THE ROAD TO EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING: A CASE STUDY FROM ISRAEL

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Abstract: We present an empirical case study of an Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB) initiative in a school in Israel. First, we tell the story of the school's 10-year journey toward the successful integration of evaluation through ECB. Then we examine the case according to King's (2002) four elements of ECB: teachers, students, the curriculum, and the context. We present four concrete examples of evaluations conducted at the school illustrating how these elements influenced the results of ECB. We follow this presentation with a discussion of the case in relation to other ECB checklists. After thorough and systematic investigation, we believe that through this case we can learn more about the factors that contribute to or inhibit the successful outcome of an ECB effort in schools.

Résumé : Nous présentons une étude empirique sur une initiative de renforcement des capacités d'évaluation (RCÉ) réalisée dans une école israélienne. D'abord nous présentons l'histoire du parcours de l'école pendant 10 ans vers l'intégration réussie de l'évaluation RCÉ. Nous examinons ensuite le cas en fonction des quatre éléments du RCÉ de King (2002), c'est-à-dire : les professeurs, les étudiants, le curriculum, et le contexte. Nous présentons quatre exemples concrets des évaluations effectuées à l'école illustrant comment ces éléments ont influencé les résultats du RCÉ. Cette présentation est suivie d'une discussion du cas relativement aux autres listes de contrôle du RCÉ. Après une enquête approfondie et systématique, nous croyons que, grâce à ce cas, nous pouvons en apprendre davantage sur les facteurs qui contribuent à la réussite des efforts du RCÉ dans les écoles ou à leur échec.
INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed repeated analyses of the attempt to integrate evaluative inquiry into a variety of contexts through various forms of evaluation capacity building (ECB) (Cousins, 2005; King, 2002; Nevo, 2002). The case presented here describes the process in one school in Israel where conditions were ripe for developing and sustaining evaluation capacity. Through plotting the journey of the school, we identified conditions or elements that proved favourable to the successful incorporation of evaluative inquiry into the school as an organization. According to Cousins et al. (2006), “there exists a paucity of empirical research in this area” (p. 155). Hence we believe that the case provides a needed and relevant example of ECB. First, we present our views on ECB, to be followed by a narrative description of the school. We then describe the case by discussing the elements of the ECB process, based on King’s framework for ECB. We conclude by discussing the case in terms of other current frameworks.

EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING

ECB is a vehicle for introducing evaluation and evaluative inquiry into a variety of contexts ranging from individual programs on a local level to larger regional and national interventions. Evaluative inquiry is “the systematic gathering and analysis of data for organizational problem solving and decision making” (Cousins, 2005). Thus the results of ECB in a school should include evaluative inquiry as an integral part of the school organization. According to Baizerman, Compton, and Stockdill (2002), “ECB is the intentional work to continuously create and sustain overall organizational processes that make quality evaluation and its uses routine” (p. 1). The emphasized words indicate the primary actions of ECB—sustaining and making routine quality evaluation and its uses. The emphasis is on the sustainability and internalization of the process. In order to ensure good ECB, one must include a sustainability and a routinization component in any ECB program. In addition, these elements should be intentional and continuous, not side effects of another process or periodic efforts to introduce the subject into occasional teacher meetings.

This definition can also be broken down into three parts: the purpose, the process, and the result of ECB. The purpose of conducting ECB in a specific context is to train professional evaluators, to train other professionals to conduct evaluation properly or to train
stakeholders to participate intelligently in evaluations, and to use evaluation constructively. The process has to be deliberate, with the aim of teaching evaluation skills and techniques. This process can consist of direct and indirect activities: direct ECB involves teaching evaluation practice through workshops, training sessions, courses, or degree programs, whereas indirect ECB incorporates evaluation into a specific context through “consolidation of evaluation knowledge and skill development through application on authentic school evaluation projects” (Cousins, personal communication, February 19, 2011). Furthermore, direct ECB focuses on training internal evaluators while indirect ECB focuses on incorporating external evaluators into the workings of a specific context in which participants are encouraged and trained in evaluative thinking. ECB that aims at “empowering schools and teachers to participate as equal partners in the evaluation process and make use of it” (Nevo, 2009, p. 301) are involved in indirect ECB. Those who actually train staff members to conduct evaluations are engaged in direct ECB.

The result of ECB should be some form of sustained evaluative inquiry in the school. The productive outcome of ECB depends on the purpose and the process and can take two forms: (a) internal evaluation in the form of an onsite evaluation unit or a staff member whose job is to conduct evaluations onsite, or (b) educated use of an external professional evaluator. Successful evaluation capacity often depends on a constructive dialogue between the two. According to Nevo (2009), the success of such a dialogue depends on “three aspects of evaluation practice: conception, methodology, and communication.” These three aspects relate to evaluation as a non-threatening process of learning that leads to understanding and improving programs.

Thus ECB is not only about developing the capacity to do evaluation, but also, and importantly, the capacity to use it constructively (e.g., Levin-Rozalis, Rosenstein, & Cousins, 2009). The case presented below illustrates this complicated process.

CASE STUDY: MOLEDET SCHOOL

A Word on Method

Before presenting the case, we would like to mention a few principles of case study as a research method. The purpose of a case study is to illustrate a particular point that can be explained by a theory that enables one to understand other cases. According to Stake (1995), “the
real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well” (p. 8). The case study itself is not used as a basis for extrapolation, but rather as a point of reference for better understanding a specific phenomenon. We hope that the analysis of the case of Moledet School will shed light on the complex phenomenon of ECB.

Upon first examination, we found that staff at Moledet school had kept clear and well-organized documentation of the entire process of ECB, protocols of all the meetings, pictures of children’s activities, summaries of activities, feedback, questionnaires and summaries of questionnaires, presentations, Gantt charts of evaluation plans, work plans, and so forth. All the teachers who were involved in an evaluation project received the relevant plans. We analyzed all documents, and we relied on this documentation to trace chronological events and developments. In addition, we conducted a total of 9 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders (including the principal and the administrative staff), using the documentation to remind them of various stages in the process when necessary. We conducted 4 focus groups with 7 teachers in each group. The groups comprised teachers who were at different levels of involvement in the evaluation process, including those who requested, conducted, and participated in the evaluation projects. Finally, we held 10 periodic meetings with the immediate evaluation and documentation unit to plan, implement, and give feedback on our own evaluation. All interviews, focus groups, and meetings were recorded. Analysis of the data consisted of reflection, categorizing, collation, consensus formation, and concept mapping. Once the analysis was finished, we presented the findings to the principal for further discussion and reflection.

Staff members were particularly interested in knowing whether theories or models that might support their work existed in the professional literature. We found that there were indeed theories, models, and frameworks that described the empirical process that we witnessed at Moledet School. Among the models discussed, the staff were particularly receptive to King’s (2002) framework, which helped them better understand the process. The matching of the experience of Moledet School and King’s model prompted the development of this case study. We now turn to a narrative description of the case followed by some analyses using King’s framework and an examination of some concrete results of the ECB process at Moledet School.
The Story of ECB at Moledet School

Moledet School was built in the early 1980s and serves a mixed community of new immigrants, families with four or more children, and the families of army personnel. The school serves approximately 600 pupils, of whom 10% have hearing difficulties. There are 50 teachers and 10 supporting staff. The current energetic and visionary principal joined the school in 1992. His first task was to establish a program to mainstream hearing-challenged children in the school.

In 1995, the Ministry of Education embarked on an extensive project called “30 Settlements” that made funding available to support innovation and development in 30 different locations in the country, including Beer Sheva, the home of Moledet School. One of the programs implemented through this project was the Autonomous School Program (Kolsti & Rutherford, 1991; Levine, 1991), in which several schools in Israel could autonomously manage national funding allocated to the school according to their own goals and approaches. As part of this program, the Moledet school principal attended an intensive seminar, which focused on increased school responsibility and the need for accountability and evaluation. According to the principal, “the teacher needs to evaluate, the professional team needs to evaluate, the principal needs to evaluate, the evaluation staff should evaluate and the individual needs to evaluate.”

Simultaneously, the regional director of the Ministry of Education promoted evaluation and evaluation use. In order to support this drive for evaluation, he helped establish the Measurement and Evaluation Unit at the Pedagogical Centre (“Pisga”). The principal of Moledet School decided to pursue his vision of implementing evaluation activities in the school by sending a group of teachers from the school to evaluation courses provided by Pisga. Teachers learned about alternative assessment instruments such as interviews, questionnaires, and observation grids. In addition, they focused on the current paradigms and practices of evaluation. In the words of one of the teachers when talking about the changes that occurred as a result of the courses:

Of course we knew that we have to assess the children’s studies. Every teacher knows that. But also through observations and talks we can understand where he is. Then we share the information at pedagogical meetings or with the counsellor if necessary. That includes observations as well—the pupil’s behaviour and position in the class.
The course graduates then conducted evaluations of several small projects in the school under the supervision of one graduate who was chosen to be the “internal evaluator.” The staff used the evaluation unit at Pisga as a source of information and consultation concerning evaluation, and they also received instruction from a private consulting group. They were enthusiastic about their participation in these small projects: they learned to ask appropriate questions about their pedagogy and classroom behaviour. In their own words, “Evaluation makes the work more difficult but it actually facilitates it as well. With evaluation you plan anew and you respond to the situation. It is very useful and helps everyone.” They were amazed to see the holistic picture of their work that emerged through the evaluation. As a result, they requested more training and additional staff to meet a growing demand for evaluation.

At the same time they decided to develop a “Caring School” (in line with the concept in the United States—see, e.g., Lickona & Davidson, 2001; Lickona, Schaps, & Lewis, 2001) and submitted their application to the Ministry of Education to become an “experimental school” according to Ministry of Education guidelines for the National Experimental School Project. The transformation of the school into an experimental school began in 2001 with documentation, evaluation, and ECB as key components of the process. The ECB effort consisted of six teachers from the school, the principal, the assistant principal, and an external consultant (the head of the evaluation unit at Pisga). Together with Pisga, the Experimental Wing of the Ministry of Education offered evaluation training for all the schools in the region that were becoming experimental schools. It should be noted here that the influence of the measurement and evaluation unit at Pisga was twofold: it offered evaluation courses to school personnel as a direct form of ECB, and it provided advice to Moledet staff in an indirect form of ECB.

At the end of the initial phase of becoming an experimental school, the school had expanded the original concept of a caring school into an experimental program called “A Caring Community”. The program was approved by the Ministry of Education’s Experimental Division in 2002. Since then, an initiative evolved that encouraged caring, consideration of others, and contributing to the community called “an integrated school as a caring community” (The Heart of Caring Integrated school for the caring community “Experimental Book 5763-5767, Beer Sheva / 2008 – 5768). As part of the implementation of this program, an external evaluator consultant was invited to
monitor the process and measure the outcomes. The evaluation activities conducted to measure the program’s outcomes were external at first, and gradually became an integral part of the experimental program and the routine of the school.

In 2003, the staff participated in a workshop concerning the experimental schools and realized that they needed to conduct more data collection. Through discussions with the external evaluation consultant, they decided to establish a combined Documentation and Evaluation Unit. This new unit, composed of 10 teachers, planned, implemented, and used a number of evaluations over the years. The teachers and other staff members included in this group began a capacity building initiative by raising issues that they thought needed evaluation. Once they had been trained, they were able to actually devise the evaluation questions and tools as well as participate in the analysis and interpretation under the guidance of the documentation and evaluation unit at the school. The work is done through mixed forums and team meetings. Throughout this period the staff of the school (approximately 50 teachers) participated in small group sessions devoted to evaluation. They completed needs assessment questionnaires and discussed how to investigate evaluation questions and issues. An important feature of this ECB process was the constant support of the principal. One of the teachers commented, “The principal initiates some evaluations and then it’s clear and structured. But he also supports each teacher in her own efforts at evaluation. It wouldn’t work without the support of the principal.” These meetings were recognized by the principal and the Ministry of Education as in-service training, and therefore the teachers were compensated for their participation.

An additional ECB strategy occurred in 2005 when Ben Gurion University of the Negev opened a graduate evaluation and measurement degree program through its education department. Upon the advice of the external evaluator and with the full support of the principal, three leaders from the documentation and evaluation unit enrolled in the master’s level program. Two years later, another external evaluator was hired to evaluate the entire ECB process.

Figure 1 shows the development described above graphically. The white boxes illustrate the developments at the school and the gray boxes illustrate the overall context. We discuss further details about the context for the case study later on in the article. We now turn to an application of King’s (2002) ECB framework to the case school.
It is notable that this framework resonated with the school staff’s understanding of the ECB process at Moledet School.

**Figure 1**
The Process

ECB ACCORDING TO KING’S FRAMEWORK AND THE MOLEDET SCHOOL

We have chosen King’s (2002) “four commonplaces of learning” framework because of its emphasis on stakeholder involvement and ECB-conducive context. King’s prescriptions for operating an ECB system in a school divide contributing elements into four groups: teachers, students, curriculum, and context. The four elements of King’s ECB model were found to be clearly evident and significant in the development of ECB in Moledet School. In Table 1 we show the elements in the King conceptualization as they pertain to the school. We discuss these in detail below.
Table 1
King’s (2002) Model and Moledet School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Defined in terms of Moledet School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>External evaluator, consultant, principal, regional director, graduates of the degree program in measurement and evaluation at Ben Gurion University of the Negev (BGU)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teachers and other staff members who participated in evaluation workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Enrichment training at Pisga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Small group workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal degree program at BGU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>National support of evaluation in the schools, 30 Settlements initiative, experimental school program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teachers

The teachers in King’s framework are the evaluation teachers, administrators, and opinion leaders who show a commitment to evaluation and its use—who exercise the “clout factor” (King & Pechman, 1984). The “teachers” associated with the ECB effort include: six teachers from the school, the principal, the assistant principal, and an external consultant (the head of the evaluation unit at Pisga). All six teachers had completed Master’s degree programs: two in measurement and evaluation and four in educational administration. The principal and assistant principal had attended numerous workshops and in-service training sessions in conjunction with the experimental program. Cousins (2005) identified several factors that influence schools in their propensity to engage in systematic inquiry. Among these were two prominent influences: school leadership in the form of principal modelling and facilitation practices, and the successful use of evaluation. Both of these factors were well established at Moledet School. In addition, when the external evaluator was hired to evaluate the overview of the process and outcome she also fulfilled the role of “teacher” according to the model.

Students

According to the model the students are the teachers and other staff members who are involved in the ECB process. Approximately 50 teachers and staff members were involved in this case. They participated in small group sessions devoted to evaluation. The work was done through forums composed of “teachers” and “students” (in the terminology used by King, 2002). They completed needs assessment questionnaires and discussed how to investigate evaluation questions and issues that they raised themselves.
Curriculum

The curriculum element of King’s (2002) model refers to participation in the evaluation process, onsite practice, guidance, and limited formal training. In the case of Moledet, the curriculum consisted of enrichment training at the regional Pedagogical Center (Pisga) as well as formal degree courses at Ben Gurion University of the Negev (BGU). The teachers who participated in these formal training programs then led workshops for other staff members and conducted several evaluations. Some of these are summarized in the next section as concrete examples of the process and outcome of ECB at the school. The onsite training sessions focused on the development of evaluation skills of data collection and analysis as well as dissemination of knowledge via knowledge management. It is clear from a review of school documentation that these lessons were not only learned but also internalized and became routine. As evidence of school support of the training, these meetings were written into the school calendar so that no other activity could be planned to conflict with them. The long-term goal of this approach was for everyone to be an evaluator within his or her own practice. In addition, formal training courses at Pisga included evaluation concepts, theory, skills, and practice. At BGU, the graduate and postgraduate program was a more comprehensive evaluation and measurement course of study aimed at training professional evaluators.

Context

Context refers to the place in which the ECB effort is implemented—the school, the school district, and the National Educational priorities. The context of the specific case of Moledet School, as can be seen in Figure 1 above, was conducive to successful ECB because of the pro-evaluation atmosphere and activities conducted at the school, regional, and national levels. For example, the meetings mentioned under “curriculum” were recognized by the principal and the Ministry of Education as in-service training, allowing the teachers to be compensated for their participation. We found that when the immediate context is situated within a larger pro-evaluation context, the stage is set for successful ECB. The context of Moledet School was characterized by a commitment to improving education and the school climate, and the national context provided support for innovation and evaluation. The combination provided a perfect setting for the ECB effort described here. The gradual format of in-service training, on-the-job guidance, and outside formal training provided the setting and the
possibility for a successful and sustainable ECB process. This can also be understood as the combination of direct and indirect ECB as well as the synergy between internal and external evaluators.

Returning to King’s (2002) four commonplaces of learning, we can see that they were evident in the development of ECB at Moledet School: teachers provided by Pisga and BGU; students comprising highly motivated teachers from the school; curriculum as represented by formal training; and context reflecting the move toward evaluation use and ECB in the educational system in Israel on both national and regional levels. The next section presents the empirical evidence of ECB through four examples of evaluation carried out at Moledet School.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE OF ECB

The outcome of the ECB process described above has been the adoption of evaluative thinking and evaluation use in the school. Staff members confirmed in interviews that evaluation is indeed an integral part of Moledet School. Cousins (2005) states that much has been written about doing evaluation but very little about using it. Here we present four examples of evaluation use at Moledet School. At the end of the section, Table 2 summarizes the specific evaluations discussed here and their outcomes.

Example 1: Mentoring (2003)

Example 1 illustrates evaluation use and the change that it generates. After two years of implementing the “caring school,” it was decided to examine the approach anew. The documentation and evaluation unit (D&E unit) conducted an action evaluation to investigate the meaning of a “caring community” (CC). The team worked together with the teachers and staff and formulated the following evaluation questions: What is a CC? Why is a CC important? How does one create a CC? The D&E unit devised their own evaluation instruments to use with parents, teachers, and pupils: an open-ended questionnaire and interviews to be conducted by the staff. The external evaluation consultant analyzed the data and returned it to the evaluation unit. They in turn discussed the findings with the entire school staff. The findings concerned both conceptual and practical issues. As a result it was decided that a pilot mentoring program for Grades 3, 4, and 5 would be an ideal expression of CC. According to the evaluation of the
mentoring program conducted in 2004, the pilot was found to be successful and the program was expanded to include the entire school. It was given the name “Northern Star” to point the right direction for the experimental school.

As a result of this 2003 evaluation, the entire organizational structure of the experimental school team was changed to better represent the spirit of the experiment—a caring community. In King’s (2002) terms, the teachers and students used the curriculum to conduct and implement evaluation within a supportive context. The staff learned to ask and answer questions and to think evaluatively. They then acted according to this thinking process. In addition, the internal and external evaluators worked together to insure a positive result.


Example 2 illustrates process use of evaluation as opposed to the use of findings. Upon request from the teachers, the D&E unit decided to conduct a formative evaluation of the week devoted to mainstreaming hearing-challenged children.

The evaluation instruments consisted of a pre/post combined open and closed questionnaire designed by the D&E unit and handed out by the pupils. The analysis was done by the unit. The findings showed that hearing children had some general knowledge about hearing-challenged children, but they did not know essential facts. In addition, they did not know sign language, although they knew that many of the hearing-challenged children used it to communicate. These findings were shared with the teaching staff, the principal, and assistant principal. They sparked a serious discussion and re-examination of the mainstreaming program. Some teachers argued for earlier and more extensive mainstreaming. As a result, minor changes in classroom behaviours of teachers and assistants were instituted, but no major changes were made. The system did not encourage early mainstreaming, as funding was distributed according to the number of children in “special” classes rather than as a whole. Thus, in accordance with King’s (2002) model, where the context—in this case the system—does not support change resulting from evaluation findings, use clearly suffers. In this particular instance, the evaluation process was useful in helping stakeholders develop evaluative thinking and evaluation skills to make individual adjustments, even though the actual findings were not used to make changes to the program as a whole.

Example 3 demonstrates the process, implementation, and impact of evaluation. In 2005–2006 the entire school embarked on a revision of the pupil report card. First, the D&E unit conducted an evaluation, under the guidance of the external evaluator, of the standard report card used by the school. They found that it did not reflect the spirit of a caring community. As a result the entire format and content were revised, and the new report card went into effect in 2006–2007 (see Figure 2). In the words of the head of the evaluation team, “I believe that more changes will take place because that is the way we work at the school – thinking about thinking, continuous learning.” All elements of King’s (2002) model were in force here.

Example 4: Examination of the Functioning of the Caring Community (2006–2007)

Example 4 shows an evaluation proposed, designed, implemented, and used by the staff itself without the help of outside evaluation personnel. In 2006–2007 the leaders of the Experimental School Project set out to check the functioning of the caring community. They worked together with the D&E unit to devise and distribute a questionnaire about the “Caring Class.” The results indicated that there was not enough personal contact with each child to fully understand his or her inner world. In the words of the teachers:

We learned from the questionnaires because ... in a class of 40 children these things get lost. The teacher misses the signals. As a result of the systematic examination of the program, we now know that we have to sit down and make time for each child.

As a result of the evaluation, each teacher had to arrange for at least two 20-minute sessions with each individual pupil twice a year.

These examples are summarized in Table 2. The leftmost column lists the evaluand, next the role of the external evaluator, then the role of the internal evaluator, followed by King’s (2002) four elements, and ending with the use that was made of the evaluation. Evaluation was used to make concrete changes in three of the cases, and was not used in one because of the policy of the Ministry of Education to encourage larger class sizes—the context. It is important to remember, however, that although no changes were made as a result of the evaluation,
### Figure 2
Report Card Before and After Evaluation (Example 3)

#### Old Report Card

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments according to Subject Matter</th>
<th>New Report Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Comprehension</td>
<td>Contribution to Society/Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geometry</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Towards the Golden Path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>with friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>with teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>Towards school property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School uniform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work and learning habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tardiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Order and Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listening in class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homework preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation in a group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the teachers practiced evaluative thinking and the evaluation process enabled them to develop skills used throughout their work.

Table 2  
Specific Cases of Evaluation in Moledet School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluand</th>
<th>Role of external evaluator</th>
<th>Role of internal evaluator</th>
<th>Favourable combination of King’s (2002) four elements</th>
<th>Use made of the evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring community (2003)</td>
<td>Design and analyze</td>
<td>Implement and give feedback</td>
<td>Teachers, students, curriculum, context</td>
<td>Development of mentoring program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainstreaming (2003)</td>
<td>Supervise</td>
<td>Design, implement, analyze, give feedback</td>
<td>Teachers, students, curriculum (context unfavourable)</td>
<td>Discussion but no major changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report card (2006)</td>
<td>Supervise, advise</td>
<td>Design, implement, analyze, give feedback</td>
<td>Teachers, students, curriculum, context</td>
<td>Development of new report card format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DISCUSSION

This overview of the process of ECB as the routinization, internalization, and sustainability of evaluation in Moledet School has examined the process through the lens of the influencing factors of ECB proposed by King (2002): teachers, students, curriculum, and context. The case of Moledet also conforms to the checklist provided by Volkov and King (2007) for building organizational evaluation capacity. In this case, the school is the organization and clearly incorporates each of the 6 prescriptions covered by the checklist:

1. Cultivate a positive, ECB-friendly internal organizational context.
2. Understand and take advantage of the external environment and its influence on the organization.
3. Develop and implement a purposeful long-term ECB plan for the organization.
4. Build and reinforce infrastructure to support specific components of the evaluation process and communication systems.
5. Introduce and maintain purposeful socialization into the organization’s evaluation process.
6. Build and expand peer learning structures.
In addition, the examples above demonstrate the relationship between internal and external evaluators. Like Nevo (1995), our experience points to the benefits of a dialogue between internal and external evaluation in which “(a) external evaluation will enhance accuracy and objectivity, (b) internal evaluation will increase relevancy, and (c) the dialogue will increase stakeholders’ involvement and create an evaluation culture in the school receptive to evaluation and its utilization” (Nevo, 2009, p. 298). We view these elements as indicators of not only successful evaluation utilization, but also of successful ECB as well.

If we return to the definition of ECB at the beginning of this article, we can use it as a checklist as well. Was there intentional work to continuously create and sustain overall organizational processes that make quality evaluation and its uses routine as prescribed by Baizerman, Compton, and Stockdill (2002)? The answer is “Yes.”

Furthermore, we can see how the case of Moledet School fits the conceptual framework of evaluative inquiry as an organizational learning system proposed by Cousins, Goh, Clark, and Lee (2004). Cousins et al.’s (2004) framework includes interdependent relationships between “organizational learning, evaluation use, and influence.” According to the framework, “organizational processes and consequences are dependent on a host of support structures, one of them being evaluative inquiry” (Levin-Rozalis et al., 2009, p. 195). Evaluative inquiry was a key factor in the ECB process undertaken at the school. Participation was high, and a combination of internal and external evaluators facilitated ECB. Evaluation consequences were evident—a mentoring program was established, the report card was changed, and so forth. Evaluation capacity was developed through academic courses, onsite training, workshops, and practice. Time and again, teachers stated that evaluation is a routine and integral part of school life. The organization was ready, as evidenced by the principal’s commitment to evaluation and the support he gave the teachers in pursuing their own professional development in the area of evaluation. Organizational consequences can be seen by the successful development of the Caring Community Experimental School and the consequential plans for a Dissemination Centre.

Although this case is a positive example of ECB, it would not be complete without mentioning the problem of too much evaluation or evaluation burnout. One of the risks of too much evaluation—too
many interviews, questionnaires, and feedback forms—is that respondents do not take them seriously and give superficial answers. Dahler-Larsen (2006) discusses risks of “over-evaluating” and “evaluation fatigue” at length. According to Dahler-Larsen (2006), “no organization can question its assumptions and practices constantly.” This factor was evident at Moledet School as well and can inhibit the successful development of ECB. Awareness of the problem and sensitivity to over-evaluating can modify its effect. Clearly the school has to select objects of evaluation carefully and set limits.

Another inhibiting factor illustrated in this case is that effectiveness suffers when one of the elements is not favourable for ECB. This is seen in example 3, where the condition of context was not met and ECB did not bring the desired results.

Overall, however, the process of ECB described here has proven itself successful in terms of building a sustainable evaluation team and creating an atmosphere of evaluative thinking and use at Moledet School. There are plans to disseminate the model to other schools as well.

CONCLUSION

We have presented empirical evidence of the development, process, and use of ECB in this article. We believe that such evidence is helpful not only in supporting existing theories of ECB, but also in understanding the challenges of the ECB effort in a school in “real time.” Throughout the case we have illustrated the ways in which ECB results in a high level of process use and learning. There is a clear demand for empirical studies, as called for by Amo and Cousins (2007) in their comprehensive review of the literature of empirical research in evaluation with an eye toward operationalization of process use.

On the whole, the conditions for successful ECB put forth by King (2002) were met at Moledet School, as evidenced by the examples given above. Moreover, the staff proudly presents the changes brought about by ECB and evaluations conducted at the school at professional meetings. It appears that evaluative thinking and processes have become an integral part of the school, although it remains to be seen how sustainable these changes are over time. At this point, the school is currently embarking on a new challenge—the creation of a dissemination centre for the caring community and the evaluation model.
It is hoped that a bank of similar empirical studies can emerge to support the many ECB theories and frameworks with solid evidence from the field so that the voice of those doing and using evaluations can be clearly heard. Hopefully such voices can pave the road to ECB development, sustainability, and dissemination.

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NOTE

1. We have received permission to use the school name and to identify central figures in the case. In fact, the school was eager to have its story told.

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