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**An Investigation of the Organizational Effects of
Internal Participatory Evaluation**

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements of the
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Ottawa

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Abstract

A rapidly growing body of literature shows that organizations vary widely in their ability to acquire and assimilate information from their environments or to locally generate knowledge useful for organizational decision making and problem solving; in short, their capacity to learn. Organizational learning theoretical perspectives have identified a number of processes and strategic dimensions that define organizational learning capacity. But relatively little is known about how to stimulate growth in such capacity. A variety of intervention options including the use of focus groups, concept mapping, leadership training, and development strategies have been suggested as possibilities and empirical evidence as to their effectiveness is beginning to accumulate. One such option is evaluation or applied social research.

Over the past few decades our knowledge about how and why evaluation data are used has expanded considerably. This knowledge prompted the development of a form of collaborative inquiry called "participatory evaluation" (Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995). While participatory evaluation has been demonstrated to enhance the utilization of specific evaluation results, it also has great potential for stimulating the development of organizational learning capacity. However, organizations have been slow to embrace methods of systematic inquiry such as program evaluation and only a small number of studies have looked at the effects of evaluation on the capacity of organizations to learn.

It would seem that internal evaluators, given their position within organizations and expertise with the entity being evaluated, would be ideally suited to conducting participatory evaluation. But the research looking at the

participatory approach as an organizational intervention has emerged, solely, from the perspective of externally conducted evaluations: There are no studies where the impact of an internally conducted participatory evaluation has been assessed. Therefore, the study investigated internal participatory evaluation as an intervention to enhance organizational learning capacity. In particular, this study examined the nature and causes of observed effects.

A national, not-for-profit training organization where the present study's author was employed, served as the site of the research. The research process inquiring into the effects of internal participatory evaluation on the organization employed qualitative methods. Data were collected, over approximately two years, via retrospective observations, participant observations, archival data, interviews with key informants of the evaluation process, and from a focus group held approximately six months following the completion of the project. The data were collected, analyzed, displayed and interpreted according to a conceptual framework.

The design of the study utilized several features to ensure the validity of the findings such as examining data from different sources, involving an independent interviewer, and providing respondents with the opportunity to make a collective response as to the effects of the internal participatory evaluation, as well as to assess the interpretations given to the data by the author.

The results of the study were then compared and discussed in the light of what is known about participatory evaluation and organizational learning. It was concluded that internal participatory evaluation can positively affect the constructs associated with organizational learning capacity including causing organizational members to unearth and question fundamental assumptions about how the

organization is operating (i.e., double-loop learning). It was further concluded that longitudinal designs that incorporate qualitative methods geared to measure complex phenomena within a particular context are needed in this domain of research. It is believed that the present study has extended our knowledge about the power of evaluation as an organizational change phenomenon and has provided a more solid basis from which to make conclusions regarding its potential for impact.

Finally, in spite of the fact that the present study was exploratory in nature, recommendations were listed for evaluation practitioners interested in pursuing further study.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents who were my first teachers. It is they who taught me that while education is important to a life fulfilled, the love and support of family are essential.

Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis, I have drawn heavily on the knowledge, skills, and expertise of many people. I would therefore like to express my gratitude to them for the contribution each has made to this major undertaking.

Brad Cousins, thesis supervisor, for his guidance, expertise, detailed editorial input, and timely encouragement. His views about evaluation, collaborative practice, and organizational learning have profoundly influenced my own thinking. Similarly, my professional work as an evaluation practitioner has benefited tremendously from Brad's mentoring over the last four years.

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PART I

OVERVIEW OF STUDY

A rapidly growing body of literature shows that organizations vary widely in their ability to acquire and assimilate information from their environments or to locally generate knowledge useful for organizational decision making and problem solving; in short, their capacity to learn. Organizational learning theoretical perspectives have identified a number of process and strategic dimensions that define organizational learning capacity. But relatively little is known about how to stimulate growth in such capacity.

Over the past few decades our knowledge about how and why evaluation data are used has expanded considerably. This knowledge prompted the development of a form of collaborative inquiry called "participatory evaluation" (Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995). Although participatory evaluation has been demonstrated to enhance the utilization of specific evaluation results, it also has shown some potential for stimulating the development of organizational learning capacity. It would seem that internal evaluators, given their position within organizations and expertise with the entity being evaluated, would be ideally suited to conducting participatory evaluation. But the research looking at the participatory approach as an organizational intervention has emerged, solely, from the perspective of externally conducted evaluations: There are no studies where the impact of an internally conducted participatory evaluation has been assessed.

The present study addressed this gap in the literature by implementing a two and one-half year longitudinal single case study participatory evaluation in a national,

publicly funded training organization. The present study author's doctoral training, prior research experience, combined with his organizational mandate (he is the program's director), qualified him as the internal participatory evaluator in the case evaluation. Participant observations, document analyses, and semi-structured interviews carried out "blind" by an independent and detached data collector, provided the empirical basis for judging the organizational impact of the intervention

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part One, which includes chapters one, two, and three focuses on providing a succinct review of the empirical literature, why the study is important, and the research methods that were employed. Chapter One provides a general overview of the study including an introduction to the conceptual framework that was utilized throughout the research. Chapter Two considers why organizational learning has caught the attention of both organization and evaluation theorists and describes the various constructs under investigation. It also examines the gap in the literature and poses the specific research questions that were addressed. Chapter 3 outlines the methods of data collection, data analysis, and data management that were utilized.

Part Two focuses on the study's findings. Chapters 4 through 8 are sequenced to follow the chronology of the evaluation project implemented by the present study's author. Chapter 9 provides a summary of the study's findings and graphically displays the major types of impacts that were observed.

Part Three presents the study's conclusions and implications for future research. Chapter 10 outlines the limitations inherent in the study and a synopsis of the study's findings in relation to the major themes that have emerged in the recent empirical literature. Chapter 11 contains the author's insights regarding the study's implication

for research and evaluation practice. The chapter ends with some concluding thoughts about the study as a whole and where future researchers could focus their energies.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Organizations are purposeful social systems that have three interrelated tasks: (1) the development of the organization; (2) the development of individuals who comprise the organization; and (3) the development of the community/nation to which the organization is connected (Ackoff, 1981). Organizational theorists have focused primarily on the first of these three tasks with the goal of generating knowledge about those factors which contribute to making the organization more productive and competitive (Argyris & Schon, 1978; Huber, 1991). The ability or capacity of organizations to "learn" has been identified as being critical if organizations are to adapt to and survive in today's turbulent society (Dixon, 1994). Some of the interventions that have been associated with improving an organization's learning capacity are: focus group methods, concept mapping, leadership development and training, and the like. In recent years, some researchers (e.g., Cousins & Earl, 1995; Owen & Lambert, 1994; Preskill, 1994) have cast evaluation and other forms of applied systematic inquiry as an intervention with the potential to enhance organizational learning capacity. One approach--participatory evaluation--has been highlighted in this regard, in part because it requires the direct involvement of organization members in the production of generative knowledge, that is, knowledge created internally within

and by the organization for local use. Although generative knowledge is an important part of organizational learning, adaptive knowledge or knowledge acquired from outside the organization is also integral (Huber, 1991; Senge, 1990). Conceivably, some forms of evaluation could also be powerful interventions for developing adaptive knowledge as a way of enhancing organizational learning capacity.

Unfortunately, organizations have been slow to embrace methods of systematic inquiry such as program evaluation. Moreover, empirical research on the nature, causes, and consequences of such activities is in short supply. Much of what little research is available on the topic focuses on practical forms of participatory evaluation where an evaluator external to the organization works with organization members. Little is known about the impact of participatory evaluation where the evaluator is internal to the organization and/or to the program being evaluated.

The present longitudinal case study 1) investigated internal participatory evaluation as an intervention to enhance organizational learning capacity and 2) examined factors underlying the development of organizational learning capacity, including the adoption of evaluative systems by the organization. In particular, the impact on the development of organizational learning systems of the variables associated with the characteristics of the organization, the internal participatory evaluation process, and the evaluation's specific consequences were examined.

1.2 General Research Questions

In general terms, this study addressed two basic questions:

1. What are the consequences of internal participatory evaluation on organizational learning capacity?
2. What factors explain the extent to which these consequences occurred?

Following the description of the study's conceptual design and the appropriate review of literature, a more specific set of research questions will be stated.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework represented in Figure 1 was applied in the present study to address the questions posed above. This framework was created following a review of the empirical research that has attempted to link collaborative evaluation activities and the development of an organization's capacity to learn (Cousins, 1996a; Cousins & Earl, 1995; Preskill, 1994). Specifically, the seven constructs within the category *organizational learning capacity* were based on findings of prior research (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1978; Dixon, 1994; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Simon, 1991) and these can be considered the "effect" variables for the present study. The framework also identifies three overarching categories of characteristics which the present study will attempt to describe and illuminate in terms of their impact on the development of organizational learning systems. The categories are: *characteristics of the organization*; *internal participatory evaluation intervention*; and *observed impact of the evaluation*.

The concept *characteristics of the organization* contains four constructs which describe the potential influence an organization has on its members (Anderson, 1982). It is depicted in Figure 1 as a “backdrop” to the entire study, one which embraces the context for evaluation and provides parameters for its application. The constructs have been shown to have significant impact on the organization (e.g., on leadership) and have the potential to both foster and negate the development of organizational learning capacity (Louis & Simsek, 1991). The concept *internal participatory evaluation intervention* is composed of those factors that have emerged in the evaluation and knowledge utilization literature as having the potential to influence organizational learning capacity (e.g., Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Huberman, 1990; Huberman & Cox, 1990; Shulha & Cousins, 1996). In particular, the participatory evaluation process and the role of the researcher are contained in this category and received particular attention in the present study. The arrows indicate the direction of influence and guided data collection. Finally, the concept *impact of the evaluation* is composed of two constructs that have been used to describe evaluation use—instrumental and educative. The arrow extending down from internal participatory evaluation intervention represents the delay in time normally required for evaluation findings to be used. It was predicted that evaluation impact should also have an influence on the degree of organizational learning observed.

The following literature review synthesizes what is known about organizational learning capacity and identifies the gaps in knowledge. This, in turn, provides the motivation for the present study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature: Organizational Learning and Participatory Evaluation

The following review will address the available literature in the domains of organizational learning, evaluation utilization, and internal evaluation. It is divided into five distinct sections. First, the constructs associated with organization learning capacity are described separately in terms of what constitutes each one and what factors seem to have an influence on their growth. The second section deals with the characteristics of the organization that have been shown to be linked to organizational learning. The third section addresses the concepts associated with evaluation utilization. This important concept is teased out by first defining evaluation and then demonstrating how researchers have been able to explain variability in evaluation use. The fourth section introduces the reader to the domains of participatory evaluation and internal evaluation. These two components are then examined in terms of their impact on organization learning. The final section attempts to see through the literature and identify those gaps in knowledge that appear to be evident. The section concludes with a presentation of study's specific research questions.

2.1 Organizational Learning Capacity

This discussion reviews theoretical perspectives on organizational learning capacity that have been raised in the literature in the past two decades. First, however, it is important to present the definition of organizational learning that will

be used in the present study: "An entity [a human, group, or organization] learns if, through its processing of information, the range of its potential behaviors is changed" (Huber, 1991, p. 89). This definition is based on a constructivist's view of learning; that is, that knowledge is socially constructed (Bandura, 1986). Just as an individual is able to gain knowledge (learn) by absorbing information from its various senses, an organization is able to gain knowledge by absorbing information from its individual members (Dixon, 1994). Furthermore, some agreement exists among researchers (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Hedberg, 1981) that distinctions between individual and organizational learning should be clear. "Though individual learning is important to organizations, organizational learning is not simply the sum of each member's learning" (Fiol & Lyles, 1985, p. 804).

The constructivist's view of learning starts from the position that learning requires individuals to interpret their experiences and that this interpretation is both unique and constrained by the individual's sense-making abilities (Kolb, 1984; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). If the concepts of individual learning are to assist us in our understanding of organizational learning, we must conceive of learning in its broadest sense: that which occurs through an individual's everyday experience (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Dixon, 1994; March, 1991).

While this view supports the conception that the capacity of organizations to learn is attributed, directly, to the capacity of its members to learn, other theorists (e.g., Huber, 1991) have extended the thinking and proposed that changes in behavior need not necessarily be observed for learning to occur. For example, individuals can be involved in the complex task of interpreting new information or clarifying their beliefs of cause-effect relationships and show no "observable" signs

of change. This view is consistent with the information processing conceptions of evaluation use established more than a decade ago (Kennedy, 1983a; King & Pechman, 1984; Larsen, 1985). Similarly, cognitive researchers (e.g., Ennis, 1985) who have looked at the development and assessment of critical thinking skills concluded that these abilities (e.g., clarity-related abilities, inference-related abilities, decision-making abilities) are practical learning steps which are extremely difficult to observe or measure. Certainly, it does seem reasonable that as organization members form their new mental models, overt behavior may not be affected.

Other theorists, however, insist that it is through behaving and experiencing that we learn and that organizational learning is not possible unless organization members engage in an error detection and correction process (Argyris, 1993; Argyris and Schon, 1978; Dixon, 1994). Argyris and Schon (1978) have postulated that the organization can experience two primary types of learning: single-loop and double-loop (these concepts are described in detail in the next section). They have also identified a third level of learning, which they called "deutero-learning." Deutero-learning refers to the capacity of organizations to learn how to learn, that is, how to systematically generate information on behalf of the organization to assist in the task of decision making and problem solving. This process is an important aspect of organizational learning for it allows the organization to continually generate new states of awareness and being. Given the purpose and function of evaluation, to generate knowledge to assist decision makers make better decisions, deutero-learning has special significance for the present study. Evaluative systems can be considered internal operating systems that produce information on an ongoing basis

that enable the organization to be self-correcting. This concept will be articulated more fully in a later section.

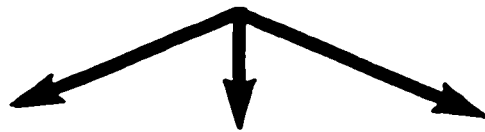
Figure 1 categorizes the various constructs associated with organizational learning capacity under two headings: *dimensions* of organizational learning and the *processes* used to capture, interpret or otherwise generate knowledge. It is important to note that the seven constructs associated with both categories are interdependent. The four dimensions directly affect and are affected by the three organizational processes imbedded in the organization. Dimensions of organizational learning is considered first.

2.1.1 Shared knowledge representation

Knowledge is represented in organizations in a variety of ways.

Understanding how we as individuals learn is at the core of our understanding of how organizations learn. Typically, decision-making processes and individual perspectives are stored collectively by organization members as images and maps in theories-of-action (Argyris & Schon, 1978), routines (Levitt & March, 1988), mental models (Senge, 1990), meaning structures (Dixon, 1994), or assumptions (Drucker, 1994). Developing these images or meaning structures is a function of an individual seeing relationships in data: what is larger or smaller, what is similar to something else, what cause produces what effect, and what comes first, second, and third in a sequence (Dixon, 1994). This process is governed, primarily, by the individual's existing meaning structures: the more ways the new data are tied or similar to an individual's existing cognitive map, the more likely it will be absorbed and retrieved

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT



Organizational Boundaries

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORGANIZATION

- ecology
- milieu
- social systems
- culture

Organizational Learning Capacity

Dimensions:

- Knowledge representation
- levels of learning
- memory
- action vs. conceptualizing

Processes:

- knowledge generated (internal)
- knowledge acquired (external)
- interpretive systems

Internal Participatory Evaluation Intervention

- researcher (research skills, program expertise, organizational knowledge)
- primary users (program expertise, organizational knowledge)
- shared control, depth of participation, primary users
- Evaluation framework for evaluating training programs
- forums for sustained interactivity
- nature of findings
- dissemination strategies

Observed Impact of the Evaluation

- Educative - conceptual understanding of program developed
- Instrumental - discrete decisions supported by evaluation data



Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Internal participatory evaluation as an organizational intervention.

at a later time (Bateson, 1979; Huberman, 1990). When different meaning structures or knowledge representations are scattered among organization members, "organizational learning disabilities" occur (Senge, 1990), whereas, when meaning structures are widely held or shared by organization members, organizational learning capacity is significant.

Argyris and Schön (1978) observed that learning occurs when there is a mismatch between outcome and expectation. In this context the mismatch between the observation and expectation acts as a "triggering" event for learning. An example of this phenomenon is provided by Virany, Tushman and Romanelli (1992) who found in their study of executive team succession in corporations that deeper levels of organizational learning will occur when new leaders challenge the existing cognitive maps of the organization. Researchers (Daft & Weick, 1984; Weick, 1979) have described this phenomenon as "organizational stress" and suggested that the process of learning requires a certain amount of stress; otherwise, there is little incentive for the organization to learn and/or change. Knowles (1984) observed that at the individual level, it is not the mismatch or the difference itself that is significant for learning, rather, it is the process one goes through to resolve the difference. Nothing has been learned until organization members construct their own meaning from working through their experiences. For example, a new leader can trigger organization members into a process of first surfacing and then rationalizing hidden beliefs about a particular program by challenging the program's value. The nature and consequences of this process will be discussed in the next section when levels of organizational learning is described.

It has also been noted that organizations must acquire the ability to “unlearn”: replace existing meaning structures with new ones (Hedberg, 1981). This premise—that an organization must have the ability to unlearn or relearn based on its past behavior, has widespread acceptance in the literature (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Chakravarthy (1982), for example, argued that organizational adaptation is the key to strategic management because it involves making ongoing strategic choices based on changes in the environment. The success of the strategy or intervention in replacing existing meaning structures depends on the complexity and prevalence of the meaning structure to members of the organization.

2.1.2 Levels of learning

Most theorists would agree that organizations experience different levels of learning: low-level or single-loop learning to high-level or double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991). Fiol and Lyles (1985) defined low-level learning as occurring within the existing organizational structure—its given sets of rules. Low-level learning leads to rudimentary associations that result in simple changes that are usually of short duration and impact only part of what the organization does. Indicators or evidence that low-level or single-loop learning has occurred could include, for example, the minor adjustments and fine tuning of existing organizational decision-making processes.

High-level or double-loop learning, on the other hand, is reflected in the alteration of the overall decision rules, norms, and beliefs of the organization. Evidence to support the existence of double-loop learning could include organization members altering existing assumptions or perspectives that guide the organization and its programs. It is a more cognitive process than is single-loop learning (Fiol &

Lyles, 1985) with the new perspectives or meaning structures having long term impact on many facets of the organization (Simon, 1991). Thus, the desired consequence of double-loop learning is often not any particular behavioral change, but rather the development of shared frames of reference (Argyris & Schon, 1978) or cognitive frameworks (Huber, 1991) that assist the organization to make better decisions.

Finally, the literature also supports the notion that some type of crisis or triggering event (e.g., a new strategy, a new leader, a dramatic change in the environment) is necessary for higher-level learning to occur (Foil & Lyles, 1985; Louis & Simsek, 1991). For example, the process of developing a new education program based on a significant change in the environment (e.g., emerging information technology) will require organization members to extend past “how” the program should be implemented, to more deeply questioning the very nature of education itself.

2.1.3 Memory

Organizational memory is a significant feature of organizational learning capacity and is reflected in the ability to organize, store and retrieve information (Levitt & March, 1988; Simon, 1991). Levitt and March (1988) described memory in terms of the various routines which are developed by the organization to guide its behaviour. Routines include the forms, rules, operating procedures, and technologies that drive the organization, as well as the structure of beliefs, paradigms, and culture that allow the organization to survive considerable turnover of personnel. As was outlined earlier, although organizations do learn through their members, over time, as members come and go, and leadership changes,

organizations develop memories, behaviors, and norms that survive (Hedberg, 1981).

One factor that has been found to facilitate the day-to-day operation of the organization and its ability to withstand member succession are the instruments used to organize, preserve, and allow access to an organization's history (March, 1991). For example, an accounting system, whether viewed as a product of design or the result of evolving practice, affects the recording and creation of an organization's history (Johnson & Kaplan, 1987). Inferences drawn from this history will contribute to the organization's standard operating procedures and subsequent decisions that are made. The quality of these decisions is directly attributed to the amount of organizational memory made available to organization members (Levitt & March, 1988). It would seem that organizations which have evaluative systems in place would be able to provide opportunities for organization members to access information that may be imbedded in the organization's culture. This, in turn, would lead to an increase in both individual and organizational learning.

2.1.4 Action versus conceptualization

As discussed earlier, action versus conceptualization relates to error detection and correction or trial-and-error learning, as opposed to the mere increase in the range of potential behaviors. Scholars of organizational science are still debating whether or not organization members need to demonstrate behavioral change versus simply improving their cognitive processes as a necessary indicator of organizational learning (Cousins, 1996b). On the one hand, some researchers (e.g., Argyris, 1993) feel that for collective or organizational learning to occur,

organization members must act on the collective interpretations and decisions which are reached. This concept—that learning results from some form of action—evolved from Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle theory which advocated that individuals should be required to test out the conclusions that they reach through active experimentation. Action is necessary for it serves to both test the interpretations made and to generate new information that continues the learning process (Argyris;1993; Dixon, 1994). Further, learning is dependent on action because: 1) a gap exists between stored knowledge and knowledge required to act effectively; 2) the organizational contexts are constantly changing; and 3) it is necessary for the organization members to codify/integrate effective behavior so that it can be reliably repeated (Argyris, 1993).

On the other hand, some theorists (Daft & Weick, 1984; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Huber, 1991) have proposed the view that learning is a process of developing the cognitive systems and memories among organization members. This perspective is congruent with Senge's (1990) notion that cognitive development (versus behavior development) is dependent on organization members acquiring shared interpretations and mental models which are necessary for sustained improvements for organizational actions. Likewise, contemporary thinking about knowledge utilization, albeit at the individual versus organizational level, acknowledges that the mere cognitive processing of information by organization members is sufficient for use to have occurred (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Kennedy, 1984). To conclude, it is important to note that the adoption of Huber's (1991) definition of organizational learning embraces both the action-oriented (behavioral) as well as the conceptual-oriented (cognitive) notions of organizational learning.

The processes that act to foster or inhibit learning in organizations have received a good deal of attention in the literature (Huber, 1991; Levitt & March, 1988). For the present study, the central question to be addressed is how do these processes affect the establishment of shared images and mental models among organization members? The assumption that knowledge is socially constructed (Bandura, 1986) helps to frame the answer. As discussed earlier, individual members of the organization must learn collectively; and organizational learning occurs when understandings are shared among organization members and cognitive systems and memories are altered or acquired (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). This conception provides the basis for the organizational learning cycle proposed by Dixon (1994) which encompasses the various constructs represented in Figure 1. The *Processes* can be viewed as a cycle that starts with: (1) the widespread generation and acquisition of information; (2) the integration of the new information into the organizational context; (3) the collective interpretation of the information; and (4) the authorization for organization members to take responsible action based on the interpreted meaning. The fourth step then feeds into the first to generate new information.

2.1.5 Knowledge acquisition versus generation

Theorists such as Huber (1991) and Senge (1990) have differentiated between knowledge which is acquired externally from the organization (adaptive) and knowledge which is internally created (generative). Knowledge or information acquired externally requires crossing the organization's boundaries to interact with the external world. By contrast, internally created knowledge is developed within the organization's boundaries and is reliant on the systems and strategies imbedded

within the organization's operating procedures. Internal generative systems would include strategies for analyzing successes and mistakes, running experiments designed to provide new information, and building feedback mechanisms into programs and activities so that they become self correcting (Dixon, 1994).

As indicated earlier, this distinction has particular relevance for the present study due to the nature of the intervention under investigation. Evaluation can be considered an internal feedback mechanism that creates knowledge for the purpose of assisting program leaders to make decisions. In this sense organizational knowledge is generative. As such, if evaluation systems find their way into the organizational system, the capacity for learning should be improved. A few studies have addressed this issue (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Murphy, 1996; Nevo, 1993) and found that an organization's acceptance of evaluative systems is dependent upon changes in organizational culture. Apart from program evaluation, other generative learning strategies that have been proven effective include various forums for sharing and interpreting information, action research activities, and other approaches to systematic inquiry (Cousins & Earl, 1995).

Similarly, a variety of strategies including needs assessment, environmental scanning, and recruitment could be used to acquire knowledge from the external environment leading to adaptive learning. Researchers have provided convincing evidence of the link between an organization's ability to acquire knowledge from its environment and its ability to learn (Hedberg, 1981; Huber, 1991; March, 1991). For example, Huber (1991) discussed the merits of recruitment strategies in increasing the range and diversity of views within organizations. If managed correctly (i.e., views are processed by key decision makers), the new perspectives

could trigger organizational action and even a shift in core assumptions. Hedberg (1981) uses the term "unlearning" in this context. These outcomes are necessary ingredients of second-order (double-loop) learning discussed earlier (Cousins, 1996). Perhaps Friedlander (1984) summed up this notion best when he wrote that "organizational learning occurs at the interfaces between persons, between organizational units, and between the organization and its external environment" (p. 199). It would seem that the outcomes of both adaptive and generative activities will likely assist the organization to learn.

2.1.6 Interpretive systems

Drucker (1994) concluded that for organizations to learn, and ultimately survive, they need to have information systems or interpretive processes in place that force their members to regularly rethink the organization's basic assumptions. Otherwise, the organization "becomes sloppy. It begins to cut corners. It begins to pursue what is expedient rather than what is right. It stops thinking. It stops questioning" (Drucker, 1994, p. 101). The continuous collection of information, whether generated internally or acquired externally, is only beneficial to the organization if it is made available to members of the organization. Dixon (1994) echoed the views of other researchers (e.g., Weiss, 1983) that "information which is collected externally and/or generated internally can only be understood within the context of the total organization" (p. 73). In order to accomplish this task, organization members must act in concert with each other and have a clear understanding of the task at hand (Schon, 1979). Daft and Huber (1987) have indicated that the distribution of accurate and complete information is a critical element in the ability of organization members to make sense of new information.

The authors observed that the type and amount of information that is disseminated within organizations is often limited and obstructed. Specifically, information is regularly routed to selected individuals within the organization, delayed to prevent timely use, and summarized, simplified, or modified to distort its original meaning. The use of these techniques by organization members may be a deliberate act to control information or it may be a result of the organization's culture: simply the way they do things (Dixon, 1994). If organizations are to resolve these problems, they must not only confront their members' collective interpretation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for information dissemination, but also attempt to build in better interpretive processes that would act to distribute information throughout the organization. What appears to be critical to organizational learning is the organization's capacity to reduce uncertainty by increasing the volume of data processed (Daft & Huber, 1987).

To summarize, organizational learning involves the creation and storage of socially constructed interpretations of data and information that enter the organization from the environment, or are generated from within. Thus, organizations need to develop mechanisms for members to process vast amounts of data into context-relevant knowledge and/or ideas that are widely shared throughout the organization. Consequently, organizations cannot learn in the absence of "social processing" of information (Louis, 1994; Louis & Dentler, 1988). Evaluation practice, of a particular kind, can facilitate the generation of new knowledge for the organization, as well as provide forums for social processing (these concepts are given a thorough treatment later in the review of literature). Thus, as is postulated in the present study, if evaluation practice becomes systemic,

the capacity for organizational learning will be enhanced. Unfortunately, organizations are not very receptive to acquiring or integrating new "systems" into their operating procedures. The next section will address those factors that have the potential to affect organizational learning.

2.2 Characteristics of the Organization

Figure 1 represents some of the potential context factors that may influence the development of organizational learning. Anderson's (1982) taxonomy of terms commonly associated with organizational climate establishes an appropriate framework for the present study. Based on the work of Tagiuri 1968, this framework divides climate into four categories: 1) *milieu*, a psycho-social dimension concerned with the presence of persons and groups and their characteristics; 2) *social systems*, a social dimension concerned with the patterned relationships of persons and groups; 3) *culture*, the belief systems, assumptions, and norms of the organization; and 4) *ecology*, human relationships vis-a-vis the physical and material aspects of the organization. The four categories are discussed below in the context of the present study and their impact on organizational learning.

2.2.1 Milieu

Cousins (1994a), following his extensive review of the literature, noted that two factors emerged within this category as being predictive of organizational learning: dimensions of leadership and organizational turnover, succession, or attrition. First, Leithwood and Dart (1992) considered dimensions of transformational leadership within the context of organizational learning capacity. The authors found that leadership qualities such as providing vision, fostering

commitment to group goals, modeling of values-based practice, providing individual support, and establishing high performance standards were related to both successful policy implementation and organizational learning. Similarly, Earl (1995) and Lafleur (1995) identified the influential role that school leaders (e.g., principals, superintendents) play in fostering support for school-based activities such as program evaluation as well as the deleterious effects that result from their lack of personal or intellectual support. In the private sector, Nystrom and Starbuck (1984) portrayed the role of top managers and executive leaders as being central to the ability of an organization to learn. The positions held by these individuals within the organization result in their views and opinions receiving prominence over those held by their subordinates. Whether intentional or unintentional, this dramatically affects the ability of organizations to either recognize or integrate new ideas from members throughout the organizational structure. Hence the capability to unlearn, mentioned earlier to be important to organizational learning, will be negatively affected by ignoring or not paying attention to new ideas from all sectors of the organization.

Interestingly, there is an incongruity in discussing leadership and organizational learning, given that organizational learning is a concept that acts to reduce the power of leaders within organizations (Bennis, 1993), at least as defined in the traditional sense. Organizational learning implies and recommends that a leader's ideas be challenged by organization members through a process of sense-making rather than be accepted verbatim. The obvious proposition is that if organization leaders believe in and act to foster environments that acknowledge the

intellectual abilities of all their members, the capacity for organizational learning will be improved.

The second factor that has emerged concerns the turnover of key personnel within organizations (including succession and member attrition). As mentioned previously, several theorists have suggested that bringing in new members acts to infuse new knowledge into the organizations which can benefit its learning capabilities (Huber, 1991; March, 1991). However, it should also be noted that organizational succession can cause learning disabilities if the new members hold different beliefs or core assumptions about the organization or the nature of its business. This is especially true with newly acquired executive level personnel. In these cases, additional time will be needed until these new members are integrated into and/or reach a satisfactory level of comfort with the operations of the organization (Senge, 1990).

2.2.2 Social systems

Three social system factors have been highlighted by Cousins (1994a) as influencing organizational learning. The first, *hierarchical structure* refers to the number of levels within which people are located throughout an organization. Researchers (e.g., Lovell & Turner, 1988) have acknowledged that individuals and groups, positioned at different levels in the hierarchy, may perceive both organizational problems and the information/thinking that is brought to bear on these problems differently. Moreover, a centralized, mechanistic structure tends to reinforce past behaviors, whereas a more decentralized structure tends to allow shifts of beliefs and actions (Duncan, 1974). Kotter (1995) added that sometimes organization members may understand the problem correctly but are positioned into

such a narrow job category, that their ability to act on problems is seriously undermined. The second factor, *distribution of power*, refers to the nature and permissiveness of the control systems within the organization that limit or foster action by its members. The final factor, *decision-making structures*, is closely related to the other two factors and is fundamental to the social processing conception of organizational learning outlined earlier. The notion that a central or "head" office is the only place where decisions should be made is counter to the premise of developing organizational learning capacities. When organizations involve their members in the generation of information and its collective interpretation, but stops short of authorizing organization members to act, the learning is likely to be lost. In addition, "to understand what needs doing, but to be prevented from acting on the knowledge leads to anger or despair, or in some situations, subversion" (Dixon, 1994, p. 92). Organizations can be designed to encourage learning and reflective action-taking, but this generally means moving away from a centralized, mechanistic structure and by distributing both the power and decision-making abilities to its members in the field (Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Such considerations imply a cultural shift in the organization.

2.2.3 Culture

Organizational culture refers to the set of collective meaning structures, shared beliefs or assumptions, and norms that organization members use to interpret the nature of their world and rationalize the actions that are taken (Dixon, 1994; Fiol & Lyles, 1985). Organizations develop or acquire their cultures by 1) being immersed into an existing culture (e.g., the organization's industry) and 2)

responding to or assimilating the experiences of their members (Schein, 1992).

Thus organizations are both recipients of and creators of their own cultures.

Organizational culture is a powerful antecedent to the decisions taken by the organization. Dixon (1994) made mention of the cultural assumptions which are learned and held within specific organizations and their significance. The following quote highlights two very different assumptions:

...an organization may be action-oriented, allocating little time for either planning or reflection. The cultural norm is reflected in conversations by phrases such as, "It's better to do something than nothing" and "We're not going to get anywhere just sitting around talking about it, let's do something." In a different organization the culture may be more concerned with being right than with acting. The conversation reflects this: "Let's take our time to think this through;" "Don't go off half-cocked." (p. 116)

Assumptions are at the base of the organization's culture, and hence its decision making, yet they are the most difficult elements to decipher (Argyris, Putman, & Smith, 1985). Schein (1992) suggested that researchers who are interested in assessing organizational culture look at the following six general areas of assumptions: the nature and reality of truth, the nature of time, the nature of space, the nature of human nature, the nature of human activity, and the nature of human relationships. Of these, the nature of reality and truth seems to hold particular relevance for the present study. This area refers to how organization members know if something is true or real (e.g., is truth discovered empirically or through experience?). Lincoln (1991) argued that both the "positivistic" and "constructivist" view of knowledge creation are valid: Organizations must ensure that they select the correct approach for the problems they wish to solve. It would seem logical that organizations that hold assumptions that are supportive of all

types of “knowing” (including empirically-based approaches) would be more inclined to integrate evaluation practice into their organization.

2.2.4 Ecology

The impact of ecological factors (e.g., architectural and physical variables of organizations) on organizational learning have received little attention in the literature (Cousins, 1994a). However, it seems reasonable to postulate that a variety of physical variables (e.g., information technology systems) would likely foster the development of interpersonal communication networks necessary for information dissemination which would enhance shared knowledge representation.

To conclude, the four factors comprised in Anderson’s framework—milieu, social systems, culture, and ecology—appear to provide a comprehensive conceptualization of organizational context features relevant to the establishment and maintenance of organizational learning systems, including evaluative systems. The review now turns to a discussion about evaluation and, in particular, research that has attempted to understand variability in the use of evaluation.

2.3 Observed Impact of the Evaluation

2.3.1 Evaluation defined

Evaluation as a form of disciplined inquiry, is distinct from research. Yet educational evaluation and research have a great deal in common, both depend very heavily on methods and techniques of empirical inquiry to produce new knowledge (Worthen & Saunders, 1987). Research, whether basic or applied, positivist or constructivist in approach, is given its genesis by a researcher’s own interests in a

particular problem and his or her hopes to "conceptualize and understand the chosen phenomenon: a particular finding is only a means to that end" (Cronbach & Suppes, 1969, p. 21). During positivistic or conventional scientific research, when sufficient validity controls are in place, the researcher is able to generalize the results to other units with similar characteristics to those used in the study. Conversely, the aim of constructivist inquiry is to gain a deeper understanding of a particular problem through the reconstruction of previously held constructions. Validity is considered in terms of the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln, 1991). It should also be noted that some forms of action research are designed to generate new knowledge grounded in the practical realities of those working in the field (Whyte, 1991).

Alternatively, evaluations are initiated by a stakeholder's question or need for information on a particular project or program. As Alkin (1991) stated, "the decision maker, and not the evaluator, determines the nature of the domain to be examined" (p. 96). Evaluators generate data, which are then used by the stakeholders to make decisions about the project or program. The degree to which the findings are generalizable to other projects or programs is generally quite limited (Stake & Denny, 1969), although this is not always the case. As has been pointed out recently in the literature, some evaluations, particularly large-scale evaluations involving multiple sites, have the purpose of generating generalizable knowledge (Patton, 1997; Shadish & Epstein, 1987).

The standard dictionary definition of evaluation -- "To determine the worth of: to appraise" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1960, p. 26) -- seems quite restrictive for there are many forms of evaluation with different purposes and

rationales. Some approaches to evaluation have been used to ameliorate social inequities by providing traditionally powerless groups with a voice in the decision-making process (Fetterman, 1994; Mark & Shotland, 1985). Similarly, some types of action research have as an expressed purpose the emancipation of social groups oppressed by groups with more power (Boyce, 1993). The approach used in such contexts are ideologically normative and grounded in a framework of social justice.

Alternatively, other approaches facilitate the involvement of key stakeholder groups (e.g., practitioners, project leaders, and program funders) in a participatory process with the expressed purpose of providing information that is "meaningful" to the client. Evaluators undertake their studies with the intention of assisting program leaders to make wiser decisions and expect that the information produced will be integrated and used in the decision-making process of the organization (Alkin, 1991; Weiss, 1988). The consequence of evaluation in this context is thought of in terms of the utilization of results, rather than the enhancement of social justice. Nevo (1983), following his analytic review of the literature, captured this debate and suggested that there were four purposes of evaluation: (1) formative to improve; (2) summative for selection and accountability; (3) socio-political to motivate and gain public support; and (4) administrative to exercise public support.

The present study restricted its focus to utilization-oriented evaluation. The evaluation project and its intended uses were clearly grounded in a practical, problem-solving orientation. Within this orientation, the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation (1994) defined evaluation as "the systematic investigation of the worth or merit of an object." Since a major concern for utilization-focused evaluators is understanding how stakeholders use evaluative

data to render judgements on the value (merit and worth) of a program, the Joint Committee's definition of evaluation will be used for this study.

2.3.2 Evaluation utilization

In spite of the different perceptions evaluators may have regarding the definition of evaluation, within the utilization orientation at least one important idea is shared: the desire to provide information that is "meaningful" to the client. Sirotnik (1987) helped to clarify the term "meaningfulness," by pointing out that educational evaluation is clearly designed to be decision-oriented. Others have echoed the message that evaluators undertake their studies with the intention of assisting program leaders to make wise decisions and intend that the information produced will be integrated into the decision-making process of the organization (Alkin, 1991; Weiss, 1988).

While formal evaluation studies designed to provide information to decision makers have been in place for nearly four decades, the degree to which these studies are actually *used* has garnered a great deal of research interest. The literature is full of reports highlighting the failure of educational evaluation to impact on decision makers (Guba, 1969; King, Thompson, & Pechman, 1982; Patton et al. 1977; Rutman, 1980; Slavin, 1989; Weiss, 1983). These critics have stated that evaluation results seldom influence decisions about the course of the program. At one point, Stake (1976) went so far as to wonder whether "evaluation is going to contribute more to the problems of education or more to the solutions" (p. 1). Evaluations were generally considered too narrow, unrealistic, irrelevant, and unfair (Weiss, 1983). Patton et al. (1977) concluded that micro politics and personal factors explained use after interviewing key informants involved in the evaluation

of national health programs. They went on to suggest that the poor quality of much of the evaluation work was a major reason leading to non-utilization of the results. This line of thinking resulted in what Alkin, Daillak and White (1979) called the "mainstream" viewpoint of evaluation use; the viewpoint that "contends that evaluations seldom influence program decision makers and holds out little hope that evaluation will ever break through the barriers to real impact on programs" (p 17)

However, if one looks more closely at the empirical studies on use, an alternative viewpoint emerges which challenges this mainstream perspective. Studies by Alkin et al. (1979), King and Pechman (1982), Larsen (1985), Leviton and Boruch (1983), Patton et al. (1977), and Weiss (1981) have all reported that evaluation results are used by decision makers, if one is prepared to alter their definition of "use."

Eventually, alternative forms of evaluation use were recognized, resulting in the conceptualization of use moving beyond the simple "adoption" criterion of use, to one that allows for changes in thinking without accompanying overt action. One of the first researchers to initiate this movement was Carol Weiss (1981) who argued that it would be a mistake to set as a criterion of utilization the direct adoption of evaluation-based recommendations by an agency or program. Instead, she argued for a very broad, somewhat diffuse concept of utilization that would include such things as changing people's orientation slightly, justifying existing actions, and stimulating further inquiry. Cousins and Leithwood (1986), following their review of over 65 empirical studies on the utilization of evaluative data, summarized the re-conceptualization of use as follows:

At the most direct extreme is knowledge use for *instrumental* purposes: a specific research finding, for example, is used as the primary basis for a decision. At the least direct extreme is *conceptual* (or educative) use of information. One learns from the information, such learning eventually having an indirect bearing on one's thoughts and actions: there is considerable support, at present, for this as a promising way to understand how research and evaluation are most frequently used. (p. 309)

Underlying both *instrumental* and *conceptual* use is the psychological processing of information—a basic requirement for knowledge to be considered at all (Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Kennedy, 1983a; King & Pechman, 1984). Figure 2 highlights how the use of evaluative data or information can take different forms and that program evaluations can have impact not only when stakeholders adopt their conclusions directly, but also when they are intrigued by its possibilities.

As mentioned above, instrumental use is often limited to relatively low-level decisions, where the stakes are small and users' interests relatively unaffected (Weiss, 1981). Indicators or evidence that use had occurred at this level could include, for example, stakeholders using the data from a program evaluation to update the content or instructional methods. However, instrumental use can also mean summative decisions regarding the decision to continue the funding of a particular program. Normally though, instrumental use is thought to be incremental; modifying, improving, or adding to programs in small ways.

Conceptual or educative use, which does not necessarily involve immediate and direct application of evaluative conclusions to decisions, acts to educate organization members about program operations and the consequences of program practice. Users will sometimes alter their basic perspectives about a program by

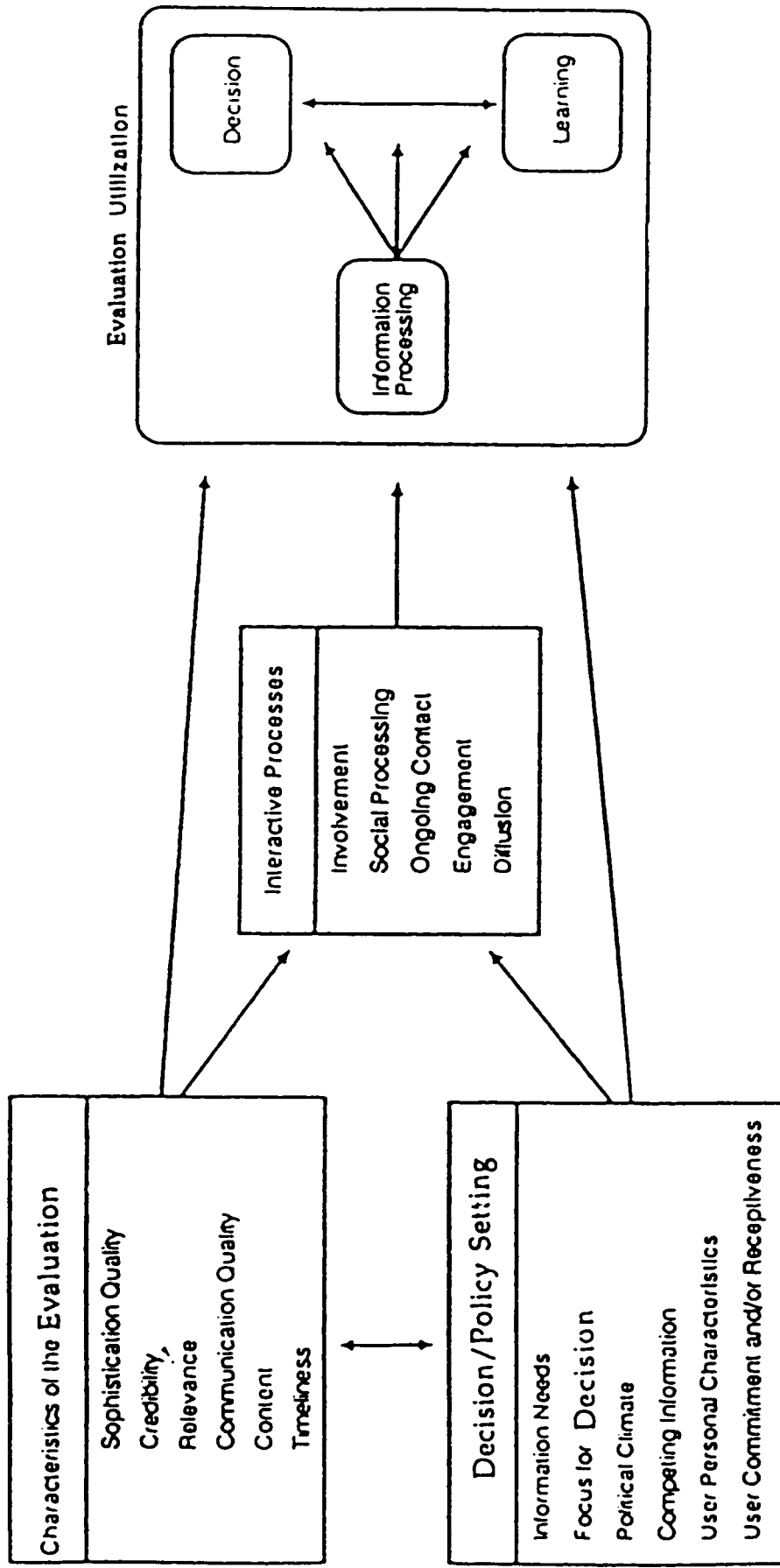


Figure 2. Evaluation utilization conceptual framework (Adapted from Cousins and Leithwood, 1993)

Note: The version of the framework presented by Cousins and Leithwood (1993) applies to the more general domain of "knowledge utilization." It has been adapted to the context of evaluation use in the present study.

taking the evaluative information into account and then filtering it through their own knowledge and interests prior to making a decision (Kennedy, 1984; Weiss, 1981). Indicators or evidence that conceptual use of data had occurred could include, for example, primary users (those with a vital interest in the program) involved in the process of digesting the evaluation findings and then rethinking the fundamental assumptions with which a particular educational program has been based. This could result in the re-design of the program model including the delivery and evaluation mechanisms. Conceptual use can be both incremental and non-incremental; the data can lead to fine tuning or cause fundamental changes to the program's purpose and design.

It is also important to acknowledge that an important distinction has recently emerged in the evaluation use literature between the utilization of evaluation findings (as discussed above) and the impact that the "process" of being involved in the evaluation can have (e.g., Cousins, 1995; Patton, 1994). Patton (1994) alluded to the concept of process use in his presentation of developmental evaluation which he defined as, "evaluation processes and activities that support program, project, product, personnel and/or organizational development" (p. 317). He crystallized his thinking on the matter in a more recent text and suggested that, "it doesn't matter so much what the focus of an evaluation is, or what it's findings, the impact comes from engaging thoughtfully and seriously in the process" (Patton, 1997, p. 90). Other researchers have examined this impact—how participation in the evaluation process seemed to affect program personnel/stakeholders. For example, Greene (1987) described two case study participatory evaluations and observed how stakeholder involvement enhanced their confidence in their ability to

analyze data and utilize research skills. However, it is Patton's (1997) assertion that involvement in the process of evaluation can not only lead to individual but to organizational development, that is of particular interest to present study. This notion will be explored in a later section that looks at those evaluation approaches that foster organizational learning.

The empirical research cited above supports the notion that evaluation information can be used and have impact in varied and complex ways. Further, significant program changes/improvements can occur if decision makers are provided the opportunity to synthesize the evaluation results in such a way that basic assumptions and beliefs about the program are socially debated. The question now becomes, "what are those factors or conditions that act to enhance or limit both the instrumental and conceptual use of new information?" The next section will attempt to address this question by providing a theoretical framework which explains the variability in evaluation use.

2.3.3 Explaining variation in evaluation use

Researchers have known for some time that using new information to make decisions involves political, organizational, socioeconomic, and attitudinal factors (Larsen, 1985). These factors not only interact with the information itself, but with one another (Smith, 1977). For example, Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) stressed the importance of producing reports that were viewed by stakeholders as credible and practical. Alkin, Stecher and Geiger (1982) reported in their analysis of Title I evaluations in school districts in the United States that the following six factors were responsible for use of evaluation information: the reputation of the evaluator; the evaluator's commitment to evaluation use; the interest of decision makers and

of the community in the evaluation; the extent to which the evaluation focused on local needs; the degree to which evaluation results were presented in a graphic, nontechnical form; and the development of procedures that assisted decision makers to use the information.

While these studies were helpful in identifying some of the factors which contributed to evaluation use, none of the studies produced the kind of prescriptive framework which is needed to indicate the relative importance of the various factors in predicting variation in use. As described earlier, use can be thought of as a continuum ranging from non-use to high-use. Similarly, the various factors (e.g., communication quality) can be placed on continuum ranging from low to high. What has been lacking in the literature was information relating to the correlation between the various factors and use.

Taking up the challenge, Cousins and Leithwood (1986) developed a meta-analytic method to assess the relative weight of the various factors identified and their ability to predict use. Their framework was inadequate in two respects: 1) it linked the use of data to an undifferentiated individual called the decision maker and 2) it failed to acknowledge the important influences of the interactions between the practitioner/stakeholder and the researcher (Cousins & Earl, 1995). Cousins and Leithwood (1993) developed the framework (see Figure 2) and it now accounts for all factors that have emerged in the empirical literature as influences on evaluation use. The higher order categories which comprise the utilization framework can be described as follows: The first category of influence is characteristics of the evaluation study itself (six factors); secondly, a number of factors have been shown to be associated with the decision or policy setting within

which the evaluation is to be used (six factors); and finally, the third category of influence labeled "Interactive Processes" identifies five factors associated with exchanges between evaluators and members of the community of practice and among members of this latter community. In total, the framework identifies seventeen potential influences that play a role in determining the extent to which evaluation data are used.

In their 1993 study, Cousins and Leithwood also applied the framework to the domain of knowledge utilization by describing its ability to answer questions about knowledge use during a school improvement project. Employing both quantitative modeling techniques, as well as, qualitative research methods, the authors found that while the factors contained within the *improvement setting* and the *source of information* may be important to stimulating conceptual use of information by educators, the impact of *interactive processes* may be particularly substantial. They found the influence of such processes to "be both discernable and relatively potent" (Cousins & Leithwood, 1993, p. 328). Specifically, four processes were found to contribute to conceptual use. First, *involvement* in the design and delivery of interventions (in the present case "evaluation") were activities which acted to positively impact both learning and decision making. Being directly involved as an active participant allows one a clearer understanding of the issues and intentions of the proposed changes. Second, *social processing* of information with colleagues and peers to determine the relevance of the new information. Third, *ongoing contact* allowed practitioners to continuously interact with curriculum and technical assistants which increased the level of understanding of the disseminated information and thus its usefulness. Finally, *engagement* in implementation and

follow-up activities which resulted in personal benefits such as renewed confidence. This in turn, stimulated educators to implement changes at the local level.

Recent empirical and conceptual work in the domains of evaluation utilization and research utilization illustrate the connection of interactive processes and social interaction to enhancing the use of evaluation data (Cousins & Earl, 1992; Huberman, 1995). Termed "linkage networks" by Huberman and Cox (1990), this conception implies inter-organizational ties and ongoing contacts between research and practitioner-based organizations. Shulha and Cousins (1996), in their recent exhaustive review of the literature on evaluation utilization, observed that an increase in use will result if users: 1) are involved in the production, dissemination, and utilization of knowledge; 2) are provided with frequent and meaningful contact with the producers of knowledge; and/or 3) share the researchers' frame of reference about the conduct of the research. These conclusions supports Weiss' (1983) contention that knowledge entering organizations will not be used unless it corresponds to what the users already know. Thus, the challenge for evaluators and other knowledge producers is to construct environments that enable users to both learn and become comfortable with incoming information.

Huberman (1990) studied this notion within the context of a Swiss national research program in vocational education. He initially increased the contacts between researchers and practitioners, who, prior to the study, had limited contact with each other. He then tracked how these contacts affected the transfer of knowledge between the two groups, as well as the degree to which these contacts were maintained after the study concluded. Huberman's work was based on the belief that for research results to exert a strong conceptual influence on

practitioners, face-to-face interactions between researchers and practitioners must occur before, during, and after the study. His study supported this premise by finding that both conceptual and instrumental use of the data increased as contacts between the researchers and practitioners intensified. Furthermore, multiple contacts with both groups, before and during the study, with the purpose of preparing the data for later use, resulted in stronger ties following the study (Huberman, 1990; Huberman & Cox, 1990).

Other researchers (Cousins, 1988; Cousins & Leithwood, 1993; Greene, 1987, 1988; Klein & Gwaltney, 1991; Mathisen, 1990; Winberg, 1991) have all supported empirically the power of such linkages in explaining the use of evaluative information. For example, Cousins (1988) found that principals' use of performance appraisal data for personal professional development was enhanced with participation in the data-gathering and processing aspects of the appraisal process. Greene's (1988) study of the effects of "stakeholder-based" evaluation suggested that greater cognitive processing occurred through active discussion with colleagues of diverse perspectives, and that this in turn leads to an increased use of evaluation results. Finally, Winberg (1991) found evidence of increased use of evaluation results if program management is involved in every step of the projects' design and early reporting of credible information is carried out. He went on to advise evaluators to adopt a "phased" approach to evaluation which demanded information be shared frequently and incrementally with the client as the evaluation study proceeds.

This recent empirical research has added considerably to our understanding of how research information or evaluative data are used and what factors or

conditions have acted to foster the various types of use (i.e., instrumental vs conceptual). The research has also provided evaluation researchers who are interested in facilitating the use of evaluative data by practitioner communities with persuasive information in terms of which approach they should follow. Clearly, the research has implied that use is improved when the users are involved in the conduct of the evaluation and the evaluation results are thought to be relevant. This understanding has led researchers to involve users in the *processes* of research—to a more collaborative approach. Weiss (1991) commented on this movement and suggested that “the notion is simple and persuasive: If stakeholders are heavily involved in deciding what questions are salient enough to need research, they will be more interested in the conclusions. If they are the ones who decide on the research question, they will pay more attention to the answers” (p. 12). In addition, Huberman and Cox (1990) advised that when interactions are intensive, users engage more fully with the study, both cognitively and operationally. They devote more time and make more attempts to influence decision-making and operational cycles. The approach also recognizes that the real learning occurs by becoming engaged in the actual task of the evaluation itself. Questions regarding how much and what kind of collaboration is necessary to improve the utilization of results, and at what costs, now seem important to ask.

Greene (1987, 1988) suggested that practitioners should help to interpret the results of research, look at findings, and try to make sense of them in terms of the needs and resources of the local setting. Similarly, Weiss (1991) stated that the users are best able to understand why the results came out as they did, and they are certainly the ones who can figure out what the implications of the results are for

practice. Some researchers have gone further (Cousins & Earl, 1992, 1995; Nevo, 1994) and recommended that program practitioners should also be involved in doing the research. Users, they say, should be partners in the research and should therefore work on study's design and collect and analyze the data. If they are to embrace the conclusions, they should be a part of creating them.

Weiss (1991) cautioned that such depth of participation may be asking too much of practitioners, given their different skills, norms, time orientations, and the like and will slow the process to a "snail's pace." However, she supported the movement toward stakeholder involvement in design and interpretation phases of the evaluation.

If we want practitioners to adopt new techniques and programs, it is useful if they have a say: a say about where the needs are before the research is being planned; a say about what research findings actually mean, how they should be understood; a say about how to translate research findings into technologies of practice. When researchers involve the practicing professional in the translation of knowledge into new practice, the message is likely to take. (p. 14)

The literature seems to suggest that the interactive processes should be viewed as critical factors which must be facilitated if evaluation results are to be used. It also seems that the interactive processes could provide an important connection for evaluation as an organizational learning system. If we accept that 1) developing linkages are fundamental to the conduct of successful program evaluations and 2) evaluation activities can stimulate organizational capacity, what approach to evaluation would be most effective in achieving these two important outcomes?

2.4 Internal Participatory Evaluation Intervention

2.4.1 Evolution of the participatory approach

One stream of participatory evaluation is based on the premise that involvement and participation of program practitioners in the process of doing the evaluation has high potential for enhancing evaluation utilization (i.e., program decision-making and problem solving). Unlike other responsive approaches to evaluation (e.g., "user-oriented," "stakeholder-based"), participatory evaluation is based on the evaluation utilization framework presented in Figure 2 and allows practice-based personnel (e.g., teachers, program managers) an opportunity to actively participate in all aspects of the evaluation process such as instrument development, data collection, data analysis and reporting. As a result, the evaluator working on the evaluation project is viewed more as a team member rather than team leader who controls the project (Cousins, 1996a). All members are valued for the expertise that they bring to the project and are expected to be active participants in the evaluation exercise.

It is widely accepted that the first real attempt to develop a model with such a focus was made by Robert Stake in the late 1960s. His approach, termed "responsive," had as its central focus the concerns and issues of the stakeholder audience and it stressed the importance of improving communication with stakeholders as a main goal. This approach attempts to respond naturally to the ways people assimilate information and arrive at understanding (Stake, 1975). Thus, the purpose, framework and focus of this evaluative approach emerged from interactions with users, and those interactions acted to progressively focus the evaluative plan. "Responsive" evaluators must interact continuously with members

of various stakeholder groups to uncover what information they desire and the manner in which they prefer to receive such information (Worthen & Sanders, 1987). In addition, the responsive approach offered evaluators, for the first time, a conceptual orientation which not only allowed for, but encouraged, ongoing dialogue with the potential users of the information.

The "stakeholder-based" approach, developed in the mid-1970s, continued the movement by involving all interested parties (i.e., stakeholders) in the evaluation early and engaging them in the planning of the evaluation (Bryk, 1983). Similar approaches, termed "user-oriented," were promoted by Alkin et al. (1979) and by (Patton et al., 1977; Patton, 1986). Potential users of information are the focal points in this approach. The user-oriented evaluator is conscious of a number of factors (i.e., personal, environmental, communal) that are likely to affect the utility of the evaluation (Stecher & Davis, 1987). As with stakeholder-based approaches, the single most important element in utilization-focused evaluation is the shift of attention from the methods or the objects of evaluation (e.g., a program), to the intended users and their intended uses of the evaluative information (Patton, 1988a, 1994).

Certain caveats must be considered. For example, the need for potential users to be relatively stable over the time needed to conduct the evaluation can be problematic. Specifically, users groups can change composition frequently and this can disrupt the the focus of the evaluation. Also, individual differences along such lines as organizational power and authority and interpersonal assertiveness can be troubling. Stakeholders who are more vocal or more persuasive can have undue influence, thus causing some users to be under-represented (Stecher & Davis, 1987).

Further, stakeholders may not understand the technical limitations of evaluation, and may become frustrated if the evaluation cannot accomplish their goals. As a result, the evaluator may need to spend considerable time, with large number of stakeholders, attempting to educate them about the potential and limits of evaluation (Gold, 1983; Murray, 1983; Weiss, 1983).

2.4.2 Participatory evaluation

Alkin (1991) questioned the wisdom of attempting to please multiple audiences at once. He distinguished between stakeholders who were “primary users” (i.e., those who make decisions related to the implementation of a program or those who are vitally interested in the program) and other stakeholders who were less interested. Recognition that meaningful involvement of this group of stakeholders was likely to enhance use, stimulated Cousins and Earl (1992) to develop the “participatory” evaluation approach which limited practitioner involvement to primary users. At the core of this model is the partnership which is developed between the “trained evaluation personnel *and* practice-based decision makers, organization members with program responsibility, or people with a vital interest in the program—in Alkin’s terms, primary users” (Cousins & Earl, 1992, p. 399). Furthermore, the authors suggested that participatory evaluation is best suited to formative evaluation projects that seek to generate information for program understanding or improvements.

By noting the important differences between the participatory approach and the conventional responsive approaches such as the stakeholder-based approach, characteristics under the heading *internal participatory evaluation intervention* identified in Figure 1 are described. First, the participatory approach involves a

relatively small number of primary users, whereas the traditional stakeholder-based model attempts to engage a large number of potentially interested members of the organization. Second, the participatory approach comprehensively engages primary users in problem formulation, instrument design or selection, data collection, analysis, interpretation, recommendation, and reporting. The stakeholder-based approach involves organization members in a consultative way to clarify the evaluation's purpose and establish relevant questions. Finally, the participatory approach requires the evaluator to assume responsibility for technical support, training, and quality control, but the responsibility for conducting the study is held equally between the evaluator and users. The stakeholder approach requires that the evaluator is the principal investigator who translates institutional requirements into the study's goals and then conducts that study. In participatory evaluation, control of the technical decision making for this evaluation is shared (Cousins & Earl, 1992).

To successfully implement a participatory evaluation, primary users must acquire the necessary technical skills vital to the successful completion of the research project. As Cousins and Earl (1992) highlighted, such learning is crucial to the participatory approach.

The evaluator's role may evolve into a position of support and consultation as time elapses and local skills are developed and refined. In the ideal, key organization members develop sufficient technical knowledge and research skills to take on the coordination role on continuing and new projects, with the evaluator available for consultation about technical issues and tasks such as statistical analysis, instrument design, and technical reporting. (p. 400)

For many evaluators, the degree of interaction required with primary stakeholders to meet the technical skill needs make the participatory approach fundamentally different from the stakeholder-based approach.

While there has been relatively little empirical work looking at the impact of participatory evaluation on both evaluation use and organizational learning, a small body of research is accumulating and the emerging findings are promising (e.g., Cousins, 1996a, 1995; King, 1995; Lafleur, 1995). For example, in terms of participatory evaluation's impact on use, Cousins (1996a) varied the level of researcher involvement in the conduct of three participatory evaluations and observed not only both instrumental and conceptual use of results, but found that all three stakeholder groups developed a significant degree of research skill during the process. He suggested that it may be more important to the eventual success of the evaluation for project members to receive appropriate training, than participation in the evaluation by the researcher. Lafleur (1995) conducted a retrospective examination of an Ontario school district's participatory approach to program evaluation and the utilization of the findings. Using the evaluation utilization framework developed by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) as the basis for his analysis, Lafleur found that the partnership established between the trained evaluation person and the primary users to be significant. Specifically, the direct involvement in the project of the primary users resulted in increased teamwork, ownership of the project, personal technical development, and a better understanding of the political and economic pressures of the school system. While the actual utilization of results in most of the applied studies analyzed were disappointing, Lafleur concluded that this was due mainly because the district's

superintendents (key primary stakeholders) were either not involved or not committed to the process. These two examples highlight the need for participatory evaluators to be diligent in involving representation from all primary stakeholder groups and ensuring that technical training support is provided to practitioners/primary users selected for involvement in the evaluation.

In terms of participatory evaluation's impact on organizational learning, Cousins and Earl (1992) reviewed 31 empirical studies concerned with evaluation use and the impact of research-practice linkages. They found participatory activities acted as a catalyst in stimulating social interaction of organization members, a condition necessary for enhanced organizational learning. Similarly Earl (1995), in a recent study on the effects of a school-based internal evaluation unit, reported that the use of a participatory evaluation approach appeared to contribute to organizational learning. In this case, school coordinators, principals, and vice-principals were involved in conducting a series of staff interviews to assess the extent to which a new curriculum was being implemented in a large urban school board. These interviewers were involved in the data analysis stage, as well as in the development of the final report. This participatory process allowed key school-based stakeholders an opportunity to engage in the kind of collaborative discussions needed for in-depth reflection of their practice and beliefs (Earl, 1995). Finally, Cousins (1996a) also found evidence, albeit modest, to suggest impact at the organizational level, as opposed to the individual level, had occurred. Following a participatory evaluation intervention, Cousins noted that ongoing research seemed likely if the environment was favorable. In another intervention he found

that learning systems were created as a result of dense interpersonal networks being formed.

Prior research highlights the importance of establishing dense interpersonal linkages among organization members if utilization of results and organizational learning is to result. Participatory evaluation, with its emphasis on extensive collaboration with primary stakeholders, would seem to hold potential for fostering organizational learning due to the forums provided for organization members to share their mental representations about the evaluation problem and the context within which it is situated. While some recent data (Forss, Cracknell & Samset, 1994) have shown that the level of organizational impact resulting from forms of participatory evaluation has not been very significant (i.e., single-loop learning is more likely to be the outcome than double-loop), further research in this domain is needed.

To conclude, while the emerging evidence linking participatory forms of evaluation to improving organization learning is positive, it is quite limited. Therefore, it is too early to suggest that participatory evaluation can stimulate the kinds of social interaction and dialogue among organization members which lead to the dimensions and processes associated with organizational learning capacity articulated earlier. It is interesting to note that most of the research looking at the impact of participatory approaches on organizational learning has emerged from externally conducted evaluations; that is, the evaluator is somehow external to the program being evaluated (even though he/she may be internal to the organization). There are few studies where the impact of participatory evaluation has been situated within the context where the trained evaluator has also been internal to

the program being evaluated. The present study is proposing an investigation of the effects that internal participatory evaluation could have. The next section explores the current literature on internal evaluation and provides a context within which the current study will be conducted.

2.4.3 Internal evaluation

House (1988), Love (1991), Mathison (1991a), Sonnichsen (1987), and Torres (1991) have all suggested that internal evaluation is probably the future of evaluation. The definitions of and differences between internal and external evaluators have been presented in the evaluation literature for many years and are central to the present study. While most researchers would define the external evaluator as being someone external to both the organization and program under review (Love, 1983, 1991; Mathison, 1991a), there is much less agreement regarding the definition and functions of an internal evaluator. Specifically, some researchers (e.g., Earl, 1995; Lafleur, 1995) have conducted studies looking at the impact that internal participatory evaluators have had on the utilization of results, focusing on evaluators who are employed by the organization but are not integral to program management or delivery. Rather, they work out of research and evaluation units and conduct evaluations in conjunction with program personnel. Conversely, noted evaluation theorists such as Scriven (1991a), Nevo (1994), and Love (1991) have defined internal evaluators as being individuals who are "internal" both to the actual program/object being evaluated and the organization within which the evaluation occurs. Scriven clarified his view, "internal evaluations (or evaluators) are those done by project staff, even if they are special evaluation staff" (1991a, p. 197). According to Scriven, unless the evaluator is connected to the program being

evaluated and acquires program expertise, it is best to regard him or her as being an "external" evaluator even if he or she is employed by the organization. Figure 3 illustrates this notion as a continuum ranging from external evaluators at one extreme and internal evaluators at the other. As noted above, the distinction between evaluators internal to the organizations and those internal to the organization *and* the program being evaluated, is a fundamental issue for the present study.

The shift from external to internal evaluations marks a significant transition in the field of educational evaluation (House, 1986; Patton, 1986, 1996). This transition resulted from two sources: the realization that evaluation is primarily a process which is designed to provide information to decision makers so that better decisions can be made; and growing disenchantment with the perceived lack of relevance of evaluations carried out by external evaluators (Clifford & Sherman, 1983; Love, 1991). Internal evaluators by virtue of their position in the organization are provided access to information which, for micro-political reasons, is kept underground. The ability to access information about the context in which the evaluation is to be conducted is crucial for improved decision making. Owen and Lambert (1994) described the current pressure on decision makers within organizations to utilize "micro-level" knowledge (i.e., knowledge which is acquired and stored by practice-based personnel). This pressure has forced evaluators to reconsider their roles. Specifically, what and how information is generated as well as how it should be communicated to decision makers. Owen and Lambert (1994) noted that there is a trend toward evaluators working internally and acquiring the technical, practice-based knowledge needed to disseminate new information to

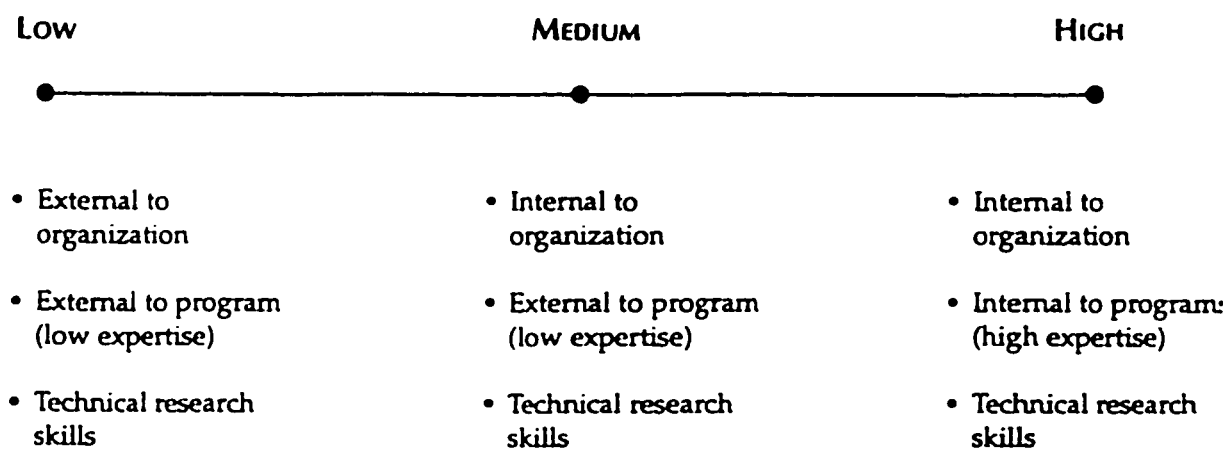


Figure 3. Level of evaluator expertise and connection to program

decision makers. It was hoped that by becoming immersed in the organization's context, evaluators could produce information that would enable decision makers "to construct accurate mental models about a program and the organizational consequences which flow from its implementation" (Owen & Lambert, 1994, p. 4).

Patton (1994), in presenting his "developmental" evaluation approach, proposed evaluators become "part of the design team helping to monitor what's happening, both processes and outcomes, in an evolving, rapidly changing environment of constant feedback and change" (p. 313). He continued by suggesting that the relationship developed can go on for years and clearly implies that an intimate relationship be developed so that the evaluator is "in-tune" with the entity being assessed. Similarly, Jenness and Barley (1995) described the current wave of educational reform in the U.S., termed "systemic reform," and its implication for evaluation. They highlighted the central role which program evaluation plays and the push to have evaluators intimately connected to programs they are evaluating.

“The nature of systemic reform requires collaboration, negotiation, and mediation. Evaluators have much to contribute to this process” (p. 54).

Put succinctly, “evaluators need to master the context because users will only understand new information as a function of old information, and the old information is rooted in the sense they have made of the context in which they work” (Huberman & Cox, 1990, p. 166). Internal evaluators using a participatory approach should be able to stimulate use by providing the social context necessary for users to develop shared understandings of information which is gathered or newly generated. This view is at odds with Scriven (1991b) and Stufflebeam (1994) who contend that evaluation should be restricted to making judgements about program merit and worth. They question the wisdom of evaluators who, it seems, have confused the goals of the evaluation and the roles they should be playing. Clearly, Scriven and Stufflebeam are of the opinion that evaluators who engage in collaborative forms of evaluation are opening themselves up to the negative consequences of co-optation and reduced technical rigor. These elements are given a more elaborate treatment in the following section.

2.4.4 Cooptation and internal evaluation

Scriven (1967) may be one of the first evaluation scholars who highlighted the problems internal evaluators have in developing an objective perspective. Faced with the constraints of politics and limited resources, Scriven proposed that internal evaluators have difficulty adhering to standard evaluative designs and thus subsequent conclusions are likely invalid. Internal evaluators, as members of the organization, help the organization to achieve its specific goals and purposes. Assuming most organizations are bureaucratic in nature, internal evaluators must

“play by the organization’s rules.” Although a problem for all evaluators, co-optation is especially troublesome for internal evaluators who are expected to be simultaneously both advocates and critics of the program under review. The reasons for this problem are numerous. Some examples are: the evaluator’s job may be dependent on the successful continuance of the project; there may be conflict with project leaders regarding the motives for reporting evaluation findings; negative results from evaluations are frequently ignored or subverted because of potentially damaging consequences; and the competition for limited funding is keen (Anderson & Ball, 1978; Kennedy, 1983b; Mathison, 1991b).

If one considers the organization itself, the power to shape the conduct of the program evaluation is great. Kennedy (1983b) suggested that organizational dynamics are so powerful that evaluators cannot operate independently of them. “This is particularly true of in-house evaluators; if they are to remain part of their organizations, they must find ways to adapt their role to the needs of the organization” (Kennedy, 1983b, p. 520). Kennedy continued by suggesting that evaluators who have been successfully integrated into organizations are likely to have taken sides with management in the conduct of their work. While in-house evaluators may have a relatively easy time adapting to the “substantive” needs of whichever clients (e.g., program personnel) they are assigned, their most significant adaptation will be to the organization’s problem-solving style. Essentially, the organization determines whom the evaluator will serve, what services will be available, and what funding will be provided. Though internal evaluators have some discretion and influence in these matters, they are usually required to respond to needs defined by administrative superiors.

Finally, Mathison (1991a) has argued that the bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of organizations, within which a decision-making model conforms, force internal evaluators to view program leaders as the sole, primary source of evaluation questions and the primary audience of the evaluation. In other words, if internal evaluators adopt a decision-making model, they will respond disproportionately to the needs of the program leaders and will put the good of the organization ahead of their own integrity as professional evaluators (Love, 1983). House (1983b) clarified this concept by identifying four broad categories of roles that in-house evaluators fill. One of these roles, termed the "participant" evaluator, can be characterized by two important features: first, they tend to serve people rather than issues, and second, they tend to take their clients' issues as their own. The abandoning of their position as neutral evaluators is at the root of the problem faced by internal evaluators.

2.4.5 Technical quality and internal evaluation

As implied above, threats to the technical quality stemming from internally conducted evaluations represents another class of issues that have been well researched (Cooley, 1980; Kean, 1980; Kennedy, 1983b; Mathison, 1991a; Scriven, 1967). Cousins and Earl (1992) cautioned, "if we accept, then, that evaluation results have real value for organizations, the question becomes how to make them accessible and important to users and responsive to their needs while maintaining sufficient technical quality" (p. 399). Researchers (Greene, 1990; Murray, 1983; Torres, 1991) identified the possible conflict between the need to be overly responsive to the political/organizational demands on the evaluation and maintenance of technical/methodological standards as a major problem. Mathison

(1991b) addressed this issue by analyzing the relationships among the roles played by internal evaluators. She identified three dominant roles that internal evaluators assume: that of a professional evaluator, a member of a substantive field, and a member of an organization. In terms of maintaining technical/methodological standards, the conflicts inherent in being a professional evaluator and a member of a substantive field affects one's perception of the technical quality of the evaluation. Mathison (1991b) also pointed out the epistemological challenge evaluators face, "there is an epistemology in any field that legitimizes certain knowledge and delegitimizes other knowing. The use of any evaluation methodologies must be at minimum palatable to those whose work is being evaluated, otherwise the effort is wasted" (Mathison, 1991b, 176).

A second significant factor, noted by Mathison (1991a), which affects the technical quality of the evaluation, are the internal operating systems which run the organization. This factor acts differently than the subtle political pressures an organization exerts on internal evaluators discussed earlier. Rather, the adoption of the decision-making model by many organizations has resulted in the creation of information systems which act to standardize the evaluation practice. Thus, the process of program evaluation becomes more like information management and, therefore, it loses some of its social obligation and ability to provide an unbiased, independent critique of the program under review.

Some researchers have addressed ways of combating the problems of cooptation and technical quality identified above. Scheerens (1985) proposed that in order to counter the influence of the organization, evaluators should lower their standards of research and opt for an "educator" role of formative or qualitative

evaluation. Mathison (1991b) has supported this idea and specified that to manage conflicts within the organization, internal evaluators must become educators. They must become, "educators about evaluation—about what evaluation is, about what evaluation can and cannot do, about evaluation as an area of intellectual interest" (Mathison, 1991b, p. 178). Mathison feels that for the process of evaluation to be accepted by the organization, it has to be understood. Accordingly, this understanding will only be accomplished by establishing open discussions about the various contentious issues which plague the evaluation process. Other suggestions for remedying the liabilities of internal evaluation counter Scheerens's proposal and have emphasized the strengthening of methodological rigor and scientific quality (Newman, White, Zuskar, & Plaut, 1983). Perhaps Mathison (1991b) provided the most obvious advice by suggesting that evaluators actively promote independence and that their evaluations undergo metaevaluations or evaluation auditing.

On the other hand, some notable researchers (e.g., Greene, 1990; Scriven, 1993) have taken issue with this bleak picture of internal evaluation and the positive perceptions held about external evaluations. Objectivity and credibility are assumed to be virtues of external evaluators given their distance from an organization's payroll and the presumed independence which this allows. However, as Scriven (1993) pointed out, external evaluators may also suffer from the same lack of objectivity and credibility for an obvious reason. To use Scriven's words, "no one ever got rich from one evaluation contract. So...you have to have satisfied clients if you want to (get) further business from them and from those with whom they network. And what pleases clients more, good news about their baby or bad news?" (p. 38). Similarly, Reichardt (1994) noted that the "self interests" of

evaluators, especially those external to the organization, will be powerful as the evaluator attempts to please the client. It would seem that the pressure to receive continued funding for future evaluation studies is extremely powerful.

In contrast, Lafleur (1995) asked primary users involved in an internal participatory evaluation to reflect on the advantages and disadvantages of the approach taken and reported that, in addition to feeling a sense of empowerment (i.e., increased understanding and ownership of the evaluation process), users felt that the participatory approach kept the evaluation practical and honest. When asked to elaborate on this finding, Lafleur (personal communication, 1995, April) commented that by building strong connections with the primary users of the evaluation, those individuals who will be faced with the responsibility for acting on the results, a "self-policing" system is fostered. Lafleur noted that evaluators needed to spend the necessary time training primary users in evaluation protocol and to work hard clarifying, up front, the standards required to implement effective and meaningful program evaluations for these systems to emerge. Cronbach et al. (1981) reinforced this by suggesting that the quality of the evaluation is not determined by the relationship of the evaluator to the program, but by the professionalism with which the evaluators and his or her evaluation team conducts the evaluation. Finally, Greene (1990) has observed that the discomfort which has been voiced by some researchers about participatory evaluation approaches, is due largely to their narrow view of what constitutes acceptable technical quality.

In essence, the challenge for evaluators of user-oriented or participatory evaluations is to 1) select who to be responsive to, 2) facilitate a forum to establish a realistic design and methodology; and 3) construct appropriate data gathering tools.

It is impossible to satisfy everyone who has an interest in the evaluation.

Consequently, participatory evaluations "can and perhaps inevitably will conflict with the technical responsibility when the criteria relevant to each (worth and merit criteria, respectively) represent the information needs or evaluation agendas of different audiences" (Greene, 1990, p. 273). The evaluator is placed in the position of balancing his or her notion of what is appropriate evaluative methodology with the possibility of rendering the evaluation useless because he or she did not conform to the views held by the certain stakeholder with certain needs (Mathison, 1991b).

2.4.6 Internal evaluation and use

The present author has had some difficulty locating empirical studies on the impact of internal evaluations on use. Only two studies, Earl (1995) and Lafleur (1995), were found that addressed evaluation use and these were within the context of an internal school system evaluation unit. Two other researchers (King & Pechman 1982, 1984; Pechman & King, 1986), although working within the context of an internal school research unit, addressed the conceptualization of evaluation utilization rather than the impact of the unit. All four studies could be classified as involving internal evaluators who, while internal to the organization, were external to the program being evaluated (see Figure 3). Lastly, Ziegahn (1989) focused on the impact of conducting an internal evaluation. She studied the activities of an internal evaluation team in the hopes of understanding why their impact on monitoring activities, with an externally funded distance education center, was so limited. Despite this lack of research, the increasing emphasis on the formative mode of evaluation and the realization that evaluators must understand and be

understood by the host organization, suggest that further research in the internal evaluation context is needed.

To conclude, if the critical function for evaluators, whether internal or external to the organization, is to assist with the production of information so a program's value can be determined, it has been suggested that evaluators become knowledgeable of the object of the evaluation (Alkin, 1991; Patton, 1994; Reichardt, 1994). It is the present investigator's contention that participatory internal evaluators—who are employed by the organization, possess the appropriate technical training, and who have acquired program expertise due to their training and connection with the program/object under review—can enhance both evaluation use and the development of organizational learning systems. Specifically, internal participatory evaluators, given their positions within organizations and their familiarity with the entity being evaluated, would seem to be ideally equipped to foster the interactive organizational processes mentioned above. Moreover, in addition to their program expertise, their ongoing connections with and intimate knowledge of the key members of the organization would provide an important base for internal participatory evaluators to develop the linkages necessary for effective communication and exchange of information. Unfortunately, very little research is available to challenge or support these assertions. The research which has been conducted on internal or "in-house" evaluators has focused primarily on investigating two concerns: cooptation and the technical quality of the evaluation itself. The present study is intended to address this gap in our empirical knowledge.

2.5 Specific Research Questions

It seems logical to speculate that internally conducted participatory evaluation would have a great potential for enhancing organizational learning capacity. A study which introduces the participatory process to an internally conducted evaluation as defined above, would contribute to filling in this "gap" in the evaluation literature. To summarize, while some researchers suggest that participatory evaluation approaches demonstrate much promise in promoting organizational learning, the data are still emerging. Further, such data have been almost exclusively drawn from studies looking at the effects of externally lead participatory evaluations. This provided the motivation for the present examination of internal participatory evaluation as an intervention to enhance the capacity of the organization to learn. A study which was based on a two and one-half year longitudinal single case study of participatory evaluation in a national, publicly funded training organization. Consequently, the specific research questions that were addressed in the present study are:

1. What are the intended or unintended organizational consequences of internal participatory evaluation? Specifically, what impact does internal participatory evaluation have on the dimensions and processes associated with organizational learning capacity?
2. What is the relative influence on organizational learning capacity of those factors associated with the characteristics of the organization, the characteristics of the evaluation intervention, and the nature of impact of the evaluation?

Chapter 3 Methods

3.1 Introduction

The review of literature on organizational learning and the nature and impact of evaluation revealed that very little is known about the specific roles which evaluation plays in enhancing organizational learning capacity. This is particularly the case for internal participatory evaluation. The present study called for an exploratory approach which provided flexibility to explore the functions and impact of internal participatory evaluation within a guiding framework tied to organizational learning and evaluation utilization. Qualitative methods designed to capitalize on the prior specifications of a conceptual framework were therefore selected for use in the present study.

3.2 Design

In their most recent book on qualitative research methods, Miles and Huberman (1994) showed how various qualitative traditions of research differ in their assumptions, focus, and methodology. For example, social anthropology, from a methodological standpoint, is based on ethnographic techniques and is concerned with: extended contacts with a given community; mundane, day-to-day events; direct or indirect participation in local activities with particular care given to the description of local particularities; individuals' perspectives and interpretation of their world; and, relatively little pre-structured instrumentation. The prime analytic task is to uncover and make clear the ways in which people in particular

(work) settings come to understand, account for, take action concerning, or otherwise manage their day-to-day situation (Van Maanen, 1979). Further, Miles and Huberman have noted the recent interest of many social anthropologists to create or make refinements to existing theories. While the assumptions and focus of this study are similar to social anthropology, the present study was guided by the conceptual framework presented earlier, and by a methodological approach advocated by Miles and Huberman (1994). Specifically, this approach implies that data collection, analysis, and interpretation are guided by the framework while simultaneously permitting emergent patterns to be captured. Previous researchers with interests similar to those of the present study have used explanatory frameworks to guide their progress. For example, Lafleur (1995) used an explanatory knowledge utilization framework developed by Cousins and Leithwood (1986) in his study which looked at the effects of participatory evaluation on utilization. Given the study's interest in expanding upon the explanatory framework presented earlier, a deductive approach seemed best suited for the present study.

Miles and Huberman (1994) support this type of qualitative approach, which asks for more fully defined research questions, more standardized data collection procedures, and more systematic devices for analysis than is generally the case in naturalistic approaches (e.g., Yin, 1991). If the goal of being out in the "field" is to describe and analyze a pattern of relationships, it must be remembered that this task requires a set of analytic categories (Mishler, 1990). Consequently, "starting with them (deductively) or getting to them (inductively) are both possible" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). This implies that emergent patterns or categories can be

captured by this approach. Lincoln (1991) mentioned that this approach to behavioral research has been used by those researchers who need or want the richness, the texture, the additional understanding, and the descriptive range that qualitative methods provide, but who are unwilling to sacrifice their public claims to scientific validity and reliability.

A longitudinal single case study design was used for the present exploratory research. The case study approach is justified when a researcher is investigating "how" or "why" questions about a contemporary set of events, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984). The present study attempted to answer both how and why questions concerning the effects which an internal participatory evaluation had on members of a national organization. Unlike an experiment, there was no attempt to manipulate or control the situation so as to assess the consequences on specific behaviors. The data collection and analysis section identifies the methods used and some of the precautions taken to improve the data's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.3 Focus for Research

The case selected for the study was an evaluation of a training program that is directed, funded, and implemented by a partnership of federal and provincial governments and national organizations. Figure 4 outlines the four main partners in the program (shaded boxes) and indicates the direction and flow of funding for its operation.

The case is suitable for study for several reasons. First, the evaluation process is ongoing and was in its initial phases when the present study began. Although none of the four partner organizations, including the organization (herein after referred to as "CNT"), had a history of using a systematic approach to evaluate its programs, there was tremendous support for the present evaluation. Further,

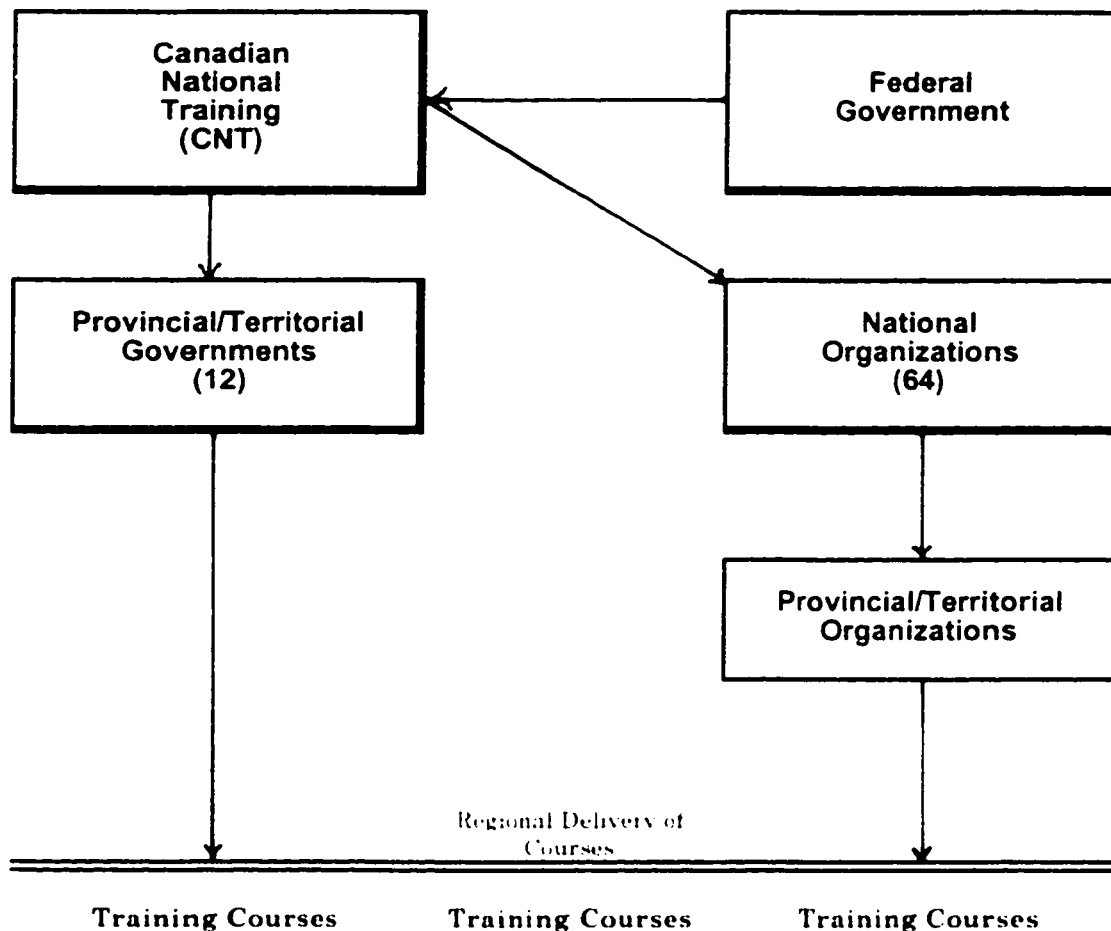


Figure 4. The national system: Relationship of the four major partners

there was evidence that many the programs key stakeholders groups (e.g., provincial/territorial organizations) were holding some misgivings about the program and this resulted in the release of internal documents and statements

which indicated that change might be necessary. Evaluation studies, like the one implemented, seemed likely to be a useful vehicle for unearthing these concerns and facilitating the change process. Second, while the initial purpose to evaluate the program could be considered summative in nature, past events moved the purpose to a predominantly formative orientation. In the mid 1990s, program leaders, from all partner organizations, were being questioned about the effectiveness of the program. As a result, in 1994 an attempt was made to pilot test the tools and process to conduct a summative evaluation. Following the analysis of results to clarify the partners' information needs, a decision was made to investigate a formative evaluation design. Thus, the use of a participatory approach was entirely appropriate.

Third, the present author is employed by the case organization (CNT) and had, as an explicit and significant part of his role, responsibility for the evaluation. The author's doctoral training, prior research experience, combined with his organizational mandate (he is the program's director), qualified him as the internal participatory researcher in the present evaluation. Further, the author's expertise and status regarding the program differentiates his role from that fulfilled by Earl (1995) or Lafleur (1995). Clearly, the author fitted the description of an internal evaluator proposed by Scriven (1991a) which makes the study unique in both form and function. Fourth, the evaluation model employed was participatory to the extent that (1) the researcher worked in partnership with a small number of primary users to carry out the study, (2) the primary users were involved in virtually all phases of the evaluation process, and (3) control of evaluation decision making was shared between the researcher and the primary users (see Appendix A

for a description of the model and the project's evaluation plan). The approach therefore conformed to the practical participatory approach put forward by Cousins and Earl (1992, 1995).

3.4 Description of Intervention

Over a two-year period, the researcher worked in partnership with members of the Planning and Evaluation Committee (PEC) to design and implement a comprehensive evaluation program which included a detailed job task analysis, needs assessment, quantitative and qualitative data collection. Figure 5 presents the administrative and/or political structure developed to provide members of partner organizations a voice in guiding the program. Figure 5 also shows the vital role played by the members of the PEC in terms of providing direction to and linking important sub-committees of the Council to each other.

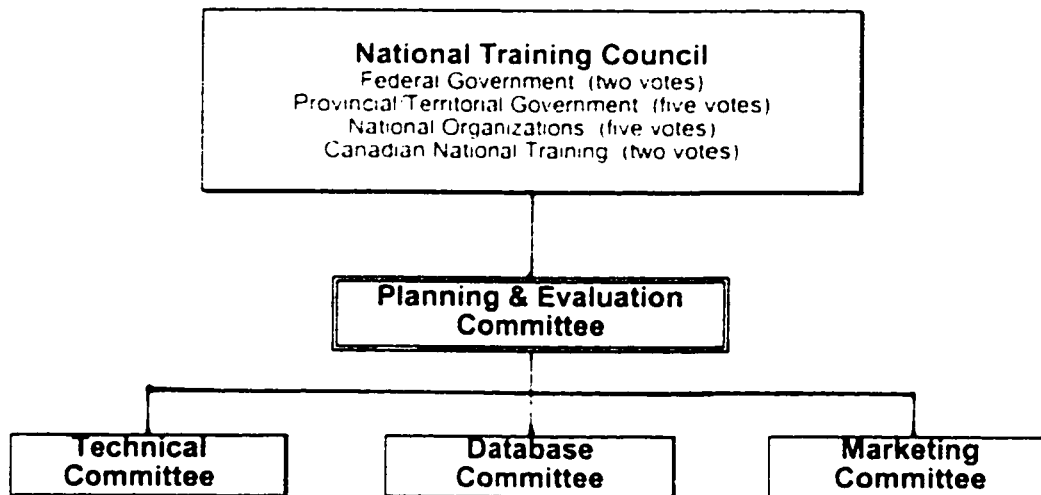


Figure 5. National training council structure

The researcher worked in collaboration with the committee on all phases of the project. Decisions were made collaboratively about project's design, scope, data collection, analysis and reporting methods. The researcher, combined with the activities associated with the project, contributed significantly to the technical research/evaluation skills of the committee. As a result, the committee members were able to establish clear project goals, discuss project time lines, develop and implement evaluation tools, collate evaluation data, and write parts of the evaluation report.

The researcher, on the other hand, acted as the project leader. This involved providing technical expertise when required (e.g., clarifying steps in the evaluation model being used, coordinating data processing and statistical analysis, interpreting quantitative results, and providing the format and background content of the final report). The researcher's support staff carried out data processing and analysis procedures to ready material for use by the committee at critical stages throughout the project. The researcher co-authored the final report with the committee; the report's editing, proof-reading, and production was coordinated by in-house staff.

The final products of the evaluation project were a 40-page final report (French and English version), a binder that contained all technical information generated throughout the project, and a 16-page executive summary. These documents were released in October, 1996 and were considered to be two months overdue according to the planned time line. Approximately 300 copies of the English version and 150 copies of the French version were printed and distributed to respective stakeholder groups across the country. The executive summary was circulated much more widely within the various organizations.

3.5 Sample

The sample for the present research comprised CNT members and primary stakeholders involved in the national training program. The members included CNT's president and technical program staff, program managers from both the federal and provincial governments, and program leaders from national organizations who worked directly on and had decision-making influence on the program. Specific information regarding which individuals were involved in data collection is provided below.

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Retrospective reflections

Given the ongoing series of discussions that have taken place since the early 1990s on the impact that the program was having on participants, there was an important need for reflection on past events. These discussions and the associated documentation captured the conceptions which primary users' had regarding both the program and organization prior to the start of the project. Therefore, the researcher systematically reviewed existing documents (e.g., minutes of meetings, position papers) and recorded on audio tape his reflections of previous discussions which pertained to the central issues of the present study. This was an important step for it established the evolutionary process which both the program and the organization had undergone prior to the initiation of the evaluation project.

3.6.2 Participant observation

Given the present study's research questions and the investigator's background and role (i.e., expertise in research methods and leading the evaluation project as an internal evaluator), the use of participant observation was justified. As Patton (1987) observed, the primary strength of naturalistic program observations is that the data are collected in the field, where the action is, as it happens. Whether a researcher uses participant observation, field observation, qualitative observation, direct observation, or field research, a common element of working in the field cuts across all these methods. The variation in observer involvement can be substantial, ranging from complete immersion in the program as a full participant to complete separation from the activities observed. In the present study, the investigator was responsible for leading the evaluation project and therefore worked closely with members of the project's steering committee throughout the evaluative exercise. The investigator's job at CNT for the last 15 years, and in particular the last eight years as one of the program directors, provided an opportunity to simultaneously combine document analysis, direct participation, observation, and introspection of events (Denzin, 1978). Thus, the purpose of such participation was to develop an insider's view of what was happening: to not only see but to feel what it was like to be part of the evaluation process.

Data were collected via participant observations during the evaluation as interesting or important events occurred. The observations were guided to some degree by the following questions: (1) what effect is the researcher having on the participatory process? (2) in what ways is the internal participatory process

evolving? (3) what organizational impact is the internal participatory process having? and (4) what factors explain the observed impact? The observation notes were somewhat unstructured and recorded onto an audio tape. Participant observations were collected up to and including the end of Stage II of the evaluation project (April, 1997), that is, once evaluation data had been analyzed, recommendations formulated, and a final report prepared and disseminated throughout the country.

3.6.3 Interviews

During the evaluation project, 27 structured interviews were carried out with members of the PEC who acted as the evaluation project's steering committee (i.e., three interviews per committee member). One other interview was carried out with CNT's president to bring the total interviews to 28. Figure 6 provides an overview of the committee's membership, as well as the coding scheme used in the Findings section to identify respondents' comments. Pseudonyms were used to assist the reader relate to the individuals implicated in the research and follow the project's evolution.

An independent interviewer was used in order to obtain corroborating evidence while at the same time minimizing participant observer bias. As outlined earlier, the present author is employed by the case organization and had as an explicit part of his job the responsibility to facilitate the evaluation project. Given that the author simultaneously acted as both evaluator and academic researcher, the potential for bias needed to be countered. Thus, the present study employed an external, independent interviewer to implement this data collection method. The

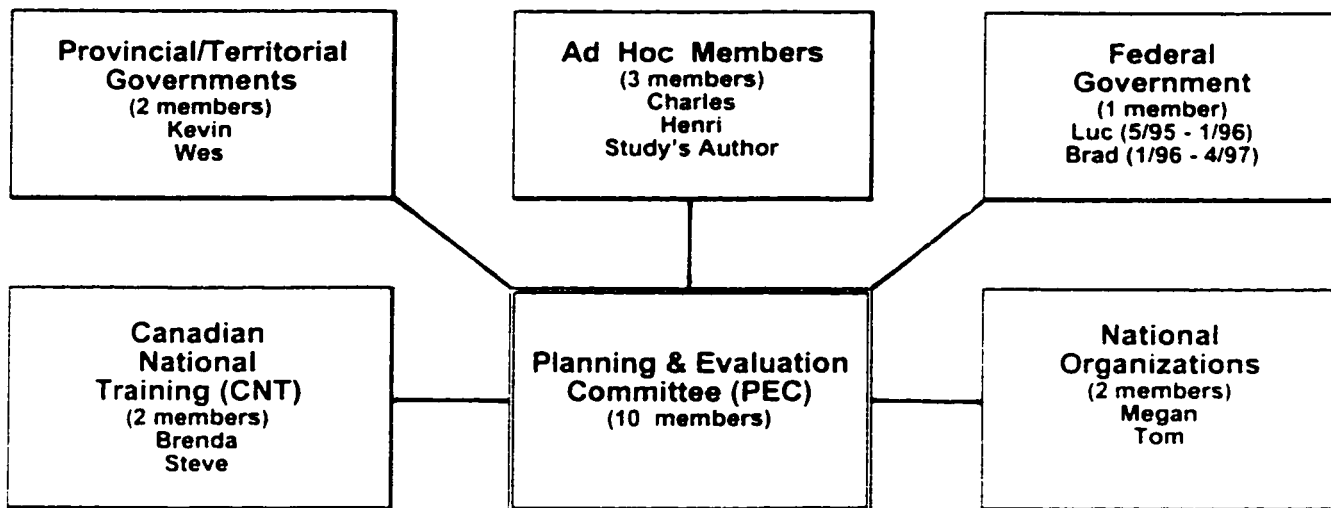


Figure 6. Makeup of the evaluation project's steering committee (PEC)

independent interviewer conducted three rounds of individual interviews, using a semi-structured interview guide, with the key informants from the evaluation at strategic points during the project's implementation—project design and data collection (October, 1995), data analysis (April, 1996), and release of evaluation report (October, 1996). The independent interviewer conducted the interviews in conjunction with regularly held meetings or by telephone. These tasks were performed completely independent of the study's investigator and provided an important "frame of reference" for the discussion of the effects which the participatory process had.

It is important to note that neither the tapes nor the transcripts that resulted from the interviews were made available to the researcher until after the final rounds of interviews (i.e., following the completion of the evaluation project and release of its final report).

The independent interviewer was selected according to the following procedure. The researcher's advisor contacted colleagues with appropriate research

skills and experience conducting structured interviews and specified the nature of the task and timeframe for the study. The person selected met the key requirement: she held a Ph.D. in educational evaluation, was unknown to the researcher and agreed to work independently for the duration of the study. Training consisted of providing her with an orientation to the conceptual framework for the study. She was given marginal assistance (e.g., provided contact names and phone numbers) by the researcher for scheduling the various interviews with the key informants. In order to ensure the provision of service throughout the process, a contract for services rendered was signed by independent interviewer and the researcher.

The first round of interviews corresponded with finalization of the evaluation project's design and the initiation of the data collection phase. The interviewees for the study were initially informed about the study by the researcher. Each was contacted by telephone by the researcher and provided with additional information regarding the nature and scope of the study and its relationship to the evaluation project. They were told that a letter of informed consent (see Appendix B) would be forwarded to them and that they would be subsequently contacted regarding their decision to participate in the study. All of the informants agreed to participate and the first round of interviews commenced in October, 1995.

All informants were contacted by the independent interviewer to schedule a convenient date and venue for the interview. This normally occurred in conjunction with a planned meeting at various points in time during the evaluation project. The interviews were conducted in a meeting room or the informant's private office. Individual interviews lasted from 60-90 minutes and were tape recorded. The

initial semi-structured interview guide that was formulated (see Appendix C) was based on the study's research questions and the conceptual framework identified in Figure 1. All informants were asked the same series of questions, although the interviewer did encourage participants to elaborate and expand on their answers.

The second round of interviews was conducted during the data analysis and early report writing stage of the evaluation project. Interviews were conducted in late April and early May, 1996. Once again, all informants were contacted by the independent interviewer and the interviews were scheduled.

A preliminary analysis of the data emerging from the participant observation data was conducted by the researcher prior to the second round of interviews. This resulted in the researcher making suggestions for modifying the interview guide to better reflect the nature of the phenomena under investigation. A letter (including the proposed changes) was sent to the researcher's advisor to request that he consider asking the independent interviewer to modify the interview instrument. Following receipt of this letter, the researcher's advisor concurred with the changes and contacted the independent interviewer with the recommendations for change. A copy of the revised instrument is provided in Appendix C.

In August, 1996, following discussions with the researcher's advisor, the researcher decided that an interview with the organization's president to gain his perspective of the evaluation project's impact on the organization and its programs was needed. The president, while instrumental to the organization's support for the project (and hence, intimately connected to a key independent variable under investigation), was not a member of the evaluation team and therefore had not been interviewed. Given the nature of the position held by this individual, a modified

instrument was developed by the researcher to be used by the independent interviewer (see Appendix C).

At the conclusion of the evaluation project (following the release of the evaluation's findings), the final round of interviews took place (October, 1996). As reflected in the instrument (see Appendix C), slight modifications were made to reflect the stage of the project.

Finally, all the tape recordings were of excellent quality and could be readily transcribed: this was done immediately following each interview by support staff. One tape was damaged in the mail and had to be re-recorded prior to transcribing.

3.6.4 Archival data

The author collected archival data that addressed specifically or provided a context for the phenomenon being observed. Archival evidence was collected from historical documents, as well as any ongoing source of information. The list below highlights the data sources utilized:

- CNT technical meeting minutes
- CNT annual reports
- National Council reports and minutes
- correspondence, FAX, e-mail of communication between project steering committee members
- national organizations and provincial/federal governments' bulletins and newsletters
- federal/provincial government policy papers
- magazines from within the system

3.6.5 Focus group

A focus group interview was conducted with the respondents interviewed throughout the project approximately six months following the completion of the evaluation project. The primary purpose of the focus group was to generate a "global thrust" from the respondents (i.e., the Planning and Evaluation Committee);

information which represented the entire group's perspective regarding the impact which the internal participatory evaluation process had on both the use of the findings and its impact on the organization. It also provided an opportunity for the respondents to provide feedback on the findings of the study. A time period of approximately six months was judged by the researcher to be sufficient to allow for impact of the evaluation, both its findings and its process, to become evident.

The focus group was facilitated by the researcher's advisor and, in this instance, the researcher was member of the response group. The role of the researcher was to both monitor the proceedings (take notes) and present his interpretation of the research findings for feedback and discussion. A copy of the guide used in the focus group interview is provided in Appendix C.

3.7 Plan of Analysis

3.7.1 Coding of data

The retrospective and participant observations, interviews, and focus group were recorded onto audio tape and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The retrospective observations, participant observations, and archival data were analyzed by the researcher as the study progressed. The interview transcripts, as noted earlier, were analyzed following the completion of the evaluation project (November, 1996), whereas the focus group data were analyzed immediately following the session (May, 1997).

Procedures for coding these data were based on those described by Miles and Huberman (1984, 1994) and a list of "start codes" grounded in the conceptual framework specified above was applied (see Appendix D). First-order codes

corresponded to the four components appearing in Figure 1 (i.e., organizational learning capacity, characteristics of the organization, internal participant evaluation intervention, and impact of the evaluation). Second-order codes relate to variables within the four components. The codes for the dependent or "effect" variables (i.e., organizational learning capacity) were based on variables found in prior research (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1978; Dixon, 1994; Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Simon, 1991). Similarly, the codes for the independent or "cause" variables (i.e., characteristics of the organization, internal participatory evaluation intervention, impact of evaluation) were based on previous empirical work (e.g., Cousins, 1996a; Cousins & Leithwood, 1986; Huberman, 1990; Huberman & Cox, 1990). Figure 7 provides a schematic representation of how the four data sources were merged, analyzed, and eventually displayed using headings that emanated from the study's conceptual framework.

In addition, pattern codes were structured in such a way as to allow the author to specify whether the inferred causal inference was positive or negative and which variables were considered in the sequence to be independent (cause) or dependent (effect) (Cousins, Ross, & Maynes, 1992).

The coding process followed by the author was as follows: 1) the transcripts and archival data were read and divided into meaning units (i.e., part sentences, sentences, multiple sentences, or paragraphs that address a single theme or issue); 2) the data were reviewed a second time as they were entered into the database; and 3) each meaning unit was subsequently read for a third time as the codes were applied. This iterative process allowed the original list of start codes to be refined

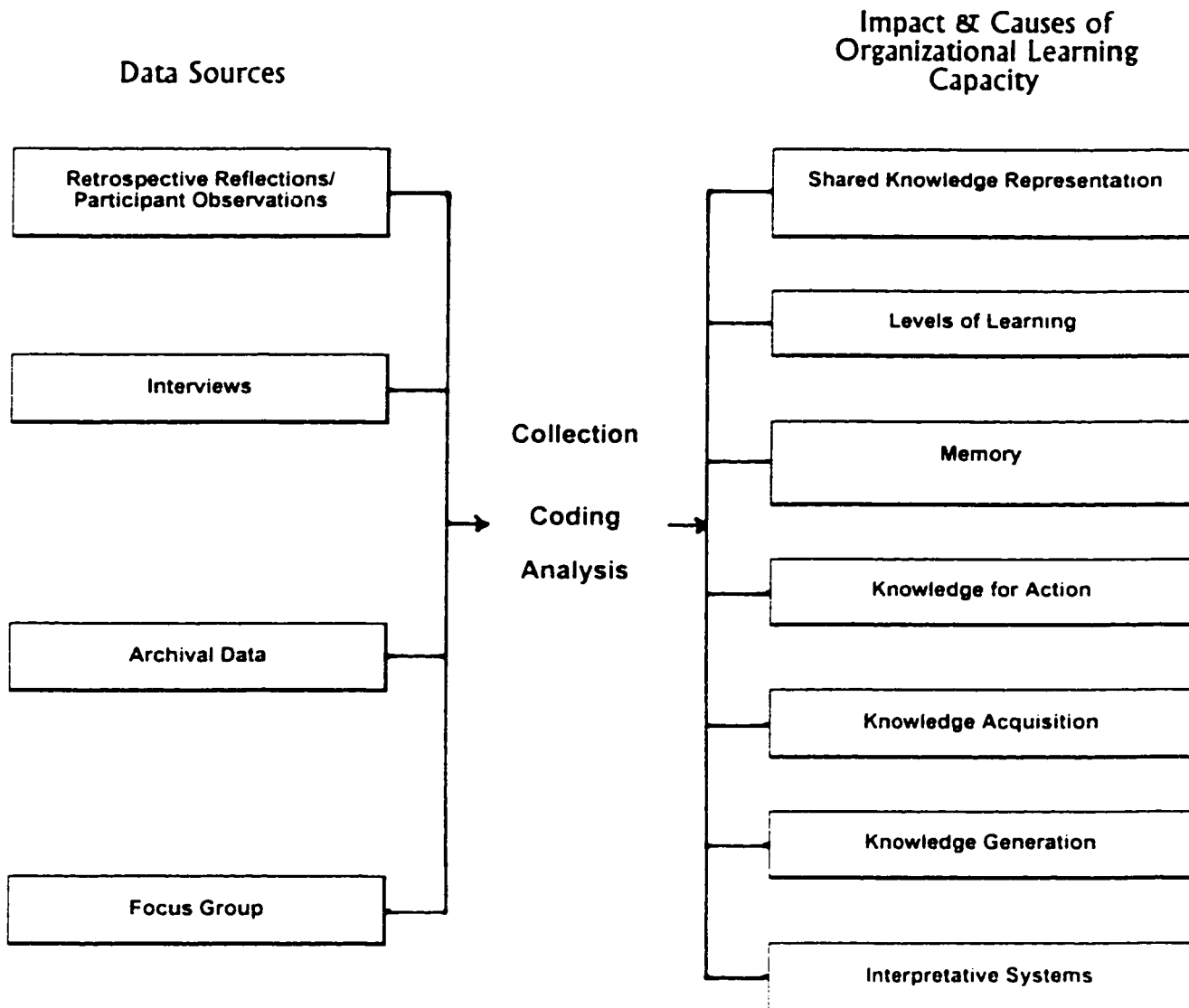


Figure 7. Schematic representation of the study's data analysis

and new codes to be added. Approximately 800 pages (single-spaced) of text were transcribed from the audio tapes produced. (It is too difficult to provide an estimate of the volume of archival data as some of the relevant information was contained in larger documents.) The analyses of these data resulted in 752 meaning units being identified for subsequent use.

3.7.2 Inter-coder reliability

In order to assess the reliability of the data coding process, a person not connected to the research randomly selected 30 meaning units from the data. These data were "double coded" by an independent analyst. The independent analyst selected was the individual who performed the independent interviews. Although this individual had some familiarity with the constructs under investigation, the author scheduled a meeting to increase her understanding of the conceptual framework and the codes. This meeting lasted approximately two hours followed by approximately three hours for the independent analyst to code the selected meaning units.

Three dimensions of the reliability agreement between the researcher and the independent analyst were analyzed: 1) agreement about first order codes; 2) agreement about second order codes; and 3) agreement about causal inferences. Agreement was defined as both the researcher and the independent analyst selecting the same code. For example, if when coding a particular meaning unit the researcher and the analyst selected a construct from the same category (e.g., levels of learning and knowledge representation), agreement would be noted for first order code selection (e.g., organizational learning capacity). Agreement about second order codes and causal inferences would be noted when the exact code was selected.

Agreement for each of the three dimensions was expressed as a proportion of the total agreement possible. The total number of first order codes that could have been correctly identified was 60 (two per meaning unit). This was also the case for second order codes. The total number of causal inferences that could have been correctly identified was 30 (one per meaning unit). The results were moderately

encouraging as agreement about first order codes was approximately 68% (41/60), agreement about second order codes was 50% (30/60), and agreement about causal inferences approximately 60% (19/30). The author and the independent analyst were generally consistent in identifying first order codes and causal inferences. A drop in consistency in agreement about second order codes was noted and may be partially due to the greater variability in the number of codes possible for selection.

Although some researchers (e.g., Miles & Huberman, 1994) have suggested that inter-coder reliability scores should fall between 70% to 90%, it would seem reasonable in the present study that the scores would be somewhat lower. Specifically, the independent analyst was not involved in coding the data and therefore may have had a different vision of what the codes meant (in spite of the training provided). Without the opportunity for discussing the independent analyst's understanding of the codes, following a coding experience, it was difficult to ensure she and the researcher held the same meaning. On the other hand, some constructivist researchers (e.g., Wolcott, 1992) would say that it is perfectly understandable to have some difficulty with inter-coder reliability because it is the author's story (his reality). Their position is that it is impossible to determine the validity of the findings; therefore, there is little need to utilize methodological techniques such as inter-coder reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

3.8 Computerization of Analyses

Data from all sources were subsequently sorted and categorized using a database management system called "Visual FoxPro 5.0 for Windows." A template specifically designed for this study was developed and installed (see Appendix E for an explanation of the main features of the software; sample output/windows, etc).

PART II – FINDINGS

Through the presentation of longitudinal qualitative data Part II will describe and analyze the evaluation process that unfolded during the study and its impact on the organization's learning capacity. This will be accomplished by first describing in detail the state of Canadian National Training (CNT) as the evaluation process was being considered (prior to May, 1995). This information will provide the study's "baseline." Subsequently, three time periods that correspond to the natural evolution of the evaluation project will provide entry points for observing change in organizational learning.

Of central concern to the study are the intended or unintended consequences of internal participatory evaluation on the dimensions and processes associated with organizational learning capacity. Specifically, analyses focus on what changes in the dependent variables were observed and, secondly, why these changes occurred. These analyses are very directly guided by attention to the variables and relationships among the variables specified in Figure 1.

The descriptive baseline provided in Chapter 4 is based primarily on participant observation, retrospective reflection, and archival data collected prior to the formal approval for the project. The study's author did, however, utilize interview data collected in time period 2 (referenced as TP 2) when respondents made noteworthy historical observations about the project or the organization. Although the interviews occurred at the end of the time period, the respondents were reflecting on events that happened throughout the time period. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 made extensive use of all four data sources.

Chapter 8 describes and analyzes the impact of the evaluation exercise (i.e., the use of evaluation findings and impact of the process) and draws heavily on focus group data. Chapter 9 provides a summary of the findings section. Outlined below in Table 1 is an overview of the findings section which identifies the chapters, their corresponding symbol and dates, and purpose.

TABLE 1
Summary of Findings Chapter

Chapter	Time Period	Dates	Description
4	TP 1	< May 10, 1995	baseline description
5	TP 2	May 1995 to October 1995	finalize design; initiation of data collection
6	TP 3	October 1995 to April 1996	completion of data collection, initiation of data analysis
7	TP 4	April 1996 to October 1996	completion of data analysis; report preparation
8	TP 5	October 1996 to April 1997	impact of evaluation findings, process use
9	N/A	N/A	summary of findings

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Chapter 4

Baseline Assessment of the Learning Capacity of the Organization: Time Period 1 (June, 1994 to May, 1995)

As described previously, CNT is a national organization that works in partnership with other national organizations and the federal and provincial/territorial governments to direct the ongoing development and implementation of a national training program. In combination, these organizations and government bodies comprise a "system," one that ensures adequate policies and resources are in place to facilitate the ongoing development and implementation of the program.

Prior to the evaluation intervention, the system was immersed in an unstable environment that included unprecedented financial cutbacks from all levels of government. In spite of these pressures, the program continued to evolve. For example, the partners' acceptance of a strategic plan resulted in a common framework being used, for the first time, to assist with future program planning. Similarly, there was a recognition, by CNT, of the need to create increased self-reliance in the national organizations over the operation of the program. Consequently, the principle of collaborative work was emerging in the hopes of reducing inefficiencies in the system and creating greater ownership by the partners.

4.1 Status of the Organization's Learning Culture as the Evaluation was Being Considered

Table 2 refers to the status of the seven dependent variables (see Figure 1) at the end of the first time period and prior to the initiation of the evaluation project.

Both affirmative and countervailing evidence are presented and are combined to reach the conclusion about the status level. The status of each of the variables is explicated in the text to follow, as well as an indication of the extent to which each

TABLE 2
Status of Organizational Learning: Time Period 1

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-low	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program issues beginning to surface • increasing awareness of partner needs • increasing number of discussions/dialogue 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • org structure isolate members • sharing with external org members limited • partners distrust org
Levels of Learning	mod-low	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project's focus/questions stimulate thinking • traditional role of partner org probed 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little change to program since inception • existing images and norms left unchallenged
Memory	low	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program info held by indiv members of org • access to info difficult
Knowledge for Action	low	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little pressure to change • limited activities designed to improve program
Knowledge Acquisition	moderate	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • solicit info about foreign and private sector programs • focus groups and telephone surveys used 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge Generation	mod-low	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic plan encouraged evaluation • org members recognize value of evaluation • two previous evaluations held 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little support from senior-level for evaluation project
Interpretive Systems	low	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited engagement of members in assessing info • board of directors cut-off from members

data source was used to assist the author draw conclusions as to the status of each construct. The scale employed provides a utilization ranking for each data source: UUU (high use), UU (moderate use), U (low use), to 0 (no use).

The level of interaction between the researcher and the various stakeholders groups during this period was quite extensive and involved: four Planning and Evaluation Committee meetings (seven days); two Technical Committee meetings (two days); two National Training Certification Council meetings (two days); 12 CNT technical staff meetings (half day meetings-six days total); two conference call meetings with Planning and Evaluation Committee; weekly informal meetings with CNT colleagues; and regular correspondence using telephone, FAX, etc.

4.1.1 Shared knowledge representation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-low	<p>P (weak positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program issues beginning to surface • increasing awareness of partner needs • increasing number of discussions/dialogue 	<p>NN (moderate negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • org. structure isolate members • sharing with external org members limited • partners distrust org
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use)
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use)
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)

CNT members' ability to develop shared meanings around important program issues could be characterized as sporadic prior to the project being initiated. Organization members with specific program responsibility were

implicitly encouraged to work independently to solve problems that impacted on the programs directly under the individual's control. Cross-functional meetings were held infrequently and staff had the ability to build networks with individuals within the system without having the need to report back. In fact, CNT's structure acted to perpetuate the conditions that limited the sharing of information or ideas in either formal meetings or informal discussion groups. Senior management's view was that by promoting this kind of individualism, ownership and an increased sense of responsibility would be fostered. This in turn would lead to increased productivity. The office layout, with its individual offices, added to the "cocoon" mentality that organization members readily accepted.

Not surprisingly, when it came time to make decisions on program initiatives or organizational policies, oftentimes members acted alone or in concert with only the senior managers. Organization members were rarely involved in the collective decision-making process in program areas outside their jurisdiction. Boundaries were clearly defined around the various programs, and projects offered by CNT and members became quite comfortable in managing their stated portfolios. In addition to affecting the organization's internal operating procedures, this style of conducting business extended to the organization's external relationships. Dealings with partner organizations within the system were relegated to somewhat formal settings (e.g., semi-annual meetings) that mainly dealt with policy issues aimed at ensuring that the program's status within the system was maintained. These interactions provided little opportunity for program leaders to exchange ideas or beliefs central to the design or delivery of the program and, consequently, little change in the program had been observed since its inception 20 years ago.

Furthermore, organizations within the system established rigid jurisdictional control over specific program areas and became quite defensive of their "slice of the program pie."

Also remarkable was the impact that this operating style appeared to be having on the members themselves. There was some evidence to suggest that members believed that little value was to be found in soliciting input from members of partner organizations. This perception seemed to be the result of 1) CNT members not feeling obliged to solicit or use the input from partner organizations to make decisions on programs under the control of the organization and 2) the belief that individuals outside the organization were not as well informed or as knowledgeable since they did not work in the program full-time. In a later interview, a CNT member revealed this perspective. In her words:

...the organization does fall short in some instances where they don't recognize the value of the contribution [of the partners]. So they may go through the steps, "Okay, let's have a committee...give me your opinion...thank you very much," they're going through the process but not actually listening to the feedback, so there is always that risk I find with the organization. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)¹

Ironically, the organization publicly portrayed itself as a collaborative, interdependent service provider to partner organizations. As the organization's 1993/94 Annual Report states:

[The organization] mission is to improve the effectiveness...by working together with partner agencies—provincial/territorial, and national organization and governments. (archival data, June 1994)

¹ Information within square brackets in this and all subsequent quotations represents 1) substitution for a participant's name to protect anonymity, 2) substitution for pronoun not traceable in quoted segment, or 3) implied statement by participant based on information immediately preceding in the interview or participant observation. The date and source (time period, role) appear in parenthesis.

A comment by another CNT member confirmed the espoused beliefs of the organization "We've always recognized the need for partners to participate in the organization." It would appear that the espoused beliefs of the organization were quite different from the day-to-day actions of organization members.

Predictably, members of partner organizations felt betrayed, left-out, and angry at CNT and its members for not involving them in decision making. Several of the respondents remarked during their interviews on the historic lack of input and access to both information and the decision-making process:

I wouldn't say that there were factions, but there has long been this sort of -- I wouldn't call it distrust -- but the chemistry hasn't been all that positive at times. Dating back several years among the various partners... that people were perhaps suspicious sometimes of [the organization] and [its members], probably thinking that they have a vested interest and maybe it may not either be open to suggestions or maybe actually protecting and withholding information so people really weren't aware of what was happening. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

I was really frustrated with some of the aspects of the program and didn't know how I could be involved to help the things evolve... there were a lot of things that were going on in [the program] that I was not aware of because I was out in the field. The communication from [the organization] down through the [national organization] down to the provincial level and then out to me as a course conductor, the lines of communication were practically nil. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

These comments reveal that some members of the evaluation steering committee were harboring significant levels of resentment regarding their role in the decision-making process given their vested interest in the program. It would seem reasonable to speculate, given the groups these individuals represent, that this view was also shared by others in the various partner organizations. The lack of collaboration and sharing of information and perspectives regarding essential

program issues appears to have resulted in an environment in which little organizational sense-making was possible. The discrepancies in mental maps held by individuals within CNT, as well as with those from partner organizations, greatly reduced both the organizational learning capacity of the organization and a sense of connection with the partner organizations that embody the system. A program leader from one of the partner organizations (and also a member of the steering committee) noted this problem in terms of bringing forward a possible program change. While extremely enthusiastic about the potential of such a change, he cautioned the group about the difficulty of getting the rest of his provincial/territorial colleagues to both understand the proposal and be comfortable accepting it (observation field notes, October 28, 1994).

On the other hand, it is important to note that in the months preceding the endorsement of the evaluation project by the National Council (which occurred on May 10, 1995), attitudes concerning the nature and role of the partners by CNT members were beginning to change. By this time, members of the steering committee had been involved in extensive deliberations over a six month period formulating the evaluation project's goals and design. For one CNT member, reflection on the less than exciting impact of previously conducted research caused a new awareness of the benefits of collaborative work:

I'll have to [involve the partners]. Because I know what kind of results I received by not going through that process: people were not committed to the research that I had collected. They were not committed to implementing any change as a result of the research that I collected... there is no sense in doing the [the research] if they're not going to change their program. So we're going to have to [involve the partners] now. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)

For another CNT member, a changed perspective resulted from the realization that not only will a collaborative process increase utilization, but also from a heightened awareness of the partner organization themselves:

[The organization] is more effective than we were. I think in the past we were more authoritative, more directive. There are other factors as well, like the relationship between [national organizations] and the [federal government] and the funding bodies and [the organization]; it's changing. [National organizations] are saying, "Hey, we know what we have to do. You don't have to keep telling us what to do all the time." So all of that is happening at the same time. So this project is having a significant influence on our cultural change... (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

Individuals who were either associated closely with the project or were members of the steering committee, were beginning to appreciate the potential benefits that collaborative work could have.

The first few months of 1995 also demonstrated the interest that members of all organizations had in clarifying the program's conceptual design, goals, and composition of the target group. Issues of this sort had not been discussed in a meaningful or purposeful way for some time and never with the expressed purpose of creating a shared understanding. One internal meeting involving members from the national organizations resulted in one member commenting that the discussion had caused her to think differently about how the program should be implemented. From her perspective, an integrated model should be considered whereby the national organizations would be able to select program content to fit the unique needs of each organization (observation field notes, January 30, 1995). Similar conversations were occurring with increasing regularity in the organization where colleagues were discussing issues relating to the content of the program, whether or not the needs of the participants are truly being met, and referencing focus group information on program participants (observation field notes, April 10, 1995). There

were indications that meaningful discussions were beginning to take place throughout the system and that an increased awareness of the issues and concerns surrounding the program was being fostered.

4.1.2 Levels of learning.

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Levels of Learning	mod-low	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project's questions stimulate thinking traditional role of partner org. probed 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> little change to program since inception existing images and norms left unchallenged
Sources of Evidence			
1 Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use)
2 Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use)
3 Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use)

The evidence collected would suggest that CNT and the system were both involved, predominantly, in low level or "single-loop" learning prior to the initiation of the project. This characterization is reflected in the nature of the changes that occurred to the program, the operating procedures of organization, and the shared frames of reference of the partner organizations.

By 1995, the program, for example, had remained virtually unchanged since its inception in 1974. Its conceptual framework was loosely built on the premise that participants would receive increasingly more advanced information, relating to a specific task area, as they moved up through the program/model. It was believed that by increasing participants' knowledge, attitudes would be altered, and this would lead to a change in behavior. It is believed that this conception of

programming stemmed from the predominant educational models used in Ontario in the 1970's (when the program was initiated) whereby teachers fulfilled the role of knowledge provider and the students were passive recipients of the knowledge. Participant evaluation was frowned upon due to the belief that it would de-motivate the volunteer adult participant from attending the program. Participants received course credit or "certification" if they attended a certain percentage of the course. Thus, courses were normally held in classrooms using the standard means of course delivery (e.g., lectures, small group tasks, individual work) and ranged in length from 8 to 40 hours. It should be noted that at the higher levels of the program, participant evaluation was established in the mid-1980's as a requirement. This would normally involve a combination of multiple choice tests, constructed response tests using workbooks, and occasionally, a practical assessment of participants' skills. Pre-course assignments and follow-up assessment/feedback sessions did not exist. Similarly, the use of multi-media (new technology) or distance learning options was extremely rare (an exception was to be found in one provincial organization that actively promoted a "home study" program).

While the program had undergone two major revisions during this time period, the focus of the changes were predominantly with the content and instructional methods. Existing images and norms for what should constitute an education/training program within the national system were used. While it could be argued that the program was made better, at no time during these revision cycles were the underlying assumptions of what should constitute an education/training program considered. Discussions regarding the conceptual design, the model, the role of evaluation, the outcomes of the program, and the like, were considered

irrelevant given the task at hand—revise the old program to fit into the existing model and delivery mechanism. Little time was spent by organization members to search for alternative routines, rules, and technologies with the purpose of bringing new knowledge to bear on the existing mind set.

However, in the months preceding the evaluation project being approved, individuals closely related to CNT or those involved as members of the project's steering committee were beginning to display signs of penetrating the underlying assumptions and beliefs of the organization and the program. A steering committee member commented during an initial meeting to establish the design of the project that everything should be put on the table this time, including the role of each of the partner organizations (observation field notes, October 28, 1994). Another commented specifically on how CNT conducts its affairs and its historical relationship with partner organizations. This steering committee member stated that he wanted to see the partner organizations obtain a position of control or certainly one of significant influence over the conduct of the project (observation field notes, April 10, 1995). Following an internal meeting, a senior manager within CNT asked if the proposed design of the project could imply a fundamental shift in how the organization views the training of participants which could result in a redesign of the model (observation field notes, January 26, 1995).

Certainly, one of the most noteworthy examples of the willingness of CNT to initiate higher levels of organizational learning was provided by the organization's president. Responding to a question about change, the president paraphrased Peter Drucker, the renowned organization theorist, and proposed that every three years organizations should be asking themselves that if they had a chance to not

offer the program that they currently do, would they still be offering it. He went on to say that "every three years [the organization] should sit back, throw everything on the table, and question everything that they're doing" (observation field notes, April 10, 1995). The president has been leading CNT for approximately 25 years. The mandate he was given was simple: Establish a credible program and ensure all Canadians had access to it. However, in recent years, the funding cutbacks had caused all program leaders to look seriously at the programs being offered. This important factor will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, when political factors are considered.

The table seems to have been set for organization members to surface, articulate and reflect on underlying assumptions and personal beliefs about the organization and the nature of its business. As CNT approached the end of this initial time period, the possibility seemed increasingly likely that the organization would integrate the knowledge and perceptions amassed in the partner organizations with its own beliefs. A critical element for learning seemed to have been fostered.

4.1.3 Memory

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Memory	low	0 (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program info. held by indiv members of org • access to info. difficult
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• N/A	• UUU (high use)
2. Interviews			• 0 (no use)
3. Archival			• 0 (no use)

The organization's capacity to organize, store, and retrieve information could be summarized as being somewhat haphazard and non-systematic at this point. Individuals within CNT maintained relevant information relating to a specific program or project on behalf of the organization. This information was, for the most part, maintained in "hard copy" format in filing cabinets. While this information was available to those who inquired, the structure (i.e., the pathways for transmission and processing within the organization) of the organization did not promote easy dissemination and diffusion of information.

As a result, the organization's "memory" found its way into the senior managers and staff that, on average, had been employed for over 15 years. The president, as reported earlier, had been with the organization since its inception in 1971. The inferences drawn from these members to assist in decision-making was accomplished through informal forums of discussion in which staff were provided access to CNT's history and hence its culture. As a result, the organization's memory was unavailable to those members of staff who, for whatever reason, did not gravitate towards these informal forums of communication. These members

therefore relied on second-hand information from colleagues as to the organization's position on various program issues.

4.1.4 Knowledge for action

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge for Action	low	0 (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little pressure to change • limited activities designed to improve program
Sources of Evidence			
1 Participant Observation		• N/A	• UUU (high use)
2 Interviews			• 0 (no use)
3 Archival			• 0 (no use)

Over the years, little had changed both in terms of CNT and the program. Since the 1970's when the federal government passed legislation to create the organization and the program, there had been no competition from any rival organization to offer a similar training/education program. CNT had a monopoly; if individuals wanted the information or certification, they would have to take the program. Under these circumstances the organization devoted little effort to implementing activities designed to cause significant program improvements. Although CNT did facilitate projects designed to make incremental improvements and kept abreast of trends occurring in foreign countries, it did not, for example, conduct pilot tests of new delivery mechanisms or seriously question its organizational mandate, policies, or activities.

To compound the problem, the system was set-up whereby the partner organizations (i.e., national organizations and provincial/territorial governments)

were responsible for the delivery of the program. Consequently, CNT was not held accountable for the program's implementation. Thus, the organization could distance itself from blame if the program was not living up to expectations. With this type of set-up, it would seem logical that program leaders would be slow to engage in activities that would challenge the status quo.

4.1.5 Knowledge acquisition

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Acquisition	moderate	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> solicit info. about foreign and private sector programs focus groups and telephone surveys used 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (moderate use) U (low use) 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N.A

As mentioned above, CNT engaged in search and discovery activities in order to acquire knowledge from its environment. Over the years the organization had been able to rationalize the costs associated with developing linkages with similar organizations from other countries. This had precipitated foreign exchanges, invitations to international conferences, and regular updating of the progress being made in other countries. As the need to look more closely at the effectiveness of the program grew more acute, the president's interest in documents that addressed comprehensive program change increased. On one such occasion, an internal session was scheduled to discuss the status of one country's progress in the hopes of

broadening the organization's perspective. The president revealed his enthusiasm for the document, describing the foreign program in a preparatory memo to staff:

[The article], in my judgement, is a superb article worthy of reading by all of us. So many challenges that are being faced by [their program] are identical to ours. Some things they have achieved; others are in the future tense and are being approached by them at this time. I have underlined what I consider to be the key areas and I have also added marginal comments and, in some cases, questions that I think are relevant to us. [archival data, February 8, 1995]

CNT's support for other strategies aimed at acquiring information through the environment via needs assessment and focus group techniques also increased over the last few years. For example, during a national event in 1993, the organization's marketing department conducted focus groups with a variety of program participants to obtain a sense of how the program was being perceived and accessed. Likewise, in the early 1990s, CNT implemented a telephone survey with participants to discuss their needs, interests, and perspectives of the program. The organization's president made a particular reference to this telephone survey during a meeting to discuss the design of the evaluation project. He observed how honest, genuine, and enthusiastic program participants were in offering their point of view and that this type of work should be encouraged by the organization (observation field notes, May 4, 1995).

Unfortunately, data that had been generated by these strategies had not always found their way into the organization's decision-making processes. The mechanism was in place to acquire new knowledge but there was limited follow through. Consequently, it was sometimes frustrating for organization members

who had been involved in the data collection exercise not to see the information being used.

4.1.6 Knowledge generation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Generation	mod-low	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic plan encouraged evaluation • org. members recognize value of evaluation • two previous evaluations held 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little support from senior-level for evaluation project
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • U (low use) • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) • 0 (no use) • U (low use)

Having the mandate to oversee the development and delivery of a national education/training program, CNT had publicly endorsed the need for all program partners to engage in the systematic evaluation of the program. In fact, CNT spearheaded two previous evaluations of the program (1983 and 1986) in which both program participants and partner organizations were asked their opinions on a variety of implementation and content issues. In addition, in 1994 CNT implemented a pilot evaluation of one of the core programs using a pre- and post-test design that attempted to measure the extent to which specific learning outcomes were being achieved. Unfortunately, the results of this study were not widely circulated or discussed. Although the purpose of the study was to develop evaluative tools and pilot test the procedures, the less than flattering results prompted organization leaders to bury the report.

Nonetheless, evidence of the increasing support for further program evaluation was beginning to emerge. Perhaps the most compelling example of this support was the strategic plan that was jointly developed by all partner organizations in 1993. The purpose of the plan was to provide guidance to all program partners in their ongoing work to revise and improve the program. One of the strategic directions states:

A four-stage evaluation process to assess the course delivery, to test achievement of the learning objectives, to track the use of the acquired skills, and to measure the impact on the system should be initiated. At the same time, feedback and input on all aspects of [the program], and on the needs of all [participants] whether they are involved in the program or not, is essential. Market research techniques (focus groups, surveys, etc.) should be used to keep the program current, relevant and effective. [archival data, November 1993]

Without question, interest in and support for incorporating program evaluation into the system was evident prior to the formal approval of the project. Several respondents advocated the use of evaluation activities including a steering committee member who made mention of how useful previous evaluation attempts by the organization were:

...some of the pre- and post-tests that [the study's author] did a while ago, suggested that there wasn't [any change in behavior], and I think that signaled a big red herring flag for us. [The results of the study] just confirmed something that we maybe knew in the back of our minds, but weren't willing to admit. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)

Another commented on the need to recommit funding so CNT could get involved in separate activities and studies that would critically look at the program in terms of implementation and impact (observation field notes, November 10, 1994). Similar sorts of comments were observed with other program leaders who were interested in modifying existing evaluation tools (e.g., questionnaire) for use in their programs (observation field notes, April 11, 1995).

While most of the key program stakeholders offered support for the evaluation project, there was also countervailing evidence that indicated the project's approach and perhaps the project itself might not be supported by all program leaders. An internal organizational meeting involving senior management surfaced one leader's concern that the project may jeopardize the program's current status. Further discussion revealed an apparent lack of awareness as to the basic rationale for initiating the project in the first place (observation field notes, March 1, 1995). This feeling was later supported by a memo written by this individual in which he listed activities that CNT had engaged in during the previous year. The memo relegated the evaluation project to a sub-point under other activities, well down the list of other projects and initiatives [archival data, May 2, 1995].

In spite of this one program leader, there does seem to be considerable evidence that organization members were beginning to take program evaluation to heart. For example, one of the respondents asked if he could borrow some information on program evaluation for a workshop he was delivering in Belgium and other French speaking countries. The presentation was to describe all aspects of program development and delivery. Yet, the member decided to focus on the importance of establishing an ongoing evaluation system (observation field notes, November 10, 1994). Also, the organization's president emphasized the need for the organization to deal seriously with the issue of program evaluation given the current political process—the organization must be seen to be legitimizing its programs (observation field notes, April 10, 1995). Last, CNT's funding guidelines for partner organizations were revised to include program evaluation activities as an allowable expenditure.

4.1.7 Interpretive systems

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Interpretive Systems	low	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited engagement of members in assessing info • board of directors cut-off from members
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N.A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • 0 (no use) • 0 (no use)

For the most part CNT and the system in which it operated hindered the development of the interpretive skills of organization members. As mentioned previously, CNT encouraged members to act independently within their specific program areas which limited the social processing and reflective dialogue that assists in developing interpretive systems within an organization. The collective interpretation of new strategies to improve the program, for example, was normally left to isolated factions of the organization to assess and determine its relevance. On many occasions, individuals were left to assess new information in isolation, decide its relevance, and act on their own interpretations. This being the case, there would be considerable variation in interpretation throughout the organization. While semi-annual meetings were held to construct annual budgets and review and update individual work plans, the comprehensive dialectic process required to mesh old and new ways of understanding were missing.

CNT's board of directors contributed to the problem. In and of itself, the board offered yet another interpretive and decision-making forum, one of considerable influence. The trouble was, however, that the board was relatively distant and disconnected from members of the organization. Only senior management from CNT interacted with board members, and consequently their discourse was limited to the shared understandings carried by senior managers. The situation evolved to the point that CNT members, who had direct line responsibility and authority for the development of programs, had virtually no access to the individuals (board members) charged with guiding the affairs of the organization.

4.1.8 Summary

Following a review of all seven variables, the overall status of the organization's learning capacity prior to the initiation of the evaluation project could be described as "moderate-low" (based on 5 point scale: "low", "moderate-low", "moderate", "moderate-high", "high"). Evidence indicated, however, that as the first time period came to a close members were beginning to appreciate the benefits of working in a collaborative way. As a result of spending time together, committee members were beginning to surface, discuss, and clarify program issues that had remained buried for some time. Although limited in scope, the observation does support the work of Earl (1995) who concluded that participatory evaluation had the ability to increase the capacity of organization members to become of like-mind. In addition, partner organizations formulated questions aimed at underlying issues regarding both the program and the system. Although new sources of knowledge was observed to be regularly acquired from the CNT's external environment, a

comprehensive evaluation of the organization's core program had never been conducted.

On the downside, the organization's structure isolated members and this was seen to limit the sharing of information. Furthermore, the involvement of partner organizations in CNT's day-to-day operation was limited. Finally, access to program information was somewhat restricted and there seemed to be little interest in challenging the status quo in terms of how the program was designed or presently implemented.

4.2 What Factors Explained Baseline Status in Organizational Learning Capacity?

Table 3 summarizes the factors that appeared to be operative during the first time period. The factors are summarized according to those variables contained in the conceptual framework (see Figure 1).

TABLE 3
Factors Influencing Status of Organizational Learning:
Time Period 1

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATION</i></p> <p>Political Environment</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced funding facilitated a re-think of partner roles • federal gov't to be less directive • CNT must prove program's merit and worth 	<p>NN (moderate negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreasing federal support causes tremendous uncertainty • partner org. distrustful of CNT and government's collaborative initiatives
<p>Milieu</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong support demonstrated for evaluation project • promoted closer ties with partner org • observed challenging status quo 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased members' confidence in evaluation project • evaluation steps helped to surface issues about program • generated critical reflection about underlying program theory 	<p>O (no influence)</p>

4.2.1 Political environment

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATION</i></p> <p>Political Environment</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduced funding facilitated a re-think of partner roles • federal gov't to be less directive • CNT must prove program's merit and worth 	<p>NN (moderate negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decreasing federal support causes tremendous uncertainty • partner org distrustful of CNT and government's collaborative initiatives
<p>Sources of Evidence</p> <p>1 Participant Observation</p> <p>2 Interviews</p> <p>3 Archival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • 0 (no use) • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • 0 (no use) • 0 (no use)

The 1990s have been a period of considerable change for CNT's environment. Four different federal ministers, three task force reports, and a change in government have negatively affected the relationship with partner organizations, thereby impairing the potential for developing the organization's learning capacity. Over the years, partner organizations had become increasingly frustrated and distrustful of the government and viewed their attempts to work collaboratively as being hollow. Previous federal government initiatives to create national policies generated feedback from the national organizations through an extensive series of focus groups and interviews. The upshot of this "consultative" process was that the feedback resulted in the implementation of policies that actually hurt the national organizations in terms of the funding they received. Consequently, members of national organizations started to refuse invitations from government related organizations to engage in any form of collaborative work or discussions. The feelings of the national organizations are captured in the comment of one of their

members who attended a meeting to discuss the evaluation project. "...is this just another process that is going to be used to actually cut the [national organization]?" A related concern was raised by another member who questioned the need for CNT to spend money conducting an evaluation when national organizations were being cut and dollars are so scarce (observation field notes, March 1, 1995).

Interestingly, although somewhat counter intuitive on the face of it, these influences also had a positive impact on the environment and ultimately the evaluation project. To be clear, the shifting political landscape combined with a significant reduction in federal funding marked a new era and an evolution of roles and relationships. Essentially, the federal government was unable to maintain control over the national organizations; it no longer had the financial clout or leadership. During this period the federal government released a report that called for fundamental changes to the system and an examination of the roles which all partner organizations should play. Specifically, the report stated that the government would: (1) change its role from that of being the "leader" of the system at the national level to being a key partner; (2) end its involvement in the day-to-day operation of the partner organizations; and (3) become less directive and more client-service oriented (archival data, November, 1994). This historic change caught the imagination of the partner organizations. Their mood was reflected in the suggestion of one of their members during an internal meeting: "up until now the [national organizations] have been relegated to a role of having very little influence into how the program is run. Now, with the way money is being scrutinized we have to ensure we make maximum use of every dollar" (observation

field notes, April 4, 1995). A CNT member offered another comment illustrative of this new awareness. In his words:

...the other political aspects, the other contexts outside (the funding, the cutbacks) that's why [partner organizations] want in on all the decisions as well. So, I think we've got two strong factors affecting us here. We go with the flow a lot more than we ever did which presents some different challenges for [our organization] with the [partner organizations] in trying to interact...we have to be better negotiators than before. Before we used to say "well, you've got funding for this, but not for that..." That worked for a while but it's not going to work any more. (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

But perhaps the clearest example of the impact that the change in the political environment was having is captured in the organization's 1994/95 Annual Report:

The need for increased collaboration and the forming of partnerships have been widely discussed and this in a setting which has historically survived on narrowness of focus and competitiveness. Inevitably when money is in short supply, fingers are pointed by those who perceive limited finances are being disbursed unevenly and unfairly. [The organization] must be able to respond to external criticism and questions by demonstrating that our programs are relevant to the needs of [the participants]. This is the reason for the strategic plan. This is the reason for the evaluation project [archival data, March 1995].

4.2.2 Milieu

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Milieu	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong support demonstrated for evaluation project • promoted closer ties with partner org. • observed challenging status quo 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) • U (low use) • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

Strong and supportive leadership was a key factor in fostering CNT's learning capacity in the months preceding the formal approval of the evaluation project. While there is an obvious connection between the attitudes of organizations' leaders and the changes noted earlier in the political environment, the overwhelming endorsement for collaborative and participatory forms of work, including evaluation, is noteworthy. For example, CNT's president claimed that the "evaluation project was long overdue and absolutely critical." A member from the federal government commented:

We've been talking about [a program] evaluation dating back to about 1985 or 86. We did conduct an evaluation that was done quite differently at that time--looking at a number of elements but not really looking at the impact of the program, so we've known since then and continued to have known that there was a need to do a more in-depth impact study. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

Two other points are also worth noting. First, CNT's president recognized the importance of CNT members to foster close ties with partner organizations.

This initial effort with the partner organizations would seem to be extremely valuable later on as the project evolved. Second, the confidence to challenge the status quo was instilled from listening to the president question fundamental assumptions himself. During many formal and informal sessions, he would raise serious questions about the program's goals, content, instructional methods, and the political relationships needed to ensure that both CNT and the program survived into the next century. It would appear that the leadership was capable of asking fundamental questions about the program and this was stimulating thinking to a new level.

4.2.3 Evaluation framework

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased members' confidence in evaluation project • evaluation steps helped to surface issues about program • generated critical reflection about underlying program theory 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Sources of Evidence</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • 0 (no use) • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA

The emergence of the framework that would eventually be used to guide the evaluation project generated some surprising reactions from members of both the project's steering committee and those closely associated to the organization. It

seemed to provide a sense of structure and credibility to the nebulous exercise called "program evaluation." For many individuals this evaluation exercise would be the first one they would have direct involvement with and knowledge about. There seemed to be a need by members associated with the project to "hang their hat" on something solid. One steering committee member voiced considerable support for a decision that would see the evaluation framework become the centerpiece of all discussions with partner organizations as the evaluation project was being introduced:

The framework or model had been used in business and was well respected, so it should be used to help educate the partner organizations (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

As the data collection steps of the evaluation framework were being debated during a meeting of the steering committee, a number of program problems and issues surfaced. Although the discussion was quite disjointed, the level of discussion prompted many around the table to appreciate the complexity of the issues that needed resolution (observation field notes, April 19, 1995). This particular discussion set the stage for the committee's decision to conduct an extensive evaluation that would include not only the program's core program, but many other aspects of the training system as well.

The evaluation framework emerged from its application to training programs in the private sector. The author of the framework (Brinkerhoff, 1987) recommended that users follow a very pragmatic method for establishing baseline measures. As a result, a proposal was circulated to organization members that categorized participants along two distinct axis (age and context). Although this categorization was done solely for the purpose of collecting data, it stimulated some

very interesting reflection. One member of the organization asked if the data collection framework being proposed should be used to assist with the reconstruction of the program (observation field notes, January 26, 1995). At another session with the partner organizations, the comment was made that "if we're going to be collecting data from the framework that has participants laid out by age-group, maybe it might be a way to present the material."

Finally, only one organization member challenged the credibility of the evaluation framework. Given that the framework called for a serious discussion of both the program's conceptual design and the perceived benefits to the organization, it would seem that most members were getting set for a fundamental review of the issues that had remained buried for quite some time.

4.2.4 Summary

Three factors (i.e., political environment, milieu, and evaluation framework) were observed in varying degrees as influencing the status of CNT's learning capacity prior to the initiation of the evaluation project. Shared knowledge representation was negatively affected by the distrust that seemed to have been fostered between the national organizations and governmental agencies. As a result, members of these organizations were unwilling to enter into meaningful discussions with CNT members for fear of retribution. The reduction in federal funding had both positive and negative effects on the levels of learning. Although it caused a tremendous amount of uncertainty, the funding cut-backs stimulated an examination of roles traditionally held by partners within the system. Strong support was also provided by CNT's president for committee members to challenge existing meaning structures used to build the program. Similarly, the president

was observed as being quite supportive of knowledge generation activities (i.e., program evaluation). This encouragement, combined with the evaluation framework, provided confidence in the evaluation project's design and to get the project off to a very positive start.

4.2.5 Author's Personal Reflections

The time period June, 1994 to May, 1995 was tremendously challenging and rewarding. In a period of less than a year, the members of the Planning and Evaluation Committee generated consensus among members of the national council to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the program. Although I felt strongly that the program was in need of evaluation, I was not prepared for the scope that the present study called for. To be clear, I was originally of the position that each component of the program should be evaluated separately to determine its impact. In fact, I had conducted two such pilot evaluations (winter and spring, 1994) that were designed to refine the data collection and analysis tools/procedures for single component evaluations. However, it became quickly obvious that my view was in the minority as compelling arguments were made for taking a look at the entire program (i.e., goals, content, instructional methods, and evaluation criteria).

On a personal level, the decision to engage in a global program evaluation necessitated a rethink of my planned doctoral studies. Although CNT's president and staff were aware of my enrolment in the doctoral program, I had not discussed my idea to use the evaluation project as the basis for my thesis. I was hoping for a much less complex evaluation initiative that would have included fewer stakeholders and could have been completed in a much shorter time frame. This discouragement was quickly offset by the reaction of my thesis advisor who saw

great potential in an evaluation project with the scope and complexity of the one being proposed. After two or three meetings with my advisor to discuss possible research thrusts, I also came to realize the unique position I was being afforded—an internal evaluator with program expertise and research skills being asked to lead a national program evaluation.

Having convinced myself that the doctoral thesis, based on the current evaluation, had great potential, my anxiety quickly shifted to whether or not I could pull this thing off. Although I had done some evaluation work and had taken a few courses, I was unsure if I could provide the technical leadership required to facilitate an evaluation like the one being proposed. Thankfully, members of the committee all seemed quite confident in their collective ability, provided there would be resources available to bring in assistance when needed. Once this assurance was given, I noticed a profound sense of confidence as we marched off into the unknown.

It is also noteworthy that CNT's president and my work colleague (Henri) alleviated many of my concerns and insecurities throughout this early period. Although I had worked closely with Henri on previous projects, and had established a good relationship with the president, the ongoing dialogue and rapport that was developed among the three of us during this period, provided a crucial sense of support as the project was initiated. I was certain that the project had the complete support of the president and that the necessary resources (both human and financial) would be made available.

Chapter 5

Finalization of Project Design and Initiation of Data Collection: Time Period 2 (May, 1995 to October, 1995)

Following the unanimous endorsement of the evaluation project by the National Council on May 10, 1995, the wheels were quickly set in motion to capitalize on the enthusiasm generated for the project. Even though the partners were heading into the summer months (a period in which traditionally very little program development work is accomplished), the project began to take on a life of its own. Several meetings were held to finalize the project's design while data collection tools and processes were being developed and pilot tested. The ambitious timelines established for the project—final report to be submitted to the National Council in May 1996—provided everyone associated with the project, especially the members of the steering committee, with tremendous incentive to get things moving.

In terms of data collection for the present research, this time period culminated in first-round interviews with members of the steering committee. The data generated from these interviews are combined and compared with the participant observation and archival data collected by the author to continue the story of how the evaluation project affected organizational learning.

5.1 Status of Organizational Learning Capacity as the Evaluation Project was Being Initiated

Table 4 displays data from the second time period concerning the status of the dependent variables. The table also includes symbols that represent whether or not the variable was observed to strengthen (\uparrow), weaken (\downarrow), or remained constant (\rightleftharpoons) in relation to the previous period.

TABLE 4
Status of Organizational Learning: Time Period 2

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-low \rightleftharpoons	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collective understanding of issues improving interventions (e.g., face-to-face meetings) increased members sharing likes and dislikes about program 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wide variation still evident—hurts learning committee's instability limits collective thinking some members hesitant to share
Levels of Learning	moderate $\uparrow\uparrow$	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> program's conceptual validity questioned program's model and delivery mechanism challenged national organizations re-define their role program practitioners touched by project 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some members still feel basic program issues yet to be addressed
Memory	mod-low $\uparrow\uparrow$	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> binders assist org. members share information dissemination of info. improve awareness of issues 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge for Action	low \rightleftharpoons	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> random pilot activity little reflection or learning
Knowledge Acquisition	mod-high $\uparrow\uparrow$	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> members initiated search for info back in regions standardized search for foreign program info. 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge Generation	mod-low \rightleftharpoons	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> org. members demonstrate considerable support human and financial resources provided for evaluation org. considers need to evaluate all its programs 	O (no evidence)
Interpretive Systems	low \rightleftharpoons	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> org. members process info. individually

The interaction between the researcher and various stakeholders groups during the past five months was extensive and continuous. The type of activities included: three Planning and Evaluation Committee meetings (six days); 4 CNT technical staff meetings (two days); one conference call with Planning and Evaluation Committee; weekly informal meetings with CNT colleagues; and regular correspondence with PEC members using telephone, FAX, etc.

5.1.1 Shared knowledge representation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-low ↔	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collective understanding of issues improving interventions (e.g., face-to-face meetings) increased members sharing likes and dislikes about program 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> wide variation still evident — hurts learning committee's instability limits collective thinking some members hesitant to share
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (moderate use)
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UU (high use)
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use)

This period provided evidence that members of both CNT and the project's steering committee were improving their collective understanding of the issues associated with the program. On the other hand, the data also confirmed that committee members were still working in isolation and having difficulty with understanding each other's perspectives regarding both the evaluation project and the program itself.

An example of some of the specific behaviors or actions that helped to develop a shared understanding was provided by steering committee members who

were observed to be involved in broad discussions with members of their representative stakeholder groups. As one member remarked, "There was a very clear mandate given to committee members to raise the issue of program revision with not only their constituents but with any other constituents that involve [program participants]." While the expressed purpose of these discussions was to inform stakeholders about the evaluation project and their role in it, the evidence seemed to suggest that these sessions assisted in confirming viewpoints about program issues that have been batted about for years. As one respondent noted:

...some new issues were raised and some issues that have previously been addressed were raised in a new context, but again, through talking and discussing about the relative merits, we've come to some consensus. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

While most committee members were involved in face-to-face encounters with their respective stakeholder groups, other forms of intervention seemed to have equally compelling consequences. For example, committee members took it upon themselves to put pen to paper and write about the program:

I've already written some discussion papers on new designs and I've shared that with the people in my region and have gotten feedback... it serves to either change or solidify my views, not to say that they are unchangeable, but to validate them. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

For CNT members, the simple act of attending internal meetings aimed at raising awareness of program issues acted to foster like-mindedness. For example, one meeting dealt with the merits of incorporating new technology into the program. The discussion that followed resulted in one member stating, "it seems that very few people in the country and very few [program participants] have the CD Rom equipment necessary to run [the program]. Therefore, while it is an opportunity to open our minds to alternative forms of delivery, very few people would be able to

access it" (observation field notes, July 11, 1995). Whether accurate or not, this viewpoint seemed to be accepted by organization members and provided the shared frame of reference used for further discussion. Specifically, organization members were not as interested in the educational merits of CD Rom technology as they were in the potential negative effects that moving to this delivery platform would have on participant wanting to access to the program.

Whatever the means—face-to-face dialogue with constituent groups, soliciting feedback on discussion papers, or conducting regular internal meetings—there was evidence to suggest that members' ideas about the program were being shared and clarified.

In contrast, there was also evidence to suggest that organizational learning was being hindered by wide variation of meaning held by CNT members and the project's steering committee. When asked directly if committee members were seeing eye-to-eye on fundamental issues, one respondent commented:

...in most situations when the issues are complicated...it takes some time for the committee to come to grips with the nature of the issues, what the issues mean, what are the impacts. (TP 2, steering committee member, Wes)

Some of the members, as a result of their different backgrounds and experiences, were having a tough time connecting with each other. This element, combined with group instability, proved to be quite problematic as several respondents observed:

We've had a couple new members come into the group lately and because they maybe haven't got the background or the history relative to the processes gone through--you step in as a new player--you may try to influence it by expressing your own views. To some degree that can be frustrating. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

...since [the member] came on...it was [his/her] first meeting...whereas all the other committee members had a lot of information, communication, and so my sense of it really was that [the member] needed that meeting to come up to speed in [his/her] own mind, to sort of get [his/her] ideas out; some of

them were very valid, some maybe weren't, yet we've already done that as a committee, we've gone through that process, whereas, [the member] hadn't. (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

In addition to confirming that some members were not compatible in their thinking, the data indicated that a few important issues were not being raise at all.

For example, a member of the steering committee remarked:

...we really also need to be airing some of these issues that are lurking in the back of our minds somewhere... "What should a national [program] really be?" "Should it be about accreditation or should it be about education or should it be a bit about both?" "What are the implications as far as international equivalencies are concerned?" So there are some large issues that haven't really been aired yet. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

When asked by the interviewer to explain why this was the case, the member revealed that to date these issues were being debated in isolation of other members of the committee. In his words:

...the dialogues are happening in the corridors, in the offices, in the regions...independently though. I believe independently. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

Not all the evidence was uniform regarding the state of the project and the members' relationships. The author's participant observations throughout this time period paint a slightly different picture, one which portrays the committee as becoming highly functional. From the author's perspective, the evaluation process appeared to have given steering committee members an opportunity to air any and all concerns about the program. In terms of the project, discussion among all of the members evolved dramatically and indicated that program leaders were all sharing similar ideas or representation of what the project is and what questions it should be attempting to resolve (observation field notes, May 26, 1995).

While the author did observe some difficulty with incorporating new members and their views into the committee, it was perceived as positive: the different views acted to stimulate further thinking among committee members and required them to justify previous decisions (observation field notes, September 29, 1995). At no time during this period did the author record evidence that members of the committee were harboring resentment or frustrations that would negatively affect their ability to develop shared frames of reference.

Nevertheless, the indications of both frustration and a lack of sharing could have posed problems for the committee as the project unfolded and more complex tasks and issues were being addressed.

5.1.2 Levels of learning

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Levels of Learning	moderate ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program's conceptual validity questioned • program's model and delivery mechanism challenged • national organizations re-define their role • program practitioners touched by project 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some members still feel basic program issues yet to be addressed
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use)
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

The data collected produced a wide range of examples which seemed to indicate that both CNT and steering committee members were beginning to challenge existing images and norms used to guide the program and ultimately the

organization. While some examples of both low and high levels of learning were noticed in the previous time period, once the actual data collection was initiated, seemingly nothing was sacred. Committee members' queries ranged from the program's conceptual validity to the jurisdictional rights of partner organizations. The evidence provided below, while dealing predominantly with the program, demonstrates that the underlying decisions, rules, norms, and beliefs used to guide CNT and partner organizations for nearly 25 years were coming under serious questioning. The findings now look at how members were beginning to experience high level or double-loop learning.

A response from a member of the steering committee, when asked if the basic assumptions about the program were being raised during the project, provides some insight into the level of questioning:

Definitely there's been some questioning of [the program's basic assumptions]...the program has been in place for 20 years and, therefore, some of the assumptions that we had 20 years ago need to be revisited. In fact, over time, I think some of them have been proven to require some reconsideration and revamping. So we're at that stage now. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

For members of CNT that were also intimately involved in the project's implementation, indications that images and norms for what could constitute a revised program model were becoming firmly planted. An internal meeting resulted in one member stating that "we have made big conceptual leaps with regards to [the program] because we have been constantly thinking and talking about it" (observation field notes, July 11, 1995). Internally at least, CNT members had indicated that redesigning the program's model and altering its delivery were key points to consider during the project. The organization's president confirmed the validity of these views and added considerable support by suggesting that "the

money saved by not generating new content could be well spent in terms of redesigning or recasting the current content into digital form for use in a computer-based, self-directed program" (observation field notes, September 5, 1995).

From the jurisdictional standpoint, similar sorts of impacts were observed. Members of the national organizations were somewhat resolute in their position, however. In their words:

My personal perspective is that [national organizations] are in fact the owner-operators of [the program], because they deliver a minimum of two-thirds of the components...when the day is done, it is the [national organization] that inherits the [program participant]. So in my opinion, the most important opinion around the table is that of the [national organization]. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

I think that as a representative of the [national organization] we should have a fair amount of input and impact into where [the program] goes. Right now, they're considering the provincial/territorial governments, the [national organizations], and [CNT] as all being equal partners in this pie...I think-- and I'm not the only one that thinks this way-- that the [national organizations] are more of a partner than some of the others. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

While members of the provincial/territorial organizations were less inclined to claim a particular degree of ownership over the program, they did support the view that the issue of jurisdiction would need to be addressed:

We all have an understanding that [the project] will impact on potential new manuals, retraining of course conductors, the immediate things. I'm sure that the committee has not considered the fact that it will impact on jurisdictional responsibilities and that's a whole lot bigger... that will not be in the hands of this particular committee to decide...it will be for basically the ministers of [the program] for each province and the Federal Minister to decide. (TP 2, steering committee member, Wes)

I don't know what is going to be the result [of the project]...I am only sure that at the end it will bring a redefinition of the role of each of the partners as it is now because the partners are involved as far as responsibility, jurisdiction, and money. If it does impact on that... it will create a pressure in the system, and when you create that type of pressure in the system everybody will want to reconsider everything. (TP 2, steering committee member, Wes)

The significance of these statements are significant—they speak to the core of the federal/provincial agreement signed in 1976 to guide the operation of the program. These issues also had the potential to steer the evaluation project away from its original purpose—that of providing information to program leaders to make the program better. However, given the fundamental nature of the inquiry, the discussion and resolution of jurisdictional responsibilities could be infinitely more important to the future of the program than whether or not the program's conceptual design, for example, is altered.

Finally, data also indicated that program leaders not directly employed by partner organizations or involved in the evaluation project had begun to challenge previously held premises about how CNT had guided the program. In a correspondence to a member on the steering committee, a program leader advised:

[The organization] always focuses on the narrow areas and usually forgets the big picture. If [the organization] is really intent on revising the program, don't deal only with the manuals. The focus is to enhance [participants' abilities] so implementation and impact must be the focus. Perhaps we should be talking about the whole program and not just making small changes because it makes us feel like we're busy doing something. Maybe the time has come to look at the complete integration of the [components] and deal with that issue once and for all! [archival data, October 2, 1995]

The organization's primary role and areas of responsibilities were being seriously questioned in a public forum for the first time in 20 years. The evidence also seemed to suggest that existing frames of reference for organizational decision making were also being challenged and altered.

However, not all the evidence was uniform regarding the level of learning in which the stakeholders engaged in during this time period. Some respondents, particularly steering committee members who represented provincial/territorial

organizations, felt the program's basic assumptions had not yet been addressed. As one member put it:

...well we haven't really got into [the basic assumptions] yet, but I can see it coming. For example, the program has been designed as an educational program...and maybe we should change it to a competency-based program. (TP 2, Kevin)

Another member supported this position as shown by the following illustrative comment:

I think issues surrounding [participant] education are just lurking in the background somewhere and they haven't really been given a chance to come out yet... and they probably should. (TP 2, Charles)

Whether or not all members carried the same view on this issue is not as important as acknowledging that a significant "re-thinking" of both the program and ultimately the organization had been initiated.

5.1.3 Memory

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Memory	mod low ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> binders assist org members share information dissemination of info improve awareness of issues 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (low use) 	
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O (no use) 	

The amount of information generated during the early months of the evaluation project was considerable. One of the first tasks undertaken by the study author was to adopt a simple mechanism to store this information; standardized binders provided easy access to needed information for all program leaders. Each

program leader from each partner organization was given an evaluation project binder that was temporally organized according to the various steps of the project. All subsequent information was tagged according to an appropriate section in the binder and program leaders were continually encouraged to take the time necessary to store the various documents in the correct place. For some members of the steering committee this simple act, facilitated some noteworthy effects. As one member mentioned:

{The project leader} has created a binder of information that he's made sure every partner gets and he gives them updates on a regular basis. I think that's clearly what the partners need, because it creates a sense of trust, it creates a sense of understanding. So that if you are not directly involved in the [steering committee]--but you come into the National Council meetings twice a year--you are getting material in between so you can read up on [the project]. (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

Internally, the binders provided CNT members an opportunity to access a common source of information about the program, as well as related issues for how a national training/education program should be conceived and operated. During a meeting with the organization's president and other technical personnel, the contents of the binder were reviewed, followed by a suggestion that everyone begin the task of becoming familiar with the various documents given their relevance to the organization's mandate. After the meeting the president noted that one of the articles from Australia "could be very useful in his deliberations with the [federal government] since they had conducted an evaluation of their program...and have come up with some very interesting conclusions with regards to the direction that their program should take" (observation field notes, September 5, 1995).

Whereas historical information was previously stored with the individual responsible for a specific project or program, or embedded in the memories of senior

management, all information relating to the comprehensive evaluation of the organization's core program was offered to the partners for scrutiny, and more importantly, use.

This exposure of information resulted in members of the steering committee becoming quite knowledgeable about various ideas and approaches used in related programs, in various sectors, all over the world. The scope of the project combined with the volume of information collected stimulated one steering committee member to suggest that other members need to "take on specific roles in terms of generating and storing information with regards to the project." It was believed that no single person could be expected to synthesize all the available information and that committee members would have to develop areas of expertise (observation field notes, September 27, 1995). This sentiment suggests an important change of roles for members of partner organizations, as well as implying a willingness for sharing control of various project steps.

5.1.4 Knowledge for action

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge for Action	low ↔	0 (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • random pilot activity • little reflection or learning
Sources of Evidence		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'UU' (high use) • 0 (no use) • 0 (no use)
1. Participant Observation			
2. Interviews			
3. Archival			

There was no observable improvement for this variable during this time period. While there were some pilot projects and activities occurring within the

system, these efforts were not being monitored by a central group or organization. Consequently, the activities were implemented randomly with little reflection and learning being brought back to the organization or system. For example, at least two national organizations were making progress towards the development of a draft curriculum based on a competency-based approach to training. The project's steering committee became aware of this work as a result of pure coincidence: one of the national organization's representatives on the committee was employed by the [national organization] implementing the change (observation field notes, September 4, 1995).

Similarly, CNT's field offices were known to be involved in a host of pilot-like projects designed to bring about modest improvements to the program. One project, in particular, involved pilot testing a new approach to assessing program participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a "field" or simulated environment. This assessment approach has been used with great success by medical schools and would have provided new insights for members of the committee. Once again, as a result of a lack of coordination and sharing among members of CNT, this learning was lost to both the organization and subsequently the project (observation field notes, October 12, 1995).

5.1.5 Knowledge acquisition

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Acquisition	mod-high ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> members initiated search for info. back in regions standardized search for foreign program info. 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1 Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
2 Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	
3 Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	

The initiation of the evaluation project acted as a catalyst for both organization and steering committee members to systematically begin the search for knowledge within its external environment. Although only a few incidences surfaced in the data, there was evidence to suggest that some organization members accepted personal responsibility to look for relevant information by interacting with organizations outside the system (e.g., private business), as well as encouraging others to do likewise.

A steering committee member commented during a project meeting on the importance of not limiting the search for information to the "old traditional ways." He continued by requesting that "not only should all members of the committee search for material that we could share with each other, but also talk with colleagues back in each of the regions about their experiences to see whether we can generate some other information" (observation field notes, September 29, 1995).

In response to a question about the appropriateness of the project's data collection step, another member made mention of the need to acquire knowledge from afar. In his words:

...if you take information that has been developed in another country that is along the same lines [as the project's] and bring that into the mix, you create almost a secondary level of information... that you can then reference back to. (TP 2, steering committee member, Kevin)

While it would appear that the evaluation project had given purpose to the systematic collection of information, at this point, it was not clear why. Perhaps both the evaluation framework and the need of steering committee members to broaden their perspectives relative to the various assumptions was a plausible cause. This issue will be addressed in the ensuing reports on results from later time periods when data from the evaluation project began to emerge.

5.1.6 Knowledge generation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Generation	mod-low ⇔	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> org members demonstrate considerable support human and financial resources provided for evaluation org considers need to evaluate all its programs 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O (no use) 	

If one accepts the logic that before an individual's (or organization's) behavior will change, there first needs to be a change in attitude—then the present

time period could be characterized as one in which the organization's attitude towards evaluation was being positively affected. While there was only limited evidence of knowledge being developed within CNT's boundaries through activities other than the current evaluation project (hence the trend remained constant), there were indications of support for various forms for sharing and interpreting information, and especially, for future evaluation-like activities of all the organization's programs.

The positive benefits of collaborating and sharing information were identified by one program leader who hoped that program evaluations could act to connect disengaged groups:

...what happens is that rather than doing [program development] in isolated pockets where one group's efforts don't benefit other groups, now hopefully as a result of projects like this one, each partner will have an opportunity to improve the program. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

A number of comments emerged from members of the steering committee that confirmed the need for and support of ongoing program evaluation activities.

One member provided an historical perspective for CNT's support. In his words:

We've had discussions internally...since about '93 that we wanted to move into [a program] evaluation. We had a strategic plan adopted with I think 18 strategic directions... one of them was program evaluation. We've been implementing this program for 20 plus years and we've never really looked at it. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

Another member proposed that program evaluation was being supported due to importance of the program to the organization:

[Senior management] support the evaluation of [the program] because it's a core program, it's our flagship program. They have placed a lot of importance on it, so they're willing to give [the project] their time and resources. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)

Yet another member advocated the ongoing use of knowledge generation activities, including evaluation, because the reputation of the program is at stake.

As he puts it:

If I had my free choice, I would say that [program evaluation] should be an ongoing process. We have a product that is recognized all over the world and as such if it is going to be called the [National Certification Program] you have to be able to say what it stands for. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

In addition to confirming CNT's support for program evaluation, perhaps the most compelling aspect of the data collected in this time period was that of a gradual change of attitude regarding the need for the organization to consider evaluating all of its programs. In response to a question as to whether or not CNT should conduct systematic studies in the future, a member of the organization responded:

I think we will. Hopefully, we will be able to establish that [program evaluation] can work for this program. But we will have to be brave enough to use the same approach in all our different programs, to really ask the questions. Sometimes you have an opinion "oh, yeah. It's a good project...we should continue..." but you don't really look at it in terms of the impact and if you are achieving the objectives. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

This shift in attitude also surfaced during two internal meetings held to discuss another major program recently implemented by the organization. Although popular with the CNT's senior management and board of directors, the program was costly and had its critics both inside and outside the organization. During the first meeting a member asked the CNT's president—a strong proponent of the program—whether or not there "has been any sort of evaluative function or system set up to monitor the success of [the program]"(observation field notes, May 10, 1995).

Subsequently, at a meeting chaired by the organization's vice-president, three or four members of the organization raised the issue of initiating an evaluation of the

organization's programs "on a more global scale," specifically, that the organization should get some methodology in place to assess whether or not the program has had any impact (observation field notes, July 24, 1995).

Although fairly limited at this point, these data suggest that the experience of working on the evaluation project had given CNT members time to reflect on not only the usefulness of the local evaluation, but program evaluation's potential role within other sectors of the organization.

5.1.7 Interpretive systems

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Interpretive Systems	low ↔	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> org. members process info. individually
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• NA	• U (low use)
2. Interviews			• 0 (no use)
3. Archival			• 0 (no use)

There was no recorded reference to the enhancement or maintenance of the organization's interpretive systems. Members of the organization still worked predominantly on their assigned portfolios with little cross-fertilization from other staff. As noted previously, this was especially true for field staff. It is worthwhile to point out, however, that the role of the steering committee was beginning to broaden as the various data collection tools were being finalized and data collection was being initiated. The members of the committee were finding themselves in a position of being the receivers of a great deal of context-specific information, information which,

until now, was basically unavailable to members of partner organizations. How the committee chose to deal with and/or process this information could have significant implications for the organization.

5.1.8 Summary

Overall, CNT's learning capacity appeared to be enhanced throughout this time period. Although there was some evidence that meaningful exchanges of thoughts and ideas was occurring, members' shared knowledge representation was viewed as remaining unchanged due to the wide variation in beliefs about the program that were reported. Members of both CNT and the project's steering committee engaged in high-level or double-loop learning as the organization's role within the system was formally questioned. This is an example of a cognitive learning process that often does not lead to any particular behavioral change, rather, its goal is to develop shared cognitive frameworks to assist the organization make better decisions (Huber, 1991). In relation to the above point, the data also revealed that members of partner organizations sought to redefine their roles within the system—they wanted more of a say in how things were done.

In terms of organizational memory, a simple method of storing and disseminating information assisted in keeping program leaders up-to-date with the project. The evidence confirmed that very little coordinated action was taking place within the system. Interestingly, the search for information external to the organization improved as members began to implement some of the data collection activities. Finally, there was information collected that suggested that CNT members were beginning to both understand and value program evaluation activity as a legitimate organizational function. The role of the organization's president was

found to be extremely powerful in introducing the notion that evaluation work should be taken more seriously due to its ability to generate information needed for decision-making. This finding corroborate previous research that has linked an organization's leadership to whether or not methods of systematic inquiry find their way into the organization (Nevo, 1993).

5.2 What Factors Explain the Observed Pattern of Organizational Learning?

Table 5 summarizes the factors that appeared to be operative during the second time period. In addition to the three factors identified in first time period—political environment, milieu, and evaluation framework—the participatory nature of the project, the impact of the researcher, and the culture of the system have been identified as being influential.

TABLE 5
Factors Influencing Status of Organizational Learning:
Time Period 2

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATION</i></p> <p>Political Environment</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in funding increases interest in evaluation • org planning session endorses program evaluation 	<p>N (weak negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in funding decreases interest in program
<p>Milieu</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous support for project • stimulated deep reflection and internal discussions on fundamental issues 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Culture</p>	<p>P (weak positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decision-making process questioned • partner organizations incorporate new criteria for funding 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitated program practitioners to challenge views of program leaders • stimulated a number of forums for discussion/debate • promote evaluation by providing ready-to-use tools 	<p>O (no influence)</p>

Participatory Process	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depth of involvement increased commitment to learn about issues • sustained forums provided opportunity to clarify concepts and generate trust • disclosure fostered 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participatory approach slowed process
Researcher Impact	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitation skills fostered members to share • very open to new ideas—stimulated discussion 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withholding personal views limited learning and increased frustration • lack of leadership in meetings

5.2.1 Political environment

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Political Environment	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in funding increases interest in evaluation • org planning session endorses program evaluation 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in funding decreases interest in program
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• U (low use)	• U (low use)
2. Interviews	• UUU (high use)	• UUU (high use)
3. Archival	• 0 (no use)	• 0 (no use)

The severe reduction in federal funding combined with the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of the federal government continued to negatively affect the dynamics of the entire system. In terms of the present study, the political environment had a direct and significant impact on members' perceptions of the importance and role program evaluation should play in the system.

The decision of the federal government to emphasize (as indicated by its funding policies) only part of the system seemed to influence some national organizations to do likewise. The funding policies were perceived by these organizations as an indication that activities such as program development and evaluation, were no longer a priority. Within a few short months, national organizations' staffs were slashed and morale plummeted. An observation from one member provides a glimpse of the attitude that some national associations had about development activities including the program itself:

...all [the association's board of directors] want to do is get rid of [the program]. It's a pain to them...they don't want to deal with it. They deal with high performance. High performance activities in this office is now 85%...[program activity] is a low priority and it's because the people in charge give it a low priority. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

The reduction in funding was also identified as a key influence on whether or not program evaluation would be conducted in the future. A few members of the steering committee referenced this factor directly:

I would say the major objections [to conducting future evaluation] are probably going to be financial...the money that can be put in there. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

Well, I think the bottom line, ironically, is the financial constraints. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

In our association money is always a factor. I think if our CEO felt [program evaluation] was important then it would happen...but first we would have to sell him on it. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

Interestingly, some of the respondents held quite different views on this issue; that is, they believed the reduction in federal funding would actually stimulate a greater interest in and support for the future use of program evaluation. Like the proverbial "double-edged" sword, when dollars are in short supply they are

placed under increased scrutiny. As the representative from the federal government observed:

...fiscal constraints shouldn't be the reason why you would do [evaluation], because you should be evaluating to know whether you are having an impact regardless. In days when there were unlimited resources you were less perhaps concerned about ensuring effectiveness, but you shouldn't be. So I guess [fiscal constraints] are a stimulus. Certainly accountability is an aspect that will require evaluation on an ongoing basis. You've got to be able to demonstrate the reason that people should invest in [the program]. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

Similarly, a member of a national organization made mention of a time when there was "money to burn" and one could just "dolly up a project or a program." By contrast, the current financial situation requires that:

...you've got to have a really good product to survive because people are becoming much more demanding of where their resources go and where they're organizations are taking them... so evaluation becomes important because you've got to be able to demonstrate to your members or to the public what it is you're accomplishing with your various programs. (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the project's political support was collected in the fall of 1995. CNT had just received word that approximately \$340,000 that was anticipated and budgeted would not be received. During an internal meeting to discuss how the organization would deal with this crisis (i.e., what programs and projects would need trimming), no one mentioned the evaluation project as a potential source of savings (observation field notes, September 5, 1995). It is conceivable that program evaluation, and in particular the evaluation project, was being looked upon by CNT members as being able to provide some of the evidence needed to justify the program's existence.

5.2.2 Milieu

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Milieu	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous support for project • stimulated deep reflection and internal discussions on fundamental issues 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • O (no use) • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

The influence of leadership during this period was predominantly in two areas—knowledge generation and levels of learning. First, the senior managers of CNT, especially the president, continued to offer substantial moral and technical support for the project. For example, although there were formal monthly briefings, the president asked questions and provided advice to evaluation project leaders on an informal basis throughout this period. Seldom did a day go by without the president asking “how’s it going” or probing project leaders for specific information about steps in the evaluation.

Furthermore, the president authored a strategic planning document designed to assist organization members to make decisions about which program/project budgets should be reduced. The document identified five key strategic directions, the first being evaluation, that should be followed by the organization if its mandate was to be achieved [archival data, October 2, 1995]. Meanwhile, the federal government’s representative to CNT’s board of directors and

who was also a member of the project's steering committee, was observed during an internal organization meeting adding considerable support for the evaluation project, "The evaluation project and its review of [the program] is fundamental to [the organization] and is something that [organization members] should not be considering cutting" (observation field notes, September 30, 1995). These last two examples of support for evaluation are particularly noteworthy given the political climate described previously. If there were members of senior management looking at the evaluation project's budget as a possible source of cost-cutting, these explicit demonstrations of support allowed the project's budget to pass unscathed.

Second, in terms of fostering high-level learning, once the data collection began, CNT's president stimulated deep reflections about the program by challenging staff not to assess the data using the existing frames of reference of the organization. During an internal meeting, he commented directly on the evaluation project and advised that steering committee members should not be "worshipping the existing program or the model like it is on an altar." Rather, the committee should be trying to develop a program that is effective in today's climate and one that can be delivered in such a way that program participants can gain access to the material easily and still maintain program standards (observation field notes, June 26, 1995).

5.2.3 Organization culture

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Culture	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decision-making process questioned • partner organizations incorporate new criteria for funding 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• 0 (no use)	• U'U' (high use)
2. Interviews	• U' (low use)	• 0 (no use)
3. Archival	• U' (low use)	• 0 (no use)

Evidence collected in this time period indicated that the shared beliefs and norms used CNT members to interpret the nature of their world and the actions taken was undergoing change. For example, the distribution of the organization's power and decision making abilities to members of partner organizations was alluded to by one organization member:

People in here at [the organization] and [federal government] have been trying to get people to accept change. It's always been "Geez, how come we're still at this...." So I think, collectively, we all have come to realize that change is slow and that [collaborative work] is necessary. (TP 2, steering committee member, Steve)

Further, the project also provided an example for how evaluation and methods of systematic inquiry could be useful to partner organizations' decision making. When asked if the evaluation project was beginning to influence the various organizations in this regard, one member replied:

...a bit. Some decisions typically happen in the ministries for political reasons...without data. The decisions being made in [this project] will be made after we find out what we've got to know. (TP 2, steering committee member, Wes)

Some partner organizations were also showing evidence of wanting to significantly change their approach in dealing with various stakeholder groups. For example, one provincial government implemented a planning and funding process that stressed the need for provincial organizations involved in program development to reconsider the ways they had previously designed and implemented the program. The document specified that organizations would be financially rewarded if their programs comprised new elements that would dramatically alter previous conceptions of program design and delivery [archival data, June 6, 1995].

Although limited, these observations indicate how the culture of both the partner organizations and CNT were beginning to be altered as a result of members challenging previously held premises. These observation could be taken as a sign that members were broadening their perspectives and engaging in high-level learning.

5.2.4 Evaluation framework

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitated program practitioners to challenge views of program leaders • stimulated a number of forums for discussion/debate • promoted evaluation by providing ready-to-use tools 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Sources of Evidence</p> <p>1 Participant Observation</p> <p>2 Interviews</p> <p>3 Archival</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O (no use) • UUU (high use) • O (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

Data collected suggested that three of the organizational learning variables under investigation were affected by the framework or model of evaluation selected for use in the project.

Prior to describing these effects, it may be useful to provide an overall sense of how the evaluation model was being perceived by members of the steering committee. By the fall of 1995, steering committee members had been provided the opportunity to become directly involved in the data collection phase and this generated some deep reflections about the model:

This Brinkerhoff model, I have to say that when you read it and then try and apply it to [our context] that it seems not only very plausible, but it seems like a perfectly logical approach to carrying out an evaluation. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

This [evaluation process] is excellent. It's about time we got out there and saw what skills are needed. It's not a process that will come up with all the answers, but it is certainly a lot better than what we do 99% of the time. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

The chance to actually work with program practitioners and be apart of the initial data collection steps seemed to have a profound impact on the committee members' ability to develop shared knowledge representations. The following comments are illustrative of how the evaluation plan facilitated their improved understanding:

This is the first time that the approach has been taken where we start with what [the participants] are actually doing in the field ...and I think that's a real plus. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

[The project] is starting where I believe it should start, which is looking at [the participant] and hearing their perceptions. There are some groups that are being given a chance to say what they think the model [practitioner] should look like, what an effective [practitioner] looks like. That in itself is a very validating exercise for [the participant]. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

The framework's initial data collection steps, combined with the participatory nature of the project, resulted in forums for organization members to actually have their views challenged (and enriched) by program deliverers and users. Members of CNT, steering committee, and the various partner groups, were strongly encouraged to "get out into the field" and assist with the data collection. Members quickly realized the potential of increasing their understanding of the issues facing program participants. As one steering committee proposed after attending an early job-task analysis session with program participants:

...it will be very important to run a similar session with provincial organizations...to get interpretations from the ones who actually deliver the program. (TP 2, steering committee member, Kevin)

Another highlighted his excitement for the model, in that the evaluation steps provided the ability to see if key stakeholders in the system were of a like-mind. In his words:

...the next stage is far more important than this stage...it's where we validate data, or challenge it, or reject it. It will continue the process that keeps involving shareholders in [the program], but it also gives us a chance

to really test the data and our conclusions and see whether that is what other people think as well. (TP 2, steering committee member, Wes)

Similar sorts of impact were observed with levels of learning, but with limited breath and depth. Some members alluded to the fact that the evaluation model was the right one because some of the program's basic assumptions have been in place for nearly 20 years and "required some reconsideration and revamping." One member awkwardly described how the program's theoretical design would be sorted out in the second step the model:

We say we're adult-centered, so we utilize a learner-centered approach, but that's basically all we have. At this point, we're essentially an information providing system. We don't do a lot to change behaviors, to build and change attitudes, and help [participants] acquire a more healthy set of values... [the purpose] of the second step is to find out if there is a certain amount of knowledge that they need to acquire and the best way to acquire this. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

Finally, the evaluation framework seemed to stimulate hope that future evaluations would be possible simply as a result of a template being developed and available for use. Several respondents provided responses and opinions that were similar to the two provided below:

I know I can take these [evaluation concepts] and apply them with some changes to anybody's evaluation process. This was something that [member] and I had certainly pushed when [the project] started... that's what we want out of this... a generic model that can be used in different scenarios. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)

I hope that this process will be adopted by [partner organizations], that they will undertake a similar process within their technical programs. That is the goal... hopefully this evaluation process can be packaged (e.g., the methodology, the questionnaires, the surveys) and used by other organizations to evaluate their programs. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

The framework appears to have given organization members considerable confidence in the project, as well as interest in the potential use of program

evaluation in future. The interest in and support for evaluation noted previously may well be facilitated if partners become comfortable with the current evaluation framework.

5.2.5 Participatory process

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Participatory Process	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depth of involvement increased commitment to learn about issues • sustained forums provided opportunity to clarify concepts and generate trust • disclosure fostered 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participatory approach slowed process
Sources of Evidence		
1 Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
2 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (moderate use)
3 Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

The participatory evaluation approach used to facilitate the project had a positive impact on many of the dependent variables under investigation. Although not specified explicitly, the approach had also fostered an enormous degree of commitment to the project resulting in members of the steering committee assuming various positions of leadership. This perception is now explicated by providing a few examples of how the participatory process influenced the capacity of the organization to learn.

First, shared knowledge representation was facilitated as members increased their participation in the project. This resulted in members becoming more committed to learning and understanding the various issues under

consideration. Steering committee members, for example, accepted the responsibility for informing and soliciting the feedback from their respective stakeholder groups. Consequently, a number of informal discussions and meetings were held to allow members to share and clarify their perspectives prior to conducting these various feedback sessions. One such discussion involving two members of the steering committee clarified that the program's minimum standards were too inflexible and prevented partner organizations from designing programs that meet the unique needs of program participants. While this discussion crystallized an important program concern that needed to be discussed with the partners, it also acted to unearth a particular concern shared by many program leaders (observation field notes, September 27, 1995).

By the fall of 1995, the steering committee's understanding of and commitment to the participatory process was becoming internalized. A member of the steering committee revealed his perception of the committee's role:

I think the primary role of the [steering committee] is to make sure that all the partners are involved in [the project]: they're informed, they get a chance to provide input, they get a chance to provide feedback, to react to what we collect, and then discuss and analyze it on their own. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

This attitude increased project leaders' sensitivity to the needs of providing key stakeholder groups with opportunities to critique the work of the committee. One member commented on the importance and benefit of providing these forums for sustained interactivity:

I think [the meeting] was a really important one because there were a lot of people at the table, many of whom weren't really all that up to speed with what we were hoping to accomplish with the program evaluation. A lot of ideas were put on the table and there was a lot of challenge to the people that had designed the initial plan... that made us really question some of the

assumptions that they were making. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

The shared control that members had and their intimate involvement in virtually all aspects of the project's operation facilitated a shared understanding of the issues. For example, steering committee members were constantly asked for their opinions and feedback when meeting agendas were being developed. The simple act of establishing agenda items acted to both clarify the various concepts under review and kept committee members thinking about project issues on a regular basis. Informal meetings, one-on-one calls, and committee conference calls seemed to be quite helpful. As one member recounted:

I believe that building a common understanding is a result of several interventions of a very particular kind. I think a willingness to discuss [various issues] beforehand, in other words to prepare the meeting, is significant. I have been involved in a couple of those discussions which I thought were very useful. Questions between [project leaders] and myself, and others like "How would you see us best doing this?"... the byproduct of that is that people are actually semi-informed about what is going to happen beforehand. So that is a very inclusive kind of process. (TP 2, steering committee member, Charles)

The participatory process met with success and facilitated members investing in a dialogue crucial to organizational learning because the process was trusted. As one member of steering committee suggested:

I think the process is recognized as a valuable one. It's not like we're just going through the motions... "I have to keep you informed, I know you have opinions but I don't really want them"... it's not like that; our opinions are taken into account, I feel that strongly. (TP 2, Brenda)

Sharing control, providing opportunities for program leaders to regularly discuss issues of importance, and involving committee members in all aspects of the project seemed to contribute positively to a climate conducive to promoting organizational learning capacity.

5.2.6 Researcher impact

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Researcher Impact	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitation skills fostered members to share • very open to new ideas—stimulated discussion 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withholding personal views limited learning and increased frustration • lack of leadership in meetings
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• UU (moderate use)	• 0 (no use)
2. Interviews	• UUU (high use)	• UUU (high use)
3. Archival	• 0 (no use)	• 0 (no use)

Of particular interest in the present study is whether or not participatory internal evaluators—who in addition to being internal to the organization have also acquired program expertise due to their connection with the program under review—can enhance both evaluation use and the development of organizational learning systems. As such, members of the steering committee were asked to comment on this matter. Results showed that the present study's author (referred to hereinafter as "the researcher") did have some influence on the dependent variables under investigation.

The facilitation skills of the researcher were mentioned by several respondents as having a major impact on the climate established for members to engage in sessions where personal beliefs and mental images could be shared. Respondents made mention of how the researcher "slowed down the process to include everybody in building group consensus." One member commented that the

researcher's approach was intentional in the hopes that information would be shared group interaction would be fostered:

I'm not sure what type of leadership [the researcher] would have...participatory certainly. He's very, very careful about getting people informed, involved; it's a very big concern of his to make sure that the partners get the required information, are kept informed of what is going on, and given a chance to react. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

Internally, informal meetings were frequently held with CNT staff to review aspects of the project and to continue discussions aimed at clarifying the organization's fundamental beliefs about its approach to education and training. One such meeting, involving a member of the project team, clarified the evaluation framework and the need for organization members to engage in "a collective mind swap of beliefs about how to best train [program participants]" (observation field notes, October 2, 1995). The researcher's efforts in this regard were continuous, repetitive, and by all accounts successful. When asked if they were comfortable with the learning process that's been going on, respondents replied positively and cited the researcher's approach to doing things:

Oh, yes. Again, I think that's thanks to [the researcher's] persistence in giving us material and going over it and over it. (TP 2, steering committee member, Megan)

Throughout the process, [the researcher] has kept us very informed of what he has been doing, either through written reports, articles, verbal feedback, so I'm very well kept abreast of the situation. (TP 2, steering committee member, Brenda)

The data also provide some insight as to members' perceptions about why the researcher was so committed to the participatory approach—personal experience:

[The researcher] has had more experience than me working with a large group of partners like this. He's also had a chance to witness what happens when you don't involve all the partners and you don't give them a chance to say what they have to say, even if it's something that you decided three months ago... "wrong path," "we've thought about this, we've tried it, it's not

going to work.” or whatever. So he's very, very good at this, very careful with this. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

Similar sorts of positive impacts were noted when respondents were asked for their opinions regarding the researcher's connection with the program and the potential for co-optation. It seemed that, initially at least, the researcher was able to maintain an objective stance when dealing with committee members' views and gained their trust:

...that is a question about this whole thing. To have somebody who is first of all [an employee of the organization], secondly, has been intricately involved in the program's development, to be the person coordinating the evaluation has the potential for bias. I think that because of the type of individual that [the researcher] is, or as I perceive him at least anyway, he has approached this process very much “open book,” no presumptions, and a readiness to take whatever conclusions come and use them appropriately. (TP 2, steering committee member, Luc)

I think that's one of [the researcher's] strengths... he is typically very open to suggestions and feedback from people. There are other people where that would be more difficult, where they would be a bit more close minded or would be very protective because it's their program. I don't think [the researcher] sees it as his program. For these reasons, not only have I not observed any negative aspects to date, but I don't anticipate any. (TP 2, steering committee member, Tom)

In addition to fostering a belief that the process was an honest one, the evidence suggested that the researcher was able to unearth or extract the underlying views members seemed to be harboring. As one steering committee observed:

I think [the researcher's] task is to keep doing what he is doing with this group. He's got very definite opinions about all aspects of [the program]. He doesn't let those show through very often which is very appropriate, because he needs to get that stuff out of us and he is doing a very good job at that. (TP 2, Charles)

For some members the experience was quite different; the researcher's participatory approach and facilitation style seemed to plant seeds of frustration.

The researcher's deliberate practice of holding back his personal views about program matters was disappointing to some members who wanted his perspective:

[The researcher] is one of the most experienced [program] people in the country. He's been at [the organization] longer than any of the other consultants and so I think there's a lot of knowledge there that deserves to come out... maybe more so than it does. (TP 2, steering committee member, Henri)

Another member commented on how they wished the researcher "would step into the discussions and let people recognize his expertise."

Additional countervailing evidence concerned the impact of the researcher's facilitation style. As one steering committee member put it:

[The researcher's] approach has its strengths and weaknesses at the same time. When you have a group like that in a room, where it's hard to know what the individual agendas are, sometimes people have an opinion and they want eight people in the room to agree with them and they don't get it... someone has to say, "it's time to move on here." (TP 2, Tom)

Similarly, how discussions were handled and particularly how decisions were processed was identified as being troublesome for some members.

In sum, although much of the evidence collected indicated that the researcher was a positive influence on the participatory process, some potentially harmful behaviors were also noted.

5.2.7 Summary

The organizational learning capacity variables that seemed to be most affected by the factors described above were knowledge generation, shared knowledge representation, and levels of learning. The funding cutbacks in the system were thought to both stimulate and retard partner organization's use of program evaluation activities. Although there was a sense that all CNT's programs needed to become more accountable, the evidence was not conclusive. Further, the

president's continual support for the project, combined with members' increasing understanding of the evaluation model, contributed to the view that knowledge generation activities—like program evaluation—may one day find a place in the system. In terms of levels of learning, the organization's leadership once again stimulated members to challenge existing rules and norms governing the operation of the program. This conceptual task was assisted by the evaluation framework that required members to consider the theoretical design of the program and to clarify its cause-effects relationships.

Finally, shared knowledge representation was thought to be positively influenced by the evaluation framework, participatory process, and the researcher. To achieve the goals of the evaluation framework, members were required to venture out into the field of practice. The resulting dialogue with program practitioners was reported to be helpful in clarifying committee members' perspectives about key program issues. The adoption of a participatory approach—which required each member of the committee to assume a leadership role—seemed to generate an increased commitment from members to actually learn about and understand the complex issues being debated. The facilitation skills of the researcher was also noted as fostering a climate conducive to unearthing personal views and beliefs. The organizational knowledge and background of the researcher was observed to be both helpful in fostering improved understandings and detrimental due to the expectations of certain committee members regarding the leadership role expected. In spite of this limitation, the findings support the conclusions of Love (1991) who stated that internal evaluators, who are internal to

the organization and the program, are able to foster the necessary conditions for use.

5.2.8 Author's Personal Reflections

I began this period (May, 1995 to October, 1995) with an incredible sense of purpose, confidence in the project plan, and lots of energy. Committee members, especially my colleague (Henri), seemed to be up for the challenge and within the first two months the initial data collection steps were beginning to take shape. I was able to focus most of my time and energies on the project and worked extremely hard to ensure that accurate information was being recorded and disseminated to program stakeholders. Unfortunately, this blissful start soon ended when the annual budget review period was initiated in September, 1995.

For the second consecutive year, financial cutbacks from the government were expected to be announced and this caused everyone associated with the project to get distracted. Although, I was not worried about the evaluation project's funding, committee members representing the national organizations and provincial/territorial governments were involved in their own budget reviews and work on the evaluation project became secondary. Consequently, during this period Henri and I started to take on an incredible amount of the responsibility to keep the project on track. Combined with increased workloads and responsibilities associated with the organization, fatigue and frustration quickly set in. It was obvious that the original time lines were far too ambitious and that new and more realistic ones needed to be established.

My doctoral work was also very demanding and it was therefore quite a relief when my thesis proposal was accepted and members of the evaluation project's

steering committee agreed to participate in the study. Interestingly, all members seemed to show a genuine interest in the research questions and some made sporadic comments indicating that they were aware they were being observed. I found this to be disturbing and hoped that it was simply a matter of time before the novelty of being involved in research study would pass. Consequently, I consciously avoided making any comments about the study and was quite discrete in my efforts to assist the independent interviewer to schedule the first round of interviews and in recording participant observations. Clearly, I didn't want to give any profile to my academic pursuits for fear that committee members would begin to question my motives as the project leader. It occurred to me that if this situation was not handled correctly, some may perceive a conflict of interest in my dual role as both researcher and project leader. Upon reflection, the collaborative nature of the project would appear to have been my greatest ally, as most decisions about the project were made by the committee. It would have been very hard, if not impossible, for one person to have made a decision regarding the project for personal gains.

Chapter 6

Finalization of Data Collection and Initiation of Data Analysis: Time Period 3 (October, 1995 to April, 1996)

The hard realities of conducting a large-scale, participatory evaluation surfaced during the winter months of 1996. Members of the project's steering committee struggled to find the needed time and energies to both develop the various data collection tools and facilitate their implementation. The project's original deadline of May 1996 was pushed back to the fall of 1996 as members focused on ensuring the project held true to its original design. The stress associated with being involved in such a complex evaluative exercise was evident in both the behaviors exhibited by steering committee members and the decisions made during this time period. By April 1996 the project was at a sort of "cross-roads." Committee members seemed to be confused and frustrated, to the point that one member considered leaving the committee. To make matters worse, new individuals had to be added to the committee as personal workloads resulted in some members having to miss meetings. Furthermore, many of the individuals associated with a key stakeholder group were in their final preparations for the 1996 summer Olympic games, and struggled to find the time to respond to surveys and attend focus group meetings. Nevertheless, the members showed remarkable commitment to the project and indications continued to surface suggesting that the participatory evaluation project was continuing to enhance organizational learning capacity.

6.1 Status of Organizational Learning as the Evaluation Project was being Implemented

Table 6 displays data from the third time period that relates to the status of the dependent variables and the supporting and countervailing evidence associated with each variable.

TABLE 6
Status of Organizational Learning: Time Period 3

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consolidation and convergence of views re. key program issues clarification of participants needs and program design increased sharing of information among org members 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> committee's instability slowed down thinking and caused frustrations
Levels of Learning	mod-high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased breadth and scope of issues previous held premises re. training and development challenged organization's decision-making process challenged jurisdiction challenged 	O (no evidence)
Memory	moderate ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organization purchases new communication technology org members improve ability to communicate 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge for Action	mod-low ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pilot development of curriculum monitored 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> little contact with field offices
Knowledge Acquisition	mod-high ↔	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> two national organizations initiate systematic searches 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge Generation	moderate ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased number of feedback mechanisms and linkages with program partners heightened staff awareness to the importance of strategic alliances see need to evaluate other org. programs 	O (no evidence)
Interpretive Systems	mod-low ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshops provide forums for discussion steering committee role evolves 	O (no evidence)

The interaction between the researcher and the various stakeholders groups during the previous six months required an extensive time and energy commitment and involved: three Planning and Evaluation Committee meetings (six days); six CNT technical staff meetings (three days); two National Training Council Meetings (two days); two conference calls with Planning and Evaluation Committee; daily informal meetings with CNT colleagues (especially the president); and regular correspondence with PEC members using telephone, FAX, etc.

6.1.1 Shared knowledge representation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	mod-high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consolidation and convergence of views re. key program issues • clarification of participants needs and program design • increased sharing of information among org members 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • committee's instability slowed down thinking and caused frustrations
Sources of Evidence			
1 Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U'U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
2 Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U'U'U (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)
3 Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

The awareness of all individuals within the system, and in particular steering committee members, to the fundamental issues that impact the program seemed to be greatly enhanced during this period. The evidence collected suggested that the various perspectives held by committee members were converging and becoming more uniform. Alternatively, the committee's ever changing membership

fostered continued frustration which negatively affected the ability of the group to become of like-mind.

For the first time, information generated by the initial data collection steps was seen to influence the views of the respondents. This information, combined with the ongoing series of interactions with individuals in the system, appeared to assist members to consolidate important assumptions about the program and its participants. Following the debriefing of a workshop aimed to provide stakeholders of the national organizations with an opportunity to discuss and voice their concerns about the program, the two steering committee members who facilitated the workshop made mention of how they were "far more knowledgeable of the issues now" (observation field notes, December 14, 1995). In addition to awareness enhancement, the interactions served to clarify their conceptions about the program and its participants:

We are finding out that some [national organizations] have a very professional culture...whereas you have other [national organizations] which will probably always be volunteer base and have different needs. And why should the program force all the [national organizations] and all the [program participants] to go through the same boxes? Why should it be that way? (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

Internal working sessions aimed at developing the data collection tools (e.g., stakeholder survey) elicited many responses that implied that the evaluation process was indeed bringing about a consensus of thought. For example, following three days of working on the survey with members of the steering committee, an understanding was reached regarding the underlying principles that program designers had used to construct the program 20 years ago (observation field notes, February 7, 1996). Once the surveys were constructed, steering committee members and provincial/territorial leaders were involved in their distribution and

use. Specifically, workshops were held in the various provinces and territories to explain the surveys and assist stakeholders in its completion. Once again, data emerged that insinuated clarification of key issues resulted from this time and labor intensive process:

The four workshops were not to necessarily complete the questionnaire, it was to explain the questions, to have some discussions about some of the questions, to provide clarification and basic information about certain elements of the program...what it is, how it works, that kind of stuff. Then the [provincial organizations] began to feel confident about the type of information we were looking for. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

You design workshops to make sure that the [provincial organizations] understand the questionnaire and issues and to make sure you get it back. It's a painful process but it's the only process. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

As a result of their ongoing involvement, by the end of this time period committee members were remarking on the learning that was being achieved. One member claimed during a phone conversation how the various interactions with his stakeholder group had acted to "crystallize his views in terms of what is required to improve the program from the [national organization] perspective and that there are some very clear and identifiable themes emerging from his ongoing conversations and survey results" (observation field notes, April 9, 1996).

In terms of CNT, the degree of information sharing among organization members noticeably increased during this period. The evaluation project encompassed the entire program and thus implicated all members who had program responsibilities. The evaluative questions, in particular, seemed to focus the intellectual energizes of the organization as members debated, argued, and tried to reach understanding and/or consensus on key program issues. A synergy of sorts appeared to result as members "pulled together" in an effort to respond to the

tremendous challenges posed by the evaluation (observation field notes, October 26, 1995).

As alluded to earlier, not all the evidence was uniform regarding the impact of the evaluative process on the degree of sense-making achieved during this period. The instability of the committee was once again identified as limiting the ability of the members to acquire a shared perspective. Only this time the evidence suggests that its impact on certain committee members was considerable. When asked why the committee seemed to be sidetracked by certain members during committee meetings, one respondent remarked:

Actually it's the composition. What occurred is that the [federal government] rep changed to a new person who doesn't have a clue about the [project]. One of the two [national organization] reps was recently fired and rehired. So she lost track for quite a long time as well. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

Another commented that the committee's instability seemed to cause the committee to lose its sense of direction and suggested that it was important to establish who was directing the project. In his words:

As far as the committee is concerned, one thing that I have mentioned to [the researcher] is that I don't sense that the committee is as permanent as I would have preferred it to be. Some people have dropped off because they have either changed jobs or we've had somebody stand in for them. We've had [committee member] not able to attend a meeting. Those things affect who are the core people in this [project]...who are the people really in this [project]? (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

6.1.2 Levels of learning

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Levels of Learning	mod-high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased breadth and scope of issues • previous held premises re training and development challenged • organization's decision-making process challenged • jurisdiction challenged 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) • UUU (high use) • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA

The ongoing deliberations among program leaders, key stakeholder groups, and persons responsible for the evaluation project's implementation facilitated a continued challenge to the existing images and norms used to guide the program and the organization. While the evidence collected is somewhat similar to that reported in previous chapters, the examples provided below demonstrate an increase in the depth and breath of issues debated. The questions or issues raised can be categorized into the following three interdependent areas: concepts underlying the program, organizational decision making, and jurisdictional concerns. This section begins with a look at how the fundamental assumptions which underlie the program were being raised and dealt with.

Although questions about the fundamental assumptions used to develop the program were beginning to emerge in the previous time periods, the data implied that important and deeply held beliefs were still "lurking in the background somewhere" and had not yet surfaced. The evidence collected and highlighted below

suggests that program leaders generally, and committee members specifically, had overcome any shyness about raising potentially controversial beliefs. In response to a query about whether or not the project will result in any surprising recommendations, a committee member replied:

Oh, I think there can and should be some surprises. My sense is that the issue [being debated] could involve significant change in people's attitudes...[the recommendations] will probably shake-up people in some cases. I can see some recommendations coming down that would challenge ways of thinking. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

The range of program issues debated by various stakeholder groups provide a gauge of the extent or level of learning. Although the examples provided below relate specifically to the members involvement in conceptual discussions about the program, the ramifications of this thinking extends beyond the program to the organization itself. The program is intimately connected with CNT's purpose—if the program changes direction, the organization is bound to follow. For example, the overall scope or purpose of the program was put on the table and clarified. As one member put it:

Once upon a time we said, "[participant] education is [the program]." That's clearly being challenged now. People, including myself, are saying, "[the program] isn't [participant] education, it's a part of [participant] education. What we should be talking about is what part it is and how important a part it is and what should it represent and what values should it promote." So there was a fundamental assumption that we equated [participant] education with [the program]... now we know that it is only part of [participant] education. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Committee and CNT members were also challenged to reflect upon their personal beliefs as to how program participants should be involved in directing their own learning. CNT members were briefed at an internal meeting that the use of new technology, for example, would alter one of the guiding principles used by the organization when it developed the original program, namely, that program

participants were passive learners. Members debated the view that new technology would act to empower the learner to seek out and access information relevant to their needs and would move the program away from being course-based to being more learner directed (observation field notes, October 26, 1995). This new conception of how participants learn has significant repercussions for how CNT positions its marketing strategy to promote the program, as well as the actual design of the program itself.

Perhaps the most significant learning resulted from members becoming immersed in an ongoing discussion aimed at uncovering the program's validity assumptions, that is, beliefs about how the program is supposed to work. At a committee meeting in January 1996 and an organization meeting in February 1996, the underlying beliefs as to how the program, and its various steps, was supposed to cause improvements to participants' behaviors was freely discussed and challenged. "There isn't anything articulated anywhere in terms of how the program was to suppose to work. While we have three components that everyone is familiar with, there has never been anything explicitly written down. One of the real treasures of the project will be to have the committee state a program theory in terms of cause-effect relationships and this should provide some very useful guidelines to program designers in the future as they go about reconstructing this thing" (observation field notes, February 22, 1996). In addition to supporting this claim, the interview data implied that serious consideration was being given to the program's basic orientation and structure:

What [the project's recommendations] might wind up doing is suggesting three different models that pertain to three different levels of [participant] development. You might have the [organizations] who produce professional [participants], followed by those that produce volunteer [participants],

followed by another who produces volunteer [participants] but who do not receive the type of [program] funding that would be necessary to mobilize the perfect [model]. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

Another commented on the overall approach that should be taken.

I think one of the assumptions we're questioning is whether [the program] should be a training or an education program. Another thing is whether or not people should, if the model was designed correctly, move through the program going up the levels or have the chance to move horizontally (i.e., stay at Level 1, but broaden their depth of knowledge at that one level). (TP 3, steering committee member, Brad)

From CNT's standpoint, the data would give the appearance that the organization's decision-making processes were being influenced by the evaluation exercise. Internal planning documents were created that referenced the need for organization members to work collaboratively with national organizations, in other words, to encourage and foster commitment to the organization's goals by working closely with and educating national organizations (archival data, December 11, 1995). A CNT member commented how the organization's traditional thinking about partner organizations was being altered:

I think more than anything, the thing that's made the most impact on me is the interest of the partners and the dynamics of the partners in [the project]. Even though it still is essentially run by [the organization]... the partners are now being given much more responsibility in terms of data collection and they're coming through. This is new for us and it looks positive. (TP 3, steering committee member, Steve)

Another member corroborated this view and provided a historical context for the change in CNT's standard operating procedures regarding the involvement of partner organizations,

[The project] is the first true example of full involvement [by the partners] in decision making. Historically, decisions about [the program] have pretty much been driven by [the organization]. Now, people expect to be involved. This is something that we had to learn ... we are not the only people being impacted by these decisions. Historically, we were pretty directive and we have found out that no matter how forceful you want to be, if people don't

feel that your decision makes sense or that the decision is not theirs... you can be as forceful as you want but it's not going to work. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Finally, the issue concerning jurisdictional power or status of the various partners once again surfaced in the interview data. Steering committee members, representing the national organizations, sounded resolute in terms of the role they saw for themselves.

I think of all the partners in [the program], the biggest partner at the table relative to ownership is the [national organizations]. Everybody else has a role to play and contributes to the process...but when it is all said and done, two of the three components are facilitated by the [national organizations] in concert with their [provincial] partners. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

When asked directly if he had a problem with the position held by most of the program partners, that is, the partners were considered to be equal, the member replied, "From a [national organization's] perspective, yes, I have a problem with that."

Murmuring were also noted from steering committee members representing the provincial governments that caused project leaders to take notice. One individual, in particular, looked to be encouraging other committee members that the issue of jurisdictional responsibilities should be addressed and dealt with in the evaluation project's report. This prompted one member to react:

I suspect [the member] has another agenda hidden underneath... challenging the jurisdiction and the terms of negotiations. Whether it's intentional or not I'm not sure. I know [the province] is undergoing a consultation process with their membership...and with the political situation the way it is now, I wouldn't be surprised if their position is "Hey, this is the way we're going to go. It's not negotiable." That wouldn't surprise me. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

What initially emerged during the fall of 1995 as an intriguing and important point for discussion, seems to have evolved into an issue that had the

potential to seriously challenge the organization's traditional ways of doing business. Thus far, the committee had not allocated time to a discussion or exploration of the topic, given its complexity and scope. Nonetheless, the issue provides an example of the depth and complexity of the topics that were surfaced by the evaluation during this period.

6.1.3 Memory

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Memory	moderate ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organization purchases new communication technology org members improve ability to communicate 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	

The need for increased communication with committee members and partner organizations contributed to a decision by the organization to investigate and eventually purchase new information dissemination/communication technology (e-mail). The data collection phase was the most "information-laden" period of the project as committee members and partner organizations implemented the surveys and conducted focus groups.

During this period, project leaders continually pointed out to the organization's senior managers their concern of not being able to communicate quickly and easily with members of the steering committee. It was somewhat ironic

that steering committee members were able to communicate regularly with each other about the project using e-mail, yet the leaders of the project were unable to do likewise (observation field notes, September 20, 1995).

An internal staff meeting provided an opportunity to raise the need for CNT to get "on-line" since so many of the partner organizations had already committed to using the internet as one of their basic communication platforms (observation field notes, October 17, 1995). This session was followed by another meeting organized by CNT's vice-president of administration in which an information technology expert was brought in to listen to the needs and educate all members of the organization on the advantages and disadvantages of moving to this new communication medium. Three times during the meeting the vice-president was observed mentioning the need for the organization to acquire the ability to use new technology, if for no other reason than to assist the leaders of the evaluation project to communicate with their committee (observation field notes, November 1, 1995). It would seem that one of the organization's key structures—the pathways for transmission of information—was being enhanced by the organization's actions to service the needs and requirements of the evaluation project.

6.1.4 Knowledge for action

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge for Action	mod-low ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pilot development of curriculum monitored 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • little contact with field offices
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

Although not one respondent commented on this variable during the interviews, the researcher did take action in an attempt to capture some of the learning being accrued by one national organization involved in a pilot activity. As mentioned in the previous chapter, two national organizations were pushing ahead in their plan to develop a competency-based training curriculum. Since a member of the project's steering committee was leading the curriculum committee of one of the national organizations, the researcher met with this member to discuss the project. As a result of these informal discussions, held in early January 1996, a great deal of information was gained and new perspectives developed regarding the potential benefits and drawbacks of shifting the program to a competency-based model (observation field notes, January 15, 1996). Furthermore, the steering committee member agreed to assume the role of "competency-based training expert" on behalf of the committee and was continually asked to provide updates to the committee on the progress being made. Unfortunately, many other projects being initiated by either the national organizations or the organization's field offices were left unchecked.

6.1.5 Knowledge acquisition

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Acquisition	mod-high ⇔	P (weak positive) • two national organizations initiate systematic searches	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• PPP (high use)	• N/A
2. Interviews		• PP (moderate use)	
3. Archival		• O (no use)	

There were two recorded examples of individuals within the system initiating a systematic search for information within their external environment. Both examples were drawn from actions of individuals affiliated with national organizations. One organization developed a survey to receive feedback about their program from a broad spectrum of users. The second organization, in addition to the survey, planned for both a review of international programs and the implementation of regional focus groups to assist them establish their future directions (observation field notes, December 14, 1995).

In addition, committee members were continually encouraged to search out and circulate information that addressed the various issues and questions that surfaced during the project. This included information that compared and contrasted Canada's program with those from other countries, as well as academic reviews of new and innovative teaching strategies. This activity was considered so important to the success of the project, that it became one of the project's key data collection steps.

6.1.6 Knowledge generation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Generation	moderate ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increased number of feedback mechanisms and linkages with program partners heightened staff awareness to the importance of strategic alliances see need to evaluate other org. programs 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPP (high use) PP (moderate use) O (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA

One of the fundamental premises raised in the review of literature was that organizations that wished to create knowledge internally, in the hopes that their programs become self-correcting, need to develop adequate feedback mechanisms. The establishment of strong bonds or linkages with key members of the organization is one way program leaders receive contextually rich information about program operations. Several respondents claimed that the evaluation project positively influenced the formation of such linkages. For example, during a workshop involving all the program partners designed to generate feedback about the program, one leader from a national organization remarked, "Every [national organization] should have strong bonds with their [provincial organizations]. In fact, just by sending out the [evaluation project's] survey and generating the report...you are forced to make a connection of some kind" (observation field notes, December 9, 1995). Similarly, CNT's president, during a strategic planning meeting, proposed, "...the evaluation project should have helped and will help [the organization] to

understand its partners in that linkages and partnerships are being created. The partnerships are something that we should foster after the evaluation project is over" (observation field notes, December 15, 1995). Finally, during the interviews conducted at the end of the time period, one member responded to a direct question about whether or not the evaluation process had improve his organization's relationship with their provincial associations, by saying:

Oh, sure. In fact [the evaluation project] provided a unique opportunity to do just that. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

It would also seem noteworthy to report the considerable support committee members voiced for participatory forms of program evaluation and the need to integrate evaluative activities into the organization's day-to-day operations. As one CNT member suggested:

From now on [the organization] can never go back. We will always have to go out and talk to our target group first and find out what their needs are before we will be able to develop or make suggestions for change. So that will have a significant impact on the organization. We will have a better reputation for believing in partnership...that is a result of this project. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

A provincial government representative advocated the use of program evaluation activities for a different reason. Program evaluation, he felt, would strengthen the program from an instructional design standpoint. In his words:

I think that we have learned that the last step of designing a new program is to plan for it's evaluation. So I guess we will probably put activities or elements in place to make sure, that in the future, we have an ongoing monitoring system in place. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

When asked by the interviewer if the use of program evaluation was "something new in the design of the program?" The member replied,

[Program evaluation] was a nonexistent aspect of the [program]. But, [program evaluation] will be used if we revise the program...it will be incorporated into this program. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

The final piece of evidence that implied CNT members were seriously considering the use of program evaluation in the future occurred during an internal organizational meeting. The individual responsible for the development and implementation of the program's advanced levels identified evaluation as a key priority for his work team (observation field notes, December 19, 1995). It seems reasonable to postulate that both committee and CNT members supported the notion that program evaluation had significant benefits (e.g., improving linkages) and they were beginning to accept the rationale that evaluation should be incorporated, formally, into the system.

6.1.7 Interpretive systems

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Interpretive Systems	mod-low ↑↑	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> workshops provide forums for discussion steering committee role evolves 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence 1 Participant Observation 2 Interviews 3 Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (low use) O (no use) O (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

Throughout the data collection period a series of forums were held by various stakeholder groups to both solicit feedback on the program and discuss potential program improvements. Similarly, the project's steering committee was immersed in ongoing discussions (e.g., conference calls, formal and informal meetings) in which conceptions about the program were debated. Due the nature of the project's goals and design, the role of the steering committee evolved into a forum which attempted

to make sense out the data being generated on behalf of all the partners. The committee had evolved into place where all the partners fed information in hopes that the members would use the data to make program improvements. The committee, it seemed, was evolving into an important monitoring or sense-making system for the organization.

6.1.8 Summary

By the end of this time period, six of the seven dependent variables were found to be enhanced. As a result, the learning capacity of the organization was thought to be considerably improved. Specifically, the data observed suggested that shared knowledge representation was significantly improved as members, having now been immersed in the project for approximately one year, were becoming of like-mind. In addition, evidence was found implying that members of both the project's steering committee and CNT were becoming highly committed to the project and were engaging in a series of ongoing, informal discussions. The only downside observed was when committee composition was altered due to unforeseen reasons and new members appeared on the scene. Stecher and Davis (1987) pointed out that these interruptions can be quite disruptive and can slow down the process. This was endorsed by the present set of findings as the development of shared perspectives slowed as new members had to be integrated.

Higher-order learning was characterized by (1) committee members surfacing underlying issues which dealt with the decision-making procedures of the organization and (2) program partners challenging the jurisdictional powers used to govern the program. The organization's memory got a boost as an electronic mail system was purchased to assist program leaders communicate and store important

information for project members and others in the system. For the first time, an attempt was made to formalize a link to one of the national organization involved in pilot testing the development of a competency-based curriculum. The use of program evaluation, as an ongoing developmental process, received endorsement from committee members, as well as from organization members who felt that a similar processes should be used on related organization programs. And finally, the steering committee showed signs of evolving into an extremely important sense-making forum on behalf of the organization and entire system. This last observation represents an example of deuterio-learning highlighted in the review of literature. It would seem that through the actions of the committee, CNT had developed a forum to systematically generate and process information on behalf of the organization (Argyris, 1993).

6.2 What Factors Explain the Observed Pattern of Organizational Learning?

Table 7 summarizes the factors that appeared to be operative during the third time period. Data appeared for the first time that would suggest the findings emerging from the evaluation project itself were beginning to have an impact on organizational learning capacity.

TABLE 7

**Factors Influencing Status of Organizational Learning:
Time Period 3**

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ORGANIZATION</i></p> <p>Political Environment</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high information needs by org. senior managers • reduction in funding stimulates new strategic partnerships • system looking for increased accountability 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Milieu</p>	<p>P (weak positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulates non-org members to challenge current conceptions about program • provides encouragement and needed resources 	<p>N (weak negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negative perception of leadership change • reduced confidence in decision-making
<p>Culture</p>	<p>P (weak positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • org questioned traditional roles with partners • increased acceptance of collaborative work by all partners 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required members to analyze training and education approaches • compared and contrasted foreign programs • stimulated utilization of evaluation tools 	<p>NN (moderate negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation design too confining - limits learning • misunderstanding of Brinkerhoff's model • scope of project too broad
<p>Participatory Process</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular, intimate involvement improved members' conceptions of program issues • increased personal commitment • shared control heightened collaboration 	<p>N (weak negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workload demotivated members • participatory approach involves too much time

Researcher Impact	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> meeting facilitation skills foster positive climate academic background increased members' confidence in project program expertise link present work with program's history 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> withholding personal views limited learning and increased frustration dual role (facilitator and project leader) confusion connection to org created perceived bias
Evaluation Findings	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minutes/summaries of focus groups nature of preliminary results of national survey 	O (no influence)

6.2.1 Political environment

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Political Environment	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> high information needs by org senior managers reduction in funding stimulates new strategic partnerships system looking for increased accountability 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
2. Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	
3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (low use) 	

In reaction to the anticipated financial cuts from the federal government, CNT embarked on a comprehensive, four month strategic planning exercise. For the first time in nearly two decades the organization was faced with making financial, program, and organizational decisions of an unprecedented nature. The president, in preparation for one of many internal planning sessions held during the

fall of 1995, prepared a document that highlighted the evaluation project as being a “significant source of information as the organization decides on its future course of action” (observation field notes, October 30, 1995). The organization was in need of timely information and the evaluation project seemed to be filling the need.

The funding crisis appeared to be facilitating high-level learning as discussions among CNT members were aimed at altering the overall norms and beliefs regarding how the organization should operate. For example, members realized that new financial and strategic relationships would be needed with partner organizations—especially national organizations—if the number of programs currently offered were to continue (observation field notes, December 1, 1995). A member of CNT commented specifically on this need. As he put it:

Our stake is getting smaller and smaller every year, because we have less and less funds. The [national organizations] have less and less funds from the Feds as well... so the partnership is really key. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Fortunately, in spite of the severe financial cuts occurring throughout the system, the political leaders in most of the provincial/territorial governments and national organizations remained surprisingly supportive of change. A commentary from one of the provinces’ quarterly newsletters to program practitioners captures the attitude partners had about the project:

The [program] is currently undergoing a widespread evaluation. Since being initiated in May 1995, the project has been asking [program participants] and key stakeholders for feedback. During the month of April all [provincial organizations] will be given opportunities to provide feedback through the official evaluation survey and open forums. Please be sure to take advantage of this long-awaited opportunity to provide input regarding the [program's] design, delivery, and approach to [program participant] development in Canada. [archival data, March, 1996]

In addition to confirming the partners' satisfaction with and involvement in the project, some of the data provided new insights into how the underlying political pressures were directing the way the evaluation was being conducted. As one provincial leader clearly noted:

The only thing I'm concerned about is when all of the provinces submit their reports... that they are completely satisfied or confident that the process was well managed and that there were no hidden agendas with the project. I want to make sure that at the end of that data collection phase, nobody will be able to come to us saying "Hey, everything was already settled in advanced." So we have got to remain quite close to the evaluation steps. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

One interpretation could be that some members of the committee were as concerned with stakeholders' perceptions of how the project was being conducted as they were with the results themselves.

The reduction in federal funding also provided evidence that supported an important view noted in previous time periods, namely, that reduced dollars trigger an increased need for the system to be more accountable. The representative from the federal government once again revealed his perspective on the important role that program evaluation ought to play:

I think with dollars being what they are—shrinking and projected to continue to shrink—there is more of a need for all organizations to be really clear about what business they are in. So I think [program evaluation] is here to stay and it's more important than it ever was. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brad)

For the first time no evidence was collected that pointed to the reduction in federal funding as negatively affecting the decision to implement program evaluation. Perhaps, respondents viewed the evaluation project as a "positive" in a system being crippled by constant funding cuts and simply chose not to comment.

6.2.2 Milieu

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Milieu	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> stimulates non-org. members to challenge current conceptions about program provides encouragement and needed resources 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> negative perception of leadership change reduced confidence in decision-making
Sources of Evidence		
1 Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (low use)
2 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UUU (high use)
3 Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0 (no use)

As the steering committee members struggled to keep the project on course and find the energy to implement the ambitious data collection steps, the continued support and guidance offered by CNT's president had a tremendously positive impact on the organizational learning that appeared to be emanating from this evaluative exercise. Somehow, it seemed as though the president's ongoing encouragement to consider alternative training/education models, that challenged the current paradigm, had reached members of the steering committee not directly employed by the organization. A representative of a provincial government highlighted the significance of the president's attitude with the following comment:

I think that senior management of [the organization] has seen that the project is going to challenge the existing model quite significantly, and there appears to be a conscious decision taken to allow that... if not encourage it. That's a big step. (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

While it was noted in the previous time periods that the president's influence had stimulated committee members, employed by CNT, to challenge previously held

beliefs, this is the first indication that suggested the president's impact had reached members of the committee who were non-employees.

It is also worthwhile to make mention of the so called "little things" that continued to foster commitment to the project. The president insisted that the evaluation project's poster be displayed on the wall outside his office. The poster, measuring 3 feet by 6 feet, was therefore visible to all organization members and visitors to the office (observation field notes, October 26, 1995). In addition, after reinforcing the importance of the committee to hit its stated timelines, the president encouraged any staff member that was asked to assist with the project to do so (observation field notes, March 14, 1996). The importance of the project to the president was clear to all members of CNT as the following comment illustrates:

...the biggest decision that was made was to initiate the project, put it as a priority, and allow staff to re-adjust their work schedules in order to make room for this as a priority. So that was a key organizational decision. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brenda)

Furthermore, the president's leadership challenged organization members, during a policies and procedures review meeting, to consider how the impending recommendations from the evaluation project will affect the organization's current support for new program initiatives like evaluation (observation field notes, February 22, 1996). If considered individually, none of the examples described above would trigger the growing confidence and positive attitude individuals associated closely with the project were developing. Taken together, however, they acted to foster a belief that the project was important and that the committee's work, including their recommendations, would be supported by CNT's senior decision-makers.

One of the most noteworthy developments during this period had to do with the potentially negative impact that the president's planned retirement in June 1996 would have. The date of his retirement was confirmed in January 1996 and for the first time evidence appeared that implied this change was being perceived by committee members as potentially damaging in terms of both organizational learning and the project's impact. Several respondents claimed effects similar to those provided below:

...[the president] is leaving soon and he's extremely influential. So we would like to be able to complete the [project's] report and get his stamp on it. The next president? Well, who knows? The impact of that next person is unpredictable. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

Other members representing partner organizations were more certain of the impact:

I come back to the point of who the new leader is, who the new president is... will be a hugely important decision. It will be hugely important for the future of this project and also the way [the organization] is viewed from outside. I personally think that it will be an enormous decision. (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

...right now we're going through this evaluation and [the president] is retiring. Now who knows? A new president could come in and say "Well, what's happened before [during the project] has little relevance and I think these are the changes that are needed." So I mean, that possibility exists. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

The evaluation process, it would appear, has not provided project leaders with the confidence that their decisions could withstand the challenge of a new CNT president who held a different view of things. These admissions would also seem to indicate that the members lacked confidence in the notion that a decentralization of power from the organization to the various partners had really been committed to. If they had, it would seem logical to speculate that committee members would be of the view that one individual—even the organization's president—would not be able to block the collective wishes of the committee.

6.2.3 Organization culture

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Culture	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • org. questioned traditional roles with partners • increased acceptance of collaborative work by all partners 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) • UUU (high use) • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

The nature and amount of CNT's work with partner organizations during this period would suggest that a more collaborative and inclusive style of management was being assumed. The participatory nature of the evaluation project provided organization members with numerous experiences and opportunities to deal face-to-face interactions with these key program stakeholders. These interactions appeared to have caused some CNT members to question the beliefs that were being using to view the world. As one member questioned:

Why shouldn't we use the [the evaluation project's] processes elsewhere? Why shouldn't we use good process when we deal with all our issues. Why shouldn't I use them in my context if I believe in them? I would like to breakdown some of those barriers. So that's coming out of the project. I'm being reaffirmed through this project that this [process] does work. (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Others identified that a shift to a more collaborative operating style would be of tremendous benefit to CNT. In her words:

[Collaborative work] will have a significant impact on the organization. Just the way the whole project has been done...there is a very high sense of cooperation amongst all the partners. Everybody has been getting tons of opportunities, lots of information, and that overall will put [the organization] in a very good light. We will have a stronger reputation for believing in the partnership as a result of this project. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brenda)

There was also evidence that this view was not limited to just CNT members involved in the evaluation project. Internal planning documents were uncovered that included a list of "core assumptions" designed to assist members in developing a collective view of the environment within which the organization was operating. One of the core assumptions referenced the need for CNT members to work in a more collaborative fashion with members of partner organizations [Archival data, December 1, 1995]. The benefits of collaborative work, it would seem, was not lost to senior managers of the organization.

If the culture of CNT had indeed changed to one in which the organization would share its decision-making power and work more collaboratively with its partners, significant opportunities for future learning would be present.

6.2.4 Evaluation framework

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Evaluation Framework	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required members to analyze training and education approaches • compared and contrasted foreign programs • stimulated utilization of evaluation tools 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation design too confining - limits learning • misunderstanding of Brinkerhoff's model • scope of project too broad
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use)
2. Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use)
3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

As was the case in the previous two time periods, the evaluation framework continued to promote high-level learning among members of the project team. However, unlike the overwhelming positive influence the framework had in promoting learning noted earlier, evidence was collected for the first time that suggested negative effects were beginning to surface.

First, from a positive standpoint, the steps associated with the evaluation framework required that committee members assess the program's design in terms of its practicality, theoretical soundness, and its responsiveness to competing alternatives (i.e., are other programs in place which are capable of doing the job better?). As a result, committee members were challenged to consider whether or not the program's validity assumptions were indeed logical. Initially, this discussion was extremely difficult for the researcher to lead given members' general lack of familiarity with the concepts. However, the dialogue did prove to be helpful in clarifying certain program weaknesses and uncovering deeply held beliefs once

members understood the purpose of stage two of Brinkerhoff's model (observation field notes, April 8, 1996).

The decision to compare and contrast the Canadian program with those from other countries resulted in a comprehensive review of literature. Consequently, the members were involved in a review of major program issues such as: program design, content, delivery, and the like. Their attitude for such work was assessed to be quite positive—members were observed to learning quite a bit about what is realistically possible in a volunteer-based program (observation field notes, January 29, 1996). This perception was confirmed by the interview data. As one committee member commented:

...there is a stage built into [the project] that looks at other models and reviews the literature in various relevant fields...that's professional development for the committee that will only be further benefit to [program]. We will be able to say, "Look, we see this about our own program and there are other models that look like this that respond to these kinds of needs" So I think that will affect our ability as a committee to make valid recommendations...well informed recommendations. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

In terms of activities associated with enhancing knowledge generation, data surfaced that indicated respondents believed that future evaluation activities would likely occur now that an evaluation framework or model had been developed and used successfully. As a member of CNT stated,

I think this evaluation project has provided a model for the rest of the [national organizations]... they will be encouraged to do their own research within their own organization. I think [the organization] will be very supportive of that. (TP 3, Brenda)

Perhaps the most important viewpoint to report, however, were those held by members of national organizations, individuals ultimately responsible for

incorporating program evaluation into their systems of operation. Their responses implied that similar impacts were also resulting:

...the [national organizations'] program evaluation is tied directly to [this project]. If the [national organizations] were paying attention during this process... they have been given ample opportunity to use the questionnaires that have been developed to take a good hard look at their own back yard. So whether they use the model this time around or take out a component... it would be quite appropriate. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

For some members, however, the experience of having to follow a set evaluation plan was proving to be quite frustrating. One member described how the evaluation steps (illustrated in an evaluation project diagram as discrete boxes) were preventing the committee from discussing important issues as they emerged during the project:

...[the committee members] are sort of like, I don't know, micro managers. They feel much more comfortable in dealing with the boxes and being true to those boxes and they don't want to be flexible. It's like once we're on this track, let's finish it. Then, we will consider other things. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

This concern stimulated a fairly intense discussion among committee members with one commenting that if "the process is trying to impact the program in a really fundamental way it is going to require the committee to be able to express their views about the program, how it is being operated, what are its inherent weaknesses, etceteras. At this point we really haven't been able to get those on the table because of this framework that we are working under" (observation field notes, April 3, 1996). This feeling was also supported by the interview data. As one member put it,

I think that [the problem] is represented [by the evaluation] wall chart ...it is a quite linear process. It describes to do this, this, and this, and by this date. What's happened over the last three or four months, quite independently I sense, is that people have said, "But just a minute. We have to deal with some of these values issues, because that's what really drives a major

rethink of a large and complex program. And unless we deal with those issues the rest is kind of futile." While the other [committee members] are saying, "no, we're just following the original design of the project here and we need to stick to that and we shouldn't deviate from that." (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

It was also becoming apparent that other members were becoming disenchanted due to related but different reasons. One member, in particular, criticized the way the project was being managed and specified that the committee should not be spending any time talking about program theory or philosophical questions because they were inappropriate. His frustration was a result of the committee not adhering closely enough to his perception of what the evaluation plan called for (observation field notes, April 19, 1996). This perspective was echoed by another member who felt the project was getting a little out-of-hand.

The project has got significantly broader. The range of questions, the width and breadth of the research is expanding almost to the point where I would feel more comfortable if we just reined it back in fractionally, just to make sure there are some reasonable perimeters to what it is we're attempting to do here. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

Significantly different interpretations had somehow emerged as to what tasks should be completed and how, this, in spite of a document written specifically to assist committee members with their comprehension of Brinkerhoff's model. The author's own observation reiterated this view: "It became clear very soon in the meeting that people had completely different levels of understanding in terms of where we are in this project, what should be the next step, and what should the committee be doing" (observation field notes, April 3, 1996). Although there had been frequent conversations with many of the members since the last meeting in late January 1996, it would seem that more frequent interventions were needed. What was earlier thought to be an important guiding light for the committee, the

evaluation framework now seemed to be blurring the road and causing considerable problems.

6.2.5 Participatory process

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Participatory Process	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular, intimate involvement improved members' conceptions of program issues • increased personal commitment • shared control heightened collaboration 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workload de-motivated members • participatory approach involves too much time
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)
2. Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)
3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

Evidence collected throughout this time period described the positive effects on the development of shared knowledge representation that can result from in-depth participation of committee members in the project.

As with earlier time periods, committee members reported that they were particularly influenced by being intimately involved in the project. Several respondents claimed that their understanding of the issues dramatically improved as a result of their direct and ongoing involvement. As one member representing the national organizations reported,

I think I have a greater understanding of the whole project from actually working with [the researcher] and others in the group over the last eleven months. I'm recording discussion and I'm doing the [the national

organization's] report. It is more exciting now...we're getting closer to passing on recommendations. (TP 3. steering committee member, Megan)

Internally, the regular, informal meetings with the president and other technical program staff acted to positively influence the ability to "cast a light into the future and talk about what a revised program could look like." The more often this was done, the more clearly were our perceptions of what was possible (observation field notes, November 1, 1995).

The evidence collected also supported the notion that most stakeholder groups were committed to and investing considerable time in the data collection phase of the evaluation project. A letter from a provincial representative to her key program deliverers highlighted the need for the group to get together to "provide input on how the face of [participant] development and education should look in Canada" [archival data, January 15, 1996]. Similarly, partner organizations took responsibility for scheduling, advertising, and running their own workshops. This commitment was considered to be critical in providing the number of forums needed to discuss and clarify the various concepts under consideration.

The development of a climate conducive to meaningful discussion and debate seemed to result from the shared control members had in the project. One member captured the nature of the relationships that had developed when asked to describe how fundamental disagreements between committee members were handled. As he puts it:

With a remarkable amount of goodwill. There were a couple of moments where there was great frustration, but it was diffused pretty well. I think various members of the committee, including myself, could have leapt in there, but in fact, the group worked it out another way and there was certainly a degree of tolerance. I think tolerance is the right word, because I don't think anyone's view changed. I think they kept their views, but there

was a willingness to listen to others. (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

Another member concurred with this view and remarked that "one of the good things about the committee is that there is great respect for other people."

On the downside, there was considerable evidence to suggest that by the end of this time period the participatory nature of the exercise was beginning to take its toll on committee members. Members who worked for national organizations and had their offices located nationally, had additional demands placed on their time such as attending informal sessions and proof-reading drafts of surveys. The depth and scope of their participation led one member to express his misgivings this way:

I guess one issue is the amount of work it takes to do the review of literature and develop the discussion papers. How do we go about it and do people have the time? It is a big issue for me because we are doing other work within [federal government] that is not unlike this process. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brad)

An informal meeting with a committee member to discuss how he was to facilitate an upcoming workshop resulted in a request for the researcher or a member from CNT to lead the workshop. The member simply did not have the time needed to prepare for and run yet another meeting (observation field notes, March 26, 1996). The project, it would appear, was resting on shaky ground. The level of commitment and excitement originally felt for the evaluation was starting to wain. At this critical moment, it was observed by the researcher that if the organization backed away from its leadership role or softened on the timelines, the entire project would be at risk (observation field notes, March 26, 1996).

6.2.6 Researcher impact

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Researcher Impact	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting facilitation skills foster positive climate • academic background increased members' confidence in project • program expertise link present work with program's history 	NN (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withholding personal views limited learning and increased frustration • dual role (facilitator and project leader) confusion • connection to org. created perceived bias
Sources of Evidence		
1 Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U' (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
2 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use)
3 Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

Considerable data were collected that indicated that the impact of the researcher continued to significantly influence the status of organization learning capacity. The evidence was both powerful and at times contradicting. We will begin with a look at the positive influences the researcher seemed to be exerting on organizational learning capacity.

Several respondents mentioned the researcher's facilitation skills as being particularly helpful in ensuring that the climate for discussion was open, positive, and trusting. This would seem to be important to the constructs associated with knowledge representation, especially, given the ever-changing status of committee membership. One of the respondents, who was recently added to the committee, commented on the researcher's approach to integrating new people into the committee:

I met [committee member] for the first time at the last meeting and he had some very strong opinions. One could have concluded that "Wow, what a negative attitude...could he not say anything positive about [the program]?" But he was doing it in a genuine way...these were issues to him and the process was open enough to allow it. I think [the researcher] does a really good job, frankly, in terms of encouraging people to come forth. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brad)

He continued to elaborate on one specific intervention strategy he found particularly effective:

... [the researcher] challenges people to be open and involved. Just the way he set up [the agenda] last time, the very first item was "let's go around the table and let's talk about how everyone feels about the whole process." I found that really useful for me because it allowed me to express my feelings of being kind of overwhelmed by the whole thing, ... it allowed everybody to do that. I mean, he really pushes for that to happen so people are not allowed to be passive. (TP 3, steering committee member, Brad)

The researcher's academic background and research skills were identified by respondents as being directly linked to both the learning that members thought they were acquiring, as well as to their level of confidence with the project. As one member observed:

It's been a learning experience for everybody that's for sure. Obviously, the way [the researcher] has been able to lead this project is directly related to the success of the study. If [the researcher] didn't have the academic background in program evaluation I think we would have a much harder time. For me at least, it's been a really valuable learning experience to understand some of these differences in terms of research, the use of data and evaluations. (TP 3, steering committee member, Steve)

The link between the researcher's knowledge of evaluative practice and the members level of confidence was confirmed by another committee member, who said:

There was a concern at the last meeting about the data collection and analysis of the survey...about the minimum number of returns for certain cells that we've identified. Now I guess the concern is always about the validity of statistics. Fortunately, [the researcher] and [an expert] both said that this material is not going to stand alone... it is part of the data pool we'll use to make decisions. [The researcher] convinced us that the process is

perfect and I think at the same time through his sort of educating us he has made us realize some of the parameters of the project from an academic point of view. (TP 3, steering committee member, Megan)

Besides both research and facilitation skills, the researcher's knowledge of CNT and level of program expertise was also viewed to be salient. The researcher helped members clarify the relationships in the data and with linking past events with current thinking. His background was especially useful in dealing with the myriad of information generated by the project; that is, the sorting and filtering of information:

...we are not able to do all that stuff...getting the right information out and setting up [the meetings] and constantly being on the phone to get people to do this or that or checking on what they've done. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

As for being employed by CNT and having a thorough knowledge of the organization and the program, the researcher's position generated some positive reactions:

I think it is very important that [the researcher] be from within [the program]. What he brings is a kind of anchor for the project, within the institution, that we all need. (TP 3, steering committee member, Charles)

The researcher was also comfortable in contacting other experienced program personnel to discuss difficult and/or controversial issues. These viewpoints were then brought to the committee and integrated. It was observed that while it would have been possible for these individuals to mislead someone less informed, it was very difficult for anyone to mislead the researcher. This helped to keep everyone associated with project in line to some degree (observation field notes, April 23, 1996). In this regard, several respondents made specific reference to the researcher's program experience:

I think his background adds to the study because he knows the system. (TP 3, steering committee member, Tom)

[The program] is a very complicated model. There are a lot of issues and players and things like that. I think that [the researcher's] knowledge and experience with the program has actually helped the evaluation. (TP 3, steering committee members, Brenda)

Conversely, not all the evidence was uniform regarding the positive impact the researcher's behavior was having. Although similar in nature to the evidence collected in the second time period, throughout this period it looked as though the consequences would be more serious. Once again, the researcher's habit of holding back information or "speaking his mind" was highlighted as being particularly problematic. As a colleague from the organization made mention:

[The researcher] is trying more or less to let people speak and process information while he sits. I've told him once or twice that he has a wealth of knowledge that we must benefit from. He has information... he can think about the program in areas that we don't normally think about or have time to think about. I've told him "Any time that you shut down and let the group speak all the time you're leaving us out, you're not giving us all of your expertise." (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Interestingly, another member in response to a question about the researcher's role on the committee, addressed the above criticism directly and provided a suggestion for its resolution:

[The researcher] is basically stuck with a situation where he has got to play two roles within this committee where he should be playing only one. He has got to provide technical information about the project—he should not have the role of facilitating the meetings. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

This member was clearly of the view that it was inappropriate for the researcher to be responsible for facilitating the meeting due to his role as project "leader." His frustration with the committee's instability and the researcher's role and facilitation style culminated in the member actually contemplating leaving the committee:

...the problem was that some new people were just coming on board [at the last meeting] and we had to start from scratch. Frankly, because of those open discussions, we're using valuable time that we should be using on resolving issues about the management of the project. And if I'm not able to do that, I might as well not go [to the meetings]. And frankly, I'm thinking about that. (TP 3, steering committee member, Wes)

Similar sorts of impact were noted regarding the researcher's position within CNT and degree of program expertise. To be clear, the researcher's position within the organization was seen to retard learning and sense-making because of biases he was perceived to have developed over the years. In response to a question about the researcher's influence, one member commented:

...that's where some of the difficulties come in. [The researcher] is coming from within the box, he's coming from within a set of thoughts. So it makes my job more difficult. If he was, say, an external evaluator, who was not so entrenched in [the program], it would have a much different flavor. (TP 3, steering committee member, Kevin)

6.2.7 Evaluation findings

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Evaluation Findings	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minutes/summaries of focus groups • nature of preliminary results of national survey 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A)
2. Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	
3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	

Due to the nature of the various data collection steps that were implemented over the last six months (e.g., surveys, focus groups), information or evaluation findings began to slowly emerge. This information acted to facilitate the collective

understanding of the issues and move certain committee members closer to the viewpoints of their colleagues. This information took varied forms: documents that contained minutes of focus groups to preliminary summaries of a national survey of program practitioners. One particular document that summarized the discussions of the first workshop held with national organizations, stimulated further inquiry about the program from steering committee members (observation field notes, January 8, 1996). Preliminary results of the national survey designed to solicit feedback from program practitioners, found that respondents to the survey had overwhelmingly endorsed the need for the program to make better use out of new technology. A committee member, after reviewing these data, brought the point up at a committee meeting and advocated that the evaluation project should investigate the readiness of the program partners to embrace such a change (observation field notes April 3, 1996).

Moreover, during a workshop with program leaders of the national organizations, the concept of shifting the program to a competency-based approach was ratified. Following the workshop, a committee member speculated on the implications this change would have on the program's course conductors—they would have to acquire a completely different set of skills (observation field notes, April 15, 1996). Once again, there is evidence that the potential outcomes of the project's recommendations helped to spark further thinking/discussion which helped to raise committee members' understanding of the issues and the development of shared knowledge.

6.2.8 Summary

As with the previous time period, the reduction in federal funding did stimulate certain members to become far more interested in program evaluation activities so that questions of accountability could be answered. It also facilitated higher-order learning as members of both CNT and partner organizations attempted to establish new strategic alliances. Although there was some evidence that members were becoming somewhat concerned with the departure of CNT's president, the leadership that was provided stimulated members to continue the challenge of core assumptions. The ability of the organization's leader to stimulate high-level learning has been found in both school-based and private sector organizations (e.g., Bennis, 1993; Earl, 1995; Lafleur, 1995; Nystrom & Starbuck, 1984). The evaluation framework's requirement for members to search out and compare Canada's program with those of foreign countries was found to facilitate high-level discussions (learning) about each program's conceptual orientation. This finding lends support to researchers (e.g., Hedberg, 1981; Huber, 1991) that have linked the organization's ability to acquire and process knowledge from its environment and its ability to learn. In addition, the provisions of program specific evaluative tools helped partner organizations both understand what program evaluation was about and stimulated interest in initiating evaluation-like activities.

The participatory process provided numerous opportunities for program leaders and stakeholders to get together and discuss the various issues that were being raised. The collaborative approach seemed to become ingrained into the culture of CNT and evidence was unearthed that the organization's stated policies and operating procedures were beginning to be altered. These findings support

previous research in the organizational learning (e.g., Cousins, 1996a; Earl, 1995), knowledge utilization (e.g., Huberman, 1990), and evaluation use (e.g., Leviton & Hughes, 1981) literature.

The period was extremely challenging for the researcher as frustrations related to his facilitation style increased with two particular members of the committee. On the other hand, there were many examples provided that indicated that the researcher's style, program knowledge, and research skills heightened the committee members' confidence in design of the evaluation project and the preliminary conclusions that were being drawn. In addition, the increase in confidence was also found to enhance the shared knowledge members were acquiring regarding the implications of the project's potential recommendations for change. This was thought to be critical as the project entered into its final stage.

6.2.9 Author's Personal Reflections

Without question, the past six-months (October, 1995 to April, 1996) have been the most exciting and fulfilling, yet at times, the most difficult and stressful period of the entire study. In fact, it was so demanding at times that I, along with others, thought seriously about getting off the project; the rewards did not seem to be worth the aggravation. However, a common sense of purpose—to come up with a set of recommendations to make an important national program better—prevailed and kept everyone united. Realizing the tenuous state of affairs, I interacted with committee members in as positive a manner as possible. For example, I consciously solicited and took criticism for actions or project delays that in many cases were not my fault. I decided that the only way to get through this period was to inject some fun into the project and make the committee's time together as enjoyable as

possible. Thus, the location and activities associated with each committee meeting (large or small, formal or informal) always involved important social functions. I worked on the premise that if I could keep people as friends, the project may have a chance of survival.

In spite of these difficulties, I was extremely pleased with the progress the project was making, as well as the committee's grasp of and shared understanding of the complex program and organizational issues under review. Significant strides were taken in terms of coming together around some key concepts that would make both the program and the system more effective. At times it felt as though we knew the "answer" and could simply start the process of writing the report.

Unfortunately, the concepts had been debated by members of the committee at a conceptual level and many of the ideas were difficult to verbalize at the level of practice. The process of first re-thinking the concepts and then write a summary report that program practitioner would relate to was not going to be an easy task.

From an project administration standpoint, it is important to mention how helpful my participant observations were to keeping the project on-line. The process of keeping personal accounts of individuals' statements throughout the project resulted in an extremely detailed reference document being developed. It seemed that the more complex and confusing the project became, the more important it was for me to have a handle on what was said and/or agreed to by whom. The reference document proved to be an invaluable support as the project's activities and time lines were continually challenged and modified to accommodate unforeseen situations.

Reflecting on the project as a whole, I couldn't keep myself from thinking about how much easier the task would have been if either we had decided to evaluate just one of the program's components, or, if I was given the unilateral decision making ability regarding the project's implementation. As it was, by the end of this time period, all committee members was eliciting the symptoms of serious fatigue with some members beginning to seriously question whether or not they had the necessary skills and/or energy to get the last of the project completed.

Chapter 7

Finalization of Data Analysis and Development of Report: Time Period 4 (April, 1996 to October, 1996)

The final period of the evaluation project was terribly hectic and demanding as committee members worked together to synthesize the vast amount of information generated by the data collection steps and forge one, single comprehensive report. One of the period's highlight was a four day committee meeting held at the end of June at a local conference center. In hindsight, this meeting proved to be crucial to the project's success for it provided a significant period of time for members of the committee to discuss and debate all that had happened in the previous 12 months in a relaxed atmosphere. It was here that the "waters cleared" and a new vision for the program was reached.

This period also saw the retirement of CNT's only president. While this change did not affect the release or contents of the final report, it did influence the report's initial utilization. Considerable attention was given to the official release of the report, with all the various partners attesting to its importance and potential impact on the program. The committee concerned itself with crafting a dissemination strategy in the hopes of ensuring the report would be both read and understood. Regarding the present research, the CNT's retiring president was interviewed in mid-July and these data are reported in combination with all other relevant data.

7.1 Status of Organizational Learning as the Evaluation Project was Coming to a Close.

Table 8 displays data from the fourth time period and captures the status of the dependent variables as the project concluded and the report was being released.

TABLE 8

Status of Organizational Learning: Time Period 4

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> many key issues identified and understood heightened level of like-mindedness resolution of personal consequences 	O (no evidence)
Levels of Learning	high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception of national org 's role in system significantly altered org traditional power base challenged federal funding policies with partners re-thought increased awareness of the need for strong linkages 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> org new president holds different view of partners role in decision-making
Memory	mod ↔	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extensive use of e-mail investigate list serve tech. 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge for Action	mod-low ↔	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shared development and review of pilot project s design 	O (no evidence)
Knowledge Acquisition	moderate ↓↓	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reduction in search for and use of info. external to organization
Knowledge Generation	mod-high ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> national org initiate limited evaluation activities org senior managers endorses need to evaluate all programs 	O (no evidence)
Interpretive Systems	moderate ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> steering committee becomes key organization filter organization initiates work teams 	O (no evidence)

The level of interaction between the researcher and the various stakeholders groups during this period involved: two Planning and Evaluation Committee meetings (six days); five CNT technical staff meetings (two and one half days); one National Training Council Meeting (one day); two conference calls with Planning and Evaluation Committee; weekly informal meetings with CNT colleagues; and regular correspondence with PEC members using telephone, FAX, etc.

7.1.1 Shared knowledge representation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Shared Knowledge Representation	high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • many key issues identified and understood • heightened level of like-mindedness • resolution of personal consequences 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	

By the end of the project, members of both the steering committee and CNT were demonstrating a significant degree of familiarity and like-mindedness with the many issues unearthed by the evaluation exercise. Unlike previous time periods, there were no reported incidence of members having difficulty sharing their perspectives, seeing relationships in the project's findings, or working at cross purposes.

Confirmatory statements began to emerge in late April 1996 following a series of workshops designed to solicit approval from the stakeholders of the national organizations to a report representing their views about the program. During one particular workshop a committee member was observed commenting that, "we have been able to bring the national organizations' position to a concise point and that there are four or five key themes that are starting to emerge" (observation field notes, April 30, 1996). The workshops seemed to have promoted a "coming together" among members and this yielded an important result—confidence. As a representative of the national organizations reported:

...it's the first time in a long time that the [national organizations] have come together in such numbers and contributed in a fairly meaningful way. So the communication aspect of it has been quite significant. Our work is not done, but at least when I stand up and say, "The [national organizations] perspective is..." I will not have to make it up, I know I will be representing a certain majority. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

Members from both the provincial/territorial governments and CNT also made remarks that suggested their meaning structures around key program issues had merged. One respondent made implicit mention of this phenomena by comparing and contrasting his personal relationship with another member of the committee over the course of the project:

At one time [committee member] and myself were really arguing on every single issue... fighting all the time. But now, we're together... trying to figure out a way to approach this or that and to make sure that the idea we share will carry. Now I feel that we're pretty good accomplices. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

Additional support for the view that a shared perspective was developed is provided by another member's recollection of a particularly significant four day committee meeting held in late June:

[The meeting] really impressed me because there was a coming together of sorts and things started to actually come into focus. It's such a huge process that one has the feeling that [the report] could go anywhere or it could go nowhere. I think [the meeting] allowed things to really start to crystallize and the group came together. (TP 4, steering committee meeting. Brad)

CNT members responded to the evaluative exercise in a similar fashion.

Important discussions were held in preparation of the organization's submission to the steering committee. During a conference call with CNT technical staff working in the field, agreement was reached that the program should be both a training program that would lead to certification, as well as contain elements of an education program that would increase participants' ability to become reflective, critical thinkers (observation field notes, May 29, 1996). The resolution of what the program should be attempting to accomplish proved to be quite helpful to the organization as they worked to finalize their report. Interestingly, a comment from the president captured the clarity of thinking that organization members had developed. In his words:

What changes should occur and how extensive should these be? The Achilles heel of the program is the practical component. We have been relatively successful in conveying knowledge, but, because of course design, because of the insufficient allocation of time in courses, the practical aspect has been ineffectively and inadequately addressed. (TP 4, organization president)

Finally, one piece of data were particularly interesting. It was the response of a committee member, who in previous time periods had voiced considerable frustration about the project that almost led to his departure from the committee. When asked by the interviewer, "How have things been going on since the last time we spoke", he answered:

It has gone much better. I feel that much of the time has been devoted to understanding and developing consensus. Committee members are better able to present their position, to weigh their position, to compare their

positions, so that has brought us to a situation where most of the issues have been discussed and understood. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

It seemed as though once the various knowledge representations became widely held or shared by members of the committee, this individual's frustrations with the group were alleviated. This could be an important consideration for facilitators of participatory evaluations who are bound to face similar reactions as building consensus is oftentimes a slow and difficult process.

7.1.2 Levels of learning

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Levels of Learning	high ↑↑	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • perception of national org.'s role in system significantly altered • org traditional power base challenged • federal funding policies with partners re-thought • increased awareness of the need for strong linkages 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • org new president holds different view of partners' role in decision-making
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use)
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use)
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use)

Responses to the interviewer's questions that probed for examples of or reflections about the amount and type of learning experienced by the members was substantial and powerful. While the data also picked up on many of the ideas identified in earlier time periods, this time, the respondents seem to be more definite about their perceptions. One could classify the level of learning as being predominantly high-level or double-loop learning; much of the evidence pertains to members being involved in deep, reflective discussions about the underlying

decision rules, norms, and beliefs about how the organization operates. The discussion begins by looking at how committee members viewed the role of CNT relative to other partner organizations.

The previous two time periods contained both interview and observation data that implied most committee members were questioning the role that CNT had historically played within the system. Individuals, particularly those from national organizations, were committed to the view that their organizations should be recognized as being the key partner, given their fundamental connection with the participants in the system. Once again, this position was restated by a representative of the national organizations who suggested to the researcher during a private meeting that, "the [provincial/territorial governments], [federal government], and [the organization] should not feel that they have an equal stake in the program. The [national organizations] have the most to gain and/or lose, and therefore, our views should become quite influential in terms of the future decision making" (observation field notes, May 7, 1996). A short time later, the individual's thinking evolved to the point that he felt comfortable recommending what role CNT should have and how the evaluation report could be used. "The role [CNT] should be playing in the system is that of providing resources and making interventions like [the evaluation project] to assist all the partners facilitate their program. It should not be a top down system where [CNT] drives the program from their lofty command center in Ottawa. In fact the preliminary report really should be [CNT's] strategic plan for future change" (observation field notes, May 30, 1996). Realizing the political fallout of making such a significant shift, the member cautions:

There is going to be a gut reaction at [CNT's] board level. [The shift] dilutes a little bit of the power from [CNT]. So who knows what the political

response will be to that. I mean, because that's where policy is formed, right? At the board table. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

Undaunted, the member carried his perception of the "new order" throughout the remainder of the project and confidently announced to all partners at a national meeting at the project's conclusion:

...the [national organizations] are looking for greater flexibility relative to how they design and deliver [the program]. Basically, all of the partners today have endorsed a move towards a more flexible program. I want to remind the [national organizations] that with increased flexibility will come increased responsibilities. The minute we begin to take on sort of the big key partner role in [the program] and start to take a greater responsibility for the experience [program participants] will receive, then our responsibility will increase dramatically. That seemingly is the direction that we are heading. (archival data, October 21, 1996)

For members representing CNT, the experience of working and interacting with partner organizations throughout the evaluation project resulted in similar views being formed. In their words:

I think the organization is not so centered on itself, it recognizes the importance of key players outside the organization and how important it is to get them to contribute to the changes being made so that they will then buy in. So [the organization] has a greater understanding of it's role as a service organization. In the past it was "we are here to implement changes and here are the changes so you do it..." So that's a fundamental shift. It's not 100% that way, I just see the organization going in that direction. I think this project really helped to give it a big push. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

Another member alluded to the evolving role of the national organizations relative to the organization and articulated a position quite similar to the one proposed earlier.

[The national organizations] have taken up the challenge and said basically, "we have to be much more vocal and much more active and not assume that [the organization] runs our program." I think that's positive. I've heard myself saying, "that doesn't mean that [the organization] doesn't have a role...it just re-addresses our role to a support and service role. So it's perhaps a radical change. (TP 4, steering committee meeting, Henri)

It is worthwhile to note how these perceptions transcended the committee to other key individuals in CNT. The organization's long-time president confirmed that a change in the traditional way of doing business was likely. He too seemed to be caught up in the process used to conduct the evaluation. When asked if "the partners would expect more involvement in the future," he replied:

Yes, I think the trend has been set. There is no question that in the early years [CNT] was not only the engine for driving these projects and doing the actual work, [CNT] did a great deal of decision making in a fairly authoritarian fashion--it did get things done because it was authoritarian. Now we have an expectation by the partners, as a result of [the project], that a more democratic process will be used in the future. (TP 4, president of organization)

The president also provided some intriguing personal reflections on other important effects he noticed. In his words:

...[the project] has unearthed some leadership which was pretty well disguising itself as being dormant. Opportunities have been provided for individuals with capabilities to demonstrate those capabilities, and that's what this very time consuming, involvement process has allowed to happen. (TP 4, president of organization)

At this point in time, one should feel comfortable in postulating that significant organizational and system change would be possible. The evidence appears to suggest that not only do partner organizations want to assume much more of a leadership role in the program, members of CNT (including the president) shared a similar view including a belief in the leadership capabilities of the partners to handle such a change.

However, September 1996 marked the start date of the new president of the organization. Although the new president had been employed by CNT for nearly 17 years and had great familiarity with both the program and the evaluation project,

his view of the CNT's role within the system appeared to be somewhat different than those just reported.

Following a series of introductory meetings in early September 1996, an internal planning meeting was held to discuss the actual nature of the work CNT performs and how future planning decisions should be done regarding the program. The new president had the view that planning should be done internally by key people within the organization in specific groups or work teams. The researcher and his CNT colleague attempted to describe the current thinking regarding how program decisions have been recently made and indicated that it would be unwise to return to an internal operating style that neglected the partners (observation field notes, September 24, 1996). The CNT member made a particular reference to his concern that the new president seemed unaware of the recent philosophical shift in operating procedures:

...the most significant accomplishment we've had is that now [the program] is a true collaboration. I've warned our new president that we can't ever back track and go back to a more authoritative style. We used to be pretty authoritative here, we used to make decisions and basically lay down the law and everybody had to follow. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

Interestingly, by the end of October 1996 the new president made a public announcement, at the session to formally release the project's report, that indicated that he was beginning to appreciate the value of a more democratic approach.

From [CNT's] perspective the evaluation project is really about making very significant improvement to the program. It followed a very comprehensive and inclusive process. As we've heard so far this morning it has really been driven by all of the partners of the program. It has had extensive input from the [program participants], from the people that the program is really directed towards. I think we've got the process right now and we've got a very thorough foundation behind us which will really help us move ahead. [archival data, October 21, 1996]

Other evidence of learning resulting from the evaluation project appeared in various forms, such as, the federal government policies concerning the nature and scope of their funding priorities were called into question by members representing national organizations, and a rationale had to be established to justify the continuation of decade-old policies. As the member representing the federal government made mention:

I understand that there are some things raised in this evaluation that might be a threat to [the federal government] in terms of where we have come from in terms of our policies and what we are interested in supporting. It might be related to the age old principle that the development and delivery of levels 1 to 3 are basically the responsibility of the [national organizations] and the [provincial organizations], whereas, 4 and 5 has always been what the [federal government] is interested in supporting. Maybe there's something in the [evaluation report] that might challenge whether or not we're still into this kind of a separation. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brad)

Moreover, the evaluation process appeared to have caused this particular member to reflect on the federal government's approach to dealing with national organizations and to begin to question some of the deeper assumptions about collaborative work. During the interview, the member analyzed and compared the collaborative process used during the evaluation project with a similar process the federal government recently facilitated with the national organizations:

The [federal government] designed a process involving people from [national organizations], [CNT], and others to look at the services that [participants] currently have, which ones still need to be provided, and which ones should the federal government continue to be involved in and why? We had a meeting a couple of weeks ago because a number of people in the national community felt that [the process] was not handled properly, that it was designed to have an ulterior motive—that is, to help rationalize the federal government's support of national [facilities]... Many of the things that were outlined in the process, whether they were all done or not I don't know, but for whatever reason the communication didn't occur and there was a misperception out there. I don't think that has occurred in this situation. (TP 4, steering committee meeting, Brad)

Finally, the process made several respondents acutely aware of the importance of establishing strong and comprehensive linkages with key partners in the system. The data collected supports the notion that members were beginning to look at the linkages established, as a result of the evaluation project, in a new light.

As a member of the steering committee put it:

... it is now going to be possible to take advantage of the relationships and linkages that have been built in the last six months with the [national] communities to begin to process other issues that are affecting the community? (TP 4, steering committee member, Megan)

This view was echoed by another member who implied that in order to implement the new system with the associated changes, new forms of partnerships would have to be considered:

[National organizations] will move towards these recommendations differently. I think there will be a strong role for us to continue to play in the area of coming together and sort of mentor each other in the face of diminishing funds and in some cases diminishing human resources. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

If the interpretations provided above are indeed accurate, the stage would seem to be set for a significant change to the organization's present role within the system.

7.1.3 Memory

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Memory	mod ↔	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • extensive use of e-mail • investigate list serve tech. 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• U (moderate use)	• N/A
2. Interviews		• 0 (no use)	
3. Archival		• 0 (no use)	

Members of the project steering committee made extensive use of the newly acquired electronic mail or "e-mail" system. Although not one committee member commented on this use during the interviews, the researcher and organization members involved in the project communicated almost daily with members of the committee. E-mail was observed to have many advantages—it made instantaneous connections with committee members and simplified the process of distributing a wide variety of documents (observation field notes, June 12, 1996). CNT's newly hired data base manager was instrumental in training organization members in the proper use of e-mail and this assistance was extended to members of the steering committee in the use of their home-based computers. It should also be noted that the data base manager initiated an investigation into a "list-serve" internet application that would have provided members with an opportunity to communicate with and provide ideas to a protected internet "mail box."

7.1.4 Knowledge for action

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge for Action	mod-low \Leftrightarrow	P (weak positive) • shared development and review of pilot project's design	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• UU (moderate use)	• N/A
2. Interviews		• 0 (no use)	
3. Archival		• 0 (no use)	

As steering committee members put pen to paper to prepare the project's report, there was very little interest in acquiring new perspectives or to engage in any form of trial and error learning. However, one of the outcomes of the collaborative process was that members of the committee were more aware of program related pilot projects occurring within the system. CNT members, in particular, worked to ensure that activities facilitated by organization staff were discussed in advanced to ensure their compatibility with strategic directions. For example, near the end of the time period, one of the organization's field offices had an opportunity to pilot test the use of the internet to deliver program material. This initiative was very complementary to one of the evaluation project's recommendations and had the potential to result in significant organizational learning. After discussions with CNT staff, which included the field office member, the organization's data base manager, the president, and the study's author, a

decision was reached to move ahead in a systematic and controlled way (observation field notes, October 5, 1996).

7.1.5 Knowledge acquisition

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Acquisition	moderate ↓	O (no evidence)	N (weak negative) • reduction in search for and use of info external to organization
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		• N/A	• U (low use)
2. Interviews			• 0 (no use)
3. Archival			• 0 (no use)

The search for relevant information from external sources (e.g., private sector) slowed as the project's report was being prepared. So much information was generated by the data collection step that specifically addressed this need, committee members were oftentimes overwhelmed. Although the project did establish some important links with external sources (e.g., foreign programs) that could be used to assist with future development, there was a conscious attempt by the committee to limit the flow of new information throughout this period.

7.1.6 Knowledge generation

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Knowledge Generation	mod-high ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> national org. initiate limited evaluation activities org. senior managers endorses need to evaluate all programs 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence			
1. Participant Observation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UU (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NA
2. Interviews		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> U (low use) 	
3. Archival		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O (no use) 	

Data emanating from this time period gave the impression that various forms of evaluation had found their way into the system and the organization itself. The discussion begins with a look at the evidence that intimates that national organizations had embraced evaluative work.

The clearest sign of support for the use of evaluation was captured in the response of a committee member to the question, "Do you, right now, know of any examples of program evaluation going on?" The member's reply was simple and to the point, "I am aware of a number of [national organizations] who have taken up part of this process...I'm one of them." Another representative of the national organizations provided a similar view and offered an opinion on the fallout of such a decision:

I can say definitely from the [context] that I'm most involved in that yes [evaluation work is being initiated]...because they want to have an evaluation project of [our program]. I think that other [organizations] are going to be a bit more introspective of themselves and of how their [program] is being delivered in future. (TP 4, steering committee member, Megan)

Certainly, the two committee members who represented the national organizations looked to be committed to program evaluation. The data also suggested that other stakeholders in the system were similarly influenced. One national organization representative, who was not directly involved in the project, called to request information on how the survey data base could be used to pull out information specific to his national organization. Failing this, he asked if the survey could be modified to suit his needs (observation field notes, May 30, 1996).

From CNT's perspective, a formal review began of the organization's advanced level programs. The committee member representing the federal government noted this organizational activity but was unsure of the reasons why this initiative began.

I know that [CNT] has commissioned a working group consisting of [CNT], [national organization], and [federal government] representatives to look at the [advance level] program. I don't know if it is a direct spin-off from [the project] or whether it's something that the new president has felt needed to be done. (TP 4, Brad)

Once again, the words of the former president are somewhat prophetic and capture the mood of the organization with respect to the use of and role program evaluation plays:

We've had a [national institute] now for several years in Victoria. There has been an evaluation done of that...not a very intensive one. We have another now in Calgary. Probably in the not too distant future we'll have another in Toronto and another in Montreal. Therefore, as we increase the number of those there is probably the need for, and this could be a massive one, a good critical look at the [national institutes]. (TP 4, president of organization)

The evidence would seem to suggest that program evaluation has found a home in the decision-making of CNT. It is also possible to speculate that the evaluation project triggered this organizational change.

7.1.7 Interpretive systems

Variables	Status	Supporting Evidence	Countervailing Evidence
Interpretive Systems	moderate ↑↑	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> steering committee becomes key organization filter organization initiates work teams 	O (no evidence)
Sources of Evidence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participant Observation Interviews Archival 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 (low use) 0 (no use) 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

The project's steering committee continued to gain increased prominence in the system as the information flow from the evaluation projected crested in June 1996. At this point, all of the stakeholder groups had submitted substantive documents representative of their distinct views about the program. The survey results were also completed as was the review of foreign programs. At this point, it was up to the committee members to make sense of all this information and generate a single report.

Given the importance of its task, committee members collectively decided to broaden the group by adding on additional representatives from both the national organizations and provincial governments. The committee's make-up gave it substantial face validity and was well position to influence all of the partners with its recommendations.

In terms of CNT, the newly elected president proposed that a series of work teams be created to improve the quality of decision making. Drawing heavily from

the principles of collaborative practice used extensively during the evaluation project, the move to work teams was agreed to by members of the organization as an improved management structure. Each team would be made up of individuals from across the entire organization with the singular purpose of improving efficiency and coordination. It would seem that for the first time in CNT's history, there was potential for organization members to analyze, discuss, and reflect on new, incoming information in relation to organizational priorities.

7.1.8 Summary

By the end of the evaluation project (i.e., the release of the evaluation report), the overall status of the organization's learning capacity could be characterized as being "moderate-high." This estimation is based on the view that all seven dependent variables under investigation improved throughout the project with two variables classified as "high", two as "moderate-high", two as "moderate", and one as "moderate-low."

Shared knowledge representation achieved a high level of functioning among members during this period with no observations reported of members having difficulty reaching a shared understanding of the various issues. In fact, an increase in confidence was reported by many respondents to their collective thinking. Similarly, considerable evidence was found that indicated members were engaged in high-level or double-loop learning. Members of national organizations were re-establishing their positions within the system while members of the organization, including the president, were re-thinking their role as a service-provider. The use of electronic mail by members within the system was extensive and this variable remained at a moderate level. Knowledge for action showed

evidence that members within the organization were now sharing information emanating from pilot activities aimed to improve the delivery of the program. The external search for information slowed during this period as members of the steering committee attempted to assimilate the volumes of information already collected. On the other hand, data suggested that program evaluation initiatives were being undertaken by both national organizations and members of the organization as the period came to a close. Finally, the interpretive systems gained strength as the committee itself formalized into an efficient and capable sense-making forum. Furthermore, the organization implemented work teams with exactly the same function in the hopes of strengthening its capacity to interpret information for improved decision making.

7.2 What Factors Explain the Observed Pattern of Organizational Learning?

Table 9 summarizes the factors that appeared to be operative during the fourth time period. For the first time the strategies employed to disseminate information about the project and technical skills development were observed as potentially impacting on organizational learning capacity.

TABLE 9
Factors Influencing Status of Organizational Learning:
Time Period 4

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
<p><i>CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATION</i></p> <p>Political Environment</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional funding bodies lose power base—sparks stakeholders to challenge status quo • partners forced to implement new linkages 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Milieu</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • president triggered members to consolidate thinking and generate recommendations • president offered verbal and written support for significant program change 	<p>N (weak negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new president ignored work of committee and altered conceptions of partners' new role
<p>Culture</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNT incorporated evaluation into system • benefits of using methods of systematic inquiry recognized and appreciated 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p><i>EVALUATION INTERVENTION</i></p> <p>Evaluation Framework</p>	<p>PPP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partner position papers heightened knowledge representation • refinement of evaluation tools increased interest in and acceptance of program evaluation 	<p>O (no influence)</p>
<p>Participatory Process</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustained forums enhanced understanding of issues by improving communication • involvement in data analysis & report writing focused members on fundamental issues 	<p>O (no influence)</p>

Researcher Impact	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributed key information that challenged and/or confirmed committee' views • org. knowledge provided context for discussion • facilitated process that encouraged members to be open and reflective 	N (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withholding personal views limited learning & increased frustration
Evaluation Findings	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consolidated/confirmed views re. controversial issues • challenged perceived biases of researcher • confirmed need to conduct program evaluation 	O (no influence)
Other Factors	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dissemination strategies kept information in manageable chunks— facilitated understanding • technical skills development enhanced motivation 	O (no influence)

7.2.1 Political environment

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Political Environment	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • traditional funding bodies lose power base—sparks stakeholders to challenge status quo • partners forced to implement new linkages 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• U (low use)	• N/A
2. Interviews	• UUU (high use)	
3. Archival	• O (no use)	

Compared to the previous time period, the political environment did not seem to change in the final five months leading up to the evaluation report being released. It did, however, continue to play a prominent role in fostering high-levels of learning. One committee member's challenge of the traditional roles played by CNT resulted from the federal government having less money to provide national organizations for the development and delivery of their program. There simply was no longer an obligation to follow the government's lead. As the member put it:

[CNT] and [the federal government] have held their position in [the system] predominantly because of leverage and that leverage was funding. Well, as government budgets shrink across the board... you can walk into my office with a set of guidelines and say, "Gentleman, stand at attention." And I'll say, "I don't have time today boys. You are only giving me four thousand dollars a year to implement [the program]. Take that little book and move down the hall." That's the reality. The baseball bat is gone or is going. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

The funding cutbacks also precipitated members, who were still committed to the program, to think of new ways to make the system work in tight financial times. Hence, ideas such as mentorship (i.e., one national organization helping another), increasing the number of forums for sharing and interpreting information, and the like were identified and discussed (observation field notes, September 22, 1996).

The effect of the political environment (i.e., funding) on the nature and scope of the evaluation project's report was also considered by one member who admitted:

...our [committee] is still wrestling with [the question]: is this a set of recommendations or is it policy... as in "it would really be appreciated if you did it this way..." or "...considered this..." or "you've got two years to do this, three years to do that, and five years to do that." If you expect to get funding in these areas you will tow the line. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

On the other hand, some members of the organization had the view that, politically, there was strong support for the program and that sufficient funding and other resources would be made available for the changes to be implemented:

...if these recommendations are put into effect then naturally that will affect the funding. We should be enabling [national organizations] to carry on those projects so they will have access to money. Now they'll have tools that they can work with, they'll have money that they can tap in, they'll have some consultants to go to, they'll have information to look at. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

In spite of this perception, the national organizations were searching for ways to deal with "the harsh realities out there" and looking for someone to "lead the charge."

7.2.2 Milieu

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Milieu	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • president triggered members to consolidate thinking and generate recommendations • president offered verbal and written support for significant program change 	N (weak negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new president ignored work of committee and altered conceptions of partners new role
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U'U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U'U (moderate use)
2. Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U'U (moderate use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

As mentioned earlier, this period culminated in a new president taking over the helm of CNT in September 1996. From April to September, however, the leadership provided by the organization's former president continued to be quite

influential in stimulating discussions aimed at surfacing deeply held beliefs and challenging their legitimacy.

The former president's timely interventions helped to stimulate the committee to consolidate their view about the data and write the report. This was extremely important as the information being generated by the various data collection steps was at times overwhelming. During an informal meeting involving the researcher and two members of the committee, the president became somewhat frustrated at hearing that the committee felt unsure of making recommendations asking for significant program changes because of the lack of time. The president responded by stating to the two members, "you are more than ready and have the expertise and experience to make recommendations asking for real change. Some very fine and credible data has been collected, so you should feel confident about making some interpretations for how the program should be reconfigured" (observation field notes, May 13, 1996). This meeting was followed a short time later with a letter, written by the president, thanking the members of the committee for their time and effort on the project. The letter acknowledged how the committee had "been examining deeply held beliefs and considering alternative conceptions of how [the program] could be operated...it is anticipated that the recommendations emanating from this project will result in significant changes to the way [the program] is conceptualized and delivered" [archival data, May 28, 1996].

The president also had a hand in writing the organization's 1996 Annual Report in which he gave the evaluation project heightened profile and alluded to some of the key impacts of the project.

Significant progress was made during the year and the feedback received suggested that there will be some significant changes made to the program. There can be little doubt that the next two years will provide many new challenges...and the [CNT's staff] and others will have heavy demands placed upon their creativity and their networking skills in order that the very best program changes will result. [archival data, June 1996]

Although he did not state explicitly that CNT would be required to shift its standard operating procedure in terms of how it should be dealing with partner organizations, it was implied.

As for the new president, there were two interventions that indicated he was of a different mind-set. Although he announced in a press release that the evaluation project "is expected to result in significant changes for program improvements" [archival data, June 22, 1996], in two subsequent meetings, July 21 and September 24, designed to orient staff to his vision of the future, he failed to mention the potential contribution of the evaluation project's findings (observation field notes, September 24, 1996). This was extremely frustrating to the researcher, and not surprisingly, to other members of staff who had become quite familiar with and accepting of the project and its findings. "Leading up to the meeting [the staff] all commented on how bad the process was and the fact that the material used to prepare for the meeting had no mention of the evaluation project report and that there was little thought given to the fact that [colleague] and [the researcher] should be involved to help debrief the group (observation field notes, September 24, 1996). For whatever reason, the new president showed very little interest in using the findings of the evaluation project to assist in establishing strategic directions for the organization. Moreover, it would seem that he also was ignoring the new thinking that had emerged over the last 18 months; that is, the role of CNT should be one of a provider of "services" within a collaborative partnership.

7.2.3 Organization culture

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Culture	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CNT incorporated evaluation into system • benefits of using methods of systematic inquiry recognized and appreciated 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use) • UU (high use) • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NA

There was considerable evidence that CNT, in response to the experience of its members, acquired an appreciation for the usefulness of program evaluation. We begin by recapping the organization's collective meaning structures associated with the understanding and acceptance of program evaluation. While this perspective was presented in earlier time periods, it was through the eyes of the committee members. We now have the views of the former president to both enlighten and confirm previous positions taken.

The former president guided CNT for 25 years. As a result, he not only helped to establish CNT's culture but embodied it. His views on the impact that the evaluation project has had on the organization provides some interesting points for comparison and discussion. For example, the interview data provides some insights regarding both the system's and CNT's use and/or acceptance of program evaluation:

From memory I can't recall any edict coming down from [federal government] that said "it's time for you guys to do an evaluation in the program." At the same time, they have always been supportive of these initiatives. It might have been in a more general way..."there should be an evaluation of the [system]" or "are we achieving success in [the program]?"...that sort of thing. Never anything specific. (TP 4, president of organization)

When the president was asked if he felt that program evaluation activities would be used to assist with decision making in the future, he replied,

I think following the release of [the project's] recommendations there will be an acceptance of a need to see how things are going after a certain period of time. So therefore, there will probably be some sort of program evaluation. (TP 4, president of organization)

It would seem that from the former president's standpoint, the evaluation exercise has caused him to believe that the future use of program evaluation by CNT had great potential.

What about the other members of the project team? What were their feelings about the need to or capability of the system to conduct systematic inquiry now that project had come to a close? Not surprisingly, similar sorts of impacts were observed. Members of the project's steering committee revealed how the project had served to influence their thinking on the need to base decisions on data rather than feelings. As a member from the provincial government stated:

I hope that we will refrain from basing decisions on impressions and feelings...you cannot make effective decisions like that. I mean, it's the scientific approach to decision making that we need. When you generate data, when you look for data, if you have it, use it. That's what we've done with this particular project. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

An additional comment is offered by a member of CNT. It also provided some insight as to why evaluation-like activities will be supported in future. In her words:

One of the results [of the project] is this better sense of the need to assess the needs of our client group as opposed to just deciding. I think as we went through the process and we saw some of the results of the evaluation, it surprised us, you know, "Oh, I would have thought they thought this..." Then you know it's a good thing to do research because you don't know everything that you think you know. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

When respondents were pressed to come up with factors or reasons why program evaluation will eventually find its way into the system, their opinions were straight to the point:

I think when the organizations—be it the province, the [national organizations], or even [CNT]—realize how much information you can get [from evaluation], how significant the information is, how worthwhile the exercise is ...I think that's a big factor. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

Furthermore, CNT members were observed asking for specific pieces of data emerging from the project to assist them with aspects of their day-to-day jobs that were unrelated to the program. One member, who was leading a project team to develop computer software, incorporated some of the demographic data generated by the survey and asked "if we were going to do any more research in this area to let him know." He wanted to design some specific questions for his purposes (observation field notes, July 17, 1996).

The evidence collected gives the appearance that program evaluation is becoming both well understood and appreciated by members in the system. While it may be presumptuous to state that program evaluation activities will become integrated into the operating procedures of the organization, one of the project member's final comment leads one to believe it could be possible. In his words:

It seems to me that if [program evaluation] really is a way of doing business, that could well be institutionalize, in fact I think it should be. (TP 4, steering committee member, Charles)

7.2.4 Evaluation framework

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Evaluation Framework	PPP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • partner position papers heightened knowledge representation • refinement of evaluation tools increased interest in and acceptance of program evaluation 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• UU (moderate use)	• NA
2. Interviews	• UUU (high use)	
3. Archival	• 0 (no use)	

The evaluation framework was referenced by respondents as influencing two of the dependent variables under review—shared knowledge representation and knowledge generation.

One of the evaluation steps required all key stakeholder groups to put pen to paper and submit their conceptions of how the program should be designed and this seemed to facilitate and accelerate the committee's understanding of the issues (observation field notes, May 15, 1996). When asked by the interviewer, "what were the most worthwhile activities in terms of how the project was implemented?", several respondents claimed similar sorts of impacts:

The two things that worked best were (1) the meeting at Montebello and (2) the written reports. When the report was prepared for validation... most of the time it was good quality work. So even if the discussions at times was so-so, the report following the discussions was always good. That's basically what saved the project because the members were able to react to something that was written—to add to or modify. That created momentum to the process. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

Another member made particular mention of how the position papers put a focus on things. As she puts it:

I think the work that was done in advance [of the meetings] by the committee members was most worthwhile. For example, everybody submitted a position paper. I think the forming of each position paper was very important...it really made people put down on paper what they thought, not just to talk about [proposed changes] but to be very clear. It really helped to get the views out. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

Meanwhile, the ongoing development, refinement, and dissemination of the various evaluation tools acted to promote continued confidence and interest in the conduct of evaluation. "The fact that we have developed specific tools and we've got a process in place to collect data is critically important to partners accepting and incorporating evaluation (observation field notes, May 30, 1996). As was reported in previous chapters, the evaluation project has fostered the development of a set of data collection and analysis procedures from which all the national organizations can benefit. The evidence collected over the four time periods does imply that program leaders were beginning to feel quite comfortable initiating program evaluation activities using the specific tools and procedures developed for the project.

7.2.5 Participatory process

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Participatory Process	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustained forums enhanced understanding of issues by improving communication • involvement in data analysis & report writing focused members on fundamental issues 	0 (no influence)
Sources of Evidence <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use) • UUU (high use) • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

As with the previous time periods, there was once again compelling evidence that elements associated with participatory evaluation—the reliance on primary users, depth of participation, shared control, forums for sustained interactivity—contributed positively to improving the learning capacity of CNT. First a few general statements about the influence of the participatory process.

All members of the project's steering committee made numerous references, either directly to the researcher or during the final interviews, expounding the virtues of collaborative work. During a national meeting involving all the program stakeholders, a member who represented the national organizations, made mention of "how excellent the process has been in terms of getting the [national organizations] involved and that he was overwhelmed by the commitment that [national organizations] seemed to have to the program (observation field notes,

May 7, 1996). The other national organizations' representative echoed this feeling and identified what part of the process was of most value:

From a personal standpoint the most worthwhile activity was actually doing the feedback groups with the [national organizations]. For me, as a [national organization] rep., having to talk to people and do those little workshops was probably the most rewarding. I really enjoyed the person-to-person contact and hearing their opinions. (TP 4, steering committee member, Megan)

These positive views resulted in a strong buy-in to the project's results:

...the process really caused people to participate and to develop a good sense of ownership in the report. I really believe that the report is theirs just as much as it is ours. (TP 4, steering committee member, Steve)

Not surprisingly, the former president's feelings about the report's likely success of being acted upon, was based on his assessment of stakeholders' commitment to what had gone on over the last 18 months:

I think as a result of the amount of time and energy and the involvement [of stakeholders] to date...one assumes [the recommendations] are going to be very well considered. People are fully aware of all the processes that occurred leading to these recommendations--they are not something that have been plucked out of the blue. (TP 4, president of organization)

The discussion will now attend to the specific impacts that the participatory process had on the dependent variables under review. Consideration is given to the value of sustained forums for discussion and dialogue. The continued involvement of the committee members in meetings, conference calls, one-to-one discussions, and the like, aided their collective understanding of the issues. According to one project team member, who went out of his way to attend a meeting to layout the evaluation report, "it was really only through direct face-to-face contact that he was able to get his point across when dealing with such complex matters" (observation field notes, July 25, 1996). When this member was asked what factors he would attribute to the project's success, he replied:

Time and respect. That's it. It's the number of situations we had, maybe 20 to 25 meetings together...and I guess we learned the way to express ourselves. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

The importance of regular contact, of a particular nature, was not lost to those outside the project. The former president acknowledged the role these interactions had to the development of a shared perspective:

I think as a result of several well organized meetings...where people had the opportunity to have their day in court, to voice their views, and to be heard...we now have [a committee] which is of a like-mind. (TP 4, president of organization)

Becoming "less polarized", "eliminating the BS", and "hammering out egos" were all terms used to describe the outcomes of the participatory process. In the end, as one respondent observed, the secret to why the process worked was simply the result of staying connected:

I think the nature of and frequency of the dialogue between various members was important. It doesn't have to be for a long time but it has to be fairly frequent for people to keep the issues up front. Everybody is busy, but through frequent contact and dialogue it keeps [the issues] a priority. (TP 4, steering committee member, Charles)

He went on to describe the participatory nature of the meetings (e.g., shared control) that helped to form peoples' views of things:

I think the fact that there was a lot of input sought and given by the various partners, that contributed significantly to the outcome of the project thus far. It's one thing to record somebody's views, it's all together different for someone to pick it up, debate it, and then end up recommending it...it was a very validating kind of process. (TP 4, steering committee member, Charles)

Participatory work that requires members to become deeply immersed in all aspects of the project also seems to hold much promise in fostering higher forms of learning. For example, one member reflected on the value of in-depth involvement because it brings program leaders closer to the action:

I think the involvement of the so called experts—the administrators or leaders of the program—in the collection of data and the analysis is very important. So you've involved key people...engaged fairly regularly in the delivery of the program, therefore, they are getting first hand information back from a very key group. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

This involvement, in turn, could have played a role in fostering the national organizations' new found sense of who they were relative to the other partners. One member's thoughtful comment at the conclusion of the period noted the importance of the process to shifting organizational thinking.

The most striking thing is the reality that the [national organizations], in particular, have really taken up the challenge and are now becoming the main movers in the program which I think we haven't seen before. That's perhaps a statement about how effective the project has been... [the project] has got to them...that they can be major players in this since they are ultimately responsible for initiating and carrying out [the program]. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

7.2.6 Researcher impact

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Researcher Impact	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • contributed key information that challenged and/or confirmed committee' views • org. knowledge provided context for discussion • facilitated process that encouraged members to be open and reflective 	N (moderate negative) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • withholding personal views • limited learning & increased frustration
Sources of Evidence		
1 Participant Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U (low use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)
2 Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UUU (high use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UU (moderate use)
3 Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 (no use)

The evidence collected in the final time period regarding the researcher's impact was considerably more positive than that of the previous two periods. This

could be, however, simply the result of the project drawing to a close and therefore everyone was generally in a better frame of mind. Whatever the reasons, the researcher's impact fell into three general categories. Effects were attributed to either (1) the researcher's specific research skills and/or academic training, (2) his professional background or program expertise, and (3) the facilitation skills utilized by the researcher throughout the project. While many of the comments are similar to those reported in early chapters, it appeared that the respondents' views were more thoughtful and encompassed their thinking about the researcher's impact over the entire project. We will begin with a look at the impact that the researcher's academic training had on the process and ultimately, organizational learning.

Several respondents felt the researcher was responsible for keeping the project on course and as a result of his professional training was able to access relevant sources of information that would have been otherwise unavailable:

[The researcher] is the expert...he has expertise in program evaluation. He brings to the table the recent research in that area and any of the views and stuff related to research evaluation. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

[The researcher] obviously has the academic basis so that's helped us too. He's legitimized the process for all us. We all learned something. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brad)

Unfortunately, the member did not specify what was learned or what directly did the researcher's academic background contribute. Fortunately, another member commenting on the researcher's development over the last two years, made mention of how he assisted project members reach higher states of understanding. In her words:

I just mentioned to [the researcher] the other day how he questions things...he doesn't necessarily assume. He has a greater depth of understanding about the issues, whereas before he would just read

something like a research paper and would just assume that "okay, I read that and I accept it." Now, it's "what exactly is it saying, how does it relate to my organization, is it in fact appropriate..." It's just a deeper sense of knowing. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

The level of program expertise and organizational knowledge possessed by the researcher showed to be positively linked with improving members ability to see relationships in the data and the credibility and/or relevance of the project itself. A committee member revealed his perception of the researcher during the interview:

[The researcher] would get up, make an intervention and everybody thought, "wow, he's made it clear." He's got the background to it...he had the answers. (TP 4, Henri)

Working and interacting with program practitioners, over a long period of time, also proved to be significant. Respondents felt that the reputation earned by the researcher contributed to the overall belief that the evaluation exercise was being conducted in good faith and was, in fact, worth the effort. As a member of the federal government puts it:

[The researcher's] got a very well deserved reputation for the work that he has done with [national organizations] in helping them get their individual programs up and running. [The reputation] builds a certain credibility with the people in [national organizations] in terms of his motivation and his commitment to helping their individual [organizations] and [organizations] generally. This gives a pretty good feeling of satisfaction that he has the competence to deliver. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brad)

Several respondents claimed that researcher's background helped to "ground the project" and "bring it back to reality:"

[The researcher] uses his knowledge of the program to situate [the project] in some kind of historical context...we've done revisions and rewritten materials, and so on, but we haven't looked at the essential issues like "what are we trying to do with this education program?" (TP 4, steering committee member, Charles)

There was also direct reference to the researcher's facilitation style as being fundamental to the success of the project. In particular, the interview data provided

descriptive comments as to how the facilitative approach resulted in underlying concepts being surfaced and then clarified. Somewhat of a surprise was that the approach was not hidden to the committee; rather, members reported an explicit awareness of the researcher's intentions in this regard:

... it came together with certain concepts being thrown out by different people and I would say that [the researcher] had a lot to do with that. The process encouraged people to literally come forth and put things up on the flip chart...as to say, "this is one way I could see it happening." These were contrasted by other peoples' approaches that were quite different. The best aspects of each approach were then melted together to come up with something that seemed to make sense. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brad)

Other members had difficulty describing a particular or unique intervention. For them, the process worked—members were able to reach consensus around extremely difficult issues—because the researcher's personality was so well suited to the task at hand:

I think that [the researcher] was almost the perfect personality type, with the perfect approach to making this thing work. He was sort of the middle man who gathered all of these varying opinions and attitudes and facilitated them. He allowed us to be different, he allowed us to have different opinions. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

I think [the researcher] is the real catalyst of this whole thing. I know he's got a number of specific roles like helping design the process, etc., but I think one of his most important values is his attitude...he's got a great sense of humor, and he just makes it fun. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brad)

Although most of the evidence collected supports the notion that the researcher's impact on organizational learning was positive, there continued to surface countervailing data to the contrary. As was mentioned in the two previous time periods, some members of the committee were harboring significant levels of resentment regarding the researcher's conscious decision to withhold his point of view. As one member tried to explain:

...my perception is that he is not speaking with authority when he should. He has a lot of knowledge and I told him, "You are depriving the committee of your knowledge when you do that." Sometimes I turn questions back to him, "what do you think we should do?" And he didn't like that. So it was a major disagreement. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

Another member reinforced the perception that the problem was the result of the researcher's dual role as facilitator and project leader. As with the previous respondent, this member felt that the researcher would not, "just come out and say whatever he thinks scientifically, or because of his experience, or his analysis." As a result, the member was of the opinion that he, "missed out on the best that the [the researcher] had to offer."

On the other hand, one member commented that he had observed a change in the researcher over the course of the project. He thought that the researcher was getting better at extracting information from the committee and as the project move closer to its deadline, was more likely to take on a leadership role with the group.

As he put it:

[The researcher] started to take a few more chances at leading...he then provided us with the opportunity to see if we were in agreement. It started to work well...its when we started to gain our most momentum. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

While another member made mention of the researcher's approach as being sort of "pushy" at times, the above comments raise an important question in terms of how should evaluators facilitate participatory processes to achieve the most desirable outcomes—product as well as process. The evidence does suggest that the role of the researcher, in this case, was significant to the capacity of the members to surface, debate, and reach consensus on complex program issues.

7.2.7 Evaluation findings

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Evaluation Findings	PP (moderate positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consolidated/confirmed views re. controversial issues • challenged perceived biases of researcher • confirmed need to conduct program evaluation 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence		
1. Participant Observation	• 0 (no use)	• N/A
2. Interviews	• UUU (high use)	
3. Archival	• 0 (no use)	

The findings seemed to positively contribute to clarifying and consolidating members' views on important program issues.

While many of the activities associated with the conduct of the project have been described earlier, the findings emanating from the survey data seemed to have particular significance. As one member suggested:

I think that doing such an extensive [participant survey] with all that statistical analysis has really confirmed a lot of feelings about the [the program]. It gives you something solid to base your intuition on. (TP 4, steering committee member, Steve)

Other respondents attributed the survey findings with breaking down the strongly held beliefs or biases held by organization members. Specifically, the perceived biases held by the researcher were thought to be challenged by the results of the survey. As one steering committee member observed:

...there's been similar learning with [the researcher] in terms of breaking down myths about the way we did things. The [participant survey] and

some of the other surveys forced [the researcher] through a process of, "hmm, I've always been thinking this way...my thinking was clearly outdated..." (TP 4, steering committee member, Kevin)

While limited, the evidence also implied that the findings emerging from the project were contributing to members' acceptance of the beneficial role evaluation activities could play in the system. Once again, the participant survey was mentioned as having prominence for certain members. When asked, " what factors would influence future decisions to incorporate program evaluation into the system," one member replied:

I think the most critical component of this whole project has been the [participant survey]. I think what the project probably has cemented is the need to be in touch with two groups of people: [the participant] and other key consumers. (TP 4, steering committee member, Henri)

For members of CNT, the findings from the survey confirmed the notion that national organizations would "need help to analyze their system and the participants in their program." Thus, it may have triggered the initiation of a series of evaluation-like steps to gather information on the target group, organization by organization.

7.2.8 Other factors

Variables	Positive Influence	Negative Influence
Other Factors	P (weak positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dissemination strategies kept information in manageable chunks— facilitated understanding technical skills development enhanced motivation 	O (no influence)
Sources of Evidence 1. Participant Observation 2. Interviews 3. Archival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UU (high use) U (moderate use) 0 (no use) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

Data surfaced that indicated that two other factors identified in the conceptual framework were beginning to influence the dependent variables under review. Given the stage that the project was in, it was not surprising that the dissemination strategies being used and members' development of technical skills were starting to emerge. We will begin with the evidence associated with the strategies used to disseminate elements of the project's findings.

The dissemination strategy adopted by the project team throughout the project could be characterized as being "bite sized" and continuous. This approach looked to be helpful in establishing a common or shared frame of reference with members of the steering committee, as well as other stakeholder groups. On one occasion, program leaders from the partner organizations were brought together to hear the preliminary results of the participant survey. Even though the presentation was based on less than half of the surveys eventually returned, the impact on participants was profound. They were receiving information, generated

this time through systematic methodology, that were confirming beliefs traditionally based on anecdotal data (observation field notes, May 13, 1996).

The release of the preliminary survey findings occurred approximately eight weeks following the distribution of the survey to respondents. Consequently, stakeholders showed considerable interest in and excitement about the preliminary findings even though they were not considered final. This had an interesting effect—it seemed to take the pressure off both committee members and stakeholders from having to accept every conclusion or direction the data were pointing because so many more surveys would be incorporated before the findings would be considered final (observation field notes, May 13, 1996). It allowed, however, new conceptions about the program (e.g., the need for the courses to be integrated) to be exposed in a forum that fostered critical reflection.

One member remarked that the best way to overcome stakeholders' resistance to the recommendations being proposed, is by educating the stakeholders through a planned dissemination process. As he puts it:

We've got to have a plan for [the report's] dissemination. If it's quality pedagogical and consultative process we should be okay. If we try only to consult and not give the proper background on the proposed changes, we might face problems. We must make sure the stakeholders understand where the changes are coming from. We have to be very tactical in the way we approach it. (TP 4, steering committee member, Wes)

This approach would seem to be very consistent with the participatory process used to conduct the project. The dissemination strategies utilized throughout the project to inform stakeholders about the project (e.g., the monthly bulletins) and its final recommendations, appeared to have fostered not only a sharing of information, but, a slow and methodical altering of previously held premises.

Finally, several respondents claimed that the effects of working on the steering committee provided them with both specific technical skills associated with conducting program evaluation and a better appreciation of the leadership abilities needed to manage such projects. The following comments attest to these impacts:

I now know the evaluation steps we've taken so I can follow and do something similar, not as extensive, but certainly do a similar type of evaluation. (TP 4, steering committee member, Megan)

I learned a tremendous amount about leadership style and project management...as a result of observing those who were in charge. I'm not sure though if I would be able to apply the same skills as they did even having had been through it. (TP 4, steering committee member, Brenda)

While it is difficult to say whether or not an increase in technical skills impacted on organizational learning capacity, it would seem reasonable to suggest that committee members' motivation to stay a part of the project were enhanced. This, in turn, provided the time needed for members to become acquainted with the new conceptions about the program that reported throughout this section.

7.2.9 Summary

Higher levels of learning were once again promoted by the political landscape, particularly, the reduction in federal funding. New relationships were required and changes to the traditional roles of the partners were being seriously contemplated. The ongoing support and encouragement of the organization's former president appeared to also trigger members to challenge deeply held beliefs. Moreover, his support was found to be salient to the increasing level of support observed for CNT's use of an ongoing system of program evaluation activities. There did appear to be a cultural shift in attitude and/or belief as to the potential value of program evaluation.

The effects of the participatory process and researcher were also observed to be tied closely with organizational learning during this period. For example, involving members in the actual preparation of the preliminary documents, maintaining close, personal dialogues, and interactions with program administrators all contributed to a heightened understanding of the issues. In addition, the participatory process forced members to stay connected and this facilitated the use of e-mail. Hence the memory of the organization was found to be positively influenced.

In terms of the researcher, his research and program expertise were reported as assisting in keeping the project "on-task" and clarifying issues that had historical implications. In addition, his facilitation skills were also mentioned by several respondents as helpful to the process of unearthing members' deep-seeded views about the program.

The evaluation findings provided a measure of reassurance for some of the decisions taken by the committee and legitimized the value of program evaluation for members that had little or no previous experience. Finally, the dissemination strategies fostered shared understanding and the emerging technical abilities of committee members fostered confidence that future evaluations could be managed.

7.2.10 Author's Personal Reflections

The overwhelming relief of getting through this period (April, 1996 to October, 1996) and bringing an evaluation project of this complexity to a successful conclusion is difficult to describe. I had a sense of calm once we were at a point in time when no further information would be collected (and therefore in need of processing). The committee had made its decisions about what it wanted to say

about program, it was my job to facilitate the writing and dissemination of the evaluation report. Even though we were entering the summer period, I looked forward to the serenity that accompanies such a writing task. Maybe I was, and had been, ready to for this stage of the project for quite some time?

The involvement of the committee during this period was especially gratifying as individuals took sections of the report and attempted to put pen to paper. I did feel the urge to write the entire document and expected that most committee members would be inclined to not engage in this time consuming task. However, this feeling subsided when the scope of the task became clear and certain committee members offered suggestions, ideas, and contributed concretely to the exercise. These actions confirmed that they were more than capable of the work and five of the members took an active role in the writing task.

It was also rewarding to receive the many comments and notes from individuals in the system offering congratulations on the project's facilitation and outcomes. So many important organizational issues were raised and clarified, in addition to the program issues, that they may well be the most important outcomes of the project. I certainly feel that CNT's approach to working with the partner organization's is forever changed and that the current mood among the partners may well lead to future systemic changes.

Chapter 8

Impact of Evaluation Time Period 5 (April, 1997)

The purpose of this chapter is to report on the results of the focus group interview that was conducted with the project's steering committee in April, 1997. First, the author will describe how the actual evaluation findings were utilized by the various stakeholder groups (i.e., instrumental vs conceptual use). This will be followed by a discussion of those factors that appeared to influence use of evaluation findings. Second, a summary is provided of the impact which the evaluation process had on both the individuals involved in the project and the organization itself. The author will then attempt to explain the observed pattern of individual and organizational learning.

The focus group interview occurred approximately six months after the release of the evaluation project's report. Six months was judged by the researcher to be sufficient time to allow for impact of the evaluation to become evident. The study's author did, however, utilize interview and participant observation data collected in earlier time periods when respondents or program personnel made direct reference to utilization of evaluation findings or the process associated with the evaluation intervention.

8.1 How were the Evaluation Findings Utilized?

Table 10 summarizes the data collected concerning the major sorts of impact (evaluation use) that were observed and/or mentioned by the respondents. Using the study's conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1 and discussions provided in

TABLE 10

Use of Evaluation Findings

Type of Use	Evidence
Instrumental Use (support for discrete decisions)	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• endorsement of report's recommendations• adoption of competency-based training• unique needs of program participants used as basis of program changes• program funding policies altered• used in organizational planning
Educative Use (learning and conceptual development)	PPP (strong positive) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• broadened program leaders' perceptions of an alternative program model• stimulated critical reflection about need for significant program change• caused members to question traditional role of course conductors• validated program changes already being contemplated by national organizations

the review of literature, it is possible to describe the use of evaluation findings. As was outlined, the use and/or impact of evaluation findings can take different forms—they can be used directly to support discrete decisions (instrumental use) or they can educate organization members about the program operation and consequences of program practices (educative or conceptual use). Both types of use were found to have occurred in the present study. We will begin with a look at the instrumental impacts.

8.1.1 Instrumental use

Perhaps the most significant example of instrumental impact was the unanimous decision of the program partners to adopt the evaluation report which contained a series of recommendations for program improvements at the May, 1997 national council meetings. This included a recommendation that the program embrace a competency-based training approach. This decision has the potential to radically alter the way the program is conceived and delivered in the years ahead.

According to one of the member of the steering committee:

Adopting a competency-based training approach will require all the partners too re-assess their program's design, content, delivery, etc. Especially, around the standards that need to be created/developed. (TP 5, focus group interview, Steve)

Several members commented that evaluation findings gave a clear picture of the needs of program participants and that there needed to be a "commitment from all program developers to focus in on these needs." Curriculum designers made specific use of how participants were classified and the participant profiles (i.e., specific needs) associated with each category. Special mention was made of the findings that emanated from the results of a nation-wide survey of program participants. As one member put it:

The [participant] survey was very powerful...it is based on the needs of [participants] and a lot of our decisions were based on the information from this survey. It has added a lot of credibility to our decisions. (TP 5, focus group interview, Wes)

Similarly, the results of other key data collection steps were used by both committee members and CNT staff to modify program policies. For example, CNT interpreted the findings and decided to made resources available to one national organization for a pilot test of an alternative delivery model using new technology

and adjusted program funding guidelines to bring them in line with the various recommendations contained in the evaluation report (observation field notes, February, 12, 1997).

In a different sphere, the evaluation findings were being used by CNT's senior managers to assist in their annual strategic planning process. The evaluation report acted to inform organization members of key program decisions/directions taken by the program partners and stimulated discussion regarding what organizational response would be appropriate (observation field notes, March 22, 1997).

Finally, it should be noted that strict adherence by the users to the recommendations as prescribed was not the criteria used by the author to gage instrumental use. While there was evidence of stakeholders adopting the recommendations directly, many took the recommendations and adapted them to their unique situation to meet specific needs. Both cases were judged to be evidence of instrumental use of findings.

8.1.2 Educative use

The data also provided support that educative or conceptual use of the evaluation findings had occurred. Not surprisingly, the findings had a similar effect as many of the other independent variables under investigation; they acted to inform program leaders about the program and triggered serious questions as to its effectiveness. In some cases the evaluation findings supported and/or justified members' beliefs that participants' behaviors needed to be both demonstrated and assessed if the program was to meet its stated objectives. It is important to remind the reader that these observations were first noted in time period 3. This is not

surprising given that preliminary findings from the evaluation project started to emerge during this period as the various data collection procedures were being implemented.

For example, one committee member responded to a direct question about the potential use of the evaluation data that had begun to emerge during the data collection period, by stating:

We have some data that will be useful when we do major revisions to the contents of the program. Right now it has helped us in two ways: confirm what we need to prioritize in terms of content and given suggestions on how to make the program change [the participants'] behavior? (TP 3, steering committee member, Henri)

Similarly, as the project was winding down, steering committee members were acknowledging a heightened awareness of the unique needs of the national organizations. As one member suggested:

...we came to realize that the needs of the [national organizations] are so different that two levels below level three is not enough for some and it's too many for others. So we will have to help the [national organizations] analyze their system to see if the current system is satisfactory. (TP 4, steering committee member, Tom)

In addition to awareness enhancement, for some members the evaluation findings provided confirmation that the program changes already being seriously considered by the various partners were valid:

When we came back to the stakeholders with the findings, program problems, etc, it was like "why are we not surprised?" These are the kinds of problems that we have been talking about...now they are on paper. (TP 5, focus group interview, Steve)

The evaluation findings (e.g., results from focus groups, surveys, etc) appear to have informed those associated with the project about unique aspects of program practice and caused stakeholders to question fundamental assumptions about the teaching and learning process. The role of the course conductors, for example, were

given serious consideration as steering committee members attempted to assess the impact a shift to a competency-based training program could have. Everyone agreed that the present conception of course conductors as “teachers of content” would need to be replaced with a new conception of course conductor as “facilitators of learning” (observation field notes, September 21, 1996).

Although earlier chapters have made mention of members becoming involved in serious discussion and debate regarding the fundamental assumptions upon which the program was built, there is now evidence that intensive cognitive energies were stimulated by the findings themselves. To be clear, up until now, data have surfaced that link deep conceptual thinking about the program and organization with the participatory evaluation process. What we now have is evidence to suggest that the evaluation findings themselves have initiated similar levels of cognitive effort. Specifically, the findings served to confirm prior knowledge and beliefs about the program and, in some cases, increased program leaders' awareness.

8.2 What Factors Explain the Variation in Use?

The factors are summarized in Table 11 under the three major components of the evaluation use conceptual framework outlined in Figure 2. This discussion begins with a look at interactive processes.

TABLE 11

Factors Influencing Utilization of Findings

Factor	Evidence
<p>Interactive Processes</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heightened levels of trust • re-established old and created new partnerships • provided good technical training in systematic inquiry • evaluation report widely circulated to all stakeholders • face-to-face discussions held with stakeholders to explain findings and solicit approval • newsletters and bulletins used to publicize project findings/recommendations
<p>Decision or Policy Setting Considerations</p>	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support from senior management • resources from CNT • high information needs
<p>Evaluation Implementation Characteristics</p>	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • project's scope • quality of evaluation methods • credibility of evaluation team members • participant survey data powerful • position papers relevant, authentic • review of foreign countries acted as an independent corroboration of findings

8.2.1 Interactive processes

Several outcomes of the participatory process were identified as having a positive impact on the use of evaluation findings. First, respondents indicated that embracing an extensive collaborative process was "absolutely new and unique in the

history of the program.” A climate of trust resulted which, according to one committee member, “improved our ability to effect change.” As he puts it:

...without this trust...in the old days all of the partner concerns would have to be resolved or answered before the partners would have agreed to the changes. If we did not have the trust...we would be dead. (TP 5, focus group interview, Steve)

Implicit in this comment is that the stakeholders were more apt to believe in and use the report's findings due to its enhanced credibility.

Second, the participatory process also facilitated the establishment of new partnerships with key stakeholder groups while strengthening the linkages with existing partners. According to one steering committee member, the process “extended the loop” by:

...broadening the number of stakeholders usually involved from just national and provincial organizations leaders to the practitioner level (e.g., course conductors). (TP 5, focus group interview, Brenda)

As the project evolved, the process seemed to enhance the committee's sensitivity to the importance of maintaining good relationships with the various stakeholder groups if project's findings were to have any hope of being accepted:

There was a general interest and awareness that unless we included these important stakeholder groups, the project would not be able to move forward...its recommendations would not be accepted...it would not be successful. (TP 5, focus group interview, Charles)

The technical skills training resulting from members' involvement in the project was thought to be personally significant. As reported earlier, the skills were acquired due to members taking an active role in the conduct of the evaluation, that is, from creating the data collection instruments, and collecting and analyzing evaluation data. This training helped members to appreciate and understand the

data being generated, as well as assisting them in their important roles in disseminating the results.

While evidence was unearthed that the evaluation findings were being widely circulated to program partners (via a formal report), steering committee members identified that the ongoing, face-to-face dialogue with key stakeholder groups was absolutely critical to the eventual use of the project's findings. Members noted that the presentations, made both during the project and after the release of the project's report findings, were done with the express purpose of stimulating thinking, discussion and debate. Committee members held the viewpoint that the "entire process was very much an educational process with the various workshops and discussions designed to assist stakeholders keep up-to-date" (observation field notes, October 21, 1996).

A program newsletter was also identified as being helpful in disseminating information about the project to program practitioners, as well as primary stakeholders. Moreover, an evaluation project bulletin was created solely for the purpose of getting information about the project (e.g., project steps, timelines, and findings) out to program leaders at all levels.

8.2.2 Decision or policy setting considerations

Although the respondents did not allude to the effects which the context or setting may have had on use, the researcher did make some personal observations. First, considerable financial support was provided by CNT to the project team to both conduct the evaluation and ensure that appropriate follow-up was initiated. For example, resources were made available to hold meetings and to travel throughout Canada to present the evaluation findings. In addition, the organization

ensured that adequate support staff time was allocated to prepare presentation kits and to handle information dissemination regarding the project. It seemed evident that the CNT's senior management, especially the new president, valued the work of the steering committee and was quite interested in having the findings favorably received by the various stakeholder groups (observation field notes, February 10, 1997). Without question, without this support the project's impact would have been severely hampered.

At the same time, CNT's database was undergoing a major overhaul. The existing hardware and software was nearly 15 years old and a decision was made to invest approximately \$100,000 to ensure that it had the capacity to handle the proposed changes to the program. This would also seem to be tangible evidence of the organization's endorsement of the project's findings and directions being proposed.

Government leaders had strong interests in receiving information about the program as they too were embarking on a series of similar program reviews. Consequently, the results of the evaluation project seemed to be of great interest to both provincial and federal funding bodies. This notion became especially evident once these bodies realized that the major recommendation contained in the report was consistent with their own views of how the program should be improved.

8.2.3 Evaluation implementation characteristics

The evaluation framework positively affected use by increasing the perceived "quality" (defined as methodological sophistication, rigor, and approach taken) of the evaluation exercise. The evaluation model employed by the project team acted

to structure and provide guidance to the exercise, as well as give members confidence in the evaluation results:

At first I had trouble with the Brinkerhoff model. I was confused with how it fit with Kirkpatrick's model. However, once I got it straight...it really help to guide our discussion...I think it gave us all confidence. (TP 5, focus group interview, Brenda)

Besides the belief that the project was being guided by an evaluative framework that would yield valid results, respondents suggested that the credibility of the steering committee members themselves contributed to the acceptance of the evaluation findings. One steering committee member reflected on the importance of the perceived credibility of the project leaders:

The [national organization's] focus groups did a lot to dispel their concerns about the findings...these workshops pulled a lot of weight. Also, the credibility of the [national organization] reps on the committee was very important. I can't say enough about how influential they were in getting the [national organizations] to buy into this thing. (TP 5, focus group interview, Kevin)

Another committee member, who represented the national organizations, provided corroboration for this view:

I had a meeting with one [national organization] to explain the report's findings. They wanted some clarification on what was going on and where the program was going. I didn't have all the answers but I just asked them to continue to have trust in the process and the people who represent them. They had no problem with that. (TP 5, focus group interview, Tom)

Evidence surfaced that indicated respondents believed that the nature of the findings—the report's content—influenced utilization. In particular, the results of the participant's survey and the partner position papers were highlighted as being significant. As one member puts it:

...the [participant survey] was very powerful...its based on the needs of [program participants] and a lot of our decisions were based on the decisions emanating from survey. It has added a lot of credibility to our decisions. (TP 5, focus group interview, Henri)

Other factors having positive effects were the scope of the research project and the independent review of similar programs from other countries. The analysis of and comparison to these foreign programs provided a certain amount of validity to the findings. As one member commented:

In addition to all the surveys, process, workshops, meetings etc...we used a review of other countries' programs to help us with our decisions. These were very helpful for it gave us confidence in our own work, in our own recommendations. (TP 5, focus group interview, Brad)

Finally, it is interesting and important to note that no one challenged the credibility of the project's findings. Throughout the report dissemination stage, the various stakeholder groups generally focused their questions around issues relating to how the various recommendations would be implemented, under what time lines, and who was going to fund the changes.

To conclude, this section has provided some insight into the nature and range of uses of evaluation findings emanating from internal participatory evaluation. It has also discussed those factors that seemed to influence utilization in one particular case. The discussion now turns to explaining the impact of the evaluation process.

8.3 Impact of the Internal Participatory Evaluation Process

Throughout the findings section, evidence was unearthed linking specific effects of the evaluation process—how the evaluation was being conducted—with both individual and organizational consequences. It is now possible to analyze focus group data that was obtained from those individuals most closely connected with the evaluative process to assess these consequences. Table 12 summarizes this

data, as well as the author's personal observations that dealt with the consequences of the evaluation process. The author will first describe these effects and then attempt to explain the observed pattern of individual and organizational learning.

TABLE 12

Impact of the Internal Participatory Evaluation Process

Type of Impact	Evidence
Personal Development	<p>PPP (strong positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant professional development experience • skills in systematic inquiry enhanced • initiation of independent evaluation studies • heightened self confidence • promotion of project leaders
Organizational Development	<p>PP (moderate positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evaluation work supported • deep reflection on organization's operating style • partner organizations want involvement in decision making

8.3.1 Personal development

Committee members viewed their involvement in the evaluation project as an effective professional development exercise. For some, the consequence of being involved in the project resulted in personal reflections that would have impact well after the evaluation is completed:

[The evaluation project] has had a definite impact on me. I am very use to going out and doing things myself...and not seek the feedback or involvement

that is required. I have learned about the participatory process and I was lucky because I am in [the organization] and was able to get an inside view. So I watched carefully. (TP 5, focus group interview, Brenda)

...professional development over the last 2 years have been the most of my career. I was pretty dictatorial and made my own decisions...now I'm learning so much about process...learning patience...learning about how you have to build a knowledge base first before you can move people to accept your position. (TP 5, focus group interview, Henri)

For others, the experience lead to the development of skills in systematic inquiry:

[The project] was an incredible process for me. I learned about how a program evaluation is implemented and the specific elements about data collection and analysis. I've learned a lot about the process as well. (TP 5, focus group interview, Steve)

When committee members were asked if the process was positive and would they do it again, the responses were generally very positive. As one member suggested:

As far as acquiring pure knowledge the data collection steps were great. But it took a lot of patience ...it took a lot of time and effort. The tradeoff is worth it. (TP 5, steering committee member, Wes)

A final facet of process use which surfaced in the data were the personal leadership development of committee members. Since the completion of the project, two members have been promoted within the system while two have assumed positions of increased complexity and responsibility in the private sector. In all cases, the study raised their level of confidence and provided concrete skills that were recognized by senior level management.

8.3.2 Organizational development

There was compelling evidence to suggest that the members felt capable and were motivated to initiate evaluation activities on their own. One member, following the data collection period, commented, "I am now able to implement a similar process with other projects that I do." In addition, some members made

mention of how their newly developed skills had been used in their program consulting work with third world countries:

We can now train others in other countries...in many aspects of both participant evaluation and program evaluation. So if we are now at this step...I would say we have learned a great deal. (TP 5, focus group interview, Wes)

The reader should be somewhat cautious in accepting these observations as evidence that evaluative systems have found their way into the organization. For example, when the group was asked whether or not there would be further evaluation work, one member replied that it would all depend on how the results of the present were processed.

In terms of the [national organizations], we would respond equally positive next time around if we deliver the goods. Make the shift [to competency-based program]. Therefore if [CNT] or [the committee] has to go back to the community in the years to come [to initiate another evaluation]...the doors will be wide open. (TP 5, focus group interview, Tom)

Committee members also confirmed that serious reflection, at the level of the organization, was happening and that previously held premises were changing. In response to a question about the evaluation, several members claimed that the process had a significant and lasting impact on how CNT would have to operate:

A lot of stakeholders were surprised that we were coming out to them. It went from surprise...to excitement...to ownership. It has got to the point now that [the organization] can't go back to the unilateral style we used to have. It would be anarchy. (TP 5, focus group interview, Henri)

Similar sorts of impacts were observed when discussing the greater system within which the organization operates. Members were adamant that partner organizations "needed to have more input and feedback into all decisions that affect them." Respondents went on to describe how the process facilitated a "collaborative spirit"—something never done before.

8.4 Factors Influencing Process Effects

Unfortunately, there were not much data from the focus group dealing specifically with those factors that seemed to facilitate the effects described above. However, it is worth noting two comments that were particularly insightful. For the first time the evaluative process “extended the loop” to include stakeholders’ (practitioners’) views in formulating program development initiatives. CNT had never made a systematic attempt to solicit views from all levels of the program for decision-making purposes. Committee members felt this was critical for it stimulated reflection about the way the system, not just the program, was operating. Who was in control? Who should be in control? What voice should be given to practitioners? Should this voice be limited to just issues regarding the program’s content, or should partners also address issues such as how CNT should be operated and what services it should offer?

The second point raised by the respondents was that the partnerships that were formed among the various stakeholder groups, and in particular, between CNT and the national organization assisted to stimulate the deep reflection evident throughout the project. As one member put it:

The collaborative process that was initiated, the partnerships were strengthen and new ones formed...caused a lot of trust to be formed. If we did not continue it...our ability to effect change would be nil. (TP 5, focus group interview, Kevin)

To conclude, this section discussed the evidence that emerged from the focus group interview that was associated with how the evaluation was conducted—the process. Much of the data reported above corroborates the findings reported in earlier chapters and would seem to provide evidence that the impact of this

particular internal participatory evaluation had significant effects on both the program under review and the organization itself.

8.5 Summary

The findings emanating from the evaluation project were observed to be used to support specific program initiatives (instrumental) such as the decision to adopt a competency-based orientation and the needs of program participants. Similarly, the data provided clear evidence that educative or conceptual use of the findings had also taken place. The findings acted to inform program leaders about the program and trigger serious questions as to its effectiveness. A key learning was the awareness that national organization's needs were not being adequately addressed by the current content and delivery system. The factors influencing the utilization of findings were categorized in three components: interactive processes, decision or policy setting considerations, and evaluation implementation considerations. Certainly, the level of trust and establishment of partnerships, as well as the credibility of the evaluation team were found to be extremely powerful factors influencing use.

The evaluation process—how the evaluation was conducted—was also found to have personal and organizational consequences. From a personal standpoint, significant professional development in terms of research training was reported. Respondents also noted heightened levels of self-confidence in initiating and leading evaluation-like activities. From the standpoint of the organization, the participatory process caused deep reflection on the organization's operating style and culminated in the various partner organizations asking for and receiving a

commitment by CNT's leadership to review its decision-making approach with the partners.

8.6 Author's Personal Reflections

The past six months (October, 1996 to April, 1996) allowed everyone associated with the project to take a well deserved rest. Immediately following the formal release of the evaluation report in October, I worked with members of the steering committee and colleagues at CNT to ensure that the report was distributed to all appropriate stakeholders groups. I then took a three month leave of absence to initiate the analysis of data and begin the writing of the findings chapter. During my absence, members of the committee, and in particular Henri, stepped forward and assumed the leadership of this important phase of the project. The committee concentrated on developing an evaluation report presentation package to be used by program leaders in the provinces/territories and national organizations. Once again, further refinements of previously held notions concerning the needs of program stakeholders, the conception of competency-based training, and the relationship of CNT to the partner organizations was observed. (As it turned out, I sat in on all meetings during this time period and was available for informal discussions since my temporary office was located in the same building.)

Without question, the most significant work during this period was the committee's involvement in facilitating workshops designed to present the report's findings to stakeholder groups in the provinces. By going out to various regions of the country, individual members were able to receive (and judge), first hand, the level of support from those individuals who would be directly effected by the

recommendations. At another level, it provided additional support for the view that CNT should be working to establish new and stronger relationships with program leaders on the front lines. This perspective is indeed a powerful one and seems to be held by all members of the committee and many others in the system. It was certainly gratifying to see the results of the evaluation project receive such strong endorsement of the program partners, as well as CNT's senior managers. The report has been adopted as a benchmark for organizational planning and decision-making.

Chapter 9

Summary of Findings

Table 13 provides a graphical representation of the extent to which the organizational learning capacity variables changed over the course of the evaluation project. This trend is presented as a line graph beginning at the baseline (TP 1) or before the project was initiated up to the project's report being released (TP 4). The summary will present each variable individually and will describe the trend which was observed over the course of the project, as well as note those factors which seemed to have influenced their evolution.

9.1 Shared Knowledge Representation

Members of both the project's steering committee and CNT reported substantial development of a shared understanding of program and organizational issues. Prior to the start of the project, members from partner organizations were distrustful of CNT and this limited individuals sharing their views about important program issues. However, once the project was initiated, the collective understanding of the issues improved as members became implicated in the day-to-day operation of the project. By the end of the second time period, there were still some members who were not connecting with the rest of the group and were still harboring feelings that important, fundamental issues needed to "get out on the table." A notable improvement was reported by respondents in this regard as the data began to emerge and data analysis was initiated. A significant consolidation and convergence of views around such issues as: participants' needs and conceptual

TABLE 13

Status of Organizational Learning: A Summary

Variable	Scale	TP 1	TP 2	TP 3	TP 4
Shared Knowledge Representation	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	ml	ml	mh	h
Levels of Learning	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	ml	m	mh	h
Memory	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	l	ml	m	m
Knowledge for Action	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	l	l	ml	ml
Knowledge Acquisition	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	m	mh	mh	m
Knowledge Generation	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	ml	ml	m	mh
Interpretive Systems	high mod-high moderate mod-low low	l	l	ml	m

design resulted from an increased sharing of information among members. Finally, as the project's report was being prepared for release, a heightened level of awareness and like-mindedness was reported from a number of respondents.

The factors which appeared to be predominantly responsible for this change were the participatory evaluation process, the impact of the researcher, and the evaluation framework. First, the participatory process was responsible for stimulating members' commitment to the evaluation exercise and this led to members having to take responsibility for facilitating stakeholder forums. This work improved their understanding of the issues and gave them confidence in their views. The number of forums for sustained interactivity kept the dialogue "alive" and members on task. The actual work by members to create the data collection tools, implement the various data collection steps, analyze the data, and write the report all contributed greatly to the shared level of knowledge that resulted.

Second, the impact of the researcher contributed throughout the project to the creation of a climate conducive to the unearthing of personal beliefs among members and generally holding together the project team as it struggled through some of the more difficult steps. His organizational knowledge and program expertise were found to be important in linking past events with present-day findings and generally gave members a sense of confidence that they were on the right track. For a few, the researcher's technical training as an evaluator contributed to their own personal development and training and this was found to assist in their appreciation of and understanding of the evaluation plan. Finally, the evaluation framework or model looked to be facilitating shared knowledge representation by directing committee members out into the field to uncover what

were the specific needs of program participants. The framework also called for members to identify program problems and concerns and determine if the current or any program design could be expected to address them.

9.2 Levels of Learning

This variable strengthened incrementally throughout the project beginning as “mod-low” and reaching “high” by the end of the fourth time period. The learning could be characterized as being high-level or double-loop learning and involved both members of the steering committee and of the organization. Examples of the learning that occurred ranged from discussions which probed to very heart of whether or not the program should be a training or education program and the ramifications of such a decision for CNT. The traditional roles of the partner organizations were debated and triggered a series of parallel discussions with organization staff. Lastly, the decision-making style or culture of CNT was called into question as the evaluation project evolved and members became sensitized to the benefits of a collaborative approach.

Two predominant factors—the leadership provided by the CNT’s president and the political environment—appeared to cause this phenomenon. The leadership provided by CNT’s president throughout the study stimulated organization members to seriously question not only the purpose and role of the program, but the organization itself. Interview data made mention of the president’s personal views regarding the need for CNT to change “its way of doing business.” He took it upon himself to encourage others in the organization to recognize and deal with how CNT positioned itself (i.e., what skills would staff need to possess) to deal effectively with

partner organizations. At one point leading up to the project's report, the former president challenged members of the steering committee for not having the confidence of recommending fundamental program/system changes.

It is important to note how the president came to hold the view that CNT had to undergo a significant change to its operating style and/or its culture. Simply, he gained the insight from members of the organization. The president appeared to foster an organizational climate that acknowledged the intellectual abilities of the members and this seemed to improve the capacity of the organization to learn.

Equally compelling were the effects of the political environment, particularly the reduction in funding by the federal government to CNT and the partners. This reality forced those partners who were responsible for program implementation to re-examine their roles and consider new strategic alliances to ensure that existing programs would not be cut. It also led to a significant re-think of both the role and power held by CNT over the national organizations. As one member from the national organization's reported, "the baseball is going or is gone." The concept of mentorship and collaboration replaced the traditional practice whereby CNT would produce policies that the national organizations would be expected to implement with little or no involvement in their formulation.

9.3 Memory

CNT's ability to organize, store, and retrieve information improved from a "low" to a "moderate" rating by the end of the project. Only two significant actions were undertaken by the organization and its members: 1) the development of an information storage and retrieval system and 2) the purchase and use of electronic

mail. Both were observed to assist CNT and members of the steering committee with various aspects of their work. The use of e-mail, for example, was used to disseminate project information (e.g., findings), as well as to enhance project members' communication.

Leadership and the participatory process were two factors that seemed to stimulate this improvement to the organization's memory. The former president was understanding of the complaints from project leaders regarding their difficulty in communicating with fellow members of the steering committee. The former president instructed the organization's vice-president to investigate and to eventually purchase e-mail in the hopes of bringing CNT "into the 21st century" and to assist with the evaluation project. The participatory nature of the project helped to facilitate this decision as both steering committee members and other interested stakeholders continually requested project-related information and pressured CNT members to be kept informed about the project's evolution and findings.

9.4 Knowledge for Action

The capacity of CNT to reflect upon and learn from pilot initiatives occurring within the system remained relatively low throughout the project. Although some improvement was noted during the third time period as steering committee members became aware of an initiative of one national organization to develop a competency-based program and took steps to monitor this project, on the whole, the learning was random, ill-defined, and unsystematic. By the end of the fourth time period, there was evidence that members of CNT were working together to both develop and monitor the trial of an internet-based delivery project. However, the

data were not strong enough to rank this variable higher than “mod-low.”

Knowledge for action was the lowest rated variable of the seven dependent variables tracked in the present study.

The participatory nature of the project provided steering committee members with numerous opportunities to interact with colleagues in the system, as well as program practitioners. These interactions stimulated an information exchange which could be considered greatly improved from previous times. For example, committee members were provided with first-hand accounts of various developmental initiatives that were being led and funded by partner organizations throughout the system. Once these pilot initiatives were identified, it was then possible for committee members to monitor their implementation.

9.5 Knowledge Acquisition

As indicated in Table 11, CNT had a fairly high capacity for acquiring information from its environment prior to the start of the evaluation project. Its capacity strengthened following the initiation of the data collection as information from foreign programs and private-sector programs were compared and contrasted with the program under review. By the end of third time period however, the committee was showing the strains of trying to process the incredible amounts of information being generated and reduced their interest in information emanating from external sources. The trend was therefore reported as returning back to a “moderate” level by the end of the project.

The evaluation framework was instrumental in triggering committee members to look beyond the boundaries of the organization for information that

would help to provide a fresh perspective on the problems which were surfacing. One of the project steps was titled 'Review of Literature and Foreign Programs' and each member was assigned the responsibility for one aspect of the search. Although it is probable that some kind of review or investigation would have occurred, formalizing this need ensured that this important step would not be forgotten. The evaluation framework also asked for committee members to initiate a debate with their relevant stakeholder groups about the conceptual design of the program and whether or not the assumptions driving the program were valid. This resulted in members searching for similar analyses in both the private sector and with programs offered in foreign countries.

9.6 Knowledge Generation

The improvement of this variable seemed to be continuous for the four time periods and moved from "mod-low" to "mod-high." The evidence to support this trend was based on both committee and CNT members recognizing the value of program evaluation and the resultant positive attitude that was developed for its formal adoption and use. Following the implementation of the data collection steps, organization members' confidence grew to the point that they were recommending the use of program evaluation with all of the organization's programs. The project culminated with CNT and some national organizations initiating various types of evaluations.

Three factors emerged as being significant to the trend observed. These factors were: 1) the leadership provided by the organization's president; 2) the political environment; and 3) the evaluation framework. Throughout the evaluation

project, CNT's former president provided ongoing support to the project leaders and for the project's importance. This support provided legitimacy for the role program evaluation could play in the ongoing development and monitoring of education/training programs. During the second time period the president produced an internal document to assist organization members establish a strategic plan. In this document he stressed the need for members to consider the findings from the evaluation project as organizational decisions were being made and to consider if further evaluation work was needed. This was found to be quite significant as evidence appeared in the final time period that suggested CNT, as well as other organizations, were becoming interested in conducting additional evaluations.

The political uncertainty in terms of funding had both a negative and positive effect on knowledge generation. During both the second and third time periods, committee members responded that the reduction in federal funding would cause program leaders to pay less attention to the program, including any attempts to monitor its success and/or failures through evaluative activities. On the other hand, there was compelling evidence that the opposite was true. Program leaders were looking at evaluative processes to provide a measure of accountability in the system. Certainly, by the end of the fourth time period, program leaders were showing signs of being quite pleased with the outcomes of the project in terms of providing evidence that the program was being supported by a great number of stakeholders, hence a measure of accountability was attained. Finally, the evaluation framework provided a measure of confidence to committee members that a proven model was available for use. In addition, the development and validation of context specific tools that were available for use facilitated a genuine interest in

program evaluation. As was observed in the later time periods, some national organizations initiated their own evaluations following a similar design and used the same tools that were incorporated into the present study.

9.7 Interpretive Systems

The growth of the interpretive or sense-making systems of CNT did not appear until the third time period as the data were beginning to be analyzed. The project's steering committee was challenged with the task of making sense out of the data which ranged from participant surveys to minutes of focus groups. By the end of the project, the committee was being viewed by all four partner organizations, and in particular CNT, as a key leadership group whose responsibilities included setting strategic directions for the entire system. It would appear that the components of an effective learning system were in place—that is, the committee was: 1) made up of individuals representative of all key stakeholders, 2) had access to or could generate needed information, 3) provided with the financial resources to function, and 4) handed a clear and unequivocal mandate. Interestingly, these four factors were used by the organization's new president as an outline for how CNT work teams should be designed.

Although there was not a direct reference in the data to any one causal factor, it would seem reasonable to speculate that the participatory process did facilitate the interpretive system's evolution during the project. The participatory approach required that all key stakeholder groups would be represented, that each member would be intimately involved in the project, and that sustained forums for interactivity would be facilitated. Add to this the incredible amount of information

about both the program and the system that needed processing, and consequently, the steering committee's role escalated to that of dealing with issues that were much broader than the program itself.

SECTION III

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

This study tracked significant change to the organizational learning capacity of a national training organization. This change was triggered by an internal participatory evaluation of the organization's key program. In chapter 10 the author's intention is to critically reflect on the evaluative process employed during the study and to comment on how the findings, which emanated primarily from individuals working with the author in carrying out the evaluation, add to our knowledge about the potential for participatory evaluation to enhance organizational learning. The literature will be reviewed thematically, with the purpose of pointing out specific areas where the present study makes a contribution.

Attention then turns in chapter 11 to the study's implications for research and theory and recommendations for evaluation practice. That chapter ends with some final thoughts about the entire study as a whole.

Chapter 10

Discussion of Findings

10.1 Overview of the Study

The capacity of organizations to learn has been identified as being critical if they are to adapt to survive in today's turbulent society (Dixon, 1994). In recent years, some researchers (e.g., Cousins & Earl, 1995; Preskill, 1994) have cast evaluation, and in particular participatory evaluation, as having the potential to enhance organizational learning capacity. Since little is known about the impact of participatory evaluation where the evaluator is internal to the organization and /or the program being evaluated, the study investigated internal participatory evaluation as an intervention to enhance organizational learning capacity. In particular, this study examined the nature and causes of observed effects.

A national, not-for-profit training organization where the present study's author was employed, served as the site of the research. The research process inquiring into the effects of internal participatory evaluation on the organization employed qualitative methods. Data were collected, over approximately two years, via retrospective observations, participant observations, archival data, interviews with key informants of the evaluation process, and from a focus group held approximately six months following the completion of the project. The data were collected, analyzed, displayed and interpreted according to the conceptual framework depicted in Figure 1. The design of the study utilized several features to ensure the validity of the findings such as examining data from different sources (i.e., participant observations, interviews with key informants, documents, focus

group interview). Second, the interview data were obtained using an independent interviewer. Interview rounds were sequenced over the course of the study and these data were very helpful in corroborating and clarifying the views of the researcher. This longitudinal sequencing allowed the interviewer to capitalize on knowledge obtained from previous interviews and allowed respondents to verify prior observations. Third, respondents were provided with the opportunity (via the focus group interview) to make a collective response as to the effects of the internal participatory evaluation, as well as to assess the interpretations given to the data by the researcher. It can be argued that these features of the study enhanced the internal validity of the findings.

10.2 Limitations of the Study

Due to the general lack of empirical knowledge regarding the impact of evaluation—in particular, internal participatory evaluation—on organizational learning the present study used an exploratory approach. Such an approach provides the flexibility to explore the functions and impact of internal participatory evaluation within the bounds of a guiding conceptual framework tied to organizational learning. As highlighted earlier, the qualitative methods employed were designed to capitalize on the prior specification of this framework. While this process permits the identification and interpretation of unexpected and unanticipated findings, it is necessarily limited in its ability to do so.

Another limitation of the study concerns the reliability of the findings. The data collection, coding, and analysis of the participant observation, retrospective observation, and archival data was conducted by a single individual: the study's

author. However, several steps were taken to help offset this limitation. First, a check of inter-coder reliability was performed to provide a measure of confidence in the coding and analysis of data. Second, data were collected from one key source (i.e., the interviews with key informants), using an independent interviewer. The corroborating evidence provided by this method help to minimize participant observer bias. Third, common codes for analysis and procedures for both analysis and display fostered increased reliability due to the number of repeated reviews of the raw data which refined the codes and clarified the influences in the data. Finally, the extensive use of direct quotations from the interviews to compare and contrast the participant and archival data, allow the reader to draw his/her own conclusions as to the influences.

A third limitation concerns the possibility that the observed impact was the result of a "novelty" effect. That is, respondents were reacting to the uniqueness of the participatory intervention (it had never been employed before in the organization), rather than to the intervention itself. When the respondents were asked during the focus group interview whether or not this was the case, their response was uniformly in support of this not being the case. Similarly, it is also very likely that the mere act of respondents being asked to articulate their reflections about the evaluation experience during the interview sessions helped shape organizational learning. Although it is impossible under the present design to be decisive about the influence of the novelty effect, readers are cautioned as the findings are reviewed and used.

A fourth limitation acknowledges that committee members knew that they were being observed while the project was being implemented. In spite of the

author's refrain from discussing his research study or making explicit his participant observations, the possibility remains that some members, either consciously or unconsciously, behaved differently. On a related point, committee members were informed that all interview transcripts would be made available to the author at the end of the project. Given the author's continued role in the system (i.e., he would have ongoing contact with each member following the conclusion of the project), the possibility exists that some members may not have fully disclosed their thoughts and beliefs about the project. Similarly, they may have described events in a more positive light knowing that the author would eventually be reading the transcripts.

A fifth limitation that needs to be acknowledged is the author's own day-to-day behavior may have been somewhat atypical from the behavior that might be expected from someone carrying out his role, but who was not carrying out doctoral research at the same time. It is known, for example, that an individual's commitment to a given set of ideas tends to be enhanced when the individual publicly acknowledges the commitment. The eventual deposition of the author's thesis into the public domain certainly constitutes such an acknowledgment and should therefore be noted by the reader.

A sixth limitation was the role and influence that the author's advisor had on the thesis project—from its conceptualization, implementation, and write-up. The extensive empirical research conducted by Dr. Brad Cousins and his colleagues about participatory evaluation and the possible links to organizational learning consequences, has underlined many of the notions presented in the thesis. A final limitation for the study was the decision to have the author's advisor facilitate the

focus group session. Participants were told of the facilitator's connection to the author and may have elected to voice only positive comments for fear that the author's status could have been somehow damaged.

10.3 Relevant Themes Emerging from the Literature

Recent research in the evaluation and knowledge utilization fields has resulted in four areas that have particular relevance to this study. The areas are: 1) participatory evaluation's effect on organizational learning; 2) the expanding concept of utilization to include process use; 3) interest in internal evaluation as a way to increasing the links between the evaluator and the user; and 4) the use of longitudinal designs that employ more sensitive evaluative methods. Each area will be addressed by first situating the discussion in the current literature in order to indicate the direction in which the field is heading. Specific findings from the present study will then be provided to show how they extend the literature.

10.3.1 Participatory evaluation and organizational learning

The notion that participatory forms of evaluation should be re-conceptualized due to their effects not only on the program under study, but on the organization within which the program is situated, was first advanced by Cousins and Earl (1992). The authors proposed that due to the partnership which is developed (between the trained evaluation personnel and practice-based decision makers) and nature of the work involved in the conduct of the evaluation, participatory evaluation can stimulate the kinds of social interaction and dialogue necessary for improved organizational learning. Key organizational learning principles that are thought to be influenced by participatory practice include: knowledge is socially

constructed (Dixon, 1994); learning can be low-level and impact only part of the organization or high-level and result in changes to the organization's culture (Argyris & Schön, 1978); information storage and retrieval systems foster learning (Levitt & March, 1988); learning can be cognitive (increasing range of possible behaviors) or behavioral (based on actions taken) (Fiol & Lyles, 1985); knowledge can be acquired either outside the organization or generated within (Huber, 1991); and interpretive systems assist organizations in sense making (Drucker, 1994). To summarize, organizational learning involves the creation and storage of socially constructed interpretations of facts and knowledge that enter the organization from the environment, or are generated from within.

Several other authors support this direction in the literature and have added significantly to the debate. Preskill (1994) adapted a focus group method to promote team learning within an organization and advocated that evaluators should be using participatory approaches with the expressed goal to promote organizational learning. Owen and Lambert (1994; 1995) pointed out the importance of evaluation activities in generating knowledge "within the system" so it can be used and/or processed by organization decision makers. Similarly, Cousins (1996a), Earl (1995), and Lafleur (1995) have employed participatory evaluations and using different research designs and data collection methods have found evidence of organizational learning. In addition, Cousins and Earl's (1995) recent comprehensive review and synthesis of what is known about the organizational consequences of participatory forms of evaluation have added considerably to our understanding.

Still, while participatory evaluation "at first blush, has a bright future...the current bank of empirical data is much too thin to warrant unreflective change in

this direction" (Cousins & Earl, 1995, p.14). For example, what do researchers mean when they state that organizational learning has been enhanced or reduced? The construct is a dense one and the elements associated with organizational learning are somewhat nebulous. As was observed by Huberman (1995), organizational learning "is a slippery measure, and I am one of several who is wary of it" (p.103). Consequently, researchers have had difficulty both defining and associating learning outcomes with specific elements of the participatory process. The present study has taken a step, albeit tentative, towards addressing this problem. It has delineated or broken apart organizational learning into four dimensions (i.e., shared knowledge representation, levels of learning, memory, and knowledge for action) and three processes (i.e., knowledge acquisition, knowledge generation, and interpretive systems). Furthermore, the study revealed differential effects in the rate of growth among these seven variables and initiated the arduous task of linking specific factors from the participatory process that seem to impact each variable. For example, the participatory process implemented in the present study was found to be significantly linked with the development of shared knowledge representation, knowledge for action, knowledge generation, and interpretive systems.

The participatory process implemented in the present study cast a large net over the organization's members. The organization's president, for example, was engaged in an ongoing way with the researcher throughout the project. This immersion resulted in the president becoming quite knowledgeable about the evaluation framework being employed and the benefits of evaluation-like work in general. His continued support for the project and future evaluation work were

found to be closely linked with CNT's members views of evaluation activities as well. This finding adds support to previous research (Cousins & Earl, 1995; Murphy, 1996; Nevo, 1993) that had found organizational acceptance of evaluative systems is dependent on the organization's leadership, and ultimately, on changes to the organization's culture. Clearly, in the present context, the effects of the participatory approach was found to contribute, and could even be considered as the primary reason for the cultural change that was observed.

The study also demonstrated that members of both CNT and the project's steering committee increased their propensity to question basic assumptions about how the organization had been operating (high-level learning). This critique was quite distinct from members questioning how the program was originally conceived by the organization (i.e., its original purpose). Rather it centered on a highly sensitive topic that challenged assumptions formulated some 25 years ago. Similarly, the roles of CNT staff, in terms of the how they should work and the skills they should possess, were also critiqued. It is important to note that consensus was reached among members concerning what role CNT needed to play in the future and how the organization should function. The examples provided above support the work of those researchers (e.g., Huber, 1991; Simon, 1991) who believe that double-loop learning can occur without any noticeable behavioral change. Certainly, it could be easily argued that individuals involved in the present study did develop shared frames of references as a result of their deliberations, and that future decisions regarding organizational action will likely be affected.

Furthermore, the study also connected the participatory process to the concept of deutero-learning. As discussed earlier, deutero-learning refers to the

capacity of the organization to learn how to learn, that is, how to systematically generate information on behalf of the organization to assist in the task of decision-making and problem solving (Argyris, 1993). The nature and type of work that the steering committee encompassed escalated as the project evolved to the point that it was providing strategic directions to not only the program, but to the organization itself. The participatory process provided the necessary conditions for the committee to deal with the very complex and sensitive issues related to how the organization should operate in relation to the other partner organizations.

These findings are at odds with those researchers (e.g., Foross, Cracknell, & Samset, 1994) who have suggested that the impact of participatory forms of evaluation is more likely to be low-level rather than high-level learning. Similarly, Huberman (1995), after critiquing a collection of studies looking at participatory evaluation's impact in education, concluded that the organizational learning effects were minimal. The present study provides a much more positive assessment of the impact that participatory evaluation, of a particular kind, can have on organizational learning. The present study has provided evidence that participatory evaluation which is quite intensive, and over a long period of time, does have the capacity to facilitate the variables associated with organizational learning.

10.3.2 Process use

Connections between how the evaluation is conducted and specific individual and organizational consequences, is a recent phenomenon that represents a new direction in the field. Termed "process use" by Patton (1997), this conceptualization challenges researchers to not consider use just in terms of utilization of findings (i.e., instrumental, educative). While many other researchers (e.g., Cousins, 1995;

Greene, 1988b) have noticed impacts that extended beyond the use of findings, only recently has it become a focus of study. Greene's contribution is noteworthy for she has provided a framework that categorizes process effects into three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and political dimensions. Cognitive impacts can be thought of as what organization members learn about their program as a result of participation in the evaluation process. This learning will ultimately affect their ongoing decisions and behavior. Participation in the evaluation process has also been tied to picking up specific skills (e.g., research) which is indirectly tied to this cognitive dimension (Cousins, 1995).

Affective dimensions refers to the feelings of self-worth and ownership of the program that results from collaborative work. House, Haug, and Norris (1996) alluded to this impact during their three year evaluation project with a large government body. The researchers commented on how this dimension is tied to creating an "evaluation culture" and stimulates stakeholders to consider evaluation over the long term. Political dimension can be described in terms of the sense of empowerment among stakeholders that results from such a process (such as providing groups of individuals with a voice in how things are run). Patton (1997) added another dimension that infers that the evaluation process can have organizational impacts that extend beyond the individuals associated with the project.

While there are some data to suggest that the impact of process use is significant and important for researchers to understand, there is not a lot known about this phenomenon. However, House et al (1996) observed that an evaluation process that involved increased interaction with stakeholders such as holding

forums, seminars, and the like resulted in an improved attitude among stakeholders to accepting evaluation-like activities. The present study also addressed the effects of process use directly and found signs that all four dimensions were influenced. The findings emphasized the importance that organization members placed on personal development they experienced as a result of being involved over the course of the study. Members noted their improved research skills and how the experience would cause them to alter their personal behaviors following the completion of the project. A heightened level of confidence was linked to their ability to conduct, individually, future evaluation projects. It would seem logical to speculate that if individuals are influenced to the degree reported in the present study, the impact would be felt at the organizational level.

10.3.3 Internal evaluation

Perhaps one of the more significant developments in the evaluation use literature is the trend to move evaluations "in-house" (House, 1988; House et al, 1996; Love, 1991; Torres, 1991). This trend stems from the recognition that utilization of evaluation or research knowledge will be hindered if the evaluator and/or researcher does not have a detailed appreciation of the context (Huberman, 1990, 1994; Patton, 1988a). Patton argued that evaluators should be held accountable for intended use by intended users and must therefore become immersed in the context of the evaluation to facilitate its use. Chelimsky (1996) advised that due to the overriding political pressures inherent in the organization, evaluators must be concerned with the "users' milieu." Otherwise, the organizational or political culture, that has been proven to prevent use, will go unnoticed. Another compelling reason for internally located evaluators is the widely

accepted notion that evaluation knowledge needs to be socially processed by the users prior to being effectively implemented in a local context (Louis, & Simsek, 1991). This thinking is grounded in the principles of social learning or experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) which advocates the active role of the learner in constructing new knowledge in the relation to his/her own context. Several other researchers (e.g., Huberman & Cox, 1990; Owen & Lambert, 1995) have supported this view and have endorsed the need of evaluators to develop forums for continuous interactions and exchanges between organization members so that shared understandings can occur. It would seem that evaluators, working internal to the organization, could assist to facilitate these necessary conditions.

Unfortunately, internal evaluation efforts are often criticized as lacking methodological rigor and having the potential for bias: the credibility of internal evaluation has been often highlighted in the literature (Kennedy, 1983b; Mathison, 1991a; Scriven, 1967; Torres, 1991). Some notable researchers, however, have recently taken issue with this view (e.g., Greene, 1990; Scriven, 1993) and have pointed out that external evaluators may suffer from the same lack of objectivity and credibility. However, the concerns remain and internal evaluators' credibility is still at risk as they attempt to balance the technical integrity of the evaluation and the inherent power and interests of the organization (Chelmsky, 1995; Mathison, 1991b).

Although countervailing evidence continues to surface about internal evaluators and the problems associated with co-optation and maintaining technical quality, the findings of the present study do not support these claims. When respondents were asked directly for their opinions regarding the researcher's

connection with the program and the potential for co-optation, there was a unanimous response that researcher bias was not evident. The researcher was able to maintain his objectivity when helping design the evaluation and, in particular, when data were analyzed and recommendations developed. Clearly, the findings are in line with those of Lafleur (1995) who found that internal evaluations can be quite credible if a self monitoring system among project committee members is fostered. Although this particular idea was not mentioned directly by any of the present study's respondents, committee members were observed as maintaining a very professional and objective stance throughout the project.

Another important feature of the current study is the distinction that was made regarding which type of internal evaluator the present study's author fulfilled. The traditional definition of an internal evaluator is someone employed by the organization and conducts evaluation with program personnel. Many studies looking at the effects of internal evaluators on organizational learning (e.g., Earl, 1995; Lafleur, 1995) have been conducted using this conception. The present study investigated the effects of an internal evaluator who was both employed by the organization and internal to the program being evaluated. While this definition is supported by some notable researchers (e.g., Love, 1991; Scriven, 1991a), little is known about the kinds of effects internal evaluators of this type may have.

The study's findings do offer some insights regarding this issue. The evidence linked the researcher, and in particular his facilitation and program knowledge, to heighten levels of shared knowledge representation among members involved in the evaluation project. The findings appear to offer support for those researchers (e.g., Love, 1991) who have promoted the virtues of being strategically located within the

organization and the program under review. In addition, the researcher's organizational knowledge and program expertise were found to be important to his ability to link past events with the study's findings. The researcher's position in the organization provided access to information that for micro-political reasons is kept "underground" and unavailable to non-members. This lends support to the position taken by Owen and Lambert (1994), who advised evaluators to reconsider their traditional roles and to move into the context of the evaluation to obtain program-specific information. In terms of the present study, it was the "micro-level" knowledge that proved to be invaluable as the researcher attempted to frame the findings so that members of the organization could easily relate to and digest their meanings.

The data also addressed the idea that the formation of strong linkages between the evaluator and organization members are critical to facilitating higher-level learning outcomes (Cousins, 1996a). Once again, evidence was gathered that highlighted the importance of micro-level knowledge to the researcher's ability to 1) adapt the study's design and data to fit the context and 2) analyze people's moods, attitudes, and the like. The researcher's comprehensive knowledge about the program, his length of employment with the organization, familiarity with key players in the system, and ability to facilitate daily connections with organization members to the project findings were all found to stimulate dense interpersonal networks.

10.3.4 Methodological issues

A vast majority of the research looking at participatory evaluation's effect on organizational learning have used relatively immediate or retrospective methods

(e.g., Earl, 1995; Lafleur, 1995). Are these sufficient to measure the constructs of organizational learning capacity? The dimensions and processes associated with organizational learning capacity are complex social phenomena that involve groups of individuals or entire organizations altering fundamental and deep-rooted beliefs, norms, and routines. As has been shown in this study, these variables are not apt to change over the short term. As such, they require a methodological approach that enable the researcher to comprehend at fairly deep levels the contextual meanings of the phenomena. Lincoln (1991) assessed the compatibility of the positivist versus the constructivist approach to dealing with research issues that are social and behavioral in origin. Lincoln advocates that if researchers are interested in behavior and complex social patterns, they must "join" the inquiry process as the various constructions are being created. These individual constructions should then be refined through a series of iterative interactions between the among the research participants. This resonates with the perspectives of other researchers (e.g., Rich, 1991; Shulha & Cousins, 1996) who have called for more longitudinal designs that use methods that are able to adequately capture subtle, individual perspectives and behaviors.

Data from the present study did demonstrate the power of a longitudinal design that incorporated qualitative methods that were geared to measure complex phenomena within a particular context. Theoretically, the seven organizational learning constructs could be assessed in all organizations. However, some of the dimensions (e.g., double-loop learning) and processes (e.g., interpretive systems) are extremely difficult to measure. By committing the necessary time and energy to become immersed into the fabric of the organization the author was able to track

the development of these variables. Moreover, through an iterative process with the respondents, he established a context specific definition and/or understanding of these same variables. To the author's knowledge, this is the first time such knowledge has been generated in the empirical literature.

Chapter 11

Implications, Recommendations and Conclusions

11.1 Implications for Research

As reported in the literature review, research linking collaborative or participatory forms of evaluation and organizational learning is slowly accumulating. The work of various authors (Cousins and Earl, 1992, 1995; Owen & Lambert, 1995; Patton, 1997) to link, theoretically, participatory evaluation and organizational learning has been very helpful. However, when this relationship has been looked at closely, that is, when the studies investigating this phenomena have been analyzed, the results are sobering (e.g., Huberman, 1995). The findings of the present study, however, provide a much more positive assessment of the impact of participatory evaluation on organizational learning. Although the study tracked a number of variables linked to organizational learning capacity, the conceptual framework developed to guide this study was preliminary and should be therefore considered as a catalyst for future research. Since there are still gaps in our knowledge regarding the consequences of participatory practice on organizational learning, the following questions are provided to help guide future researchers:

- Do the conditions under which organization learning appears to occur in a not-for-profit organization differ from conditions in the private sector? What are the factors likely to be associated with higher levels of organizational learning in settings where profit is the goal?

- Would other forms of participatory evaluation and/or collaborative evaluation have similar effects? For example, what would be the effects of a study in which empowerment rather than utilization is the goal?
- A long list of competencies have been identified as being necessary for evaluators to acquire in order to facilitate the participatory process (see next section). Which ones are most important? To what degree? How best to acquire these competencies?
- The various factors assessed in the study (independent variables) were linked to one or more of the dependent variables under review. What is the relative weight of these factors? How do the factors interact with each other to affect organizational learning? What is their cause-effect relationship?
- We need to know more about practice. What is it that evaluators do to facilitate the organizational constructs investigated in the present literature?
Consideration could be given to debriefing experienced evaluators who have an interest in the organizational consequences of participatory evaluation.

11.2 Recommendations for Evaluation Practice

Even though the present study was exploratory in nature, it is believed that sufficient knowledge has accrued about internal participatory evaluation's impact on organization learning capacity to offer some tentative recommendations for evaluation practice. These suggestions should be treated with caution and are meant to serve as general guides for those evaluators wishing to embrace internal participatory practice and have an interest in fostering organizational learning outcomes.

11.2.1 Context considerations

Strong support has been provided for evaluators to immerse themselves in the context (i.e., the program as well as the organization) if both increased use and organizational learning is the objective. It is here that evaluators can more easily achieve the equitable relationships shown to be so important in developing trust and ownership with practitioners and user groups. Increased familiarity with the context has been shown to increase the ability to frame information so that organization members involved on project steering committees can make sense of it. This in turn facilitates shared perspectives by committee members which is an important first step towards organizational learning.

11.2.2 Internal evaluation

The rise in support for collaborative forms of practice in all facets of life has caused evaluation theorists to expand the conception of the evaluator's role. If one of these new roles is that of facilitating organizational learning, the findings speaks to the need of evaluators to forge strong linkages with organization members. Specifically, this means the ability to interact and connect with organization members in an ongoing and meaningful way. While research has demonstrated the ability of external evaluators to develop these linkages, common sense would suggest that partnerships could be formed and maintain more effectively by evaluators working internal to the organization.

Although countervailing evidence continues to surface about internal evaluators and the problems associated with co-optation and maintaining technical quality, the benefits of working from inside the organization would probably outweigh the drawbacks.

11.2.3 Sustained involvement

Evaluators, whether internal or external to the organization, must take into consideration the importance of sustaining their involvement with the organization following the release of the findings to support both their utilization and the associated organizational learning that has hopefully accrued. In the present study, the work of the researcher to facilitate the understanding and integration of the data generated by the various data collection steps was key to the organization members becoming of like-mind and promoting both single and double-loop learning.

11.2.4 Evaluator skills

What are the skills evaluators need to possess in order to master the internal participatory evaluation process? The available research offers many suggestions and the list seems to be getting longer and longer. Unfortunately, the present study has done little to reduce the list. It has, however, confirmed skills that other investigators have deemed to be important. The following recommended competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) are provided with no particular priority in mind:

1. The evaluator must embrace the role of an educator. This requires a conscious acknowledgement of those values associated with being a facilitator, planner, mentor, or colleague in the process of implementing an evaluation. This position is rooted in the belief that one's role is to assist people to do their own learning rather than to teach them. Readers interested in the philosophical basis to this approach are directed to the work of Carl Rogers (1969; 1994).

2. The evaluator must acquire substantive knowledge. Given the discussion earlier regarding the importance of context, it is not surprising that program specific knowledge made the list. Not only must this knowledge be acquired, it must be maintained throughout the evaluation exercise. The findings highlighted how the researcher's credibility, as a result of his extensive program background and expertise, fostered confidence in the project team towards both the findings and evaluation process.
3. The evaluator must acquire knowledge from the literature of organizational learning. If the evaluator is interested in fostering any of the dimensions or processes of organizational learning capacity investigated in the present study, he/she should acquire an understanding of their theoretical basis. The evaluator would also do well to review the literature on both evaluation and knowledge utilization given its connection to organizational learning.
1. The evaluator must have the necessary technical training in evaluation. One of the key responsibilities of evaluators using the participatory approach is the provision of technical training to those assisting in directing the evaluation. As was evident in the present study, this necessitates individualized assessment of needs and providing technical support and training on an as-needed basis. It could be argued that such demands are more easily met by evaluators who work internal to the organization. The study also provided compelling evidence for the use of an evaluation framework that facilitates members to search for and process information from programs external to the organization. This process, it seems, acts to involve project members in deep, reflective dialogue that can prove to be very useful to the development of shared perspectives.

5. The evaluator must possess excellent interpersonal and group process skills.

Clearly related to the role of being an effective educator and facilitator, the interpersonal skills to foster rapport with both program practitioners and senior organization officials is a must. Demonstrating enthusiasm, empathy, and professionalism are all needed if the evaluation is to achieve the goals of both utilization and organizational learning.

These recommendations have emanated from the author's experience over the last two years and are put forward for consideration. Some will be more feasible than others. Hopefully, all will have a positive impact on the development of organizational learning constructs, while at the same time, foster increased utilization of evaluation findings.

11.3 Conclusions

The study of organizational change is very complex. Although the constructs have been identified, they still remain vague and somewhat abstract. This study has attempted to shed some light on the matter by isolating the various constructs, describing what they looked like in the context of a not-for-profit organization and linking their growth to specific factors. Clearly, one of the factors that has been demonstrated to positively influence organizational learning capacity is internal participatory evaluation. While it is obvious that one study cannot cast this form of evaluation as a panacea for those wishing to enhance an organization's learning capacity, it does offer hope. The study should also give future researchers some guidance as to the power of longitudinal designs that incorporate methods of data collection that require an intimate, internal position in both the organization and/or

program under review. Finally, it is important to acknowledge both the important benefits and potential burdens that future researchers and individual participants might expect to experience as a result of their participation in a similar type of evaluation initiative.

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Appendix A

Description of Evaluation Model

Evaluation Model

The evaluation model proposed by Brinkerhoff (1987) was used in the present study. This model has evolved the work of Donald Kirkpatrick (1959, 1971) to include two additional steps in the evaluation cycle. As a result, a six-stage model is now being recommended to organizations interested in evaluating training or development programs. The specific stages of the model are described as follows:

- Stage I evaluates the value and importance of problems which may be solved by a training program intervention. Stage I seeks data to understand the skills, knowledge, and attitudes which will be necessary to change to correct the problems identified.
- Stage II aims to produce a defensible training program design. This involves assessing the program's design in terms of its practicality, theoretical soundness, and its responsiveness to competing alternatives.
- Stage III is concerned with whether the design is, in fact, being installed and operated according to the plan. Stage III consists of assessing the actual training activities, gathering feedback about the reactions of participants, and implementing other process evaluation activities.
- Stage IV evaluates whether or not the participants have acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitudes which were presented during the training program.
- Stage V assesses how much and how well acquired knowledge, skills, and attitudes are being translated into on-the-job behavior changes.
- Stage VI measures the value of the training intervention in terms of meeting organizational goals. What impact has the training had on organization indicators such as productivity, profitability, and turnover?

From an evaluation standpoint, it would be best to evaluate training programs directly in terms of the results or impact of the program (Stage VI). There are, however, so many complicating factors that it is extremely difficult if not impossible to evaluate certain kinds of programs in terms of results. Therefore, it is recommended that programs are evaluated in sequential order, Stage I through Stage VI (Brinkerhoff, 1989). Nowakowski (1989) added that since evaluation resources are scarce, training development benefits more from up-front evaluation investment (e.g., needs assessment),

than it does from impact studies. Finally, the higher the level of assessment, the more complex and difficult evaluation becomes. Discussion of these different levels of training evaluation have proved useful in negotiating with decision makers about the types of effectiveness data they need, the usefulness of the data at each level, the costs and constraints involved in obtaining the data, and the risks of not obtaining them (Nowakowski, 1989).

The current evaluation focused directly on the first two stages of Brinkerhoff's model due to the current status of the program; the organization had never conducted an assessment of participants' needs or debated the theoretical soundness of the educational/training model being used. Further, primary stakeholders over the last year have articulated their desire to complete the first two stages, analyze the information collected, and make recommendations for future change.



EVALUATION PROJECT

April '95

STEP 1: PROJECT APPROVAL

National [redacted] Council approves Evaluation Project

Goals of Project:

1. To produce credible information for the [redacted] advisory committees to aid in improving the [redacted] Program.
2. To produce credible information for the [redacted] advisory committees to assist with the revision of the [redacted] Component.
3. To improve the involvement of the key stakeholder groups in the ongoing evolution of the [redacted].

May '95

STEP 2: INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Update all partners about project, establish formal communication links, outline sequence of activities, and provide opportunity for input from:

- Provincial/Territorial [redacted] Coordinators (PTCCs)
- National [redacted] Organizations (NSOs)
- Provincial/Territorial [redacted] Organizations (PTSOs)
- etc

[ongoing]

July '95

STEP 3: JOB TASK ANALYSIS (JTA) SESSIONS

Identify [redacted] tasks (and sub-tasks) listings using model [redacted] from various [redacted] age groups and competitive levels.

This information will guide the development of the [redacted] Observation and Model [redacted] Survey instruments.

[completion December 1995]

October '95

STEP 4: [redacted] OBSERVATIONS

Confirm and complete [redacted] task listings initiated in JTA sessions

[completion January 1996]

STEP 5: NSO/PTSO INVOLVEMENT

Initiate NSO/PTSO involvement to project by:

- providing forums for discussion about the evaluation project
- soliciting opinions regarding [redacted] design and delivery
- providing an opportunity to debate the various approaches used to develop [redacted]

[completion May 1996]

STEP 6: REVIEW OF LITERATURE & ARCHIVAL DATA

Initiate:

- comparison of international [redacted] development models
- literature review of teaching effectiveness theory
- review of technological advances applied to training
- analysis of [redacted] Participant Course Evaluation Forms

[completion June 1996]

January '96

STEP 7: [redacted] SURVEY

Distributed to Model [redacted] across the country, the goals of the survey are:

- validate the [redacted] demands identified by the JTA and [redacted] Observations
- solicit [redacted] feedback regarding the design and delivery

[completion May 1996]

September '96

STEP 9: PRELIMINARY REPORT

Present results from evaluation project including recommendations for change to:

- NSOs, PTSOs
- PTCCs
- MCCs
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

[completion Fall 1996]

April '97

STEP 11: NATIONAL [redacted] CERTIFICATION COUNCIL-ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE

Based on the feedback collected, the Planning and Evaluation Committee recommend specific changes to the [redacted] standards.

The PEC will consult all partners, in a formal process, as the recommendations are implemented.

[Spring 1997]

STEP 8: SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP FEEDBACK

The following stakeholders will be provided opportunities to express their views regarding the [redacted]

- [redacted]
- national [redacted]
- Master Course Conductors ([redacted] and [redacted])
- Provincial/Territorial [redacted] Coordinators

[completion May 1996]

STEP 10: REPORT DISTRIBUTION AND FEEDBACK

Solicit feedback from NCCP stake holders on Report's recommendations

[Winter 1997]

Appendix B

Letter of Informed Consent

September, 1995

Dear [committee member],

As you are aware, I am currently completing a Ph.D. at the University of Ottawa in the area of program evaluation. When a research study involving individuals is undertaken by researchers at the University of Ottawa, the Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) requires the written consent of the participants. This does not imply that the study is risky in any way; the intention is simply to assure the respect and confidentiality of the individuals concerned.

The purpose of the study is to look the effects of program evaluation activities on the organization. Specifically, this involves looking at the effects which the [evaluation project] has on [the organization] and the various partners in [the system]. The study will be carried out over the next year and with your permission, we would like to begin collecting data as soon as possible. The data collection will consist of gathering archival data, systematic observations collected by me and interviews with you, other members of [the steering committee] and perhaps other government and [national organization] staff. All interviews will be conducted by an independent interviewer selected due to her research training and familiarity with interview technique. If you consent to participate, you will be interviewed for approximately 1 hour, on three occasions over the next eight months. Further, you will be asked to attend a focus group at the end of the study. In all cases the focus of the data collection activities will be how the organization was affected by the evaluation project.

With your permission, we would like to tape record the interview to ensure that your comments are not misrepresented. Each interview will remain strictly confidential and only summaries of the interviews using fictitious names of people and organizations will be reported. The same protocol will be followed for both the participant observation and the focus group data. Archival data will be kept strictly confidential. You will receive a summary of the findings once the study is completed.

The research study has been approved by the Faculty of Education, the UHREC, and [the organization]. Inquiries or any ethical questions dealing with the ethical conduct of this study can be addressed to the Chair of the UHREC (613) 562-5800 ext. 4091. The University of Ottawa requires its researchers to obtain formal consent from those participating in study. Your signature at the bottom of this letter would serve such a purpose. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. If you have any questions about the study, I would be happy to deal with them.

Sincerely,

Tim Robinson

I agree to participate in this study. _____

Appendix C

Instruments:

Interview Guide: First Round

Interview Guide: Second Round

Interview Guide: President

Interview Guide: Final Round

Interview Guide: Focus Group

Interview Guide: First Round

Aware of Tim's research project at Ottawa U

Interested in how the Evaluation Project is effecting

- the workings of the committee
- how you view your role is developing
- any observable changes to opinions about

research

Asked to interview you separately to get your opinion on these things, up till now, monitoring only through Tim's perspective

Seen *letter of consent* to participate in this and subsequent interviews - all right with you?

Interview will be tape recorded - all right with you?

FIRST LIKE TO GET YOUR OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVALUATION PROJECT.

- how are things going so far
- comfortable with the setup
- likes and dislikes

1. What has your experience with the project been like so far?

When did you first become aware of the need for such a study?

When did you hear that a study had been initiated?

When did you first get involved? *How did you get involved? Who invited you?*

What is your role on the committee?

2. So what is happening with the project? Are things going well?

Do you think there is agreement on the project goals?

Are new issues being raised? *How are these issues being treated by others?*

In general then, are committee members of like-mind? *hold similar views*

Do you perceive any factions or cliques forming?

3. Do you feel the project, the way it is designed, has it begun to affect the basic assumptions/perspectives on program development?

The underlying assumptions used to guide the development of the [PROGRAM] over the years?

4. To date, have you noticed, has the evaluation project affected the way decisions are made around here? *the [PROGRAM]*

Remembering how decisions were typically made before this program study was undertaken, has there been any change in the way decisions are being made?

5. Do you feel that being a member of this team has improved your confidence about acting on the issues and bringing about changes to the program? *Yes, can you give an example?*

No, why not?

What do you consider are the advantages for you being on this evaluation team?

NOW I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COMMENT A BIT ON HOW THIS PROJECT MAY HAVE AFFECTED YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE [CNT].

6. How would you describe the approach taken by the project team? *How does it differ from the approaches of other committees/studies you've been on? (gathering lots of info-perspectives to assist decision making)*

Do you think this approach would be workable for future projects?

7. In your opinion, has the example of this project helped you to improve the means by which your organization manages information and communicates this information? *Notice any changes within the [CNT]?*

Have you noticed any changes within yourself concerning the ways you handle information, either you bring to the committee or you get out of it?

Do you see any improvements amongst your committee members in the way information is shared?

Any examples of how the program evaluation activities are being integrated into the operation of the system.

8. What factors (either within your organization or as part of the [CNT] as a whole) do you feel would influence the decision to use evaluation activities in the future?

(leadership/support from stakeholders (program funders, key users), turnover, strategic planning, typical decision making structures, distribution of power, politics)

9. Now about [the researcher], what do you consider to be his role on the project? Do you agree with this? Would you change anything?

How has he influenced the conduct of the program evaluation thus far?

In the role that you describe for Tim, do you feel his involvement with the [PROGRAM] is of value to him? *Examples?*

NOW, RETURNING TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EVALUATION PROJECT, I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOU. AND THEN WE'LL WRAP UP.

10. How would you describe the way decisions are being made about the research? Do you feel comfortable with this?

Who makes most of the decisions? *Joint? Just a few of the senior people?*

Do you feel you are making an impact?

Can you give an example of an initiative by either you or another member of the committee.

11. What do you think about the design of the study?

Does it hold water? *(credible)*

Do you think it will lead to some useful results?

Do you understand the purpose of each of the steps?

12. How do you think the data from this program evaluation will be used?

What makes you feel this way? *examples?*

What do you think has to happen before recommendations from the evaluation can be implemented?

Finally, is there anything else about the project you would like to comment on?

Interview Guide: Second Round

Interested from your perspective how the [PROGRAM] Evaluation Project is evolving and how it is effecting the [CNT] and/or the [development] system.

- - the workings of the committee
- - how you view your role is developing
- - any observable changes to opinions about research

Again, interview will be tape recorded - all right with you?

PART I — OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION PROJECT

FIRST I'D LIKE TO GET YOUR OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVALUATION PROJECT.

1. So, how is the evaluation project going ?

- since we last spoke, have there been any problems?
- has support for the project changed?
- any new issues being raised? - how are these being treated?

2. Are committee members of like-mind? Do they hold similar views?

- Do you think there is agreement on the project goals?
- Do you perceive any factions or cliques forming?

3. Do you feel the project, the way it is designed, has caused members of the committee or others connected to the project, to reflect upon their basic assumptions/perspectives on [program] development?

The underlying assumptions used to guide the development of the [PROGRAM] over the years - its content, its design?

If so, what elements of the project have caused this to happen - what would you attribute this learning to?

- can you give some examples ...

4. To date, do you feel the evaluation project has affected the way decisions are made concerning the [PROGRAM]?

Remembering how decisions were typically made and who was involved in making them, have there been any changes to the decision making process in the last year?

5. Do you feel that being a member of PEC has improved or potentially will improve your confidence about acting on the recommendations that will emerge from the project?

Please explain your feelings at this point in the project.

PART II —AFFECT ON THE ORGANIZATION

NOW I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COMMENT A BIT ON HOW THIS PROJECT HAS AFFECTED THE [CNT].

6. In your opinion, has this project helped to improve the means by which the [CNT] collects, manages, and shares/communicates information?

Do you notice any changes among [PROGRAM] partners? (i.e., NSOs/PSOs, PTCCs, federal government)

- *has the culture of the [CNT] been effected?*
- *changes in the nature in which business is conducted?*

7. Do you think the approach used in this project would be workable for future projects?

Why or why not?

8. What factors do you feel would influence the organization or the Council's decision to use program evaluation activities to assist in decision making, on an ongoing basis, in the future?

- *previous experiences with evaluation activities, positive/negative*
- *leadership/support from stakeholders (program funders, key users)*
- *strategic planning initiatives*
- *type of evaluation process*
- *distribution of power, politics*

9. Are there any examples you can think of in which program evaluation activities are being integrated into other aspects of the organization or the system?

- *evidence which supports the need for and use of evaluation activities*

10. Now about [the researcher], what do you consider to be his role on the project? Do you agree with this? Would you change anything?

How has he influenced the conduct of the program evaluation thus far?

In the role that you describe for Tim, do you feel his involvement with the [PROGRAM] is of value to him? *Examples?*

- *what key issues/problems has the committee had to overcome?*
 - *what role did Tim play?*
 - *what role did the committee play?*
- ** clarify - role of Tim/committee in overcoming problems? ****

PART III — FUTURE PREDICTIONS & WRAP-UP

NOW, RETURNING TO THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EVALUATION PROJECT, I HAVE A FEW MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOU. AND THEN WE'LL WRAP UP.

11. Now that we have had a chance to discuss the evaluation project in some detail, how does the approach being used here differ from the approaches used by other committees/studies you've been involved in?

- *involvement of key stakeholders*
- *intimate involvement in project*
- *shared responsibility*
- *gathering multiple information & perspectives to assist decision making*

12 Do you feel comfortable with the way decisions are made regarding the evaluation project?

- *If yes, why?*
- *If no, why not?*

13. Do you feel you are making an impact on the direction of the project?

Can you give an example of some initiative introduced by either you or another member of the committee?

14. How do you think the data from this program evaluation will be used?

What makes you feel this way? *examples?*

What do you think has to happen before recommendations from the evaluation can be implemented?

Finally, is there anything else about the project you would like to comment on?

Interview Guide: President of Organization

Introductory Statements/Questions

This interview is interested in obtaining your perspective, as [the organization's] president, of how the Evaluation Project has affected the organization, its program, and its partners. To mention a few areas:

- the association's view/acceptance of program evaluation?;
- the Project's impact on the staff within [the organization], as well as those individuals involved from the system?;
- the impact of the collaborative process being used -- its strengths and weaknesses?;
- Tim's role as project co-leader (with member) -- how has his background/expertise in program development affected his ability to lead the project?;
- Your influence -- how would you describe your role in the project over the last year, what potential "political/organizational" hurdles did you have a hand in resolving?

Section I – Overall Perspective on Evaluation Project

Question

1. How is the evaluation project going?
 - *has there been any problems?*
 - *level of support for the project?*
 - *new issues being raised? How are these being treated?*
2. Are members of the PEC of like-mind, hold similar views?
3. Do you feel the project, the way it is designed, has caused members of the committee or others connected to the project, to reflect upon their basis assumptions/perspectives on program development? If so, what elements of the project has caused this to happen? Give examples if possible.

- The underlying assumptions used to guide the development of the program over the years (i.e., its content, its design, etc)?

4. To date, do you feel the evaluation project has affected or will potentially affect the way decisions are made concerning the program?
- Remembering how decisions were typically made and who was involved in making them, has there been any changes to the decision-making process in the last year?
5. Do you feel that the Project recommendations will be acted upon?
- Yes/No, please explain your feelings at this point in the project

Section II – Affect on the Organization

“Now I would like you to comment a bit on how this project has affected the organization and/or the system.

Question

6. In your opinion, has this project helped to improve the means by which the [the organization] collects, manages, and shares/communicates information? Notice any changes among the program partner groups?
- culture of organization affected?
- nature in which business is conducted?
7. Do you think the approach used in this project would be workable for future projects? Why/why not?
8. What factors do you feel would influence [the organization's] or the Council's decision to use program evaluation activities to assist in decision-making, on an ongoing basis, in the future?
- previous experiences with evaluation activities - positive/negative
- leadership/support from stakeholders (program funders, key users)
- strategic planning initiatives,
- type of evaluation process
- distribution of power, politics

9. Are there any examples you can think of in which program evaluation activities are being integrated into other aspects of the [the organization] or the system?
- evidence which supports the need for and use of evaluation activities
10. Has your level of support for the Project changed over the course of the last year? Increased/decreased? Why?
11. Now about Tim Robinson, what do you consider to be his role on the Project?
- what key issues/problems has the committee had to overcome?
- what role did Tim play?
- what role did the committee play?

Section III – Future Predictions & Wrap-up

12. Now that we have had a chance to discuss the evaluation project in some detail, how does the approach being used here, differ from the approaches used by other studies of the program?
- involving key stakeholders, intimate involvement in project, shared responsibility, gathering lots of info-perspectives to assist decision making
13. Do you feel comfortable with the way decisions are being made re. the evaluation project? If yes, why? If no, why not?
14. How do you think the data from this program evaluation will be used? What makes you feel this way? examples?
What do you think has to happen before recommendations from the evaluation can be implemented?

Anything else about the Project you would like to comment on?

Interview Guide: Final Round

PART I — OVERALL PERSPECTIVE ON EVALUATION PROJECT

FIRST I'D LIKE TO GET YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVALUATION PROJECT.

1. Overall, how did the evaluation project go ?

- what was support like for the project? (from all sectors)
- did any problems emerge over the last 4 months ?

2. Relating to how the project was conducted and managed, what in your opinion were the most and least worthwhile activities ?

(e.g., meetings, conference calls, dissemination of minutes, communication)

- Most:
- Least:

3. About [the researcher], what do you consider to be his role on the project? *Do you agree with this?*

a) How did Tim's position at [CNT] and his personal background with the [PROGRAM] influence the project?

b) Have you noticed any changes in his role over the course of the project?

Examples ?

If change, how has it influenced the conduct of the program evaluation?

c) What would you change about Tim's role?

4. Can you name any unexpected issues that emerged during the project and explain how the committee treated these issues ?

**** clarify - role of Tim/committee in overcoming problems? ****

5. Have you noticed a change in any particular committee members during the course of the project ?

(compare a year ago to the present)

a) Without identifying the individual, can you describe in what ways they have changed.

b) What aspects of the committee work would you attribute these changes to?

6. Do you feel you have made an impact on the project? If so, how ?

a) Can you give an example of some initiative introduced by either you or another member of the committee?

PART II —AFFECT ON THE ORGANIZATION

NOW I WOULD LIKE YOU TO COMMENT A BIT ON HOW THIS PROJECT HAS AFFECTED [CNT] AND ITS PARTNERS.

7. Do you feel that the organization, has learned something as a result of this evaluation project experience ?

a) If so, what have they learned ?

b) What about the program partners ?

c) If so, are there any aspects of the project that you would attribute this learning to ? Can you give some examples ?

8. Do you feel the evaluation project has affected the way decisions are made concerning the program?

Remembering how decisions were typically made and who was involved in making them, have there been any changes to the decision making process in the last year?

a) What about the partners ?

9. Are there any examples you can think of in which program evaluation activities are being integrated into other aspects of the organization or the system?

- evidence which supports the need for and use of evaluation activities

10. What factors do you feel would influence the organization or the Council's decision to use program evaluation activities to assist in decision making, on an ongoing basis, in the future?

- previous experiences with evaluation activities, positive/negative*
- leadership/support from stakeholders (program funders, key users)*
- strategic planning initiatives*
- type of evaluation process*
- distribution of power, politics*

PART III — FUTURE PREDICTIONS & WRAP-UP

A FEW MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EVALUATION PROJECT. THEN WE'LL WRAP UP.

11. How do you think the data from this program evaluation will be used?

a) What makes you feel this way? *examples?*

b) What do you think has to happen before recommendations from the evaluation can be implemented?

Finally, is there anything else about the project you would like to comment on?

Interview Guide: Focus Group

Note: some of the following questions may seem out of context as they evolved from the responses solicited by the focus group facilitator during the session.

- Who were the main audiences for the findings. How did they receive the information?
- Were presentations made after the Report went out or along the way?
- Did the dissemination tools and workshops share both preliminary findings and process that the evaluation used?
- The process used to disseminate the findings, the use of these workshops, does not seem to be a one-way thing...you were looking for feedback, you were looking for a validation of the findings?
- How was the reception of the Preliminary Report. To what extent did people take the report seriously? Did they value this information? What kind of things did people learn? Was this a learning experience for them? What kind of decisions resulted or were influenced by these findings - program decisions?
- I'm hearing two things about what is happening. One has to do with the process of what has occurred (its participatory and it should continue)... the other has to do with the findings (quite apart from the process). Now, zero in on main themes that came out of the evaluation project. What changes have occurred as a result of the EP or are in the midst of occurring?
- Let's talk a little bit more about the process. Clearly, the process was an important factor...causing people to re-think what they are doing. But how much of what's happening a novelty effect? We have this new process-it is very satisfying. Will it carry on?
- But that's at a provincial level...not a national level. Like, for example, this committee (made up of indiv. from across the country). What is going on now is new?
- There are some planned activities...plans to continue in this same vain?
- There is big risk if we don't deliver. You have set people up...now you must deliver. Is that the case now?

- Some people might also feel that there is a conspiracy going on here. You guys are all bias and you are using this process to put forward your own agenda under the guise of the participatory evaluation process.
- This was like an independent corroboration. The credibility things was important. Therefore, if you bring things, ideas, feedback forward from the “front lines”...it will have a certain amount of face validity...and will carry things forward. Is this happening?
- But there is another dimension...besides the data being generated. SH must believe in this committee, they must have faith in the work of this group. Is this the sense you have? Any suspicions?
- What effect has this process had on you personally in terms of your own professional development? Was it positive? Was it skill development exercise? Would you do it again?
- OH 1 presents the general findings of the study—the impact the evaluation project had on the organization as observed by the researcher. Comments? Do you agree or disagree with the conclusions he reached?
- OH 2 presents the those factors that the researcher felt caused the consequences/impacts noted in OH 1. Comments? Do you agree or disagree?

Appendix D

List of “Start” and Added Codes

List of “Start” and Added Codes

1st Order Codes

OLC	Organizational Learning Capacity
CO	Characteristics of the Organization
IPEI	Internal Participatory Evaluation Intervention
IE	Impact of the Evaluation

2nd Order Codes

Organizational Learning Capacity

KR	Shared Knowledge Representation
L2	Levels of Learning
Mm	Memory
Ac or Cp	Action <u>vs</u> Conceptualizing
KA	Knowledge Acquired
KG	Knowledge Generated
IS	Interpretive Systems

Characteristics of the Organization

Mu	Milieu
SS	Social Systems
Cu	Culture
Ec	Ecology
*Pe	Political Environment
*Cs	Costs

Internal Participatory Evaluation Intervention

RI	Researcher Impact
P2	Participatory Process
EF	Evaluation Framework
TS	Technical Skills Development
DS	Dissemination Strategies
NF	Nature of Findings

Impact of Evaluation

EDU	Educative Use
INU	Instrumental Use

3rd Order Codes

Researcher Impact

Rs	Research Skills
Ok	Organizational knowledge
Px	Program Expertise
*Fs	Facilitation Skills

Participatory Process

Pu	Primary Users
Dp	Depth of Participation
Sc	Shared Control
*Si	Forums for Sustained Interactivity

* Added after data coding had commenced.

Appendix E

Visual FoxPro 5.0 for Windows

Visual FoxPro 5.0 for Windows

Background

Microsoft Visual FoxPro version 5.0 is the newest version of the Microsoft object-oriented environment for database construction and application development. Visual FoxPro 5.0 gives a developer the necessary tools to manage data, whether organizing tables of information and running queries, creating an integrated relational database management system, or programming a fully developed data management application for end users.

Visual FoxPro brings unique strengths, such as:

- an object-oriented tool set for creating reusable components
- a data-centric tool set with a strong local database engine and client/server orientation.
- a powerful, interactive data manipulation environment

For more up-to-date information about Visual FoxPro version 5.0, readers are advised to contact Microsoft's web page at: [<http://www.microsoft.com>].

Sample Window Used For Coding

Microsoft Visual FoxPro
File Edit Window Help

Data Analysis & Coding

ORDER BY: BLANK IV2 TIME PERIODS DEPENDENT VARIABLES INDEPENDENT VARIABLES 3RD ORDER IV's

Dependent Variable: Levels of Learning

Independent Variables and their Influence: 1 Participatory Process 1

Type: Interview 33 Type: Interview Time Frame: Time Period 4

Describe the Influence:

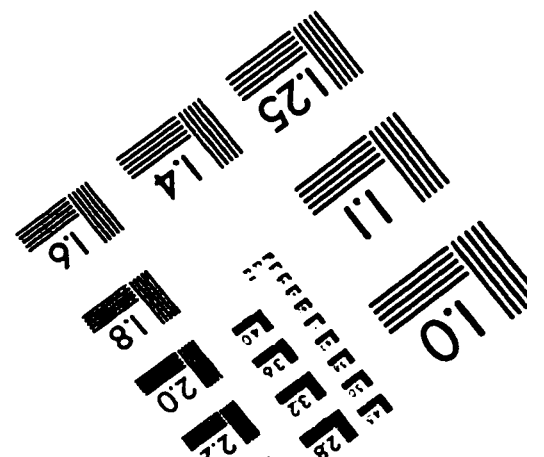
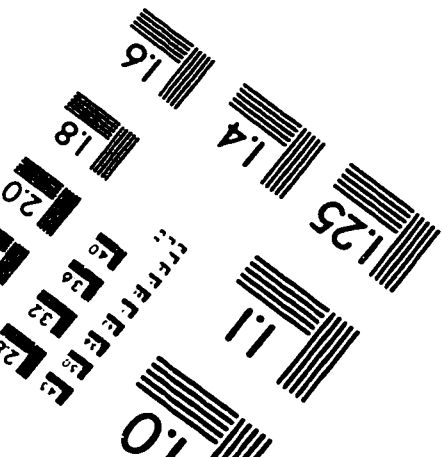
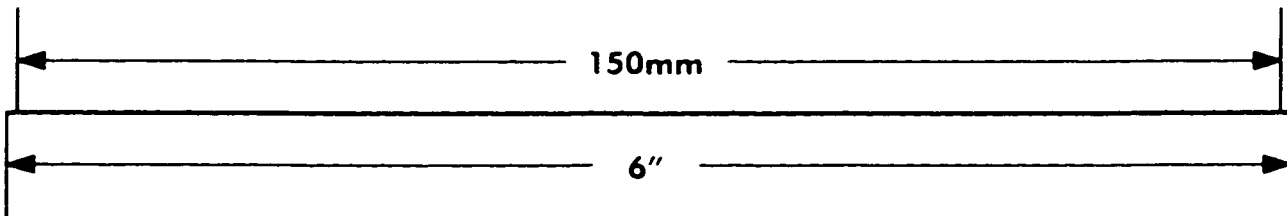
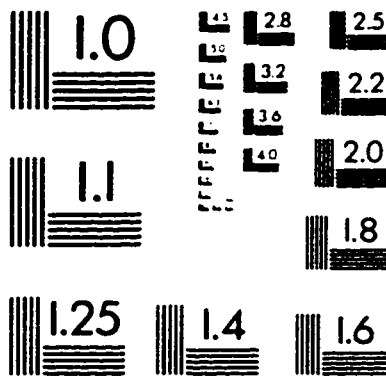
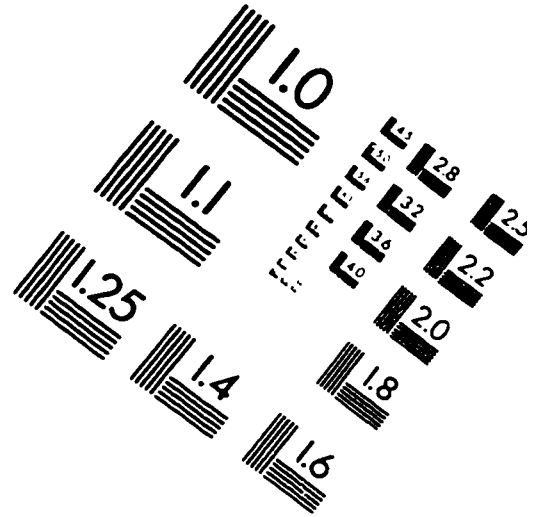
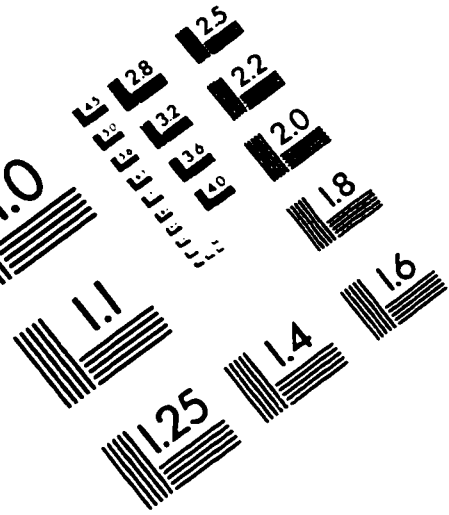
Describe the Context of the Meaning Unit

Context: Individual: Beth Exact Date: 10-01-96

Top Prev Next Bottom End Print Add Edit Delete Go to Main Menu

FAST SAVE A COPY OF YOUR EVALUATION DATA

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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