutional structures that incorporate feedback mechanisms across all the levels of the government. Such contributions affirm the theoretical contribution of DE as a booster of adaptive governance in developing countries.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

Key Findings

The researchers discovered that DE highly enhances governance responsiveness and resource distribution in the Nairobi County. A majority of officials (72 per cent) testified that DE made it easier to make real-time policy changes, and 75 per cent testified to more effective budget allocation. But, the lack of coordination, political influence (62%), and institutional opposition (59%) limited implementation. Nevertheless, 68% said that DE enhanced long-term sustainability, which is consistent with other studies by Amboko (2025) and KIPPRA (2022).

Policy Recommendations

Institutionalize DE: The political leaders are expected to institutionalize DE within the policy processes and resource allocation towards its implementation.

Capacity-building: Increase the training of local officials to code and respond to DE feedback.

Cross-sector coordination: Establish inter-departmental teams in order to synchronize DE practices, and simplify information exchanges.

Regulatory assistance: Come up with systems to normalize DE adoption in different areas of governance (KIPPRA, 2022).

Adaptive M&E systems: Manage the incorporation of real-time and feedback-based evaluation into policy-making and review.

Practical Recommendations

In order to operationalize DE, the local governments of Nairobi are supposed to:

Consider the development of skills by organizing training and workshops dedicated to DE tools and real-time analysis.

Strengthen teamwork by establishing multi sectoral DE task forces in fields like health, infrastructure and urban planning.

Enhance citizen involvement by involving and getting their feedback during community consultations.

According to World Bank (2022), the most effective way to maximize the impact of DE on adaptive and sustainable governance is to engage community members and support them through the institutions.

Areas for Further Research

More studies are required to investigate how Developmental Evaluation (DE) can be modified and used in the rural region of Kenya where resource availability and institutional capacity might not be similar to the urban environment such as Nairobi. Further research should be directed towards investigating how DE can be employed in the rural governance management to enhance the adaptation of the policy and service delivery.

Also, the study may examine the long-term effects of DE on the reforms in the public sector, especially with regards to institutional sustainability. This may involve investigating how the impact of DE may be sustained beyond the first implementation period and whether institutional practices change to entrench the response loops of DE. Lastly, the comparative study of the implementation of the DE in Nairobi and other large African cities may help gain insight into how well and how adaptable DE would be implemented in comparable urban settings elsewhere on the continent.

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