

HAND OUT - THE COMPETENCIES OF CAPACITY-DEVELOPERS.

Effective Advising in Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Contexts

The role of the 'outsider' in capacity-development (CD) is not to lead the change but to support the 'internal' actors to do so with regard to particular issues, while in doing so also strengthening their generic capacities to manage challenging changes.

Experts in thematic topics of governance such as e.g. policing, public finance management, health service delivery, land and property management etc. are not automatically highly skilled at 'transferring' their expertise, nor are they necessarily well versed in 'change management', especially in environments very different from their own.

CD therefore requires some specific competencies, something that hasn't been well appreciated in international cooperation.

Capacity issues have fitted awkwardly into the structured, bureaucratic processes of public aid agencies, specifically those to do with time frames, financial management, risk assessment, planning, programme design, control and prediction, and implementation and reporting. The current emphasis on achieving and demonstrating results has come to be the latest development objective which has posed a trade off with capacity-issues. (...) Most funding agencies have assumed that supporting capacity development required no special individual or organizational skills or dedicated internal units, as has been the case with gender, the environment or performance management. The assumption was that capacity issues were already mainstreamed, albeit informally. Yet, perversely, capacity development turns out to require expertise in areas such as political analysis, management theory and practice, and change management, which has always been in short supply in such agencies." (Baser & Morgan 2008: 116/117).

The emerging discipline of 'capacity-development' with a set of experienced 'CD-practitioners' draws on knowledge and skills derived from a variety of field, such as

- Governance and public administration
- Organisational development and management science
- Behavioural psychology and group facilitation
- Pedagogy, especially 'andragogy' or adult learning science
- Change management and facilitation
- Multi-stakeholder processes and related insights from social and political science.

The extensive collective reflection on the 'effective CD-practitioner', has also come to identify a range of qualities. These are summarized on the next page.

References:

Baser, H. & P. Morgan 2008: *Capacity, Change and Performance*. Maastricht, European Centre for Development policy Management;

Ubels, J., N-A. Acquaye-Baddoo & A. Fowler 2010: *Capacity Development in Practice*. London, Earthscan

QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE CD PRACTITIONER.

1. You articulate your own framework and ways of looking at capacity. You know key theories that underpin your analysis and choices and are conscious about what you are inclined to focus on and what you are not.
2. You balance thematic understanding with change expertise. You consciously hold and develop expertise on 'both sides of the coin' in order to be effective in the assignments and for the clients that you serve.
3. You develop detailed insight into the country context and the more immediate environment of the entity/ies you will be working with.
4. You have the skill of 'reading situations', and to see the uniqueness of each client or assignment. You develop a sense for discovering the pattern of existing energy and bottlenecks for change.
5. You are skilled at fostering strong interpersonal relationships and trust.
6. You have developed your skills for interaction and listening, and a clear sense of your personal qualities and pitfalls in this respect. You have mastered your own selection of dialogue techniques and methods.
7. You select between or combine different roles as appropriate to the task and the client situation. You know what roles you are good at and which less so. You can help to clarify roles and expectations and select appropriate role choices. You manage your relation with them in an accountable, transparent and ethical manner.
8. You promote the reality rather than the image of national and local broad-based ownership and control, and accept the implications.
9. You are able to deal with multiple interests, politics, conflict, inequality and value differences and your own position in these. You know and deepen your personal style in this respect and are clear about your boundaries, also to clients.
10. You are able to help clients develop connections between actors and levels. You have a repertoire of specific approaches or methods for doing so. If necessary and appropriate you also actively facilitate, mediate, catalyse or broker new connections.
11. You accept long-term evolutionary processes.
12. You search for the best fits between the type of intervention, the nature of the capacity challenge and the environment in which it exists.
13. You fine tune your interventions towards the needs, situation and dynamics of the client and other stakeholders.
14. You adopt flexible approaches to planning and experimentation, and maintain adaptability.
15. You balance and link accountability and learning aims. You are able to 'learn in action' and adjust the course of action on the basis of experiences, and exercise self-reflection
16. You encourage downward and sideways accountabilities (i.e. towards a broad range of local stakeholders and not only to national 'top' authorities, or external actors and donors);
17. You have shaped your own concepts and methods about measuring capacity development and demonstrating its results. You create clarity on this with clients and are able to hold different time frames.

This merges Baser & Morgan 2008:118 and Ubels, Fowler & Acquaye-Baddoo 2010: p. 301

Put together by K. Van Brabant

Referencing: Effective Advising in Statebuilding and Peacebuilding Contexts 2015. The competencies of capacity-developers. Geneva, Interpeace-IPAT