

Review

Reinhard Stockmann, Wolfgang Meyer, & Lena Taube (Eds.). (2020). Institutionalization of Evaluation in Europe. Palgrave Macmillan. 522 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-32284-7 (eBook); 978-3-030-32283-0 (hardcover); 978-3-030-32286-1 (softcover)

Asela Kalugampitiya, President, Asia Pacific Evaluation Association

This is the first of four books covering the institutionalisation of evaluation across the globe: future volumes are planned for the Americas, Africa, and Australasia. This book has chapters covering Finland, The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Czech Republic, Latvia, Poland, and Romania, as well as a chapter considering evaluation within the European Union. The purpose of the book is to share the status of institutionalisation of evaluation in European countries. The chapter of each country shows the level of maturity of the evaluation system according to the specified criteria used for analysis.

There have been earlier studies of the institutionalisation of evaluation in various national contexts (e.g., Furubo et al., 2002; Jacob, Speer, & Furubo, 2012; Toulemonde, 2000). However, this is the first to use a systematic-analysis framework. That is, each chapter covers the political, societal, and professional context of evaluation in the subject country.

The analysis of the political context covers the statutes and regulations governing evaluation (where they exist), the institutional arrangements, and evaluation practice. Apart from Switzerland and France, European countries generally do not have laws prescribing the use of evaluation although many of the countries have a designated public institution taking care of evaluation.

The analysis of the societal level shows that, in many European countries, citizens and civil society are not aware of evaluation or its importance: they do not participate in evaluation nor use it as much as might be hoped. It is clear that evaluation is still an emerging field in many parts of Europe.

The third area of analysis examines the profession of evaluation in each country. This includes whether there are: (1) an evaluation association that promotes the professionalisation of evaluation; (2) academic courses on evaluation; or (3) other professional development instruments. All European countries studied have a professional association in place and most have academic courses although, overall, the professionalisation of evaluation is not yet well advanced.

Countries such as Switzerland, France, and Germany have a mature evaluation system with regulations, evaluation practice, and a recognised profession. However, evaluation in countries such as Romania, Latvia, and Poland is still emerging. That is, the political and social systems vary from country to country. This raises the question of whether it is appropriate to apply the single analytical framework used in the book to countries that vary so widely in their development of evaluation.

Each country chapter is written by experts from that country, most of whom are independent consultants. While their independence from the governing structures is to be valued, I wondered if the analyses would have been strengthened by also including the perspectives of those working inside the system; that is, government

officials and the leaders of professional bodies. Another weakness of this study is that it does not cover all the countries in Europe. Additionally, it would have been strengthened if those chapters relating to countries that appeared in the earlier *International Atlas of Evaluation* (Furubo et al., 2002) had included commentary on how evaluation had changed in the intervening years. Nevertheless, the book is a useful step in studying institutionalisation of evaluation at country levels and brings useful resources, materials, and perspectives to considering the future of evaluation.

Further research plans of this study aim to apply a similar analysis to countries in the Americas, Asia, and Africa. The four volumes together aim to provide an interdisciplinary audience with cross-country learning to enable them to better understand the institutionalisation of evaluation in different nations, regions, and different sectors. The authors may consider reviewing the analytical framework based on their experience of the analysis of Europe before using it for other regions. Also, the authors may want to review the strategy for the authors of country chapters to increase the reliability of information at national level in upcoming volumes. Once four volumes are complete, these can be a source of knowledge on institutionalisation of evaluation which, for the first time, will provide a comprehensive analysis of evaluation in most countries in the world. This will also help to compare countries and regions for learning purposes and will become the baseline for further studies in the future.

The book fulfils its purpose by bringing together substantive information on the maturity of the evaluation systems in the countries covered. It should appeal to parliamentarians, heads of monitoring, and evaluation departments in the public sector and international organisations, particularly United Nations agencies who can work together with governments to improve local evaluation systems and fill the gaps in the institutionalisation of evaluation.

References

- Furubo, J-E., Rist, R., & Sandahl, R. (2002). *International atlas of evaluation*. Transaction Publishers.
- Jacob, S., Speer, S., & Furubo, J-E. (2012). *The institutionalization of evaluation matters. Updating the international atlas of evaluation 10 years later*. Evaluation.
- Stockmann, R., Meyer, W., & Taube, L. (Eds.). (2020). *Institutionalization of evaluation in Europe*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-32284-7>
- Toulemonde, J. (2000). Evaluation culture(s) in Europe: Differences and convergence between national practices. *Vierteljahrshefte zur Wirtschaftsforschung*, 69(3), 350–357. <https://doi.org/10.3790/vjh.69.3.350>

The Author

Asela Kalugampitiya is a Sri Lankan lawyer, currently the President of both Sri Lanka Evaluation Association and the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association. He holds a Master of Evaluation from the University of Saarland, Germany. Asela has been working in the monitoring and evaluation field for over two decades, including for international organisations such as the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), International Development Law Organization (IDLO), UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, and CARE International as monitoring and evaluation specialist. Asela was instrumental in launching the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation and managing the International Year of Evaluation 2015. He is an advisory committee member of the International Programme on Development Evaluation Training (IPDET). He is the (honorary) director, Center for Evaluation, University of Sri Jayewardenepura and a visiting lecturer of the Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation course run by the same university.