
Chapter 6

From Evaluation Capacity Building to Evaluation Capacity Development - A Paradigm Shift

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Abstract. *In acknowledging the current limitations of contemporary evaluation capacity-building practice, and in an effort to promote an innovative and equity-focused contribution to the current discourse on evaluation capacity, this chapter suggests a new framework for conceptualizing, planning, implementing, and assessing the results of capacity development (as opposed to capacity building) in evaluation more effectively in the future. The first part of the chapter proposes a new definition of capacity in evaluation, and encourages readers to embrace and adopt the more encompassing term of “evaluation capacity development” as opposed to that “evaluation capacity building.” The second part offers funders and planners an overview of those contextual and process-related factors that need to be taken into account in order to enhance the effectiveness of capacity development activities and programs. The third part highlights the specific and innovative contribution of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) to the ongoing discourse on evaluation capacity.*

Often associated with the delivery of short-term training and technical assistance funded by international agencies, evaluation capacity building (ECB) has fallen short of its intended objectives in many different development and humanitarian contexts (Tarsilla 2014a). Despite the copious resources allocated by international development organizations to enhance the capacity of low- and middle-income countries to evaluate the performance and impact of their development programs and policies, most ECB activities on the ground have failed on multiple fronts. They have not been able to target a sufficiently large critical mass of individuals and organizations that could truly foster systemic change in the uptake and use of evaluation. The agencies that fund evaluation capacity-building programs in the Global South have not coordinated with each other as closely and systematically as they should have and, in so doing, have undermined their own ability to foster a more efficient and strategic use of resources. Finally, time and energy have been focused on the measurement of short-term effects, while the quest for long-term results has largely remained elusive.

Well aware of such weaknesses, and in response to the need expressed by many actors for the roll-out of more innovative ECB strategies, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) is promoting a paradigm shift in contemporary thinking and practice in the area of evaluation capacity development (ECD) (Tarsilla 2012). In particular, it is calling for a shift from the current focus on short-term training activities to the adoption of ECD strategies that are more contextually relevant and are better geared toward equitable, systemic and sustainable learning in evaluation.

EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING: KEY ISSUES AND LIMITATIONS

It is well understood that having individual practitioners and organizations' staff participate in two- or three-day workshops on evaluation theories and methods cannot foster dramatic change either in the quality of evaluation practice or the use of evaluation products. However, despite this, most ECB interventions, supported by both national and international funders in many different countries over the last two decades, have consisted mainly in the implementation of a finite number of activities. Such reification of capacity building, illustrated by the tendency to equate capacity building with training, as well as the tendency to implement evaluation workshops in a vacuum—that is, without accurate knowledge of how power and resources are distributed and contested at the local level—is indeed one of ECB's main weaknesses. This phenomenon, which has had egregious effects on the way international and national funders have planned and budgeted for in this area of development in the past, has been so prevalent that the meaning of ECB has been watered down, and its potential significantly compromised.

A second limitation in the way ECB has been conducted in the past is the dismissal of organizational processes in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of capacity-building efforts. While too much focus has been given to advancing the technical skills of individuals and organization staff, ECB planners and workshop facilitators have often failed to assess and act

upon the environment in which their target groups are operating. In particular, ECB planners and implementers have not systematically addressed the following as part of their capacity needs assessment:

- Environmental factors that influence the use of evaluation (e.g., the type of political system in place at the national and subnational levels; existing governance and accountability norms; and the degree of openness to accept failure/s and learn from them)
- Institutional or organizational processes that either benefit or hinder the evaluation function (e.g., lines of reporting and communication across different levels of a governmental agency, or data quality assurance regulations within the national statistics office)
- The quantity and quality of incentives available to conduct and use evaluation (e.g., the systematic publication of evaluation reports on a public portal, and/or the practice of organizations' executives to develop a management response in reaction to the recommendations included in an evaluation report)

Given inadequate understanding of ECD ecology, most funders and planners have failed to get many of the relevant actors from either the public or private sectors involved, either as partners or beneficiaries, in their past ECD efforts.¹ Evaluation training programs, for instance, are generally aimed at a limited number of evaluation technical officers from one or more organizations without the strategic involvement of their supervisors and directors. Furthermore, numerous ECB interventions provide participants with evaluation toolkits and checklists but they often dismiss the environmental factors that influence the adoption and use of such knowledge product—what I have defined as the “political economy” of ECD.

A third limitation has been the more or less inadvertent perpetuation of the old development paradigm, according to which donors' needs and interests prevail over anybody else's. For more than a decade, ECB activities have been geared toward increasing the level of knowledge, skills, and attitudes of project staff in the field with the primary de facto objective to enhance regular results reporting to funders (e.g., on a quarterly basis). What has been particularly fallacious is the assumption that retrofitting existing practices within established boundaries identified by donors would enable empowerment and social change. Unfortunately, this donor-centric strategy, which I tend to classify as “functional evaluation capacity building,” or F-ECB, not ECD, has gradually become the norm (Tarsilla 2014a). In one case, four small cultural organizations that I worked with in the Democratic Republic of Congo had strategic objectives that, as spelled out in the plans and logical frameworks formulated for them by an international funder, were out of sync not only with their organizations' own vision, but also with their country's

¹ Public sector actors would include, among others, staff in ministries and members of parliaments. Private sector actors would include, among others, training institutes and consulting firms.

national cultural policies. It was very disheartening to discover that—according to the contract signed with the funder—I needed to enhance the capacity of these four organizations to measure the attainment of their objectives, which had been imposed from the outside, by using a number of indicators that the organizations in question did not really understand, or assign any credit to. In particular, it was very difficult to talk to them about logic models, theory of change, and rigorous evaluation designs, especially given the fact that the impact indicators showing at the top of the logical framework template—which had been distributed by the funder—rested on the assumption that grantees would be in a position to effectively measure the extent to which some of their activities, which were targeting less than 20 participants per year, had contributed to improved attainment of two of the Millennium Development Goals in the whole country. Unfortunately, this example shows once again that ECB programs often provide participants with the knowledge and tools that facilitate timely reporting to funding agencies, but rarely foster true organizational learning and increased results-oriented agency.

HOW TO OVERCOME EXISTING LIMITATIONS WITH THE NEW DEFINITION OF CAPACITY IN EVALUATION: FROM EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING (ECB) TO EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (ECD)

ECB in International Development: Key Assumptions and Real-World Considerations

The evaluation policies and strategic evaluation plans currently in use among several development agencies around the world are predicated on the assumption that international development evaluation serves two primary functions (GIZ 2013; Norad 2006; Sida 2007; UNESCO 2015; USAID 2011). The first is to enhance the accountability of those who manage and implement international development projects, especially vis-à-vis their respective funders and expected beneficiaries (Wiesner 1997). The second is to foster learning among those who commission, manage, conduct, and use evaluation, on what works well and what needs to be improved in international development projects and programs (Argyris and Schön 1996; Bamberger 2009; Pasteur 2006; Rist, Boily, and Martin 2011; Solomon and Chowdhury 2002). Based on such assumptions, any activity aimed at strengthening the evaluation function—locally, nationally, or globally—should, therefore, be able to contribute to strengthening both the performance and the effectiveness of international development projects in a variety of countries. However, this is easier said than done.

Typically, funders and international development agencies attempt to strengthen the evaluation function by developing the technical skills of local development practitioners. However, such strategies do not always translate into stronger development effectiveness. One reason for this is the lack of a genuine evaluative culture—that is, the systematic conduct of evaluation, and the use of findings for decision making—which often results from the limited ability of ECB to foster ownership and inclusiveness of evaluation processes.

The scenario, however, is not as bleak as it would first appear. There are several examples of countries that have put monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems into place that are both prospering and serving accountability and learning purposes. Chile, Colombia, Malaysia, Mexico, South Africa, and Sri Lanka provide good illustrations of how the creation of a supportive environment to enhance the evaluation functions at both the organizational level (Stevenson et al. 2002; Wijayatilake 2011) and the institutional level can foster the development of a strong national evaluative culture (Boyle, Lemaire, and Rist 1999; Mayne 2008; Trochim 2006). One feature that all of these countries have in common is the buy-in of different stakeholder groups both within and outside the national government into the discourse on evaluation, and their subsequent involvement in all of the related processes. Such success stories, though, have not been capitalized on in the international development arena as frequently as they should, or could, have been. The result is that the pursuit of non-inclusive targeting strategies has hindered the success of ECD interventions in many countries around the world. The simultaneous involvement of actors operating both within and outside of national governments as part of an ECB intervention has been very rare: this is also a result of the rigidity featured by the mission and the scope of work among the majority of funding agencies. On the one hand, for over a decade bilateral donors and philanthropic foundations have been able to fund a plethora of initiatives and programs specifically aimed at strengthening the knowledge and skills of stakeholders supplying evaluation services (e.g., representatives from academia, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations) (OECD 2006). On the other hand, multilateral agencies, such as the United Nations and the World Bank, have allocated the largest share of ECB resources to national governments; that is, the agents that for the most part demand evaluation services.

ECB or ECD: Does the Terminology Really Matter?

Far from becoming rhetoric in a purely academic exercise, an exploration of the language used to describe ECB would be particularly useful to enhance future programming in this area. In particular, reviewing the central attributes, modalities of implementation, and evaluative variables of ECB would be beneficial. The same is true for another popular term used in the international development arena: evaluation capacity development. An in-depth review of ECD appears even more relevant than that of ECB, given that capacity development—in evaluation as well as in a variety of other fields—is not the only “missing link in development” (World Bank 2005, 24). Even more importantly, it is part of the overall goal of development cooperation (Fukuyama 2004).

A certain confusion or lack of consensus exists over the meaning of both terms, and has been attested to by a stream of peer-reviewed literature produced by evaluation scholars. Among the most recent contributions on this topic, Bohni and Attström's (2011) appears particularly relevant. According to these Danish authors, more serious reflection and debate on the distinction between ECD and ECB is needed, as it would allow the addressing of four main issues affecting the practice of evaluation in a number of

countries: the widespread conceptual pluralism in the area of ECB and ECD; the increased number of discordant opinions regarding the purposes of ECB; the lack of a comprehensive empirical base for most ECB and ECD models; and the relatively greater focus on the approaches implemented in tackling ECB rather than ECD.

When referring to capacity building, Morgan, one of the most prolific authors on capacity, has defined it as:

...a risky, murky, messy business, with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, contested objectives, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long time lags. (Morgan 1998, 6).

Likewise, in defining capacity development, Lusthaus, one of the most well-respected Canadian experts in institutional evaluation and change, has described it as follows:

...a concept still in its infancy. Its definition is still forming. Research describing how people use the concept is sparse. So is research, which tests its assumptions and predicts its consequences. There are few evaluations of projects that are claiming to use approaches to capacity development. (Lusthaus et al. 2002, 34)

The discourse on capacity development (including over its definitions) has continued over the years. However, it has traditionally been dominated by the voices of northern scholars. Only recently have researchers and academic institutions in the Global South become engaged in this area of work. Among some of the most recognized actors who have contributed to advancing capacity development-related definitions are the following:

- The African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development, which in 2010 introduced an African Capacity Development Strategic Framework (AU and NEPAD 2012)
- The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF 2016)
- The Capacity Development for Development Effectiveness (CDDE) forum in Asia²
- The Task Team on South-South Co-operation (TT-SSC) in Latin America³

The Main Attributes of ECD

Rather than being a purely semantic issue, the distinction between ECB and ECD appears all the more relevant due to the unique political and ideological connotations ascribed to each of the two terms. As confirmed by the

² http://www.southsouthcases.info/casosasia/caso_14.php.

³ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/46080462.pdf>.

increasing use of the term “evaluation capacity development” in some of the evaluation offices of international organizations, such as the World Bank and GIZ, ECD is characterized more *consistently* and *intentionally* by a stronger emphasis on inclusiveness, flexibility, development result focus, and context responsiveness to an already existing evaluation capacity. An Institute of International Development Studies report commissioned by UNESCO draws an important distinction between capacity building and capacity development that appears particularly useful for the discussion in this chapter (Ortiz and Taylor 2009). When applied to the evaluation context, the report seems to corroborate and amplify the differences between ECB and ECD. As discussed in one of the report’s most salient passages, capacity building and capacity development are not described as simply different terms, but rather as two opposite development paradigms:

Much of the capacity development literature stresses the fact that development is already happening before the arrival of any project, donor, program or initiative, and not to recognize this as an irresponsible error and ultimately a precursor to an ineffective use of resources. Too many donors and executing agencies are determined that their projects be executed in any event, yet when those projects are severely out of tune with the development processes already in motion, they are likely to fail. They fail because:

- a) Capacity development programming that does not recognize development in motion is quite literally a foreign object; that is, it pushes ideas that aren’t likely to take hold because they are out of step with local realities;
- b) They do not build on momentum; that is, positive development initiatives and processes already in motion;
- c) The motivation needed to take forward a strategy that does not fit will in turn require a push strategy to convince people to carry it out. Even when the appropriate incentives are in place, true motivation will be dubious because participation will likely be led by the possibility of short-term gain. The fundamentals required for sustainability will be lacking and therefore the project activities and desired behavior changes are unlikely to develop deep roots” (Ortiz and Taylor 2009, 26)

Based on such foundational work, and following global research on the understanding of ECB and ECD among evaluation planners, managers, and practitioners in many different countries, the need for a new definition of ECB and ECD becomes apparent (Tarsilla 2012). However, rather than seeing the two terms as opposite, the two definitions that I came to develop after my exchanges with more than 150 practitioners in over 40 countries situate themselves along an ECB-ECD continuum, where ECB generally accounts for one of the preliminary phases of a broader and long-term ECD strategy.

Evaluation Capacity Building: A New Definition

The new definition of ECB, which was developed toward the end of a long series of consultations with practitioners around the world, reads as follows:

A necessary (but not sufficient) condition for ECD to take place. ECB mainly consists of a vast array of trainings and coaching activities (some of which are short-term in nature) aimed at building capacity, especially where capacity is either very low or thought not to be in place yet, among a discrete number of individuals working either for or within organizations and/or institutions that develop, commission, manage, conduct and/or use evaluation. Although it is an integral component of most national and international development projects today, ECB has often been viewed (especially outside of the United States) as a relatively limited accountability-driven tactic rather than a full-fledged strategy aimed at attaining organizational learning as well as other developmental objectives. As a result, ECB scope and modalities of delivery have often been considered too narrow. (Tarsilla 2012)

Evaluation Capacity Development: A New Definition

ECD, on the other hand, is defined as:

A process consisting in both the integrated enhancement and maintenance over time of: (a) Individuals' knowledge, skills and attitudes; (b) Organizations' capabilities; and (c) Institutions' readiness; toward contextually relevant planning, management, implementation, and use of evaluation at any level-global, regional, national or sub-national. More specifically, ECD is aimed at both individual and collective transformational learning in the pursuit of three primary goals: strengthening the technical quality and ownership of national evaluation processes; enhancing the local authenticity and cultural appropriateness of evaluation approaches, methods and tools used in-country; and increasing the use of evaluation findings as a way to improve development interventions in a variety of sectors. (Tarsilla 2012)

In order for ECD to be successful, it is critical that ECD strategies be implemented either in a simultaneous, or an intentionally sequenced fashion. ECD-savvy strategies (such as the ones adopted by IDEAS) are specifically aimed at promoting the conditions that support ECD among a variety of actors operating in two different spheres (both within and outside of national government), and characterized by different functions (operational, and policy or decision making) and roles (both consumers and providers of evaluation). ECD strategies consist of a combination of short, medium, and long-term activities (including training, mentoring, coaching, peer exchange, and the creation of evaluation units). Otherwise, ECD appears to be a systemic and adaptive process rather than the combination of stand-alone activities aimed at enhancing capacity at the individual, organizational, or institutional levels. As stressed by the new definition provided above, ECD emerges as an endogenous process that builds upon existing levels of knowledge, skills, and attitudes (individual), capabilities (organizational), and readiness (institutional) either simultaneously or sequentially, and in a variety of contexts (global, regional, national, and subnational), as opposed to building from scratch.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND PROCESS-RELATED FACTORS INFLUENCING THE OUTCOMES OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (ECD) ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

ECD: Gaps in Targeting and Possible Solutions

Activities aimed at strengthening technical capacity within national ministries and central planning agencies (Compton, Baizerman, and Stockdill 2002) have enhanced the knowledge of evaluation within the governmental sphere, but have not necessarily contributed to the development of skills needed to either formulate key evaluation questions or use evaluation findings (Bamberger 2009; OECD 2006). Furthermore, activities aimed at enhancing national evaluation capacity have rarely been customized to the specific functions (operational or strategic) and roles (commissioners, implementers, policy makers) of individual officers operating within the government, and have instead favored the implementation of the same standardized approach at several levels within the government, as if it were a monolithic block. Addressing the limitations of current ECB targeting is all the more relevant, as the currently biased allocation of funding between governmental and non-governmental actors has three primary consequences.

First, it has hindered the mainstreaming of evaluation at a more systemic level, as predicated by a number of studies, including a recent work funded by the U.K. Department for International Development (Gaventa and Barrett 2010). Change happens through multiple types of citizen engagement: not only through formal governance processes, even participatory ones, but also through associations and social movements that are not created by the state. Strengthening these broader processes of social change and their interactions can, in turn, create opportunities for state reformers to respond to demands, build external alliances, and contribute to state responsiveness (Gaventa and Barrett 2010).

Second, the identification of individual evaluation champions within host governments that are characterized by high employee turnover has not always contributed to either the uptake of an evaluation culture or the sustainable promotion of the use of evaluation findings in other sectors (Lennie 2005). There are certainly some good examples of the contributions of national evaluation champions. However, the tendency among politicians to cater to their constituencies' needs and interests regardless of what the available evidence suggests confronts ECD planners and implementers with a real hurdle to overcome.

Third, the greater focus on the demand for evaluation, which some authors critically refer to as "elite domination" (Fung 2003, 340), has ignored the potential contribution of evaluation "suppliers" (e.g., national evaluators), and has not sufficiently leveraged their wealth of knowledge and practical experience during the undertaking of evaluations. That notwithstanding, ECD targeting is already gradually evolving, as attested to by the support provided by such initiatives as EvalPartners and the strengthening of voluntary organizations of professionals in evaluation (VOPEs) over the last five years.

ECD Processes: What's New Compared to Past ECB Practices?

As per the new definition of ECD, the focus of ECD is not on either activities or products (e.g., a training on mixed methods, or the timely submission of a midterm review to the project funder), but rather on processes, interactions, incentives, leadership, organizational learning, and organizational development. Furthermore, ECD is characterized as a particularly inclusive process that is able to respond to the continually emerging needs and interests not simply of individuals, organizations, or institutions; but rather of individuals situated within organizations, and institutions interacting with each other, both in the governmental and nongovernmental spheres. Likewise, rather than resting upon linear and mechanistic planning, ECD is understood and defined as a process grounded in both a realistic understanding of the world's complexity, and the need to adopt more flexible and iterative planning processes. However, my analysis of contemporary ECB practice shows that the latter has focused on developing individual technical skills—how to write evaluation terms of reference, or how to develop sampling strategies—rather than on developing organization-level capabilities and institutional readiness, based on relatively linear and results-based planning processes (Tarsilla 2012). Moreover, in contrast to the descriptions of capacity development as an incessant endogenous process in the peer-reviewed literature, the way the term ECB has been understood suggests that it rests on the main assumption that in-country capacity is static (you either have it or you don't), and that targeted interventions, often funded from external development partners, are the most effective. As a result, ECB does seem to fail to recognize the inherent institutional processes and social dynamics of the settings where its activities are being implemented.

Other Contextual Factors Influencing the Outcomes of ECD Activities and Programs

If one takes the organization as the main unit of analysis of any reflection on ECD,⁴ then it is relevant to consider those unique distinct organizational features (its structures and processes) that are likely to affect the outcomes of an ECD program. The adequate consideration of organizational infrastructures and underlying dynamics is, therefore, critical to the success of any ECD strategy. For each of the relevant factors identified in the left column of table 6.1, a series of ECD strategies are recommended in the right column.

Based on a review of the organizational factors listed in the table, a key conclusion is that, despite the size of one's own organization, the planning of any ECD program cannot overlook the context in which that organization operates. As harmonization, relevance, and ownership are some of the principles that any sound ECD program should feature, it could be useful to link organizations targeted by ECB efforts with each other as if they were

⁴ Most individual evaluation practitioners work either within or for one or more organizations.

partners and not simply grantees sharing the same donor, so as to allow an alignment of their internal M&E systems.

It is important to note that what is being advocated here is not the development of a cookie-cutter approach, whereby individual organizations share exactly the same set of indicators or evaluation strategies: after all, creativity and flexibility to adjust to emerging changes are two typical features of successful ECD programs. By promoting ECD alignment, what is being suggested instead is to encourage organizations to find common and cost-effective solutions to their information needs and operational questions. During the planning of an ECD program, for instance, each organization with a vested interest in ECD could look at what tools similar organizations have used to measure a certain construct that they are interested in measuring and—for the sake of avoiding replication and the wasting of resources—might adopt those very same existing tools. Besides freeing up resources for the development of other tools, or the set-up of an information management system within one's own organization, for example, ECD alignment would foster the use of identical indicators and, as a result of increased data aggregation, the availability of data that could then inform ECD-related decision and policy making. This is even more relevant if such alignment not only takes place locally, but also at the provincial, district, regional, and national levels.

Likewise, it is important that ECD strategies acknowledge more effectively what the real interests and needs of any organization are, independently of the donors' interests and needs. With that in mind, the following key recommendations should be taken into account during the development of a new ECD strategy:

- Although it is tempting to introduce radical changes within the realm of organizational practices when ECD programs are being implemented, it is critical that donors and contractors implementing ECD strategies on the ground recognize the speed of local organizations to “digest” new evaluation methods and tools.
- Development organizations should understand that assigning a prominent role to funders' evaluation requirements and needs, and building upon them to design an ECD program, is a conventional form of evaluation capacity building. For evaluation capacity development to occur, the centrality of the organizations (each with their own interests and needs) within the system where they are operating needs to be recognized.
- A broader and more systemic targeting of ECD is needed. Two new possible scenarios could be envisaged. On the one hand, funders and implementing organizations should promote the conduct of evaluation awareness-raising among actors who, despite not being directly targeted by the ECD intervention, still gravitate within the system where the latter is being implemented. On the other hand, funders and implementing partners should ensure more active involvement of the entities working in both the private and public sector anytime a large-scale ECD program sponsored by a national

TABLE 6.1 How an organizational diagnostic could contribute to effective ECD programming

Key organizational identity traits	Considerations to integrate into an ECD strategy
<p>Historical development (informal development, formalization, expansion, regional consolidation, transition to national ownership, stagnation/implosion, self-reflection, nominal/effective revitalization)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn about the history of the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy (e.g., key milestones, original founders, individuals promoting and/or challenging transformations within the organizations in question) ▪ Make sure to conduct a stakeholders' mapping, as well as a political economy analysis to assess how power and resources are distributed in the context of the organization(s) where the capacity is expected to develop further as a result of your intervention
<p>Organizational development phase (pioneer, differentiated, integrated) (Ubels 2010)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assess the extent to which the staff of the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy mainly rely on one only leader to find their direction; or if they are driven by clearly articulated organizational policies and job descriptions ▪ In the latter case, explore to what extent evaluation tasks and responsibilities could be integrated into the existing processes and procedures
<p>Membership diversity (low, medium, high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learn about the staff making up the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy ▪ Assign staff members to different groups according to their specific role and responsibilities (e.g., top leaders and decision makers; managers; technical officers) ▪ Be sure to combine activities aimed at the whole staff with more specific strategies tailored to the needs and interests of each one of the identified subgroups ▪ Try to learn about past training programs offered to each of the identified subgroups so as to build on the examples and language used in past training events
<p>Compliance with internal government rules (low, medium, high)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Look for any organizational and performance audits that have been conducted in relation to the organization(s) targeted by the ECD strategy ▪ Identify organizational deficiencies observed in the past with respect to conformity with the established organizational procedures

(continued)

TABLE 6.1 (continued)

Key organizational identity traits	Considerations to integrate into an ECD strategy
Degree of internal networking (low, medium, high)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reconstruct the lines of communication and reporting among the staff of the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy ▪ Liaise with the management information system officer (if available) in the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy, to better understand the flow of information, both bottom-up and top-bottom
Resilience (low, medium, high)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand how the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy has been able to respond to external challenges (even those threatening the survival of the organizations in question) in the past ▪ Highlight the self-defense mechanisms, values, practices that have proved instrumental in allowing the organization(s) to stay abreast of difficulties encountered ▪ Measure to what extent the organization(s) has/have been able to absorb, adapt, and transform
Leadership type (concentrated, decentralized, shared) (Ubels 2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet with the leader(s) of the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy, and try to assess the degree to which their decision-making processes are participatory and inclusive of all staff perspectives ▪ Organize structured conversations with such leaders before implementation of the strategy begins, and try to learn what their respective frameworks of reference are (this might include assessing the type of literature, or the sources from which they draw the information that is informing their decisions)
Ownership (low, medium, high)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore the extent to which the organization(s) targeted by your ECD strategy has/have actively participated in the design of the policy or project in relation to which your ECD strategy is being undertaken ▪ Measure the degree to which the different sub-groups identified with the organization(s) in question have contributed to, and are still contributing to, the development, implementation, and evaluation of your ECD strategy ▪ Identify the opportunities for scaling up the strategy (this will include the analysis of available options to turn implementation into a sector-wide, multi-actor, inclusive endeavor, through which the roles of the funder and the external process facilitator can be gradually reduced)

government or a consortium of large funders is being planned. Too often ECD funding has concentrated on either the supply side (the individuals providing evaluation services) or the demand side (the commissioners of evaluations) of the equation. However, at a time when roles often overlap such a distinction no longer appears to be reasonable.

- For organizations that are implementing ECD strategies, as well as local organizations being targeted by ECD programs, ECD program objectives or organizational visions for evaluation should fit well with their respective institutional or organizational vision.

Enhancing Evaluation Capacity: The Equity Paradox

Considering the observed gaps in the targeting of ECD programs across funding agencies in the past, and based on the results of key ECB and ECD theoretical frameworks in use, this section provides a list of suggestions on how to make ECD targeting more inclusive and effective in the future (box 6.1).

IDEAS'S CONTRIBUTION TO A PARADIGM SHIFT IN CONTEMPORARY CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT THINKING AND PRACTICE

A Radically New Perspective on Evaluation Capacity Development

The role that IDEAS has played so far, and intends to play, in the area of ECD in the future is important and timely for three main reasons. First, it allows revitalization of the discourse on ECD among IDEAS members eight years after the IDEAS Global Assembly that was organized around this theme in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2009.⁵ Second, it is likely to provide guidance in the production of some concrete tools and checklists that IDEAS members could use to enhance the effectiveness of the ECD work in their respective fields in the future. Third, it would build and expand upon the work that IDEAS has already done on evaluation competencies. Overall, the work of IDEAS in this area, as envisioned in the mission of the newly created Evaluation Capacity Development International Topical Interest Group (ECD ITIG), aims to build more consensus among members of IDEAS from different regions on what it means to work with organizations and governments on evaluation capacity in a more contextualized and sustainable manner.

⁵ "Getting to Results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development. For more details, please visit the conference website: <https://ideas-global.org/2009-conference/>.

BOX 6.1 Key suggestions to make ECD strategy more inclusive and effective

- 1. Understand the specific ECD ecology where you are working.** In conducting a mapping of the major institutions—both within and outside of the government sphere, including VOPEs, academia, and the private sector that have demonstrated interest in ECD in the past—the identification of individuals as well as specific units with a more vested interest in evaluation is strongly recommended, so as to avoid the personalization of the evaluation function, which would then be exposed to the risk of collapse in case of staff turnover.
- 2. Identify some common nationwide goals and objectives that all ECD stakeholders could be encouraged to contribute to.** Such goals, ideally aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, do not need to be perceived as imposed from the outside, and should be consistent to the largest extent possible with the each targeted actor's mission and objectives.
- 3. Build institutional incentives from within.** The incentives that are made available, including the identification and rewarding of champions, should not focus on meeting preset performance agreements, and should promote instead the ECD actor's ability to wonder and ask questions about how to turn short-term and isolated tactics into long-term and sustainable strategies.
- 4. Conduct a participatory ECD diagnostic assessment.** Through such assessment, it will be important to foster opportunities for self-reflection and mutual learning. In this vein, it would be important that such assessment focus on a selected number of the organizational and environmental factors and processes discussed in this chapter.
- 5. Develop a national ECD strategy and, depending on the scope of your intervention, put into place a national ECD task force.** Far from being a logical framework or road map, a national evaluation strategy is to be regarded as a work in progress and a living document, setting general objectives and leaving ECD stakeholders space to come up with creative and innovative ways to achieve the agreed-upon objectives. This phase might require addressing some key issues, such as the creation of dedicated evaluation units with three specific responsibilities—compiling a database of evaluation data; conducting data analysis; and, fostering dissemination of evaluation findings—as well as the establishment of partnerships between different departments within the same organization. With respect to an ECD task force, it is advisable that a variety of actors with different functions and roles (from both the public and private spheres), as well as entities whose membership cuts across different spheres, be involved.

(continued)

BOX 6.1 *(continued)*

6. **Focus on strengthening the capacity of local actors (both users and providers of evaluation services), and develop an opportunistic joint exit strategy**, in close collaboration with the individuals, organizations, and institutions involved in an ECD program. Although not operationalized from the outset, an exit strategy needs to be conceptualized from the very beginning of an ECD intervention. In order to advance sustainability, it is of utmost importance to have a very strong leader in place, who is capable of innovation and available to promote internal structural changes and the reallocation of budget resources based on the organization's needs and the changing contextual opportunities (what I have called "responsible systemic-ness").
7. **Evaluate the progress of your ECD over time.** In order to measure the effectiveness of your ECD support program, you need to make sure that your target audience as well as the type of capacity development you are trying to support (according to the interests and needs expressed by in-country ECD stakeholders) have been clearly defined at the time of ECD strategy development.

The Organizational Principles Driving IDEAS's ECD Efforts

Cognizant of the peer-reviewed literature produced to date, and building upon the understanding of contemporary evaluation practices, IDEAS is striving to create an enabling environment in which an authentic evaluation culture can flourish among its members in the future. The IDEAS ECD strategy rests on six key organizational principles that have been identified as among the most influential in the development of an evaluative culture, especially at the global level:

Membership diversity. The more diverse the membership of IDEAS in terms of roles and functions, the more likely it is that IDEAS will be able to affect the national evaluation discourse within both the public and private spheres.

Decentralized leadership. The more that IDEAS leadership is shared, and the larger the availability of channels through which members can contribute to IDEAS decision-making processes, the better the compliance with internal governance rules will be.⁶

⁶According to IDEAS current organizational set-up, all of the world's regions are equally represented in the Board. Individual board members coordinate, too, with the national and regional evaluation associations falling within their respective geographical spheres of competence.

Frequent diagnostics of both IDEAS capabilities and organizational processes. The more frequently capability assessments are conducted—for example, annually—and the more promptly identified weaknesses are addressed, the more successfully IDEAS will be able to fulfill its mission.

Availability and continued monitoring of the IDEAS theory of change. The more often the IDEAS theory of change is available and is revised, based on its program development and the findings of capability assessments carried out among its members, the more often the assumptions underlying it will be monitored, and programmatic improvements will be made.

Promotion of effective international and external communication. The more well-articulated a communication strategy is, the more social and political legitimacy IDEAS ECD work could benefit from it.

Availability of opportunities to members for disseminating, exchanging, and developing ideas, theories, and concepts about evaluation. The approval of a new publication and dissemination policy by the IDEAS Board in May 2017 is an important milestone in the association's history. The process of publishing high-quality, peer-reviewed papers is an integral part of the IDEAS ECD ITIG work plan, and of that of all other actors within the association who have an interest in capacity development and professionalization.

By enabling its members to publish original work on topics related to international development evaluation, IDEAS will be able to attain the following objectives in the short term:

- Give visibility to practitioners and decision makers with no prior track record of publications
- Disseminate evaluation-related ideas on topics and/or countries rarely discussed in the mainstream peer-reviewed evaluation literature
- Encourage its members to collaborate in documenting and writing about their own evaluation practices on a more regular basis—that is, not only in response to the call for conference proposals launched every two years before the IDEAS General Assembly
- Use the publication of articles and other items posted on the IDEAS website as an entry point for further dialogue, and for mutual intellectual and professional enrichment among its members

In the medium and long term, the new policy is expected to elicit a stronger sense of personal belonging to IDEAS, and that, as a result, will assist in advancing and furthering IDEAS members' practice of development evaluation, through strengthening their capacities, and their uptake of innovative evaluation methodologies.

The Vision and Values Driving IDEAS's ECD Efforts

IDEAS makes a constant effort to promote a more just, equitable, and democratic design for the management, funding and evaluation of ECD work. By questioning paradigms that have dominated the international development discourse over the last 10 years, IDEAS has called upon evaluation practitioners and international partners to engage in evaluation and in capacity development with justice, sustainability, and transformative change in mind. In so doing, IDEAS is encouraging more reflection among members on what kinds of postures evaluation practitioners could and should have toward issues of equity, cultural competence, type and quality of evidence, sustainability, and the use of evaluation. Furthermore, this work promotes a more systematic appreciation of the cultural and linguistic diversity (what I call the “equality” of differences) within the IDEAS as well as the rest of the evaluation community. The ECD ITIG, for instance, complements the other IDEAS ITIGs, and helps to strengthen the cultural and linguistic diversity of the association’s membership, as a strategy for enhancing the sustainability of future evaluation endeavors. As part of such a strategy, some of the key IDEAS resources will be translated into languages other than English (French and Spanish, among others), and stronger links with other regional evaluation conferences through the establishment of joint projects will be strengthened.

Technical Considerations Driving IDEAS's ECD Efforts

Besides the foundational and more vision-related principles inspiring its future ECD strategy, a number of technical considerations are driving IDEAS’s ECD work, as follows:

- Given the lack of an effective decentralization of the M&E function in many countries, it has proven extremely difficult to promote a defused culture of evaluation through a top-down approach. Therefore, through the involvement of members at the country and subnational levels, IDEAS is attempting to extend the in-country boundaries of the evaluation culture.
- Due to the relatively weak data analysis skills among national evaluators, IDEAS aims to enhance the statistical as well as the qualitative analysis of their members through the use of webinars and other publications.
- In response to misconceptions about evaluation, or “reductive” understanding of the purposes of evaluation,⁷ IDEAS will

⁷ Many evaluation commissioners and planners believe that evaluation consists in verifying the compliance between what happens on the ground and the original objectives spelled out in the project logframe, with almost no reference to unexpected impact. This is what I refer to as the “RBM-ization of the evaluation function” (Tarsilla 2014b). As a result of such limited interpretation of evaluation objectives, the risk is that evaluation could become highly centralized, with little room left for conducting independent and equity-based evaluations of programs and policies.

increasingly promote critical publications, blogs, and online discussions on the IDEAS website or on LinkedIn, as a way to promote a more exhaustive definition of the evaluation function.

CONCLUSION

This chapter encourages funders as well as practitioners to rethink the way they plan, implement, and evaluate capacity development efforts. Based on a review of existing gaps in contemporary capacity-building practices in the evaluation arena, this chapter calls on all international development actors globally: to adopt a more contextually relevant, adaptive, equitable, inclusive, and democratic definition of ECD; to conduct more exhaustive diagnostics of both capacity and processes among the organizations and entities targeted by their ECD strategies; and to assess the distribution of power and resources within the systems where ECD strategies are expected to be implemented. Lastly, by documenting the current IDEAS initiatives that are aimed at maintaining and promoting evaluation capacity at several levels (national, regional, and global), this chapter attests to the association's leadership in the ECD arena.

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