Capacity building for SDGs

Learning organisations: Developing capacities at organisational level

Lessons from implementing and evaluating international cooperation and development aid interventions

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Preliminary remarks

There are challenges to transferring capacities from the individual to the organisational level

- Legal framework not conducive to effective delivery of the mandate
- Low initial capacities
- Attrition of capacities through turnover and „brain drain“
- Duration of projects and programmes (internalisation takes time)
- Lack of learning culture at management level
- Focus of projects and programmes (eg: youth)
Why evaluate the capacity development at organisational level?

- **Effectiveness/impact**
  - Effective internalisation of capacities provide:
    - Better outputs
    - Better use of resource
    - Less dependency on the capacities of individuals
    - Longer term change of practice and culture in the organisation

- **Sustainability**
  - Transfer of capacities at individual into the organisation allows to:
    - Design better processes
    - Sustainable working methods
    - More focus on internal quality management
Key factors of the development of capacities for organisations

- **Enabling environment**
  - The legal and political context must allow organisations to achieve their mandates
  - The organisation must be ready to learn
  - The human resource management must seek to promote capacity development at individual level

- **Targets - objectives**
  - Ensure the practice is aligned with the mandate
  - Internalise and take ownership of the capacities
  - Transfer learning to processes
  - Improve outputs and outcomes quality
How can it be measured, documented and improved

An important starting point is to set up a benchmark and look for gap analysis.

The following are some methods that can help to evaluate the capacity development in organisations:

- Kirkpatrick model
- Deming cycle – PDCA
- Process evaluation
Kirkpatrick model

- Level 1 and 2 are more targeted at the measurement of capacity development at individual level
- Level 3 and 4 are adequate to measure to the transfer of capacity from individuals to organisations

**Level 3: Behavioural change**
- The degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job

**Level 4: Organisational performance**
- The degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training and the support and accountability package
The Deming cycle can be used to assess the maturity of an organisation to undertake the basic functions and identify the capacity gaps to:

- **Plan** its work appropriately – relevance of the outputs and outcomes to the mandate, purpose or function

- **Do** its work to deliver its mandate, purpose or function – effectiveness and efficiency

- **Check** its objectives have been met, how and why or why not

- **Act** upon the shortcomings and improve processes (including planning, delivery and monitoring)
Process evaluation

- **Process evaluation** is the understanding of how things work in a sequence and how integrated and interdependent the inputs and outputs are.
- We can use the **same criteria** as for the intervention evaluation (Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency) but at a more **granular** level.
- We can identify if the organisation works in **silos** or more **transversally**.

- Evaluating processes allows to **differentiate** between **theory** related factors and **implementation** related factors.
- Understanding the processes gives more levy for **replicability** or **up-scaling** and isolates organisational outputs from the environnement factors.
- **Identify the gaps** and **monitor** the implementation of the processes.
Some «good practices» to look for

- Existence of **feedback loops** between organisational and individual capacity development
- A **knowledge management** function in the organisation or in the design of the project is a good indicator of a culture of learning from practice
- **Action learning** is an effective way to deliver capacity at individual level while ensuring that the capacities are transferred into the organisation and its working processes
- Existing **workflows** are a sign that the organisation has the capacity to reflect on its operations
- **Internal monitoring** functions are a sign that the organisation is willing and/or able to take stock of its operational capacities
Concluding remarks

• External evaluation can help organisations to develop and internalise and take ownership of their processes and capacities
• Evaluators should actively advocate for the internalisation of individual capacities to development partners and beneficiaries
• Developping internal M&E functions and capacities are a key success factor for sustainability of capacity development
• Transferring capacities from individuals to organisations takes time and it should be acknowledged in the design and evaluation of projects and programmes
• Efficiency at the organisational level is a longer term target - Capacity development has a dimension of public service
• Participatory methods are important for an organisation to learn from an external evaluation