

Helpdesk Research Report

Current thinking on capacity development

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Question

Please summarise the latest thinking on capacity development, summarising the main debates, successes and challenges identified in the key literature of the last five years.

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1. Overview

Capacity development¹ (CD) emerged in the 1990s from a reassessment of earlier approaches to technical cooperation. (Pearson 2011b, p. 10) It is now “gaining greater prominence in international discussions on the performance and future of development cooperation” (Keijzer et al. 2011, p. 7) and

¹ Capacity is defined by UNDP as “The ability of individuals, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives in a sustainable manner.” (cited in Pearson 2011b, p.6) Paul Kagame, president of Rwanda, noted in a speech to the African Capacity Development Foundation that “Capacity development goes beyond formal qualifications and technical skills development to include the cultivation of invisible or “soft” attributes such as the ability to drive change and to build processes, organizations, and institutions which can deliver public services over the long term”

continues to be identified as key constraint in development analysis and political statements. (expert comments) International declarations such as the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), Cairo Consensus on Capacity Development (2011), and the Busan 4th High-Level Forum (2011) have recognised capacity development as an important component of mainstream development thinking.

Capacity development is increasingly recognised as a **multi-dimensional, multi-actor process** (Ubels, Bokhoven, and Acquaye-Baddoo 2011; Pearson 2011a, p. 12) that goes beyond the transfer of knowledge and skills at the individual level to include organisations, sectors, systems, and the enabling environment in which they all exist. Current thinking emphasises the significance of **politics** and **governance**, the need for **country-led** and **country-owned** CD, the need to **strengthen and use in-country resources** more effectively, the need for more **South-South co-operation**, and a focus on **sustainable outcomes**. (Pearson 2011a, p. 12) Several organisations have compiled collections of case stories illustrating capacity development successes arising from these approaches, including the Learning Network on Capacity Development which maintains a catalogue of more than 600 case stories (<http://www.lencd.org/case-stories>) drawn from UNDP, the Task Team on South-South Cooperation, Princeton University's Innovations for Successful Societies project, and more than a dozen other organisations.

Although there is an emerging consensus, there is still some **lack of clarity around the concept of capacity development**, and developing a clearer common understanding underpinned by shared principles and values is still seen as an important objective. (Pearson 2011b, p. 16) The lack of consensus "has left many agencies and particularly DFID with the impression that the concept adds little if anything to development effectiveness." (expert comments)

The multilateral agencies currently showing the strongest interest in capacity development are the EU, World Bank, and UNDP, along with the Dutch, Australian, German, and Norwegian bilaterals. The UK uses many of the principles but talks more about political economy and institutional strengthening. (expert comments) The OECD appears to have disengaged with the subject and has no staff working on it. (expert comments) Few developing countries have a comprehensive CD component in their development plans or sector strategies. (Pearson 2011a, p. 12)

The following sections introduce the most important current areas of debate and activity within capacity development identified through three days of desk-based research and through discussions with capacity development specialists. There was a great deal of discussion about capacity development leading up to the Busan High-Level Forum, but there has been very little written since 2011. (expert comments)

2. Complexity

Perspectives on capacity development are moving away from the former technocratic view, characterised by approaches like training and technical assistance, towards the recognition of complexity, context, and politics as being of critical importance. Capacity is now seen as combining multiple competencies or capabilities that combine and interact in complex ways. In a high-capacity organisation, it is the complex, organic interaction among the elements of the organisation that produces "energy, confidence, productivity and resilience... The uncertain, 'emergent' nature of capacity also implies that its development is unlikely to be a linear, well-planned, predictable process." (Fowler and Ubels 2010, p. 22)

Capacity development "has for too long been misdiagnosed as a technical problem", but is increasingly understood as a "**wicked problem**" requiring "a radically different problem-solving approach." (Armstrong 2013, p. 211) Technical problems can be highly complicated, but can in principle be fully

understood, and step-by-step procedures for solving them can be defined in advance. Wicked problems, on the other hand, cannot be clearly defined, are complex and unstable, involve individual and/or group behaviour change, and have many interdependencies. They can have a huge number of potential solutions, without any being clearly definitive, and interventions often give rise to unintended consequences. (Armstrong 2013, p. 17-19)

The term “**complex adaptive systems**” has also been adopted to describe capacity development problems. These are “characterised by nested, interconnected and interdependent elements; feedback processes that promote and inhibit change; properties that emerge from complexity rather than being well-defined; non-linearity; sensitivity to initial conditions; interactions among multiple dynamic and abstract elements; adaptive agents whose behaviour is not fixed; self-organising characteristics; and co-evolution with other complex adaptive systems.” (Armstrong 2013, p. 20-22) They are not amenable to analysis through conventional rigid planning frameworks, but change and evolve dynamically and require flexible approaches to understanding them. (Baser and Morgan 2008, p. 21)

It has also been recognised that many of the **factors that influence capacity development are hidden, informal, or poorly understood**. These include relationships, structures, patterns of authority, resources, organisational dynamics, and behaviour change. (Baser and Morgan 2008, p. 20-21) It is important to understand not only the concrete observable features of organisations, but also these intangible dimensions and connections. (Fowler and Ubels 2010, p. 22)

3. Context

The process of capacity development is shaped by contextual factors, and “‘taking context as the starting point’ ... is an increasingly accepted theoretical principle.” (Baser 2011b, p. 9) **Power and politics** are particularly important: “capacity development is about altering the access of people to authority, resources and opportunities. It privileges some groups and individuals and not others. Coalitions with power either inside or outside organisations must, in some way, either directly support or tacitly accept these altered patterns and their implications for their own interests.” (Baser and Morgan 2008, p. 20) Fowler and Ubels (2010, p. 22) argue that “practitioners need to be aware of what types of power are in play, where they are located and how they are applied.”

At present, however, **much programming is still not well rooted in an understanding of the country context** (Baser 2011b, p. 9) and many capacity development initiatives fail “because complex contextual factors negate the potential effectiveness of training and other learning-based interventions. The design of any intervention should be informed by in-depth understanding of the context and the identification of opportunities and constraints, and appropriately aligned to broader CD initiatives.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 9)

4. Measuring results

Results-based management versus complexity

Debates around monitoring and evaluating capacity development mirror current debates about the results agenda in international development generally. The two main recent trends, **results-based management** and **complexity**, are “essentially contradictory and have created an acute tension in approaches to CD.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 13)

Results-based management “requires the specification of goals and objectives as a precondition to planning and being able to assess the effectiveness, outcomes, and impact of inputs and activities.” (Baser 2011b, p. 3) It focuses on short-term, discrete, predictable, and visible results and promotes the collection of quantifiable data that can be readily aggregated. (Baser 2011a, p. 5; 2011b, p. 3) This approach is suitable where there is a need to assess outputs which are objective, easily observable, and quantifiable, but it has been inappropriately applied to situations that it is ill-equipped to measure; it is important to understand when it is appropriate and when it is not. (Pearson 2011a, p. 13) “Development programs that are most precisely and easily measured are the least transformational, and those programs that are most transformational are the least measurable.” (Natisos 2010, p. 4)

Results-based management is frequently criticised for failing to support capacity development or even undermining it by being unable to capture “the ‘soft’, human or relational aspects of capacity”; implying an unrealistic expectation of rapid short-term change; discouraging experimentation, learning, and adaptation; and not engaging with contextual issues such as power, politics, relationships, mentoring, building consensus, and multi-stakeholder engagement. (Baser 2011a, p. 3-5) “The preoccupation with results and a linear approach to achieving them undermines the flexibility needed for most development work and especially for higher orders of capacity such as legitimacy, resilience and sustainability.” (expert comments)

Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development typically requires more flexibility than is allowed by most results-based management approaches. (expert comments) A blend of tools, methodologies and approaches, and engagement with multiple stakeholders, will often be needed to develop a full understanding of change processes. (Simister and Smith 2010, p. 28-29) In order to deal with complexity adequately, argues Pearson (2011a, p. 43), M&E should:

- include participatory methodologies that involve all stakeholders in reflective learning,
- include indicators that reflect Southern perspectives and needs as well as those of donors,
- span across organisations and systems to capture change that may be occurring across the complex system, and
- understand contextual factors and use content-rich, experiential approaches.

Learning versus accountability

A second tension in monitoring and evaluation of capacity development comes from the different purposes of M&E. In principle, a great deal of importance is attached to learning and improvement, but actual M&E practice is more often driven by accountability to donors (Simister and Smith 2012, p. 25) Learning-oriented and accountability-oriented M&E processes not tend not to be supportive of one another, they can even be incompatible: Simister and Smith (2012, p. 25) argue that accountability-oriented M&E “can at best inhibit the process of learning and at worst make a mockery of it.”

In practice, “M&E systems often focus on capturing relatively easy to measure results for accountability purposes. This could be explained by the fact that funders typically want clear-cut results, and by a desire to keep M&E simple and not too time-consuming. A rigid focus on results often hinders and obstructs the CD process and is counterproductive in terms of development effectiveness, but ‘mixed approaches’ to M&E may offer the possibility of measuring both quantitative and qualitative results while also supporting learning.” (Temminck 2013, p. 2)

Capacity assessment

Capacity assessment processes have often been narrow and have failed to identify systemic issues and issues of power and relational dynamics. Although there is a current trend towards basing capacity development on clear theories of capacity development and change, and tools have been developed to support stakeholders and practitioners in developing contextual understanding, recognising and building on existing capacities still remains a challenge. (Pearson 2011a, p. 9-10; Pearson 2011b, p. 16)

Operational challenges

There are many practical challenges in capacity development monitoring and evaluation. They are similar to M&E challenges in other areas of development, so will be only briefly summarised below. They include (Simister and Smith 2012, p. 7-10; Pearson 2011b, p. 16):

- **Timeframes:** Capacity development is often a long and indirect process
- **Attribution:** Capacity development takes place in a complex environment with many forces in play
- **Multiple types of change:** soft capacity results are often essential prerequisites for hard capacity results to come into place, so both should be monitored
- **Multiple actors:** results may be spread across multiple organisations including donors, providers, recipients and beneficiaries, so identifying results may require monitoring many actors.
- **Identifying and interpreting change:** it can be difficult to define what a positive change is. For example, a process of reorganisation may also be interpreted as a crisis, or a period of stability as a period of stagnation.
- **Setting boundaries:** since capacity development occurs at multiple levels and involves multiple actors, it can be difficult to decide where to set the boundaries of an M&E exercise.

Baser (2011b, p. 23-24) suggests that a significant part of the challenge of monitoring and evaluating capacity development can be attributed to the “vagueness of the concept” of capacity development, and warns that M&E difficulties are “encouraging some international partners to turn their attention away from capacity issues” and that it is therefore “urgent to develop better M&E methods.”

Simister and Smith (2012, p. 27) observe that while a great deal has been learned about the factors that enhance or inhibit good M&E of capacity building, much of the work is highly academic and theoretical, and difficult for practitioners to access and use. They argue there is a need to collect this information in one place and present it in an accessible form for practitioners.

Promising approaches

Some of the most prominent new approaches to monitoring and evaluating capacity development are:

- **Outcome mapping:** a methodology for planning, monitoring and evaluating development initiatives through three stages: intentional design, outcome and performance monitoring, and evaluation planning. It focuses on change at the outcome level, rather than tracking programme outputs, and on the organisational, policy and systems levels. There is significant demand for an increase in its use, including as an alternative to the logframe or as a supplement. However, there is not yet a consensus particularly among donors about how and when outcome mapping may be appropriate. (Baser 2011a, p. 8-9; Simister and Smith 2012, p. 25; Pearson 2011, p. 42)

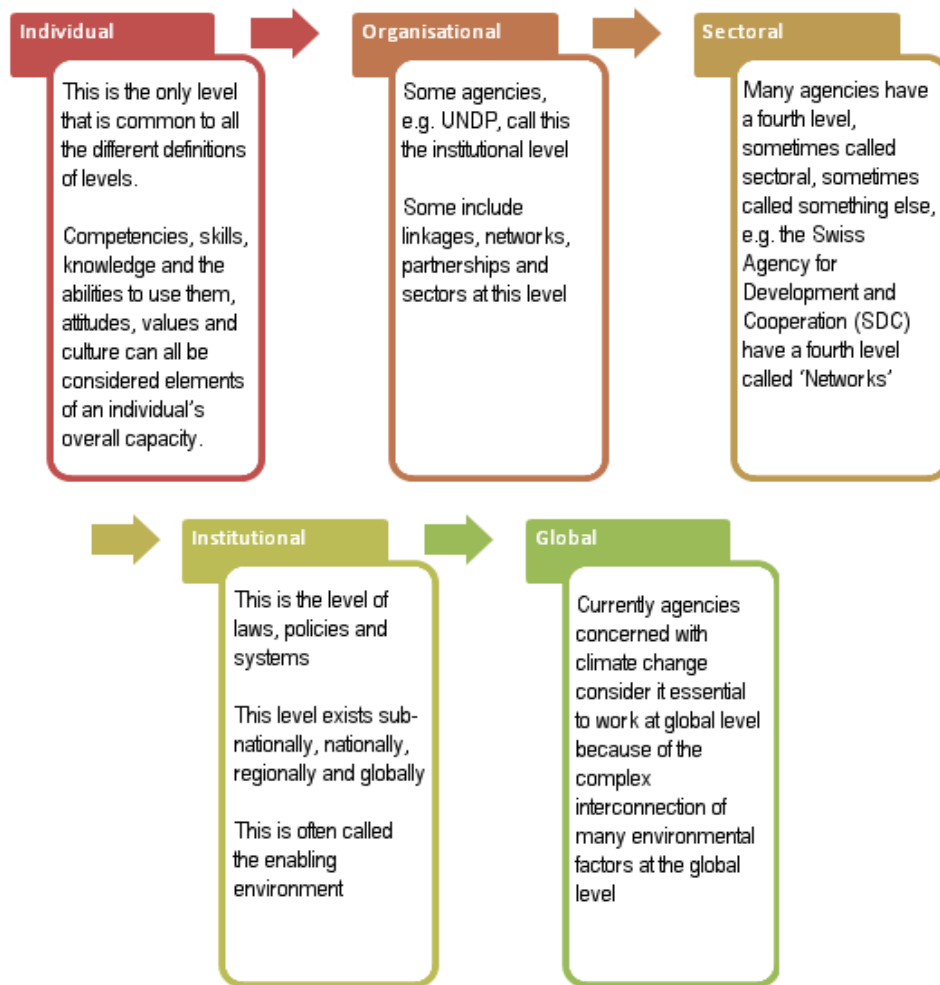
- **EDCPM 5C's:** a framework for planning, monitoring and evaluating capacity and the results of capacity development processes” based on five core capabilities. In Keijzer et al.’s original formulation (2011, p. 14) these were the capabilities to act and commit, deliver on development objectives, adapt and self-renew, relate to external stakeholders, and achieve coherence; later adaptations of the framework have suggested different capabilities. The approach is “currently exciting much interest” and is still being refined. (Simister and Smith 2012, p. 25)
- **WBI’s Capacity Development and Results Framework** focuses on institutional change, particularly knowledge and learning initiatives that improve skills, know-how and relationships (such as coalitions and networks). These in turn empower domestic agents to bring about change. The emphasis is on participatory and results-oriented institutional diagnostics and development of change strategies by domestic stakeholders. (Baser 2011a, p. 9)
- **Managing for capacity results:** At present a lot of attention is being paid to finding effective approaches for learning-oriented M&E or ‘**managing for capacity results**’, in order to improve understanding of “not only ‘what’ has been achieved, but also ‘how’ it was achieved.” (Pearson 2011b, p. 16)

5. Levels and types of capacity development

Earlier technical cooperation efforts tended to diagnose capacity gaps as a lack of expertise among individuals, with training being the typical response, but there is now recognition that training has not been as effective as expected, and that capacity development is “more than the transfer of knowledge and skills to individuals.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 8) Capacity development is now seen as a broader systemic issue with a wide range of challenges and interventions (Baser 2011b, p. 19) and there is increasing differentiation among different levels and types of capacity development.

Particularly important is the recognition that **capacity development can occur at multiple levels**. Different authors group these in different ways: for example, Baser (2011b, p. 18) describes individual competencies, collective capabilities, and system capacity, while Pearson (2011b, p. 2) identifies individual, organisational, sectoral, institutional, and global levels. In any intervention there can be debate about the appropriate level to focus on. One distinction is whether the aim is to strengthen organisations to perform defined activities (in which case results are sought at the organisational or individual level within short timeframes), or to fulfil missions or roles defined by themselves (in which case results are sought more widely including among beneficiaries, the community, or society at large, over a longer time period). (Temmink 2013, p. 5) Donors often seek to measure the contribution that capacity development makes to wider development goals such as poverty alleviation, while capacity development providers argue that it is only realistic to assess direct impacts, with broader follow-on impacts being highly problematic to measure. (Temmink 2013, p. 5)

Levels at which capacity development can take place



Source: Pearson 2011b, p. 2

Capacity development can also be characterised as being carried out for either technical or general purposes. **Technical capacity building** is narrowly focused on specific issues relating an organisation's activities, and does not involve fundamental change or include the culture, vision, values or other core elements of the organisation. **General capacity building** aims to help organisations develop their own capacity to better fulfil their core functions and mission; this can be slow and complex, and may include in-depth reflection on an organisation's culture, values and vision. This distinction can also be described as the difference between capacity development as a means to an end, or as an end in itself. (Simister and Smith 2010, p. 5)

Another distinction made is between "hard" and "soft" capacities. **Hard capacities** are "technical, functional, tangible and visible" and include technical skills, explicit knowledge and methodologies, and structures, systems and policies. **Soft capacities** are "social, relational, intangible and invisible", and include among others organisational culture and values, leadership and political skills, implicit knowledge and experience, learning, analysis, adaptation, change management. (Pearson 2011b, p. 3) CD has tended to be dominated by the more technocratic approaches, but there is increasing recognition that while these inputs are needed, they should be balanced with the "softer" capacities and tacit experience. (Armstrong 2013, p. 210; Baser 2011a, p. 14)

Finally, even at the individual and organisational levels, there is recognition that training is rarely sufficient by itself; **training is most effective in conjunction with other work** at multiple levels. (Pearson 2011a, p. 9) There are also calls for increasing the variety of types of training activities to include activities such as coaching and mentoring, action research, e-learning, knowledge management and organisational strengthening. (Pearson 2011a, p. 10)

6. Country ownership and demand

Capacity development is increasingly thought of as an inherently endogenous process, not something that can be built by outsiders. There is consensus in the literature that CD ought to be driven by developing countries taking ownership and leadership, and that **the most successful initiatives are those where country ownership is strong**. However, in reality CD is still often strongly influenced by donor priorities, perceptions, and products rather than by local demand.

For many development practitioners, strong local ownership is considered a prerequisite for successful capacity development. (Pearson 2011b, p. 16; Armstrong 2013, p. 208) But country ownership is seen as not only a pragmatic requirement for success, but as important on a more fundamental level: learning is inherently an organic, internal process, and “local actors know what capacity they need, how they think it can best be developed in their culture and context, and what support they need from development partners to achieve it.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 8; 2011b, p. 16) When outside actors play too great a role in leading CD, the process is described as “supply-driven” and sharply criticised by many. For example, Armstrong (2013, p. 213) calls such work “useless if it is divorced from a process of learning by doing” and argues that it can “create a barrier to the kind of adaptive learning that could actually improve results.”

Pressures to conform to international best practice can lead to a situation that Pritchett, Woolcock, and Andrews (2010) call **isomorphic mimicry**, in which “organizations (and states)... maintain legitimacy by adopting the forms of successful organizations and states even without their functions.” (p. 44) The term comes from biology, but while biological mimicry confers a survival advantage on the mimic, organisational mimicry can lead to organisations that appear on the surface to have the forms and structures needed for performance, but in fact lack real capacity and are unable to develop it. Others suggest that mimicry per se is not necessarily a problem, unless a government lacks the further “autonomy and capability to learn and adapt”, and that to mitigate possible problems, governments need “space to experiment, including turning something that worked well elsewhere into genuinely local innovation”. (Krause 2013, p. 3)

Despite widespread consensus in the literature around country ownership, in practice the **drive for change** still often comes from donors or international NGOs. (Simister and Smith 2010, p. 4; Armstrong 2013, p. 213) The challenge of operationalising country ownership remains strong. Pearson (2011b, p. 16) suggests that meeting this challenge requires alignment and harmonisation of donor support, flexibility, context-specific knowledge and understanding, open and trusting relationships, transparency, and true realistic commitment from the partner countries.

There is, however, a growing base of **Southern capacity development expertise** and experience which is forming “CD service sectors consisting of private firms, leading NGOs and (semi-) public institutions” which in many cases are becoming more relevant than Northern experience. (Ubels, Bokhoven, and Acquaye-Baddoo 2011)

7. Shifting bilateral and multilateral organisations' cultures

Capacity development has gained “greater prominence in international discussions on the performance and future of development cooperation.” (Keijzer et al. 2011, p. 7) There is a “growing intellectual readiness for change amongst donors” (Armstrong 2013, p. 216) and a “gradual but strong mainstreaming of CD elements in almost every sector and every NGO, government or private sector programme”. (Ubels, Bokhoven, and Acquaye-Baddoo 2011) There is a general trend towards taking a more holistic approach, embracing soft capacities as well as hard (expert comments) and several development agencies have put capacity development into their corporate policies and frameworks for reshaping their practice, although not always labelled as “capacity development”. (expert comments)

Despite the emerging consensus, however, “current practices are deeply entrenched and cannot be changed easily.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 10-11) Major challenges include:

- The increasing **focus on accountability and results** is limiting room for innovation and experimentation necessary to solve complex problems. (Armstrong 2013, p. 216) As one expert put it, “the recognised need for change is running straight into the solid wall of demand for instantly recognisable results.” (expert comments)
- **Operationalising** what is known in order to improve practice. (Pearson 2011b, p. 16) For example, although donor agencies “readily admit the need to work with local partners... it is far more difficult to put it into practice.” (Armstrong 2013, p. 213)
- **Improving shared understanding** about the principles and values of capacity development. (Pearson 2011b, p. 16)
- **Managing the scale of projects:** there are strong incentives for projects to scale up in order to reduce transaction costs as a proportion of total spending, and for individuals to disburse large amounts of money. However, many examples of successful change are small-scale, and pressures to scale up too quickly can be counterproductive. (Armstrong 2013, p. 217-18)
- **Adaptive and flexible planning** is needed to respond to situations of uncertainty and complexity and to deal with lessons picked up along the way (Armstrong 2013, p. 209-212; Baser and Morgan 2008, p. 21) but many current planning methods are methodical and assume predictability and intentionality. (Baser and Morgan 2008, p. 21)
- **Innovation, experimentation, and risk-taking** are called for by many practitioners and researchers. Armstrong (2013, p. 212), for example, argues that incentives for staff and agencies inhibit risk-taking and innovation, but that capacity development requires an ability to handle risk as an essential part of the adaptive learning process. Reference to so-called “best practice” limits “the possibility for highly contextually specific interventions.” (Armstrong 2013, p. 214)

8. Technical cooperation

This section is a brief summary based on another GSDRC helpdesk research report, “New thinking on technical assistance”, available at <http://www.gsdr.org/go/display&type=Helpdesk&id=935>.

Emerging approaches to technical cooperation tend to emphasise empowerment and leadership by the beneficiary country, use of their country systems, and exchange of experiences as peers. They aim to improve implementation know-how, raise awareness, enhance networks and strengthen coalitions. There is a greater focus on longer term impacts and sustainability, and greater involvement of Southern countries as providers of skills. As these newer approaches have only been implemented quite recently there is a shortage of rigorous impact evaluations, but particularly significant approaches include:

- **Twinning and Peer-to-Peer approaches:** These approaches typically involve collaboration with middle-income countries as the beneficiaries and in some cases the providers of technical skills. These activities are considered to have helped enhance knowledge, skills, and networks, though rigorous evaluation evidence is limited.
- **Think tank development:** To respond to knowledge gaps there have been attempts to build the capacity of think tanks in developing countries. Anecdotal evidence suggests the supported think tanks have delivered positive outcomes.
- **South-South and Triangular Cooperation:** There has been growth in learning and sharing of technical assistance between developing countries (South-South cooperation) but little as yet between traditional donor countries, emerging donor countries and developing countries (triangular cooperation).

9. Professionalisation

Debate is beginning about improving the status of capacity development as a professional discipline, and improving the skills and competencies of capacity development professionals. (Acquaye-Baddoo, Ubels, and Fowler 2010) Training organisations “need to make the shift from seeing themselves as expert providers of learning for others, to seeing themselves and their partners on a shared learning journey. Their role should increasingly become one of facilitation, supporting Southern providers as they provide support to others.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 11)

Donors and practitioners “are increasingly acknowledging that in order to work with different learning practices and to address organisational and institutional constraints, their staff need to have both technical skills and a solid understanding of good practice and better integration of learning support within broader CD processes.” (Pearson 2011a, p. 11) Various authors call for capacity development organisations and individual professionals to develop skills in coaching, process facilitation, action-learning design, change management, policy management, leadership development, and multi-stakeholder processes. (Armstrong 2013, p. 209; expert comments; Ubels, Bokhoven, and Acquaye-Baddoo 2011) Noting that there is currently no form of professional certification in capacity development, LenCD, UNDP, SDC, and DiploFoundation are developing an online certificate course in capacity development which will launch in September 2013.

10. Working in fragile contexts

“Fragile” contexts² are an important priority for capacity development, often directed towards organisational management and operations, state capacity for security, conflict resolution, public voice and representation, and the legitimacy of the state. (Baser 2011b, p. 7-8) In fragile situations **the need for developing capacity is greater and more urgent than in other contexts**, but the difficulties are greater, the risk of doing unintended harm is considerable, and current approaches have not been very effective. (Baser 2011b, p. 9-12, 29)

Top-down planned interventions based on international best practices have experienced difficulties, while flexible, bottom-up, “emergent”, and incremental approaches may be more successful. (Baser 2011b, p. 9-12) A sophisticated understanding of political processes, patterns of state-society relations

² Regions or states characterised by weak state capacity to carry out the basic functions of government including the provision of public goods and services, low levels of trust between state and citizens, limited social capital, and often by violence, insecurity, and past or ongoing conflict. (Baser 2011b, p. 6; Mcloughlin 2012, p. 7)

and sources of legitimacy is required. (Baser 2011b, p. 21) Dilemmas facing international actors include (Baser 2011b, p. 15-16):

- the degree of intrusiveness in the domestic affairs of the partner country
- the duration of international operations
- the balance between short- and long-term goals
- the balance between maintaining the cooperation of factional leaders while broadening participation of other groups in the political process
- the danger of fostering dependency on international resources
- the need for coordination among the many donors and international organizations involved in fragile situations
- inconsistencies in the values that stakeholders articulate versus the values that are reflected in actual policies and actions.

11. Success factors

A 2008 FAO review of case studies (FAO 2008) identified the following “success factors” supporting successful capacity development outcomes:

- Situations where international and/or global initiatives create opportunities or obligations
- Early involvement of national actors in the identification of needs, methodologies, and approaches
- Ownership and commitment on the part of country actors
- Identification of a local or national champion
- Carrying out needs assessments
- Attention to national, regional and sub-regional context
- Multi-dimensional (individuals, institutions and the policy/enabling environment) approach
- Combining modalities of intervention
- Use of training methodologies with an appropriate pedagogy
- Facilitating the emergence of formal or informal linkages and networks
- Ensuring a medium- to long-term time horizon (several years)
- Supporting national actors to internalize changes
- Stable and strategic allocation of resources
- Supporting institutional learning and use of incremental phased approaches
- Involving not only government officials at all levels, but also communities and community institutions
- Monitoring impact

UNDP (2013) has produced a similar list of success factors:

- National support and ownership
- A common understanding of capacity development
- A shared vision of the desired state
- Senior management political leadership, ownership, and willingness to change
- Change leadership by individuals or groups must lead and drive organizational change
- Engagement of partners and stakeholders
- Ongoing and transparent communications and collaboration
- Adapt the capacity development approach to the specific context and circumstances

- Objective evidence-based diagnostics involving stakeholders
- A credible change process and plan
- Integration of capacity development plan
- Regular review and updating of the capacity development plan
- A transition plan and strategy, when appropriate

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