



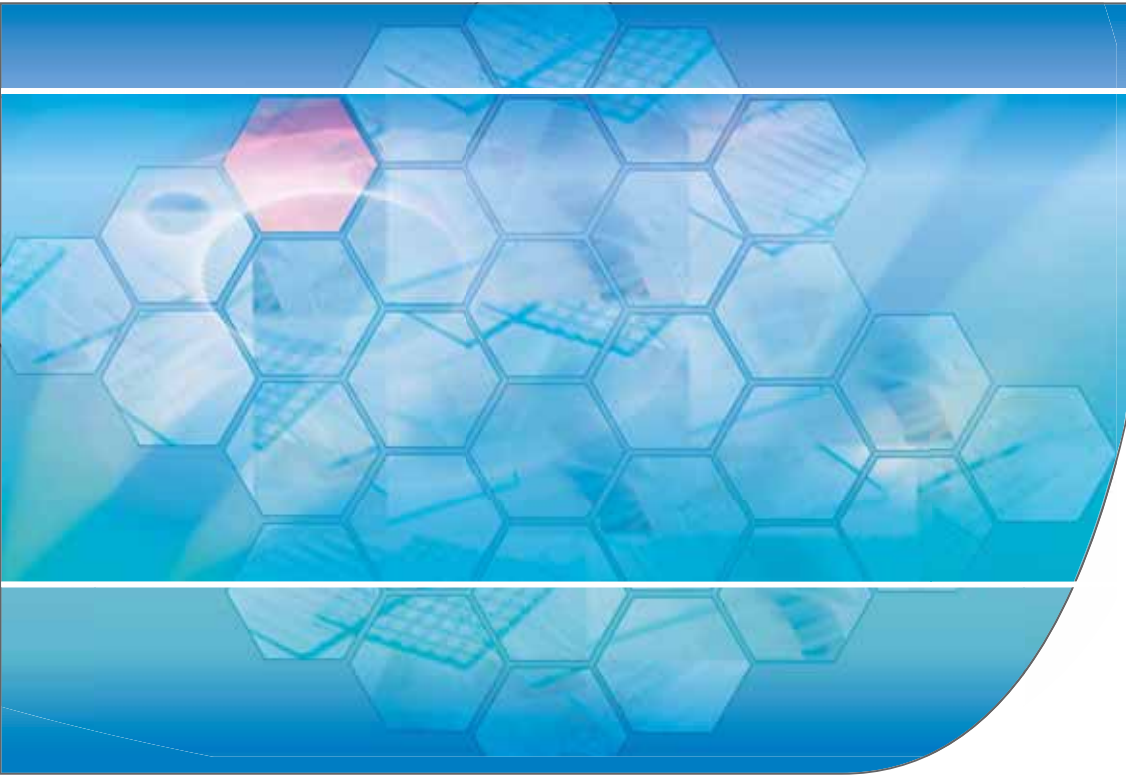
United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



International Institute  
for Educational Planning

# Without capacity, there is no development

Anton De Grauwe



Rethinking capacity development

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADEA	Association for the Development of Education in Africa
ANTRIEP	Asian Network of Training and Research Institutions in Educational Planning
CNRS	National Centre for Scientific Research (France)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
HE	higher education
IESALC	International Institute of UNESCO for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
IOS	Internal Oversight Service (UNESCO)
LAC	Latin America and the Caribbean
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TA	technical assistance
TA/TC	technical assistance/technical cooperation
UCAD	Cheikh Anta Diop University (Senegal)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UN	United Nations

## List of abbreviations

UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WBI	World Bank Institute



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## FOREWORD

Capacity development is a fundamental part of the mandates of many international organizations. Much of their work aims to strengthen national capacities through training, technical advice, exchange of experiences, research, and policy advice. Yet there is considerable dissatisfaction within the international community regarding the impact of many such interventions. The activities have usually strengthened the skills of individuals, but have not always succeeded in improving the effectiveness of the ministries and other organizations where those individuals are working. These shortcomings demand investigation in order to strengthen capacity development policies and strategies.

In this context, UNESCO received funds from the Norwegian Ministries of Education and Foreign Affairs to focus on ‘capacity development for achieving the Education for All goals’. The objective was to identify appropriate strategies for UNESCO and others. Within UNESCO, IIEP has coordinated this work. A wide range of activities was undertaken, including detailed case studies on three countries (Benin, Ethiopia and Vietnam), a series of thematic studies and literature reviews, and consultations with experts. The focus has been on educational planning and management as stronger capacities in these areas should lead to important improvements in the education system as a whole.

IIEP’s work has led to the identification of some main principles:

- The type of capacity development being considered here only works in a sustainable manner when there is national leadership and ownership, and when international efforts match national priorities and strategies.
- Strategies need attention at several levels: the capacities of the individual, the effectiveness of the organization (for example the ministry of education), the norms and practices which rule public management as a whole, and the political, social and economic contexts.
- Any intervention must recognize the intrinsic values of ownership and participation. When it aims only to identify partners’

weaknesses or to strengthen the positions of those already powerful, the deepest sense of capacity development is lost.

The series *Rethinking capacity development* has been prepared within this framework.

Mark Bray  
Director  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Why examine capacity development?**

Capacity development is a fundamental action, without which countries will not achieve their development goals. Without capacity, there is no development. However, capacity development activities have not always led to the expected impact on capacity: while they have regularly improved individuals' skills, they have seldom succeeded in transforming the organizations to which these individuals belong, including ministries of education. There is a need to examine the reasons for this relative failure and to propose innovative and relevant policies and strategies.

Against this background, IIEP-UNESCO undertook a wide range of studies on capacity development for achieving EFA. The focus is on educational planning and management because stronger capacities in these areas may have an important spill-over effect on the system as a whole. The strategy paper starts from the conviction that sustainable capacity development succeeds only when there is national ownership and when international efforts fit within national strategies.

The debate on capacity development is complex; there is an international consensus on several points. This consensus recognizes the need to develop existing capacity rather than to build from an imaginary scratch and it emphasizes the role played by the state and by effective public institutions. Capacity development strategies must pay attention to four different capacity levels in order to be effective: the capacity of the individual; the effectiveness of the organization; the norms and practices that rule public management; and the political, social and economic context. Strategies must also consider the supply of capacities as well as the demand for capacities by those within and outside of an organization. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the capacity development process has intrinsic values of ownership and participation.

## **An analysis of capacity development processes**

### *At the individual level*

Individual capacity levels differ widely between and within countries: in some cases, planning departments have sufficiently competent and committed staff who contribute effectively; in others, there are enough trained people, but they are used inefficiently and incentives to engender commitment are missing; while elsewhere, there is a significant lack of skilled staff. Training needs are diversifying because of governance reforms. During such moments of change, training can facilitate the change process and lead it in the desired direction. Because of trends towards decentralization, staff in regional and district offices need access to well developed and integrated training programmes, ideally offered by national centres.

Beyond the issues of skills levels and training needs are a number of other questions. Firstly, many officers have a useful background in teaching but do not have the required profile to perform their planning tasks with competence. One reason may be an insufficient number of well-qualified candidates; a deeper cause lies in the lack of clarity about the profiles and a lack of recognition of educational planning and management as a specific professional field. Secondly, the rapid loss of staff is in certain cases the cause of a lack of skills. In such a scenario, training has to be part of a wider set of strategies that aim at changing the utilization of staff in an office.

These findings have several strategic implications. Training is a necessary part of a capacity development strategy, but as an isolated intervention its chances of leading to organizational improvement may be limited. Training strategies and programmes need to be adapted to the national context; they therefore need to be demand- rather than supply-driven. Because of the diversity in contexts, those who supply training should offer a diversity of courses and programmes.

In many countries, women form a small minority in educational planning and management departments. At the same time, capacity development in this field has paid little attention to the issue of gender.

Technical assistance in the form of the resident expatriate-counterpart model has had little success in transmitting skills and as a rule has failed to change organizational culture. Yet other technical assistance models have been much more successful, for instance when they are characterized by strong national ownership, a flexible and responsive design rather than any standard offer, and greater appreciation of national expertise.

### *At the organizational level*

Staff effectiveness depends not only on the level of skills, but on the functioning of the organization within which individuals work. A complex set of interventions can lead to organizational change. One fundamental constraint is a weakness in shared vision among all staff, especially if combined with a sense of powerlessness. Creating a common vision about the role and responsibilities of the organization is therefore a priority.

At times, the absence of vision is reflected in the lack of a normative framework, which explains in a structured fashion the roles of different units and members of staff. This can lead to a chaotic situation. The development of such frameworks imposes a strategic reflection on the role of the ministry, each unit and each staff member. They also help regularize the recruitment, nomination and promotion processes. However, purely structural changes have not always led to an improvement in performance.

The issues of monitoring and evaluation are of great importance. Their possible lack of any linkage with performance and promotion may have a detrimental effect on the functioning of the educational administration. In many countries, reform is underway to make the evaluation process more transparent and output-oriented, linking the work of the individual staff member to the ministry's mandate and roles. Monitoring and evaluation tend to have a positive impact on an organization when performed in a supportive atmosphere, in that the support received from superiors as part of an evaluation is a strong source of motivation.

Where officers feel a sense of accountability, organizations tend to function better. Efforts to strengthen accountability may be counterproductive, however, if officers feel isolated and unsupported.

Unfortunately, few ministries have developed a genuine staff development programme and nor do they incite their staff members to take personal initiative in this regard. De-professionalization and demotivation of the civil service is a real risk, if the strengthening of external accountability is not accompanied by efforts towards professional development. The creation of professional associations can be part of such a staff development approach.

While financial incentives for public servants may be weak in many countries, several non-financial incentives can play a strong motivating role, such as a sense of mission, supportive staff development and participation in decision-making. These may demand change in the organizational culture of the ministry, which needs to come from within and cannot be imposed from the outside.

#### *Capacity development within public management*

The characteristics of the public service and of the civil service in particular have a widespread impact on the functioning of ministries of education and on the success of capacity development programmes. The public service can be a tool for national development but in some contexts it has become a source of patronage and an employment creation mechanism. Many public management reforms have so far had little impact on ministries of education, partly because some of their precepts are not adapted to the specific needs of administrations in developing countries. More successful reforms have included a focus on strengthening capacities.

Public management reforms are very difficult to implement. It may be useful to increase the involvement of civil servants and their trade associations in the reform and it may be necessary to guarantee that the reform develops the professional capacities of public servants.



### *The impact of external assistance on capacity development*

There is much external support for capacity development, but its impact remains limited where there is little national ownership. In addition, external support may take the form of inappropriately implemented technical assistance and one-off training courses. Conditionality and monitoring and evaluation approaches used by external partners can be counterproductive because they lead staff to focus on short-term outputs rather than the long-term impact. International agencies have to strengthen their own expertise in order to be able to design and implement more successful capacity development programmes.

### **Towards successful capacity development: principles and strategies**

Having recalled that sustainable capacity development requires complex interventions at the institutional, organizational and individual levels, the document highlights some foundational principles:

- national leadership and ownership should be the touchstone of any intervention;
- strategies must be context relevant and context specific;
- they should embrace an integrated set of complementary interventions, though implementation may need to proceed in steps;
- partners should commit to a long-term investment in capacity development, while working towards some short-term achievements;
- outside intervention should be conditional on an impact assessment of national capacities at various levels.

Concerning strategies aimed at developing a *supportive context*, international agencies can promote national political leadership, for instance through support to national EFA coalitions and EFA monitoring reports. In addition, the paper advocates for capacity development of civil society to encourage governmental accountability as well as to foster innovative approaches. Also, recognition needs to be given to the professional character of educational planning and management, especially in contexts where planners do not have the adequate technical

and conceptual backgrounds, including through support to associations of planners and managers.

In order to increase the *effectiveness of ministries and planning departments*, international agencies can:

- support national actors who lead a process of institutional analysis as a first stage in the design of a capacity development programme;
- use and promote participatory and learning-oriented evaluation models so as to encourage a deeper involvement of beneficiaries;
- advise government on structural reforms of planning departments, as part of a comprehensive rethinking of the educational administration, while paying attention to the impact on organizational culture;
- strengthen leadership within the educational administration by supporting inter alia the professional development of potential change leaders so that they gain in critical thinking and initiative-taking, in addition to stronger technical skills;
- promote inter-ministerial collaboration as a model that allows for sustainable learning and appropriate responses to local challenges.

At the *individual level*, capacity development programmes should aim at creating competent and committed educational planners and managers. In this regard, international agencies can:

- offer technical assistance, which does not substitute for the use of existing national capacities and which coaches and guides national experts, for instance through regular support provided by mobile teams;
- support national and regional training and research centres, through advocating among governments for the need for such centres, through offering training and knowledge resources and by promoting networking between such centres;
- continue to diversify their offer of training programmes and models to allow individuals to access a diversified training offer as part of a professional development package through national, regional or international training institutions;

- further strengthen knowledge-linking programmes to help bridge the knowledge divide.

Capacity development is a mutual learning process, where international and national experts plan and work together, while sharing a joint accountability for results and a common pride in their achievements.

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## RESUMÉ ANALYTIQUE

### **Pourquoi s'intéresser au développement des capacités ?**

Le développement des capacités est une action indispensable, sans laquelle les pays ne pourront réaliser leurs objectifs de développement. Sans capacités il ne peut y avoir de développement. Cependant, les programmes de développement des capacités n'ont pas toujours eu l'impact espéré : si ceux-ci renforcent les compétences individuelles, l'effet sur la capacité organisationnelle (dont celle des ministères de l'Éducation) est plus incertain. Il convient donc d'examiner les raisons de cet échec relatif et de proposer des politiques et des stratégies innovantes et pertinentes. C'est dans ce contexte que l'IIPE, institut spécialisé de l'UNESCO, a entrepris un grand éventail d'études sur « le développement des capacités pour réaliser les objectifs de l'EPT ». Ce document, résultat de ce travail, a pour thème central la gestion et la planification de l'éducation, partant de l'idée que des capacités plus solides dans ces domaines peuvent avoir des effets se répercutant sur l'ensemble du système. Le document de stratégie repose sur la conviction selon laquelle le développement durable des capacités n'est réalisable qu'avec une appropriation nationale et lorsque les efforts internationaux s'inscrivent dans les stratégies nationales.

Le débat sur le développement des capacités est complexe. Un consensus international s'est dessiné sur divers points, qui reconnaît qu'il convient de développer les capacités existantes plutôt que de partir d'un vide imaginaire, et insiste sur le rôle de l'État et des institutions publiques efficaces. Pour être efficaces, les stratégies de développement des capacités doivent porter sur quatre dimensions différentes : les capacités des individus, l'efficacité de l'organisation, les normes et les pratiques qui régissent la gestion publique, le contexte politique, social et économique. Elles doivent également tenir compte de l'offre et de la demande de capacités émanant de ceux qui sont à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'organisation. Et enfin, il ne faut pas oublier que le processus de développement des capacités comporte des valeurs intrinsèques d'appropriation et de participation.

## **Une analyse des processus de développement des capacités**

### *Au niveau individuel*

Le niveau des capacités individuelles varie considérablement entre pays et au sein des pays : dans certains cas, les départements de la planification disposent d'un personnel en nombre suffisant, compétent, engagé et qui travaille efficacement ; dans d'autres, les personnes formées sont en nombre suffisant, mais elles sont utilisées de façon inefficace et il n'existe pas de mesures incitatives pour susciter leur engagement ; ailleurs, le personnel qualifié fait cruellement défaut. Les réformes de gouvernance sont à l'origine de l'évolution des besoins en formation. Au cours de ces périodes de réforme, la formation peut faciliter le processus de changement et l'orienter dans la direction souhaitée. Du fait du mouvement de décentralisation, le personnel des bureaux régionaux et du district doit avoir accès à des programmes de formation bien préparés et intégrés qui, dans l'idéal, seraient offerts par les centres nationaux.

D'autres questions se posent en dehors des niveaux de compétences et des besoins de formation. D'abord, si de nombreux responsables ont une expérience utile comme enseignant, ils ne possèdent pas le profil requis pour effectuer avec compétence leur travail de planification. Ceci peut s'expliquer par le nombre insuffisant de candidats qualifiés ou, de façon plus significative, par l'absence de clarté concernant les profils et le fait que la gestion et la planification de l'éducation ne sont pas reconnues comme un domaine professionnel à part entière. Deuxièmement, la rotation rapide du personnel peut dans certains cas expliquer l'absence de compétences. Dans un tel scénario, la formation doit s'inscrire dans un ensemble plus vaste de stratégies, avec pour objectif d'améliorer l'utilisation du personnel.

Ces conclusions ont plusieurs implications stratégiques. La formation est un volet essentiel d'une stratégie de développement des capacités, mais si elle reste une intervention isolée, ses chances de susciter une amélioration organisationnelle seront limitées. Les stratégies et les programmes de formation doivent être adaptés au contexte; ils doivent être axés sur la demande plutôt que sur l'offre. Ceux qui offrent une formation devraient, en raison de la diversité des contextes, proposer un éventail de cours et de programmes.

Dans nombre de pays, les femmes constituent une petite minorité dans les départements de planification et de gestion de l'éducation. Et le développement des capacités dans ce domaine s'est peu intéressé à la question du genre.

Certains modèles d'assistance technique (par exemple le modèle « expatriés résidents-homologues ») se sont révélés plutôt médiocres sur le plan de la transmission des compétences et n'ont en général pas réussi à modifier les cultures organisationnelles. Mais d'autres modèles d'assistance technique ont donné de bien meilleurs résultats, notamment ceux qui se caractérisent par une forte appropriation nationale, une conception flexible plutôt qu'une offre standard et une meilleure appréciation des compétences nationales.

#### *Au niveau organisationnel*

L'efficacité du personnel dépend non seulement des niveaux de compétences, mais également du fonctionnement des organisations dans lesquelles travaillent les individus. Un ensemble complexe d'interventions peut entraîner un changement organisationnel. L'absence d'une vision partagée chez le personnel constitue un obstacle important, notamment lorsqu'elle s'accompagne d'un sentiment d'impuissance. Créer une vision commune du rôle et des responsabilités de l'organisation constitue donc une priorité.

L'absence de vision se reflète quelquefois dans le manque d'un cadre normatif qui explique de façon structurée les rôles des diverses unités et des membres du personnel. Ceci peut engendrer des situations chaotiques. Créer ces cadres peut amener une réflexion stratégique sur le rôle du ministère, de chaque unité et de chaque membre du personnel. Ils permettent de régulariser les processus de recrutement, de nomination et de promotion. Cependant, les changements purement structurels n'ont pas toujours permis une amélioration des performances.

Les questions de suivi et d'évaluation revêtent une grande importance. Leur éventuelle absence de lien avec les performances et la promotion peut avoir un effet négatif sur le fonctionnement de l'administration de l'éducation. Dans nombre de pays, des réformes sont en cours en faveur d'un processus d'évaluation plus transparent et axé sur les résultats, établissant un lien entre chaque membre du

personnel et le mandat et les rôles du ministère. Le suivi et l'évaluation, lorsqu'ils sont menés dans une ambiance coopérative, ont tendance à avoir un impact positif sur l'organisation; le soutien de ses supérieurs dans le cadre d'une évaluation est une puissante source de motivation.

Lorsque les responsables sont animés d'un sentiment de responsabilité, les organisations ont tendance à mieux fonctionner. Les efforts en faveur d'une responsabilisation renforcée peuvent néanmoins se révéler contre-productifs si les responsables se sentent isolés et non soutenus.

Malheureusement, peu de ministères ont un véritable programme de développement professionnel de leur personnel, et ils ne l'encouragent guère à prendre des initiatives dans ce domaine. La déprofessionnalisation et la démotivation de la Fonction publique présentent un risque réel, si le renforcement de la responsabilisation externe ne s'accompagne pas d'efforts en faveur d'un perfectionnement professionnel. La création d'associations professionnelles peut s'inscrire dans une telle approche de développement du personnel.

Si les mesures incitatives financières pour les fonctionnaires sont peu développées dans de nombreux pays, diverses mesures incitatives non financières peuvent jouer un rôle motivant : un sens de la mission, le perfectionnement du personnel dans un cadre coopératif, la participation aux prises de décision. Ceci peut demander un changement dans la culture organisationnelle, qui doit se faire de l'intérieur et ne peut être imposé de l'extérieur.

### *Développement des capacités dans la gestion publique*

Les caractéristiques du service public, et de la Fonction publique en particulier, ont un impact important sur le fonctionnement des ministères de l'éducation et sur le succès des programmes de développement des capacités. Le service public peut être un outil de développement national, mais dans certains cas, il a été source de favoritisme et s'est transformé en mécanisme de création d'emplois. Nombre de réformes de la gestion publique n'ont à ce jour eu que peu d'impacts sur les ministères de l'Éducation, en partie parce que certains de leurs préceptes ne sont pas adaptés aux besoins spécifiques

des administrations dans les pays en développement. Des réformes plus réussies avaient mis l'accent sur le renforcement des capacités.

Les réformes de la gestion publique sont très difficiles à mettre en œuvre. Il serait utile de veiller à une plus grande implication des fonctionnaires et de leurs associations professionnelles dans la réforme et il conviendrait de garantir le renforcement des capacités professionnelles des fonctionnaires à travers la réforme.

### *Impact de l'assistance externe sur le développement des capacités*

Le développement des capacités bénéficie d'un soutien important, mais son impact reste limité là où l'appropriation nationale est peu développée. En outre, le soutien externe est parfois dispensé sous la forme d'une assistance technique mal appliquée et d'un cours de formation unique. Les conditionnalités et les approches de suivi et d'évaluation utilisées par des partenaires externes peuvent se révéler contre-productives car elles amènent le personnel à se focaliser sur les produits à court terme plutôt que sur l'impact à long terme. Les agences internationales doivent renforcer leurs propres compétences afin d'élaborer et de mettre en œuvre de meilleurs programmes de développement des capacités.

### **Principes et stratégies pour la réussite du développement des capacités**

Après avoir rappelé que le développement durable des capacités exige des interventions complexes aux niveaux institutionnel, organisationnel et individuel, le document dégage quelques principes fondamentaux :

- le leadership et l'appropriation au niveau national devraient constituer une condition nécessaire dans toute intervention ;
- les stratégies doivent être pertinentes par rapport au contexte et spécifiques au contexte ;
- elles devraient englober un éventail intégré d'interventions complémentaires, même si la mise en œuvre peut exiger de procéder par étapes ;
- les partenaires devraient s'engager sur un investissement à long terme dans le développement des capacités, tout en travaillant sur quelques réalisations à court terme ;



- l'intervention extérieure devrait dépendre d'une évaluation de l'impact sur les capacités nationales à divers niveaux.

Sur le plan des stratégies visant à créer un *contexte opportun*, la promotion du leadership politique, par exemple au travers du soutien aux coalitions nationales et aux rapports nationaux de suivi de l'EPT, reste important. En outre, le document plaide en faveur du développement des capacités de la société civile pour encourager la responsabilisation du gouvernement et des approches innovantes. La promotion du caractère professionnel de la gestion et de la planification de l'éducation, en particulier dans des cadres où les planificateurs n'ont pas la formation technique et conceptuelle adéquate, peut exiger notamment la mise en place d'associations nationales et internationales de planificateurs et de gestionnaires.

Pour améliorer *l'efficacité des ministères et départements de la planification*, les agences internationales peuvent :

- soutenir les acteurs nationaux qui mènent un processus d'analyse institutionnelle, première étape dans l'élaboration d'un programme de développement des capacités ;
- utiliser et promouvoir des modèles d'évaluation participatifs et axés sur l'apprentissage afin d'encourager une implication plus profonde des bénéficiaires ;
- conseiller le gouvernement sur des réformes structurelles des départements de la planification, dans le cadre d'une refonte exhaustive de l'administration de l'éducation, tout en s'intéressant à l'impact sur les cultures organisationnelles ;
- renforcer l'encadrement dans l'administration de l'enseignement en appuyant entre autres le perfectionnement professionnel de chefs de file potentiels du changement afin de développer leur esprit critique et leur esprit d'initiative en sus du renforcement des compétences techniques ;
- promouvoir une collaboration interministérielle comme modèle permettant un apprentissage durable et des réponses appropriées aux défis locaux.

Au *niveau individuel*, les programmes de développement des capacités devraient avoir pour objectif de préparer des planificateurs

et des gestionnaires de l'éducation compétents et engagés. À cet égard, les agences internationales peuvent :

- offrir une assistance technique qui ne se substitue pas à l'utilisation des capacités nationales existantes et qui encadre et guide les experts nationaux à travers par exemple, un soutien régulier dispensé par des équipes mobiles ;
- soutenir des centres de formation et de recherche nationaux et régionaux, en pratiquant un plaidoyer auprès des gouvernements pour expliquer la nécessité de tels centres, à travers l'offre de formation et des ressources de connaissances et encourageant la constitution de réseaux entre ces centres ;
- continuer à diversifier leur offre de programmes et de modèles de formation pour permettre aux individus de choisir leur formation dans le cadre d'un développement professionnel global à travers les institutions de formation aux niveaux national, régional, ou international ;
- renforcer leurs activités dans l'échange d'information, pour aider à réduire la fracture des connaissances.

Le développement des capacités est un processus d'apprentissage mutuel, dans le cadre duquel les experts nationaux et internationaux sont collègues à égalité, planifient et travaillent ensemble, tout en partageant une responsabilité conjointe au niveau des résultats et une même fierté face à leurs réalisations.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### **Without capacity, there is no development**

Capacity development stands at the heart of UNESCO's action. Much of the work by the organization aims at strengthening the capacities of its member states through training, publications, technical support, policy dialogue and policy advice, among others. Capacity development is recognized as one of UNESCO's five main functions (these are: laboratory of ideas, standard setter, clearing house, capacity builder in member states in UNESCO's fields of competence, and catalyst for international cooperation) and it is arguably the activity that brings the organization and its staff in closest contact with the member states and their populations. Within UNESCO, capacity development in the area of educational planning and management is the mandate of its specialized institute, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP). The increased attention to this theme within the organization is in line with the emphasis which its partners, within and outside the UN, have put on capacity development. A major UNDP publication terms capacity development as "the fundamental starting point for improving people's lives" (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 1). It must, therefore, occupy a central place in all development assistance: according to the UNDP administrator, "capacity development must be taken into the core of development planning, policy and financing if it is not to be an ineffective add-on or afterthought" (UNDP, 2006: 11). The World Bank has identified capacity as the missing link in Africa's development (World Bank, 2005*a* and 2005*b*), while the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has adopted capacity development as a thematic priority. The ADB acknowledges that capacity is necessary to achieve development objectives but is also a goal in its own right (Asian Development Bank, 2007).

This unanimity leads the OECD/DAC to conclude that "all sides acknowledge that, without sufficient country capacity, development efforts in many of the poorest countries are unlikely to succeed, even if they are supported with substantially enhanced funding" (2006: 11). Most recently, the third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra (September 2008) reemphasized the fundamental importance

of capacity development. The Accra Agenda for Action includes the statement that “without robust capacity – strong institutions, systems and local expertise – developing countries cannot fully own and manage their development processes”. More specifically in the area of Education for All, the 2006 EFA *Global Action Plan* (UNESCO, 2006: 6) identifies capacity development as the second of six key areas of support and points out that:

Achieving the EFA goals implies adequate capacity, from the level of school and community to teacher training in higher education institutions and administrative capacity in education ministries. EFA stakeholders are agreed on the central importance of developing capacity as a key basis for progress. In particular, capacity development will respond to needs to scale up successful experiences, use existing capacity better and adopt good practices.

**UNESCO and its partners recognize capacity development as a fundamental action without which countries will not achieve their development goals.**

Somewhat paradoxically, this focus on capacity development stands against a background characterized by dissatisfaction and disappointment with the impact of many capacity development efforts and programmes. These have often strengthened the skills of individuals, but have not systematically succeeded in transforming the organizations to which these individuals belong, in particular the ministries of education. Admittedly, these feelings are not always based on a robust body of evaluation reports; rather, they are regularly inspired by anecdotal evidence and also by exaggerated or misguided expectations. Evaluations of specific projects generally report on their implementation rather than on their impact. The absence of a comprehensive knowledge base about the long-term impact of capacity development relates to a range of technical and political difficulties, to which this paper will pay specific attention. However, in recent years, the anecdotes have been confirmed by some more stringent evaluations.

In 2007 UNESCO’s Internal Oversight Service published a review of the organization’s capacity development work. Although the review did not evaluate the long-term impact of UNESCO’s work as such, the

following quotes (2007: 1-2) highlight the difficulties the organization encounters to achieve such an impact:

Most UNESCO staff members interviewed recognize that capacity building needs to get beyond conventional inputs, such as training and technical assistance, in order to bring about sustainable change within institutions. However, much of the organization's programming begins and ends there. (...) The review notes that the bulk of the organization's programming under the rubric of capacity building consists of small, discrete, short-term projects involving mainly technical inputs with little evidence of institutional change.

In addition, the review concludes that few UNESCO projects take into account the lessons learned in recent years about successful capacity development. The studies, which form the background to this paper, and other evaluations confirm that while some of these challenges may be caused by factors internal to UNESCO, they reflect a reality that is not unique to UNESCO and that national governments and other development partners struggle with. It is worth quoting in this regard from some recent evaluations by the World Bank.

The 2005 report of the World Bank Task Force on capacity development in Africa offers a bleak picture:

Whatever the size of the effort, African countries and some donors have raised questions about the little 'bang for the buck' from capacity development spending. Several reviews over the years suggest that capacity development efforts have often lacked clear objectives or focus, relying instead on fragmented project-by-project approaches. They frequently lacked ownership and follow-through by political and technical leaders, and were supported financially by donors even in the absence of a favourable incentive environment. Training, equipment and technical assistance – also often provided without clear and effective demand and management by recipient countries – frequently failed to take root (2005a: 21).

In the same year, an evaluation report on the Bank's programmes in Africa concluded that "in both education and health, the Bank's efforts (...) have been piecemeal, and the resulting organizational strengthening has been modest" (2005b: 27). It adds that "capacity building support in education has been less effective than in health"

but recognizes the complexity of the education sector: “the differences reflect the larger size of the sector, greater difficulty in setting clear education goals and monitoring progress, and techniques that are less easily transferable across cultures (2005b: 27)”. Two more recent evaluations by the World Bank’s Independent Evaluation Group on areas intimately linked to capacity development, namely training and public sector reform, have again illustrated the very mixed record of international action. On training, the report concludes: “most training was found to result in individual participant learning, but only about half resulted in substantial changes to workplace behaviour or enhanced development capacity (2008a: xiii)”.

This disappointing record has led some observers to make particularly harsh judgments: “since 1980, about four billion dollars a year has been spent on training, technical assistance, and assorted institutional studies. In the meantime, Africa’s latent capacity has barely budged – remaining just below the surface, waiting for real opportunities to assert itself, or seeping away to other countries (Calderisi, 2007: 164)”. While these evaluations and judgments undoubtedly reflect the complexity of capacity development and the gravity of the challenges, they should not lead to a sentiment of powerlessness but should be taken as a clarion call for deeper reflection and more appropriate action, by governments as well as by international agencies. The 2008 EFA Global Monitoring Report comments in this vein: “Another impetus for changing the ways of delivering aid to increase effectiveness is the perception that decades of ‘capacity building’ have not resulted in sustained institutional development necessary for the planning and implementation of development activities” (UNESCO, 2007: 165).

**Capacity development activities by international agencies have not led to the expected impact and many have failed to lead to sustainable change. There is a need to rethink approaches.**

### **Reflecting on new strategies**

It is precisely against this background – the imperative of a new approach to capacity development based on the realization of a certain failure – that UNESCO has decided to reflect on new strategies in

capacity development, with a specific focus on educational planning and management within the overall objective of achieving EFA. The ultimate purpose is to prepare a strategy paper that will guide UNESCO's actions in this field and is meant to be a source of inspiration for its partners and its member states. The organization is not alone in reflecting on this complex theme. Many bilateral and multilateral agencies have recently prepared guidance notes, concept papers, manuals and the like. It is useful to recall that the United Nations Economic and Social Council has recommended that all UN organizations support common country-led strategies for capacity development in the pursuit of internationally agreed development goals. The EFA GAP document also highlights the goal of “an integrated approach towards capacity development and a process for implementation – a joint venture among the EFA convenors”.

In order to undertake this strategic reflection, a wide range of studies was undertaken. The present synthesis paper draws key lessons and presents these under three main themes:

- firstly, an examination of what capacity development is. Is it possible to arrive at a common understanding of the concept and its practice, and also what it is not? The term is used so freely and seems to apply to so many different interventions that clarity is needed about its meaning and its conceptual usefulness (*Part 2*);
- secondly, an analysis of the capacity development process in a specific thematic area (namely: educational planning and management) in order to identify what the key constraints and elements of success are (*Part 3*);
- thirdly, a series of suggestions on strategic principles and strategies that can help overcome these constraints, with specific attention to strategies that an international organization such as UNESCO can implement (*Part 4*).

This programme was supported financially by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research and by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before entering into the heart of the debate, the remainder of this introduction will comment on the focus (and also the limits) of this work and will clarify the process through which it was undertaken.

*The focus of the strategic reflections*

Capacity development being a complex area, potentially covering a wide range of themes, we decided to limit the content and coverage of this analysis in two ways. Firstly, we decided the paper should give attention mainly to educational planning and management. This is justified on substantive grounds, but is also based on the need for the analysis to be feasible.

- The substantive arguments relate to the fact that the lack of planning and management capacities has been identified as a major obstacle to achieving EFA, and as important as the lack of resources. The Paris Declaration (OECD DAC, 2005: para 22) argues that “the capacity to plan, manage, implement, and account for results of policies and programmes is critical for achieving development objectives”. Usually, the education sector receives the highest share in the national budget. Effectiveness in planning and managing the use of this budget, which depends on the capacities of educational planners and managers at all levels of the educational administration, is a key factor in ensuring that funds are spent well and benefit society at large. The well known problem of a lack of absorptive capacity is intimately related to this. Any process to ‘scale up’ aid to the poorest countries demands that “more capacity is needed to generate credible strategies, policies and programmes to transform higher aid levels into positive development outcomes” (Overseas Development Institute, 2005: 2). It could also be argued that it is easier to generate local resources for other areas, such as school construction or textbooks, for instance, than for strengthening the effectiveness of the educational administration. While the funds needed for the latter purpose are minor, their impact on the effectiveness of overall educational spending may be greater.
- A second reason for this focus relates to the complexity of any study on capacity development, which is a multifaceted theme that touches upon many issues. Focusing on one fairly precise and crucial area – educational planning and management – enabled us to undertake a more in-depth analysis and therefore a more useful one.



A second option was to focus on the capacity development process as it is being undertaken by the national authorities, at times through programmes aiming explicitly at strengthening capacities in educational planning and management but more regularly through a wide variety of actions (related, for instance, to staff management, structural changes or the internal functioning of the ministry) that have a positive or negative impact on these capacities. In other words, we did not concentrate on the role of international agencies; our interest in their work was to some extent marginal. This may seem strange when our purpose is to reflect on a strategy for an international agency such as UNESCO. The fundamental reason is that capacity development works in a sustainable manner only when there is national leadership and ownership, and when international efforts fit within national priorities and strategies, be they explicit or implicit. The reason for the failure of some international efforts lies precisely in the fact that they have not sufficiently taken into account the disincentives that may exist within a country, a ministry or a local office. “One of the most important elements of the new consensus between donors and developing countries is that capacity development is primarily the responsibility of partner countries, with donors playing a supportive role” (OECD/DAC, 2006: 15).

**This strategic reflection focuses on educational planning and management. Stronger capacities in this area may have important spill-over effects on the system as a whole. Our analysis starts from the conviction that sustainable capacity development succeeds only when there is national ownership and when international efforts fit within national strategies.**

The choice of any focus unavoidably implies some limits. Two are worth mentioning.

- Firstly, other components of a successful education system (such as curriculum, motivated teachers and child-friendly schools) that are equally important are not examined as such. However, many constraints to capacity development relate to systemic issues, to which the strategy paper pays detailed attention. In addition, by analyzing how planning and management personnel function, we have also learned profound lessons about how the educational administration functions as a whole. These lessons are of relevance

to a wider range of actors in education rather than those involved in educational planning and management only.

- Secondly, while the analysis looks at planning and management at the different levels of the administration (central, regional and district), it does not cover the school level as such. Not because this level is not important, but because there is too wide a difference between the planning and management of the system and those of the school. A choice had to be made. The quality of the school depends (at least to some extent) on the competencies that planners and managers demonstrate, for example, in identifying successful strategies, assigning resources, and monitoring and evaluating their use. There is therefore an important implication here: efforts to develop national capacities in educational planning and management should keep in perspective that the final objective is improved schools and better teaching.

This analysis does not have a specific sub-sector in mind, precisely because effective educational planning and management has to have a systemic perspective, even if its overarching objective in many countries may be to achieve EFA. Our research shows the importance of strengthening the contribution of higher education to the achievement of EFA. It also shows that in many countries, non-formal and formal education need to form part of an integrated system in order for EFA to be achieved. The fact that in several countries non-formal education is not covered by the same ministry in charge of formal education complicates the task of planners and managers who want a holistic approach.

### *How this analysis was implemented*

Any successful strategy must have a profound grounding in the realities of a wide range of countries and should build upon the experiences and expertise of many partners, in order to have legitimacy among those who will be asked to implement it. We therefore decided to undertake a diverse range of activities. These can be summarized in several steps.

Firstly, the Education Sector at UNESCO Headquarters prepared a detailed review and analysis of UNESCO's own action. The review

report examines a selection of capacity development programmes implemented or supported by its divisions, institutes and bureaux. The report looks at 66 programmes.

Secondly, three detailed country analyses were prepared on capacity development constraints and strategies in Benin, Ethiopia and Vietnam (the criteria used for the selection of these three countries are in *Annex 1*). IIEP undertook this work, in close collaboration with the national ministries of education, UIS and UNESCO field offices. The work was guided by the question on how governmental policies help or constrain the development of capacities in educational planning and management. The focus therefore was on issues such as training, incentives, staff management and accountability. The reports provide new and original insight into the deeper causes of the slow progress of capacity development initiatives.

Thirdly, a large series of short reports, thematic papers and case studies were prepared by a variety of experts, under the coordination of IIEP. Themes covered included the impact of donors on capacity development; an analysis of the functioning of ministries of education, based on seven institutional audits of ministries; the role of NGOs in capacity development; transforming a ministry: a comparative analysis of Argentina and Chile; the status of educational planners and managers: an international survey; incentive structures as a capacity development strategy in public service delivery; monitoring and evaluation of capacity development; and decentralization and capacity development. *Annex 2* presents a comprehensive overview of this section of the preparatory work.

Fourthly, an experts' meeting brought together some 20 international experts in the area of capacity development, on 1-2 July 2008. These experts came from different horizons: ministries of education, international development agencies, training institutions and universities. A report of the meeting has been drafted. Before the meeting, five experts prepared brief opinion papers that reflected their own experiences (see *Annex 2*).

UNESCO is only one of the EFA partners. As we mentioned, several are working in the area of capacity development and are currently reflecting on the need for innovative strategies. From the inception of

this programme onwards, UNESCO and IIEP have consulted regularly with international partners (including at the ADEA Biennale meeting in Maputo in May 2008 and at the IWGE meeting in New York in June 2008), with ministries of education (at the ADEA Biennale and during the implementation of several national studies) and with UN partners (in particular at a workshop on “UN Development System’s Collective Response to Supporting Capacity Development” in New York on 30 April – 1 May 2008). In addition, the findings of previous exercises, such as the preparation of capacity development guidelines by the FTI Capacity Development Task team, have been taken into account.

**The synthesis paper reflects the findings of several studies so that its conclusions are based on a profound knowledge of the realities on the ground. The process of preparing the paper has taken into account the opinions of a wide range of actors, within and outside UNESCO.**

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## 2. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

### **Capacity development: a complex process**

#### *A growing international consensus*

Capacity development has become such a popular concept in recent years that two risks now crop up: firstly, that the term has become jargon to be used whenever a programme needs some positive gloss or some additional funds; secondly, that its present popularity makes us forget that the debate itself is an old one. The question of how to strengthen national capacities so that countries can develop in an autonomous manner is evidently not a new one. UNESCO itself has since its creation undertaken various activities with this objective in mind and has followed different approaches in this regard. During the first two decades of its existence, its strategy consisted mainly of assisting with the creation of national and regional institutions. The approach shifted, from the 1960s onwards, by paying attention to the need for human resources development and for training the public service in the newly independent countries. It then shifted further by emphasizing the need for endogenous development, a theme particularly popular during the 1980s. Throughout this whole period, the underlying concern was with strengthening national capacities and many of the activities of the organization would now be classified as capacity development.

Although the debate is an ancient and recurring one, it would be incorrect to argue that the responses have not changed. Disappointment with the record of capacity development programmes has led to a fundamental rethinking in three areas. The first one concerns the insight that all countries and all contexts have some capacity. Progress will be achieved more easily when efforts, especially by outsiders, aim at developing these capacities towards a positive goal rather than when one starts from a preconceived idea that there are no capacities and an outside actor is needed to build them. The move in terminology from ‘capacity building’ to ‘capacity development’ is therefore not simply a matter of political correctness, but reflects a profound difference in

approach: “the ‘building’ metaphor suggests a process starting with a plain surface and involving the step-by-step erection of a new structure, based on a preconceived design. Experience suggests that capacity is not successfully enhanced in this way.” (OECD/DAC, 2006: 12)

**There is an international consensus around capacity development. It recognizes the need to develop existing capacity rather than build from an imaginary scratch.**

A second important shift lies in the recognition that capacity development needs to consider the individuals within their context and that this context is multi-levelled: an organization, an institution and indeed a country with its traditions, its power relations and its history. A somewhat schematic overview of capacity development in DFID, for instance, shows a clear move from the lower level to the higher ones:

In the 1960s and 1970s early attempts at capacity development focused on the individual; providing training and skills, tools and equipment for individuals in key positions. (...) By the late 1970s it was recognized that this had had little impact on organizational capacity. In the 1980s the focus shifted to the role of the organization. Understanding of capacity development moved from a focus on individual skills and competences to a focus on getting organizations restructured and sometimes redesigned. (...) A decade later it was realized that while a focus on the individual and the organization remained necessary, by themselves they were not sufficient. It also requires institutional change and reform (Teskey, 2005: 9-10).

The evaluations by the World Bank referred to above link precisely the lack of impact to the insufficient attention given to the interaction between these levels. For instance, “the impact of the training for ministry staff has been low, especially in areas of sector planning and personnel management, because training was out of sync with staff redeployment related to decentralization, and civil service and pay reform have progressed slowly” (World Bank, 2005*b*: 28). The UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS) review of UNESCO’s work (Stiles and Weeks, 2007) and the review of the capacity development programmes by the Education Sector (UNESCO, 2008) show that within the organization there is growing awareness of the need to take action at the individual, organizational and institutional levels. But they

also note a discrepancy with the action taken by UNESCO. The IOS review argues that the “organization has given insufficient attention to the multi-layered nature of capacity and the multi-dimensional aspects of capacity development” (Stiles and Weeks, 2007: 18). It therefore recommends “that in its future capacity development programming, UNESCO pay closer attention to the social and political dynamics of organizational change, including the formal and informal systems that affect institutional capacity and change” (Stiles and Weeks, 2007: 29).

A third change concerns what could with some exaggeration be called the rediscovery of the state as an indispensable actor for development. Policy prescriptions in the 1980s started from a conviction, based partly on ideology, that the state was responsible for the poor performance of many developing economies, because it was involved in too many activities. The prescription therefore became to downsize the state and the emphasis was mainly on what it should not do. While there was undoubtedly some truth in the image of the state as an inefficient colossus, the implementation of these policy prescriptions led to a ‘de-capacitating’ of the state and the impossibility for its agents, the public servants, to undertake the basic tasks needed for development. The pendulum is now once again swinging towards a more balanced approach, as expressed for instance in the 1997 World Development Report (World Bank, 1997) on *The state in a changing world*. This approach recognizes the need to reinvigorate public institutions, including those that provide basic public services, without being blind to the risk that the state can become an agent of exploitation.

None of these three areas of rethinking is completely new. Already in 1972, for instance, a Sida analysis argued that development depends on the efficiency of the public administration in the recipient countries (Gustafsson, background paper: 6). What may nonetheless be new is the consensus within the international community on these three points. While this consensus may form the basis for more effective capacity development strategies and programmes, the history of failed efforts and successful reforms helps us to remember that finding solutions to intractable problems is generally not a linear process, but a circular one, whereby new solutions tend to create new problems.

**The international consensus around capacity development pays attention to the interaction between several levels: individuals, organizations, institutions and context. It emphasizes the role played by the state and by effective public institutions.**

### *Analysing and understanding capacity development*

Because of the potentially confusing complexity of capacity development, the reflections and research which underlie this strategy paper needed to start with a clear analytical framework. We started from the interpretation of capacity development as a process with four complementary dimensions, related respectively to the levels of the individual, the organization, the institution and the context. The distinction between organizations and institutions is not always clear.

The following definitions may be helpful: organizations are “groups of individuals bound by a common purpose, with clear objectives and the internal structures, processes, systems, staffing and other resources to achieve them”, while institutions refer to “the formal ‘rules of the game’ and informal norms that provide the framework of goals and incentives within which organizations and people operate” (World Bank, 2005b: 7). The UNESCO survey, undertaken as part of this programme, used the following working definitions:

- *Organizational capacity*: resources (human, intellectual, financial, physical, infrastructural, and so on) and other organizational characteristics (structure, mandate, management, leadership, and so on) that influence an organization’s performance.
- *Institutional environment*: the environment and conditions – beyond the capacity of an individual organization – necessary for organizations and individuals to demonstrate their capacity, including formal institutions (laws, policies, membership rules, and so on), informal institutions (customs, norms, and so on), and social capital and infrastructure.

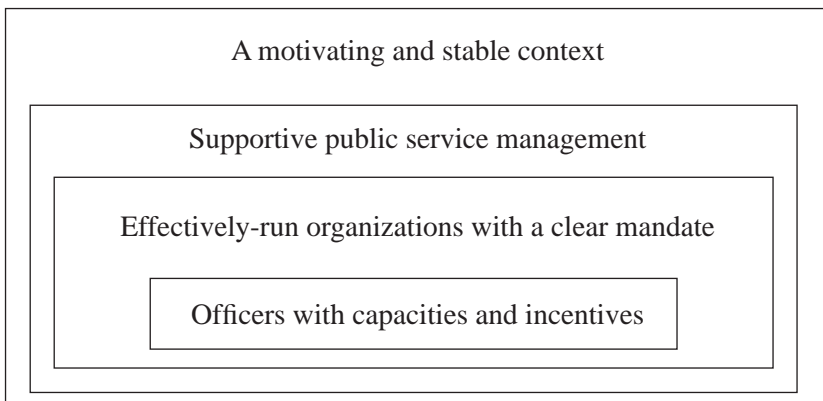
A ministry of education is, therefore, an organization, while the public management rules and regulations which it has to apply belong to the institutional sphere.



When applying this scheme to the specific case of educational planning and management, we analysed capacity development as a process with the following four dimensions:

- improving the competencies and the performance of individual officers in charge of educational planning and management;
- improving organizational performance, if necessary through rethinking the mandate, structure and internal management of the organizational units within which individual officers work. Planners and managers may belong to different units. At the level of the ministry of education, the unit is generally the department of planning but officers also belong to the ministry as a whole, which may be a more relevant entrance point for issues such as internal communications or role clarity. At the district level, there may not be a separate department of planning and the unit may be the district education office;
- improving the public administration to which these units belong, through reflection among other things on the role of the public service, the rules of civil service management and the formal and informal incentives;
- improving the social, economic and political context within which officers work and within which education systems develop, by limiting the constraints and strengthening the incentives within the external environment.

**Graph 2.1a Capacity development as a multi-dimensional process**



*Graph 2.1a* presents in a very schematic manner this multi-dimensional process: the individuals work within organizational units, which form part of public administration, which functions within a specific context. *Annex 3* presents a somewhat more detailed graph summarizing the various dimensions of capacity development and key questions in this regard. We want to emphasize here that there is a difference between capacity development actions at the various levels. Activities at the individual and organizational levels can be concerned with specific domains such as planning, management, curriculum development or teacher training. Activities which attempt to change the context and public management will always have a wider scope; they concern public service action in general. These two levels form the background against which programmes aimed at developing individual and organizational capacities are implemented. This helps explain why many sector-specific capacity development programmes, especially those by external agencies, tend to focus on the two ‘lower’ levels.

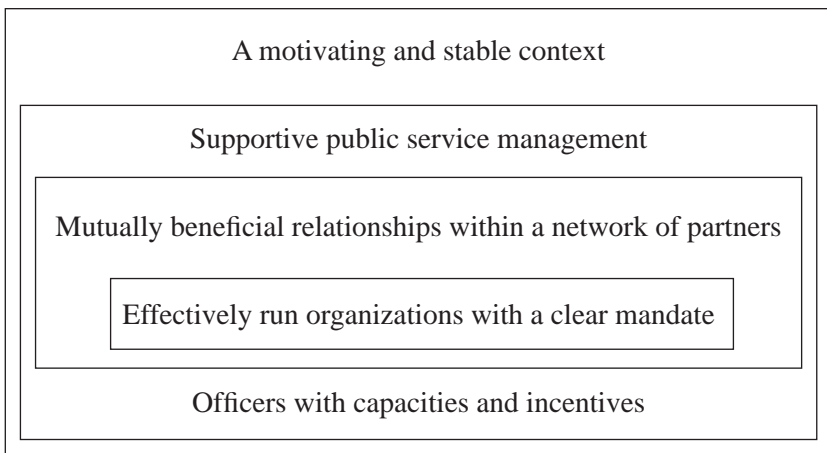
This analytical framework is, not surprisingly, quite similar to what several international agencies have used. The OECD/DAC in its reference document *The challenge of capacity development: working towards good practice* (2006) makes a distinction between three levels: the individual, the organizational and the enabling environment, of which the public sector is a part. Sida’s holistic perspective includes six levels: individual knowledge and professional skills, units in an organization, the organization itself, systems of organizations, institutional frameworks, and environment or contextual factors (OECD/DAC, 2005: 32). Grindle and Hilderbrand’s seminal study on capacity development in the public sector used a framework similar to this strategy, but added a fifth dimension between the organization level and the public sector institutional context – namely, the task network, which consists of

the set of organizations involved in accomplishing any given task. (...) Networks can be composed of organizations within and outside of the public sector, including NGOs and private sector organizations. Primary organizations have a central role in performing a given task, secondary organizations are essential to the work of the primary organizations, and supporting organizations

provide important services or support that enable a task to be performed (1995: 446).

Our studies show that indeed, although educational planning and management is a core task of the ministry of education almost everywhere, other actors within the public administration or at the political level have important roles to play. In specific contexts, for instance where the state is very weak or nearly absent, civil society actors have taken responsibility in educational planning and management. Where relevant, the analysis paid detailed attention to the interaction between the educational administration, in particular the planning departments, and these other actors. From a capacity development point of view, the implications are two-fold: on the one hand, effort needs to be made to strengthen the role of the ministry of education and its regional and district offices as primary actors in educational planning and management; on the other hand, their action should not be considered in isolation but should carefully take into account their fruitful linkages with other organizations within this network. In other words, *Graph 2.1a* could be adapted, as is shown in *Graph 2.1b*, to take into account the possible importance of this network of partners. This model comes close to the one proposed by Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995).

**Graph 2.1b Capacity development as a multi-dimensional process**



An analysis of capacity development in educational planning and management needs to pay attention to four levels (the individual, in an organizational unit, which forms part of the public administration, within a specific context) and has to consider the relationships between organizations involved in this area.

Our studies have illustrated the usefulness of a different but complementary analysis of the concept of capacity development. This emphasizes the need to work on the supply of capacities and the demand for these capacities. In other words, it is not sufficient that ministries have stronger planning and management skills; there also needs to be a demand for such skills to be used and for performance to be improved. This demand has to come from inside the ministry and from outside by the political authorities, the public or civil society. International agencies, aware that they may have focused too much on the supply side alone, increasingly recognize the need for such a comprehensive approach. The title of one publication succinctly summarizes this two-pronged approach: *Building effective states, forging engaged societies*. In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, donor and partner countries reaffirm their commitment to enhance their “respective accountability to their citizens and parliaments for their development policies, strategies and performance” (OECD DAC, 2005: 7) . Such a demand orientation also fits well within a rights-based approach to EFA.

It is useful at this stage to highlight two possible risks of a demand-focused approach. Firstly, in many cases the weakness of the supply side reflects a similar weakness on the demand side. In other words, weak capacities in the public sector and the lack of forceful demand by those who should benefit from public services are both expressions of wider problems, related to disparities within society and the capture of the public service by elite groups. This is particularly true in fragile situations where “demand-driven influences on ownership and political will are often underdeveloped and embryonic, given that citizens may not have opportunities to engage with, or provide input to, public officials regarding their interests and needs beyond informal and clientelist relationships” (Brinkerhoff, 2007: 18). Civil society organizations have more systematically emphasized the need, as part of a demand-oriented approach, to give voice to the beneficiaries of social

services and in particular to the least advantaged groups. This is true for many international non-governmental organizations, but even more so for local social movements such as indigenous and afro-descendent movements in Latin America. A second risk concerns the emphasis on reinforcing the accountability of the public sector as the main, if not unique, road to improvement in performance. As our studies show, and as this paper will later comment on, accountability needs to be counterbalanced by programmes to strengthen the professionalism and resources of public servants so that they can respond to demands for higher performance.

The previous paragraphs have analyzed capacity development firstly as an improvement process at different levels and secondly as an exercise aimed at promoting demand and supply. A third interpretation pays more attention to the intrinsic values of this process and equates it to some extent with ownership and participation. Based on a review of NGO involvement, we can summarize their vision of capacity development as follows: the process of bottom-up reform for organizational transformation, an engine for change in the search for sustainable development efforts, and the promotion of an approach to development based on the values of ownership and participation. While such terms are difficult to use in an analytical framework, it is fundamental to keep in mind that capacity development is a process of change and that this process needs to be valuable in itself. When it becomes demeaning, aiming solely at identifying weaknesses in the partner or at strengthening the positions of the already powerful, it loses its deepest sense.

**Any capacity development strategy has to pay attention to both the supply of capacities and the demand for capacities by those inside and outside the organization. It should not be forgotten that capacity development as a process has the intrinsic values of ownership and participation.**

### **Clarifying the concept of capacity**

While capacity development is a process with intrinsic values and can therefore be considered an end in itself, efforts to develop capacities generally have a more specific, final objective, such as the achievement of EFA. This leads to the issue of which capacities we

want to develop in educational planning and management for countries to be able to achieve EFA. Before examining this issue, it is useful to scan briefly some related concepts and to look more widely at the range of capacities that may be necessary for sustainable development.

Some authors make a distinction between competencies, capabilities and capacities. Competencies are individual attributes, while capabilities are collective ones, and capacity is then the “emergent combination of individual competencies and collective capabilities that enables a human system to create value” (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 34). The exact terminology and definitions are of little importance. *Box 1* shows that they are being used by different agencies in different ways. What is more significant is the insight that the specific skill of an individual officer or the collective capability of a planning department can only be considered capacity when they are part of a creative and collaborative process. In the remainder of this paper, we use the term ‘capacity’ as a generic term rather than to propose and use different terms for different levels. However, in this section we will, where relevant, make the distinction between competence (as an individual attribute), capability (as an organizational attribute) and capacity (as a combination of competencies and capabilities). Improving the competencies of an individual planner or strengthening the capabilities of a planning department are elementary steps in a capacity development process, but the process will only succeed when the individuals and departments have the opportunity to use these competencies and capabilities in order to contribute in their specific way to development. In many cases, what an outsider may consider a capacity gap is an institutional or organizational constraint on the use of existing capacities.

This argument highlights the fact that technical skills are not the only ones needing to be strengthened and that in some cases they may not be the main ones. The literature contains many examples of more or less organized sets of capabilities or capacities that capacity development should ideally pay attention to. *Box 1* provides a selection of such sets. We could produce a somewhat similar but more specific set related to educational planning and management. We could consider that, as a minimum, planners and managers should have three sets of competencies. They should have technical skills (for example, to calculate and analyse key indicators, or to make projections and

compare simulations), strategic intelligence (to be able to identify the most relevant strategies to solve development problems, such as girls' low participation in school, or a lack of competent school leadership) and human relations skills (for example, related to communication or negotiation).

### **Box 1. Competencies, capabilities and capacities**

#### **Five core capabilities:**

- to commit and engage
- to carry out technical service delivery and logistical tasks
- to relate and attract resources and support
- to balance diversity and coherence
- to adapt and self-renew.

(Baser and Morgan, 2008: 26)

#### **Ten key capacities:**

- to set objectives
- to develop strategies
- to draw up action plans
- to develop and implement appropriate policies
- to develop regulatory and legal frameworks
- to build and manage partnerships
- to foster an enabling environment for civil society, especially the private sector
- to mobilize and manage resources
- to implement action plans
- to monitor progress.

(Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 26)

#### **Three main types of administrative competence:**

- policy competence: the capability to provide informed advice to policy-makers;
- implementation competence: the knowledge and skills required to manage the relevant processes of change;
- operational competence: the capability to stabilize and conclude the implementation of a reform programme.

(Askvik and Tjomslund, 2005: 73)

#### **Three key ministry capacities:**

- Capacity to design a project, to create a vision
- capacity to operate and act

- capacity to assess opportunities and act in function of them.  
(Based on background paper on ministry reforms in Chile and Argentina, Aguerro, 2008).

**UNDP key capacities:**

- To engage in multi-stakeholder dialogue
- to analyse a situation and create a vision
- to formulate policy and strategy
- to budget, manage and implement
- to monitor and evaluate.  
(UNDP, 2006: 10)

**Sida skills analysis**

- relationship skills
- learning skills
- strategic skills
- functional skills
- professional skills  
(Sida, 2005: 50)

While it is possible to define in much more detail the required competencies of an ideal educational planner, this is not a useful exercise in this context, for two reasons. Firstly, it is counterproductive to prescribe what planners need to know, because planning is a profession and a field of action, which are in evolution: the changes in mandates are linked to governance reforms and to the identification of new policy priorities. Our analyses illustrate how planning and management change in character when priorities shift from expanding access to improving quality and when certain decisions are transferred from the central to regional level. The tasks expected of planners are to some extent the expression of a political vision and these will therefore be different from one country to another. Secondly, the identification of those competencies and capacities that may need to be strengthened for organizational units and individual officers can best be done in a participatory fashion, with these officers and units taking the lead in defining their own needs.

The implication for UNESCO is that our capacity development efforts that aim at the achievement of EFA should not concentrate on *helping countries to achieve EFA* but rather on *working with countries to develop sustainable educational planning and management systems,*



*which will increase their chances of achieving EFA.* If we follow the former interpretation, there is a genuine risk that we will limit our support to the purely technical fields, which are undoubtedly necessary but not sufficient. The latter interpretation obliges us to think more widely of the diverse sets of skills, competencies and capabilities, the absence of which help explain the ineffective performance of an educational planning and management unit. As our studies have shown, the capacity of staff to commit to and to participate in a change process may at times be the greatest challenge when the working environment offers little motivation and when the public service seems powerless in the face of severe development challenges. The capacity to adapt to a changing environment and to be ready for the unforeseen is a key element in a profession that is undergoing continuous transformation and which may face unexpected changes. A background document prepared for this programme (Ortiz and Taylor, 2008: 10-11 – see *Annex 2*) in this regard uses the concept ‘standing capacity’, which is divided into two areas: (1) basic functionalities, and (2) organizational talents. Basic functionalities are the minimal systems, infrastructure, resources and collective ability needed for an organization to perform consistently well over time. They are about its ability to be ready and able to respond to the range of logical and probable circumstances that normally present themselves. Organizational talents represent an organization’s ability to summon, draw upon or leverage a unique combination of capabilities, resources, synergies, intuitions, relationships, and so on, that allow it to be ready and able to modify plans, react, create, innovate and be constantly relevant in the face of uncertain waters, as well as in routine situations.

**The concept of capacity refers to more than the technical skills needed for a specific purpose. Capacity development therefore implies reflecting, through a participatory approach, on the wide range of individual competencies and group capabilities needed for sustainable and autonomous development.**

## **An operational definition**

### *A definition*

The literature contains a wide range of definitions of capacity development. *Box 2* contains a selection of these. This selection

shows that the term ‘capacity development’ can be, and has at times been, interpreted in a very broad manner – nearly the equivalent of ‘development’. Definitions, such as those of OECD and UNDP, have the advantage of highlighting the complexity and the *multi-layeredness* of capacity development. Such definitions remind us, for instance, of the fact that training, while being one of the most popular modalities, does not equate with capacity development. They also emphasize that capacity development is not the territory of external agencies but that the process needs to be owned and led from the inside. However, these definitions are so vast that nearly every action or every programme undertaken by an organization such as UNESCO can be considered a form of capacity development. When the term means everything, it risks actually meaning very little and becomes a slogan more than a guiding concept for action. We need, on the other hand, to avoid a definition that is so restrictive that it leads to neglecting key issues with an impact on the performance of individuals and organizations, for instance staff management or organizational structures.

For any operational definition to be useful to an organization such as UNESCO, it needs to satisfy several criteria:

- The definition must be sufficiently vast so that it covers the wide range of factors that have an impact on capacity in educational planning and management.
- It must identify the key areas where an organization such as UNESCO can play a role, without disregarding the factors over which we may not have much control but which we need to take into account.
- It needs to be sufficiently precise so that we are able to make a distinction between what is a genuine capacity development activity and what is not.

With these points in mind and based on the findings of the studies we have undertaken, we propose the following operational definition of capacity development:

**Box 2. Selected definitions of capacity development or capacity building**

“Capacity-building: The enhancement of capabilities of people and institutions to improve their competence and problem-solving capacities in a sustainable manner” (UNESCO Thesaurus).

“Capacity strengthening is an ongoing process by which people and systems, operating within dynamic contexts, enhance their abilities to develop and implement strategies in pursuit of their objectives for increased performance in a sustainable way” (Lusthaus, Anderson and Murphy, for IDRC, 1995).

“Grounded in ownership, guided by leadership, and informed by confidence and self-esteem, capacity development is the ability of people, institutions and societies to perform functions, solve problems, and set and achieve objectives” (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 1).

“Capacity development: the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time” (UNDP, 2008: 3).

“Capacity development: the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time” (OECD/DAC, 2006: 12).

**Any activity which aims explicitly at strengthening a country so that it can better achieve its development objectives by having a positive and sustainable impact on any of the following:**

- individual officers with the necessary capacities and incentives;
- organizations that have a clear mandate and are run effectively;
- a supportive public service;
- a motivating, stable and structured context without having negative effects on any of these levels.

Before entering into some implications related to our understanding of capacity development, we will briefly explain four significant points related to this definition. Firstly, the objective of developing capacities needs to be figured explicitly in the activity from its inception so that it guides us throughout the design and implementation. It should not be added as an afterthought. Secondly, the impact of the activity needs to be positive and sustainable. The question of sustainability is essential. Many studies in addition to ours have shown the lack of sustainability of various capacity development programmes that had a positive short-term impact. One of the more evident examples concerns the

setting up of an Education Management Information System (EMIS), which uses the latest hardware and software, and functions very well as long as there is some external support. When the external support ends, the internal resources, human and otherwise, are not in place to keep the EMIS running and officers quickly fall back on less impressive and more traditional systems, with which they are more at ease. Thirdly, the interaction among the four levels makes it possible that some activities that have a positive impact on one level may have a negative impact on another. Two examples come to mind. Attempts have been made to improve the management of the public service, for instance through cutting back on staff numbers in order to increase the salaries of the remaining staff. This has led in many cases to an exodus of the most competent staff and the demotivation of the remainder, who have a sense of being on a sinking ship. This scenario was present in some of our case studies. A second example is the well-known one of a training course that allows individual officers to improve their skills but, because of their incapacity to apply these skills in their organization, leads them to leave this organization, thus weakening it. We need to understand under which conditions activities will have a positive impact on organizational and individual competencies. Fourthly, the ultimate objective of capacity development is to contribute to the achievement of national and international development objectives.

### *Its implications*

The complexity of the capacity development concept, as demonstrated by our studies and as reflected in the operational definition, has several fundamental implications. We will highlight some of these here and will return to them later, when discussing capacity development strategies in detail.

Capacity development policies must pay attention to all four levels in order to be effective. However, a single actor cannot change matters at all four levels. For instance, certain key decisions – concerning, for instance, public service management – are beyond the decision-making power even of the minister of education (*Box 3*). This does not mean that no action can be taken as long as constraints are experienced at one of these four levels. Nor does it mean that every capacity development activity has to be comprehensive and has to attempt to address all

challenges at the same time. This is evidently impossible and may finally lead to a sense of powerlessness. The correct implication is that, precisely because a single actor cannot have an impact on all four levels, comprehensive programmes and joint actions ideally have a better chance of success. In the absence of such an ideal scenario, each individual agency has to consider carefully how its interventions help develop a sustainable capacity development strategy.

**Box 3. The limits of action of a single actor**

The tradition of outsourcing of professionals to undertake some of the technical jobs that need to be done by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education continues for the reasons that this is “the way the system works”. The problem is systemic: several of our respondents noted how difficult it would be for any one director-general, secretary, or indeed, adviser, to change the way things were done in any directorate, section or ministry, specifically because of the interconnectedness of the cadre, professional development, and the different ministries, including the Ministry of Establishment, the Ministry of Law, the Ministry of Finance, the Planning Commission and, of course, the Public Service Commission.

*Source:* Case study on donor impact in Bangladesh.

Capacity development interventions need to focus on the level or levels which explain the present constraints. For instance, the lack of competencies in a ministry may not always be the result of a simple lack of skills among staff, but rather of the inefficient use made of available staff or the difficulty in retaining competent staff. In such a context, intervening at the individual level (through training) may not be as effective as changing the staff management practices within the ministry.

**Capacity development is a complex process, of which a single actor has no control. This points to the need for collaboration among actors or for the integration of all capacity development efforts within a common strategy.**

The complexity of challenges makes it clear that capacity development is a change process, which is of long-term duration in the most fragile situations. An outsider may take willingness to change for granted, but a change process tends to have winners and losers. When the benefits of such a change process are visible only in the long term, while the costs may be immediate, resistance to change

could be difficult to overcome. For instance, making staff recruitment and promotion more transparent immediately limits the margin of manoeuvre of political leaders while the benefits, in terms of improved performance, may take years to appear.

This emerged as one of the most significant issues during an experts' meeting called by IIEP in the framework of this programme. The assertion was made that, above all other considerations in capacity development efforts, the readiness of the country, ministry, unit and individuals for change was the determining factor in success. The ability of those involved in capacity development, both internally and externally, to correctly understand and diagnose the conditions of readiness for change was the foremost skill needed. Capacity development is about relationships and micro- and macro-level social change – it is about the process of actors coming together, or not. One cannot ignore the readiness of the environment for change. Interest in, commitment to, and readiness for change must exist on the part of the 'receiving unit' – this is the critical condition. The readiness of the host environment for change is often linked directly to leadership. Good leadership typically means that an environment of change has been created, nurtured and maintained. The disposition for change is often a central quality of a good leader, and the conditions for change will have been created by such a leader.

The absence of willingness to change should not be interpreted as an indication that no action is possible, but rather as a guide to actions which will create opportunities for change, strengthen the positions of those who demand change and weaken those who benefit from the status quo. Where contexts are particularly difficult, such as in fragile states, capacity development will encounter serious obstacles and will demand continued support for a long-term change process, without which it may be doomed to failure.

**Capacity development is a long-term change process which demands a willingness to change. The creation of such willingness may need to form an integral part of a programme.**

It has become evident that capacity development activities risk touching on sensitive political issues. The detailed analysis which follows in the next part of this strategy paper will give several examples.

The third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra advises in the Outcome Document of one of its round tables that “support to capacity development and institutional reform should not shy away from potentially sensitive areas such as incentives, civil service reform and other issues related to the ‘political economy’ of the sector” (OECD/DAC, 2008: 27). International agencies have at times preferred to pay more attention to the fairly neutral technical questions, which are easier to implement, than to the intricate political issues.

Reflection and action on capacity development is rendered still more complex by the diversity of national contexts. While there are evident similarities (for instance, in the trend towards greater decentralization, in the existence of public management reforms or in the commitment to EFA), each situation is to some extent specific. In addition, countries change over time. This does not mean that lessons cannot be learned from such specific situations, but it has nevertheless a number of tricky repercussions. Firstly, a single set of strategies cannot be relevant to all countries and world-wide recipes may actually be harmful in certain cases. Secondly, the transfer of successful experiences is difficult and what works with success in one case may have unintended consequences in another. This may be considered, to some extent,

bad news for managers, who are looking for interventions that will produce specific, intended effects. It is also bad news for social scientists, who believe they can develop such interventions and for those who are labouring under the delusion that the interventions they already developed work like that. And it is bad news for consultants who want to sell neat solutions and quick fixes (Colarelli, 2003: 318).

It may, however, be considered good news in the sense that it obliges international agencies and national partners to sit together and work as colleagues on the adaptation of international solutions to local problems, with international partners having more world-wide ‘expertise’ and national partners having a much more profound knowledge of what may and may not work in their specific context.

The importance of the context cannot easily be overestimated. Contextual conditions are probably more important than capacity

development modalities. Our studies show that, when international agencies fail in their efforts, it is often due to a lack of flexibility or consideration of context-specificity and their over-anxiousness to focus only on apparent commonalities. Even in the presence of significant commonalities small, context-specific conditions can debilitate an otherwise well-designed capacity development effort. It is probably correct that there is more similarity between the challenges facing the health and education sectors in a country than between those facing the education sectors in two different countries. This signals the need for greater collaboration among agencies working in different sectors.

**The choice of capacity development interventions needs to take into account very carefully the specific context. Differences in contexts make it crucial to adapt interventions to each specific situation. Such adaptation can be done in close collaboration with national partners and is, in itself, a form of capacity development.**



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### **3. ANALYSING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES**

This third section analyses the main findings of the research work coordinated by IIEP-UNESCO. It presents these findings in various sections, related respectively to the levels of the individual (the planning and management officers), the organization (the educational administration and its planning departments) and the institution (the management of the public service). This is followed by a brief discussion on the impact that external actors may have on capacity development processes. Such a presentation, which for reasons of clarity is unavoidable, may give the mistaken impression that we are examining quite separate domains, the truth being that the linkages between these levels are multiple and complex. The analysis of the individual and organizational levels concerns, more specifically, educational planning and management (though several issues relate to the education sector as a whole), while the section on public management takes a wider view. Public management practices and norms have an impact on many sectors, including education. As such, their analysis forms part of the debate on capacity development in education, but it also goes beyond this sectoral debate.

#### **The individual level**

The growing focus in discussions around capacity development on the organizational and institutional levels should not cause us to overlook the central role that people play: organizations are made up of people and institutions can only be transformed through people's actions. All interventions each one of us undertakes ultimately have an impact on other individuals.

Our studies show, as can be expected, a rather varied picture when it comes to the skills of individual officers. The present capacities of planners and managers differ widely from country to country and, within each country, they reflect very much the level at which officers are placed. The need for skills improvement also changes over time, in line with national reforms. The following very concise examples illustrate the diversity of situations and needs.

- In *Vietnam*, planners at the central level and in many provinces and districts are performing their present tasks competently. However, the country is going through a reform process, towards less centralized control. Not all planners have the capacities to participate in this process, which demands more autonomous and strategic thinking (*Box 4*).

**Box 4. Vietnam: the impact of governance reforms on training needs**

The analysis of capacity needs in educational planning and management in Vietnam ends with a paradoxical conclusion. On the one hand, the country has a well-functioning and smooth educational planning process that has participated in the successful expansion of the education system. The planners at all three levels (central, provincial and district) do not play a role in policy formulation. They are mainly involved in translating general policy orientations and specific targets into budgets and into yearly plans with requirements for inputs. They do so competently and efficiently, with a strong respect for rules and for the hierarchy. Their skills could be strengthened through some training, especially in the districts, but this is not a major constraint within this centralized expansion-oriented planning process.

On the other hand, Vietnam faces important new challenges, linked in part to its integration into the global economy. There is insufficient linkage between education and the employment market, while disparities in access and quality may have widened. Faced with these challenges, the government has deepened its policy of decentralization, in education as in other sectors. The centralized expansion-oriented planning seems unable to respond to these challenges for at least two reasons.

- Firstly, improving quality and relevance demands interventions that go beyond providing more inputs and imposes upon planners a reflection on the most effective use that can be made of the available resources. This is very different from the fairly repetitive and somewhat mechanistic work they are undertaking currently.
- Secondly, the diversity of challenges between provinces and districts implies that a standard solution cannot be applied throughout the country. It is in the very nature of a decentralization process that each province, and maybe each district, defines its own priorities and strategies in function of an analysis of its context. Arguably, in such a scenario, educational planners have to be advisors to the local decision-makers rather than purely implementers of national policies.

Responding to these reforms demands creativity and a certain level of autonomy. It also requires strategic planning skills. At present, many planners do not have these skills and the educational administration does not promote, and neither does it reward, strategic thinking.

*Source:* Case studies on the university's role in capacity development.

- In *Benin*, the main challenge at the central level is not the lack of qualified human resources, but their effective deployment and monitoring. At the regional and district levels, however, officers are increasingly being asked to undertake planning and management tasks, for which they do not have the needed skills.
- In *Ethiopia*, the planning officers at the central level undoubtedly need training but, more importantly, they are seeking a clear definition of their own role in an increasingly decentralized context. In this federal country, there are major differences between the regions, linked to a great extent to their level of development. In some regions, planners are a stable and competent group; in others, the problems of turnover and a lack of some basic skills are prevalent. At the district level, where there are also significant differences, many officers are in serious need of training, in view of their growing role in educational planning and management within a policy of decentralization to the district level.
- In *Moldova*, the planning unit in the ministry faces a lack of staff as well as insufficiently qualified staff. The districts do not have well-defined planning posts, though their role in this field is growing, and they lack competent staff. The educational administration therefore plays almost no role in educational planning, which is controlled by the Ministry of Finance.

In several cases, our analyses have identified lack of individual skills as a core constraint, especially because governance reforms (towards decentralization) and the advent of new challenges (quality and equity rather than access) may have made existing skills somewhat redundant. But the studies have also highlighted the many different reasons that may explain this scenario. Our almost intuitive reaction to a lack of individual skills may be to characterize it as a training need. However, several additional factors are at stake, and the answer therefore in many cases cannot be limited to training, though training may almost always have to be part of the answer.

Many individual planners and managers, especially at decentralized levels, lack the necessary skills. Recent governance reforms and new challenges may have made this situation worse. However, situations differ widely between and within countries. And lack of training is not always the main reason for inadequate capacity.

The situations we encountered were commonly somewhat paradoxical: many officers expressed the need for more training, but they also confirmed having participated in several workshops or courses very regularly offered as part of international programmes and at times by national institutions. In Ethiopia, wide-ranging training programmes, covering all regional and district offices, have been implemented in recent years. In Benin, 75 per cent of those who responded to our questionnaire (a total of 47 planners responded: 24 of the 38 members of staff of the Ministry's *Département de la prospective et de la planification* and 23 working for the six regional offices) had received professional training during their career and 40 per cent had done so since being appointed to their present posts (*Table 3.1*). However, not all of this training was related specifically to planning and much of it was of rather short duration. In addition, some officers expressed dissatisfaction with the quality and relevance of the training, with the lack of an integrated training programme, and with the difficulty (or the lack of guidance) of how to apply the training once back in the workplace. This is less the case in Ethiopia where, in response to our questionnaire, 40 per cent of officers expressed great satisfaction with the relevance of the courses. As we will see later, the main difficulty is related to staff turnover, and not lack of relevant training. In several cases, the main critique regarding training programmes was linked to the fact that they were commonly unique events of short duration, fragmented in nature and not linked to professional development plans or career promotion opportunities. These findings also reflected the conclusions of evaluations by the World Bank. "The majority of the projects reviewed support training of individual staff, and projects have almost always achieved the target numbers to be trained. But public agency staff are often trained for specific tasks before they are positioned to use the training or before measures are taken to retain them" (World Bank, 2005*b*: xv-xvi).

The main problem, therefore, is not the availability of training or the number of courses and workshops, but the existence of a well-designed and specialized training programme focused on the needs of educational planners and managers. This is illustrated by the results of a survey we undertook, to which 80 planners from 42 countries responded (see *Annex 4* for details). The respondents all worked at the

central level and recently participated in IIEP's Advanced Training Programme (ATP). One question concerned their participation in any specialized training in educational planning and management during their career (not including the ATP): 32 out of 80 (40 per cent) had not benefited from such training. For ten others, the total duration of any specialized training received was less than one month. Planners at the lower levels of the administration generally had even less access to training programmes, especially those lasting for more than a few days.

**Table 3.1 Benin: professional training – is the cup half full?**

	Yes (%)	No (%)
Have you received any professional training during your career?	74.5	25.5
Have you received any professional training in the past five years?	57.4	42.6
Have you received any professional training since you occupied your present post?	40.4	59.6

*Source:* Individual questionnaire.

One reason for the relative lack of specialized training opportunities lies in the absence of national institutions with a mandate in training in educational planning and management. Several such institutions exist, but not everywhere. The survey showed, more specifically, that 32 of the 42 countries did not have a national institution mandated to train educational planners and managers. Respondents from an additional five countries mentioned alternative centres that offer training in educational planning and management from time to time, but not all planners from the same country were aware of their existence, which illustrates the lack of recognition of these centres. Interestingly, of the 48 people who, according to our survey, had received specialized training before they attended IIEP's ATP, only half did so in their own countries, while a quarter had to actually leave their continent to do so. Many countries are too small to have a specific training institute in educational planning and management. In such a case, different scenarios are possible: this role can be played by a university department or centre, by a regional centre or through cooperation with an international centre.

### **Box 5. Universities and capacity development in planning and management**

Universities play a role in capacity development in educational planning and management. The foremost way in which they do so is through training. Different scenarios exist according to the country.

- On an individual basis, university staff help run training programmes organized by others, regularly with the support of external funding agencies. Some may become consultants to the ministries to prepare plans, for instance when the deadline for plan preparation is short. In this case, the relationship is not at all institutionalized.
- Some minimal training takes place on an ad hoc basis in the universities: some departments offer a few courses as part of the study programmes at the undergraduate or graduate level. No specialized training programme exists.
- Universities or some other tertiary institutions offer specific training. A university may have a separate department of educational planning and administration, which offers degree courses to aspiring planners and, less regularly, training workshops for practicing ones.
- A specific, specialized institution exists with a mandate to train educational planners and administrators.

In some instances, there is dissatisfaction with the nature of the courses offered by the universities, for their theoretical orientation with little emphasis on the practical aspects. Yet there is also criticism of the ministry's failure to use well trained and well qualified planners, while people with inadequate or no training are asked to undertake planning tasks.

In addition to their involvement in training, universities may play a more indirect role: (a) individuals from universities and higher education institutions participate in committees and commissions appointed by the ministry; (b) academic experts are statutory members of committees responsible for educational policy and planning; (c) research is undertaken in the related areas and is fed to the ministry of education. However, there is an under-representation of university staff on the statutory committees. This limits the consultative discussion process and decisions become more aligned to the bureaucratic requirements. This is partly due to the love-hate relationship that often characterizes the way university experts and bureaucrats relate and interact.

Some national institutions have built strong reputations and play a significant part in developing national capacities; many others, however, fail to do so due to a variety of reasons, including limited autonomy in financial and staff management, weak support by national authorities and international agencies, a lack of high-level personnel, and insufficient knowledge of technical and practical issues. In several

countries, these institutions are now weaker than they were at the moment of their creation in the 1960s and 1970s, when more public resources were available. Those that are part of the public service and of the higher education sector have suffered from the weakening of both.

In addition, the relationship between ministries and training institutions can be tense. There is a significant question as to why resistance to change towards better inter-institutional relationships – that are self-evidently necessary and appear to be so easily within reach – remains entrenched. Part of the challenge appears to be rooted in concern over losing control and autonomy. Whether it is institutionalized or rests in the decision-making power of small groups or individuals, the move to better working relationships seems to be hindered by concern that the cost of mutually-beneficial change and cooperation, in terms of control, would be too high.

**Many planners and managers, especially at decentralized levels, have insufficient opportunities to attend specialized training programmes. One reason resides in the lack or the weakness of national centres or institutions.**

The feebleness of university education has contributed in some countries to the lowering of the overall profile of candidates for and occupants of civil servant posts. This brings us to the second main reason for the lack of skills among planners and managers. Partly because well-qualified candidates are scarce, and partly because of a lack of clarity about the profiles required, many positions are at present filled by teachers or staff without relevant backgrounds – for example, in finance or statistics. Our case studies in Benin and Ethiopia, and to a lesser extent in Vietnam, emphasize the lack of a pool of qualified professionals. One solution has been to hire secondary school principals and teachers, who are then supposed to be trained on the job by an experienced officer in planning. Our survey of 80 education planners at the central level shows that 65 of them started their careers as classroom teachers, and 22 of them spent more than ten years in the classroom. While 51 out of 80 of the planners had more than 15 years' experience in the education sector, only 13 had this length of experience in educational planning and management.

**Table 3.2 Ethiopia: educational planners with experience as a school teacher (percentage)**

Work place	Experience as a school teacher	No experience as a school teacher
MOE	89	11
REB	58	42
WEO	89	11
Total	78	22

*Source:* Individual questionnaires.

The scenario of using teachers to fill planning posts is even more prevalent at the lower levels of administration (regional or district) than at the central level: in all three countries, the staff of district education offices consists almost exclusively of former teachers. *Table 3.2* shows the example of Ethiopia, where nine out of ten district planners had started their career as a teacher. Somewhat surprisingly, the same is true for the staff of the fairly small planning department at the federal level. In extreme cases, these are teachers who have been transferred because of their inability, through physical or mental challenges, to continue working in the classroom. Research elsewhere, in countries with similar levels of development, confirms these findings (for example, Bista and Carney, 2004 on Nepal; De Grauwe and Lugaz, 2007 on West-Africa; Radi and Chang, 2003 on Niger; Shami and Shah, 2008 on Pakistan). Other examples include Zanzibar, where the majority of the staff in the ministry has a teaching background but has not received the right education for occupying a post in a ministry. This situation reflects the typical career pattern, whereby teachers gradually climb the promotion ladder to end up in an administrative position at the ministry headquarters.

Evidently, a background in teaching is not a disadvantage. It could be an important asset but only if the incumbent, when appointed to the new post, can benefit from induction or in-service training in educational planning and management. As we have seen, this is seldom the case. One solution then is to rely on some form of mentoring by colleagues or the department heads. Unfortunately, appointments of office or department heads do not necessarily take into account their specific competencies, and political, linguistic or geographic factors play a bigger role. This is to some extent unavoidable; and it is certainly not



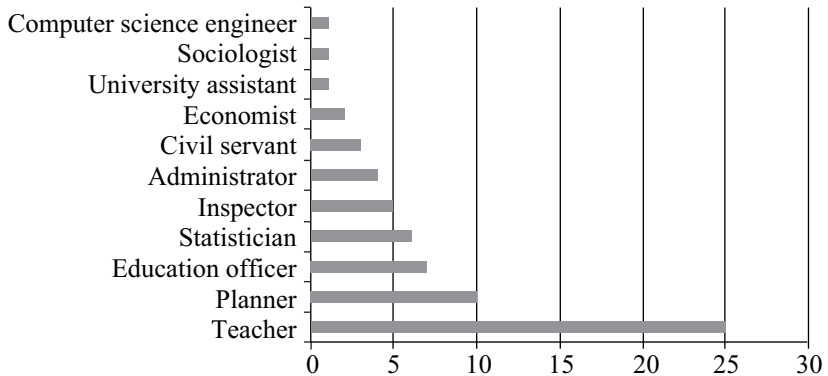
limited to a few developing countries. It does not pose a problem when the pool of competent staff with the required political and geographic characteristics is sufficiently big. Where this is not the case, for instance in the least developed or the most remote regions, it can happen that the appointed heads of offices do not have the necessary technical and leadership skills. This has severe repercussions for the functioning of the whole office and for the integration of newly appointed staff. With the greater role in planning and management given to regional and district offices in a context of decentralization, such a situation presents a serious constraint.

The lack of well-qualified candidates forms only part of the reason for the appointment of staff with an inappropriate profile. A more system-related explanation lies in the absence of a clear profile of the ideal candidate. This in itself results from a lack of recognition of educational planning and management as a specific field of action for which specialized skills are needed. In only 12 of the 42 countries represented in our survey, ‘planners’ are recognized as a corps with a specific status. In not a single country is this the case for ‘educational planners’. Out of the 65 people who responded to our open-ended question, “To which professional corps do you belong?”, only ten described themselves as planners, while 25 described themselves as ‘teachers’, six as ‘statisticians’, and five as ‘inspectors’.

This raises the issue of the possible need for a professional corps of educational planners and managers (or their integration within an existing corps of similar officers). However, the separation of a teaching corps from an administrative corps is not necessarily without problems, either. In Bangladesh, for instance, the top positions in the ministries of education are occupied by personnel belonging to the administrative cadre. This seems to have three disadvantages: firstly, these staff members have little knowledge of the specificities of the education sector; secondly, they are transferred regularly from one ministry to another; and thirdly, because they occupy the top positions, they limit the promotion possibilities of those in the education cadre, including those who have received specialized training. The continued existence of this system can be explained firstly by the fact that senior civil service positions are traditionally decided upon by a centralized and supposedly neutral body, to avoid undue influence by the sectoral

ministry. A second reason is that those who have the authority to change this system are the ones who at present benefit from it.

### Graph 3.1 Professional corps to which planners belong



Source: Individual questionnaire to selection of planners (N = 80; 15 no response).

While the creation of a specific corps for planners may be a solution in particular cases, what is undoubtedly needed everywhere is a reflection on the role of this staff at each level of the administration and on the numbers and profiles needed. This reflection should guide recruitment, deployment, training and evaluation practices. The reform of the Argentine Ministry of Education passed precisely through such a process. Specific profiles were defined for the different professionals needed to undertake the new tasks assigned to the Ministry as part of the overall reform of the educational administration. Strengthening the professional character of planners may also make them more useful advisors in discussions with decision-makers. Some of the survey respondents expressed frustration with the ambitious and sometimes unrealistic policy goals they are set to implement, in view of the limited human and material resources available and the lack of attention that political leaders pay to their technical arguments.

**Many planners and managers have useful backgrounds in teaching but do not have the required profile to perform their planning tasks with competence. While one reason may be an insufficient number of well-qualified candidates, a deeper cause lies in the lack of clarity about the profiles, and a lack of recognition of educational planning and management as a specific professional field.**

A third, major reason for the lack of skills among planners and managers is the high turnover in planning positions. This is certainly not a problem everywhere: in Vietnam, for instance, planning positions are relatively well appreciated, reflecting in part the generally high status of public service positions. However, this is not the case in all provinces. In the remote ones, special allowances are given to teachers to attract them to these provinces. Planners and other officials do not receive similar allowances, and many officers therefore prefer to return to the school when they can. But where turnover is high, its impact on organizational capacity and institutional memory is detrimental. In several of our studies, the country as a whole has sufficient qualified and experienced educational planners and managers, but too few of them are working in the educational administration. The loss of staff is caused by a wide range of factors, for instance the tradition of regular transfers, the absence of motivating leadership, inadequate salaries when compared to the private sector, and difficult working conditions (see *Box 6* for one example). Unfortunately, in such contexts, trained staff at times leave the public service more quickly than untrained staff, and staff training has therefore been linked to staff turnover and to a depletion of capacities within the public sector. Admittedly, these factors are not under the control of international organizations such as UNESCO. Neither should training simply be abandoned, precisely because newly-appointed staff members need training. The conclusion probably should be that in such scenarios, while training remains useful, it is not the fundamental response because lack of skills is not the fundamental problem.

**Box 6. How turnover can limit the impact of training: a concrete example**

An assessment was conducted in October 2005, after a comprehensive donor-supported district-level training programme. It showed that two thirds of the participating districts were able to produce adequate education plans. District officers also showed enhanced capacity in understanding and implementing national education policy, strategies and programmes, and increased ability to plan and manage educational information. Improvement in planning capacities was also observed at the Ministry of Education and at the regional level for some time after the training. However, in several districts, the results were not sustainable. One of the major reasons for declining capacity in educational planning in spite of all the courses and workshops provided was the turnover of personnel. The assessment indicated that out of the total number of education officers trained in the sample districts, 28 per cent of the education officers had left the district within one year or less after the training. An assessment carried out in 2007 showed that 50.9 per cent of the trained education officers from the sample districts had by then left their education office. According to the assessment, the five major reasons for staff leaving their positions were:

- transfer to other sectors;
- joining higher education institutions;
- suspended/floated as a result of changes in organizational structure;
- promoted to higher positions outside the *woreda* education offices;
- fired or resigned.

*Source:* Background paper: The role of universities in capacity development in Africa (*Annex 2*).

Indeed, our studies by and large demonstrate that, notwithstanding the differences between countries, the key challenges are not only to strengthen individual skills but also to define a clear vision of the role of units and individuals, and to create incentives to use newly acquired skills and improve communication, coordination and staff support within the ministry. As one of our background papers puts it:

Unless attempts to change come from levels and nodes in the bureaucracy which wield the requisite power, not much is likely to happen. Personnel or human resources offices often have the power and autonomy to offer training. The catch is that they usually lack the clout to engineer the change that is expected as a result of people acquiring new skills (de Moura Castro, background paper, 2008: 7).

One key conclusion from our country studies is that, in many cases, the utilization of staff is a more preoccupying and more fundamental problem than their availability or their level of skills. It is also, unfortunately, a more difficult challenge to address, as it relates to the ways in which an organization such as a ministry functions. This conclusion is confirmed by earlier work – for instance, by Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995), and by an analysis we undertook of several assessments of the functioning of ministries of education. This analysis covered seven ‘institutional audits’ on the functioning of ministries of education, undertaken in recent years. It is interesting to note that relatively few such studies have been prepared. These seven are also quite different in nature, going from very detailed audits to much briefer reports. They concern Bolivia (Bolivia Ministry of Education, 2005; Denmark MINISTRY OF Foreign Affairs/Danida, 2005), France (Cour des Comptes, 2003), Grenada (De Grauwe and Carron, 2000), Nepal (Bista and Carney, 2004), Niger (Radi and Chang, 2005), Palestine (Saidi, 2000) and Zanzibar (IIEP, 2007). The next section contains more references to their findings and will look at this issue in more detail.

**The rapid loss of staff is in certain cases a cause of the lack of skills. In such a scenario, training has to be part of a wider set of strategies, which aims at changing the utilization of staff in an office. On its own, training does not offer an answer.**

### **The organizational level**

Training does not change a bureaucracy. Even the most competent and committed individual can lose motivation and effectiveness in an inefficient and poorly-run organization. Improving the skills of a few individuals or all the staff of a department is of limited use when the organization within which these agents work is ineffective, badly organized and not subject to any sanction on non-performance. The effective functioning of an organization such as a planning department or a regional education office depends on several factors, which may be different in each country and for each organization. From our studies it appears that a number of challenges are recurring in different contexts and that some can be considered fundamental.

A first challenge concerns the failure to bring all staff of the ministry and its regional and district offices together around a common

vision about the role of the administration. Equally important is the belief that the ministry and its offices can make a difference to the state of the education system. Unfortunately, in many cases officers feel that their interventions have no impact. One pertinent example comes from a strongly decentralized federal country: some officers working in the planning department in the federal ministry of education felt powerless because of the high level of autonomy of the regions and the difficulty of defining a clear vision of their own role. In other cases, the insufficiency of resources or the lack of authority severely weakened the education officers. The conviction among many officers with whom we engaged that their interventions could never make a lasting difference because they lacked the tools, resources or authority, can be particularly detrimental. Alternatively, where there was space for such autonomous action (as, for instance, in many offices in Vietnam and in several regional and some district offices in Ethiopia), officers felt rewarded and the office functioned much better. The examination of the relatively successful reforms in Chile and Argentina demonstrates how crucial the definition of a common vision can be, if developed in a participatory manner. The extensive research by Grindle and Hilderbrand also emphasizes that “the organizations that performed well were able to inculcate a sense of mission and commitment to organizational goals among staff, while those that were poor performers did not provide the same sense of purpose” (1995: 455).

The existence of a vision is not of much significance if it is not shared by the staff. Our analysis of the functioning of several ministries of education shows that the absence of a coordinated vision among staff may leave the ministry in a state of confusion regarding its mission and mandate. It also shows that this vision or mandate is often perceived differently at lower levels compared to top management. This may indicate a lack of ownership, which in turn makes it difficult to establish a broad consensus on the ministry’s overall strategic objectives. The Nepalese analysis shows that staff members at higher levels have a common vision of the Ministry of Education as a ‘technical’ and not an ‘administrative’ organization. This vision was not shared by employees at lower levels, who did not seem to understand their role in the organization or the Ministry’s overall goals. The tasks they were set did not correspond to what they themselves considered to be important.

A common vision may be particularly necessary when a ministry is going through a process of transformation, as the Argentine and Chilean cases show. The institutional audit of the ministry in Grenada some years ago showed that it was moving from a traditional maintenance administration to a strategic management organization, but that this new vision had not yet been fully internalized.

**One fundamental constraint to the effective functioning of a ministry or a planning department is the weakness in shared vision, especially if combined with a sense of powerlessness.**

This vision evidently cannot simply be something esoteric, but needs to infuse the daily functioning of the organization. It could be reflected for instance in a 'normative framework', which could help in the management of human resources, with precise mandates for units, specific job descriptions for officers and clear indications of the numbers of staff needed in each service. The absence of such a framework is a major impediment: it allows for the nomination and deployment of staff without going through a rigorous selection process; and it makes it difficult for staff to know well what their tasks are and how they are expected to contribute to the overall mission of their organization. There is a wide range of situations, with some ministries that have well established and respected structures and norms, and others that are in a chaotic situation.

The lack of a normative framework may lead to the paradoxical situation of a bloated planning department, with few staff productively engaged, many people underemployed, and many tasks not being done. It also allows for a nomination process which does not have to take into account the needs of particular units or the profiles of specific posts, as these are not known (see *Box 7*). In most ministries or planning departments, some indication exists as to what tasks are expected from a certain department, but they fail to state clearly what is expected from individual officers, and they are commonly outdated. A study in Bolivia, for instance, showed there was great ambiguity regarding the distribution of functions and responsibilities at different administrative levels (Bolivia Ministry of Education; Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Danida, 2005). In related vein, our survey of planners showed that 70 out of 80 could refer to a document that described their tasks,

but only in 21 cases was there a specific job description. In several of the Vietnamese offices, however, the absence of a job description was compensated for by the existence of weekly and monthly individual task lists which the head of an office prepared together with its members.

**Box 7. The impact of the lack of a normative framework**

In general, the ministry has no precise idea of the number of posts needed in each service, neither of the desired profile for the candidates for new posts. The best scenario is one whereby a decree or an internal memo describes in general terms the responsibilities of the various services. These documents are in many cases outdated, however, and do not indicate with precision the number of staff needed in a service. None of the central or decentralized services which we visited had individual post descriptions at their disposal. One result is that nearly half the staff in the planning department (53 per cent of senior staff and 41 per cent of middle-level staff) moved from the classroom into their new post, either directly or after a brief period, without any training. There was little place for staff with genuine expertise in educational planning and management: only 20 per cent of the posts in the planning department were occupied by specialists in this field (such as economists, statisticians or planners).

There was no real recruitment process, consisting of the advertisement of a post with specific terms of reference, the identification of candidates with a relevant profile and their selection through an interview or a competitive exam. The procedure seemed to follow an opposite logic: an individual (generally a teacher) needs, for personal or health reasons, an administrative post: he sends a request to the ministry or undertakes informal steps and is redeployed into a service, without any indication of the specific post to be occupied and generally without any preliminary discussion with the head of that service. It is then left to this individual and his new chief to find, if possible, appropriate work.

It is useful to point out, though, that while such frameworks may be necessary, they are by far not sufficient. In some situations, for instance in small states, they may even be inappropriate as they are insufficiently flexible. The essential problem with such tools is that they can become very formalistic, without transforming the institutional culture. Moldova is an interesting example: the Ministry of Education underwent a profound structural reform, and a special unit was created to define educational strategies and prepare plans. This unit, however, is so far incapable of doing so, partly because its staff lacks the skills but also because all actors are more at ease with the previous arrangements, whereby policies and plans were decided to a large extent



outside the Ministry while Ministry staff remained more involved with pedagogical and supervisory matters. The case studies on reform in Chile and Argentina illustrate that structural reorganizations are not indispensable. Chile did not go through such a process. Argentina did, but it was part of a much wider reform, consisting among other things of the design of a new ministry mandate and the strengthening of the professional character of the staff. In some ministries, staff complained about recurrent reorganizations, related to changes in government and policy, which led to unclear organizational charts with ambiguous lines of reporting and conflicts between units with similar roles.

**The absence of a normative framework which explains in a structured fashion the roles of different units and members of staff can lead to chaotic situations. However, the setting up of new structures has not always led to improvement in performance.**

Staff management, and more specifically issues of promotion, monitoring and professional development, are factors that came up regularly in our analyses of organizational functioning, though once again we need to keep in mind the need to distinguish between different countries.

Maybe the most immediate complaint concerning staff management relates to political influence on recruitment processes, especially for senior posts. In our survey, 60 of 75 respondents disagreed with the statement that promotions take individual performance into account. Only five respondents agreed fully. During our field visits we regularly collected similar comments. As we mentioned before, it is hardly a surprise that politics plays a role in staff management in the public service and this is surely not unique to developing countries. It is fairly normal that for senior positions in the public service, ministers assign staff with a political outlook close to theirs. This situation becomes preoccupying when political factors become more important than competence, however, and when they are influencing even middle-level or junior posts without political clout. Staff members then realize that promotion depends less on competence than on the correct personal and political connections, and spend more time on building up such connections than on demonstrating competence.

In several cases, staff complained about the lack of supportive monitoring and evaluation. At times, evaluation is only a ritual through which officials have to pass but which is nearly without content and certainly without impact on their future and, therefore, on their performance. This seems to be the worst-case scenario and in several countries reforms are under way to turn monitoring and evaluation into moments of professional development. In Ethiopia, for instance, several initiatives are being undertaken in this regard. In a number of education bureaux, the staff is evaluated every six months, based on their individual plan, which allows for a more objective and supportive evaluation. The results are mixed. On the one hand, some officers complained about the fact that their evaluation did not help to improve their personal performance, and became somehow too mechanical. On the other hand, different educational planners and managers emphasized the positive impact of such an evaluation process on their motivation: even if it has limitations and did not lead to automatic reward, they appreciated the fact that it was kept in their personal file and that it could be taken into account in future applications. They also valued the opportunity to discuss their work with their superiors.

This example shows that a more effective educational administration probably needs tighter staff monitoring and evaluation, but it also highlights that any useful form of monitoring relies on a balance between control and support. Monitoring that consists only of control tends to lead to conflict and frustration. Some research has shown “the support of managers and colleagues in the implementation of learning as the single most important determinant of training success” (World Bank, 2008a: 36). It is somewhat unfortunate then that our survey shows dissatisfaction with the support received from superiors: when asked to consider the following statement: “*I am satisfied with the answers my senior colleagues give to my requests*”, 45 out of 76 respondents disagreed, partially or completely, whereas only three respondents fully agreed with the statement.

The fact that in certain cases promotions did not seem to take competence into consideration and that evaluations did not pay much attention to performance led the competent people to look for other rewards, which they may have found in the management of donor-funded projects and programmes. This search works against organizational

capacity development, however. When capacities in a ministry are scarce, they may become important assets. In such a context, competent individuals attempt to be in charge of many files, as each file, especially when linked to a financing partner, contains potential incentives. This creates an overload of work on the shoulders of a few individuals and a monopolization of files, about which these individuals complain but which they do not want to break because such monopolization guarantees additional income and status. The monopolization of files reflects a monopoly of capacities, which is unhelpful to capacity development but survives because it serves those who have that monopoly in an environment where capacities are in demand among international agencies. The final result is the construction of two parallel hierarchies apparently performing different groups of tasks: the official one, according to the organizational chart, takes care of the daily work; and an unofficial one, which recognizes the competent individuals, is in charge of specific programmes, projects and plans, bypassing regularly in their implementation the official hierarchy. Such a double hierarchy leads to lack of coordination and an absence of leadership (*Box 8*). Breaking such perverse incentives is extremely intricate, but we need to understand their origin in order to break them.

### **Box 8. Ministries with parallel hierarchies**

Parallel to the official structures, informal hierarchies sometimes emerge. Such informal systems represent a constant challenge to the formal one, although they may be more difficult for outsiders to identify. A mismatch between the official organizational structure and the day-to-day operational hierarchy is fed by severe discrepancies in the skills and competencies of different officers. This creates much uncertainty among officers about their roles, job security and wider organizational goals. In addition, it impedes a shared vision of the ministry's role to take root and to provide the basis for an organizational culture conducive to capacity development. In some cases, a parallel structure has emerged because the official one is perceived as inadequately defined and unable to match the structures to operational functions and tasks. Where the lines of authority and responsibility are not clearly defined, a few key staff members may 'monopolize' the institutions, both in terms of workload, resources and decision-making. Staff will report directly to these key superiors, contributing actively to sustaining the informal hierarchical structure. This may overburden some staff, however, and may exacerbate existing capacity gaps because of the lack of involvement of a significant number of personnel.

*Source:* Analysis of seven functional audits of ministries of education.

**The absence of linkage between performance, evaluation and promotion may have perverse effects on the functioning of the educational administration. In many countries, reforms are underway to make the evaluation process more transparent and support-oriented.**

The weakness of internal staff monitoring is in many cases compounded by the absence of external accountability. When internal staff supervision and support is weak and when the organization itself (that is, the ministry) is not held to account by any powerful actor, it is hardly surprising that organizational ineffectiveness at times renders the effect of individual learning nearly nil. Our studies show various instances where offices and officers succeed in doing competent work and are eager to respond positively to demands for accountability. In Vietnam, for instance, the administration at all levels is held to account by the political authorities, in particular the people's committees; they distribute budgets, but demand performance. Even in fairly chaotic and unresponsive administrations, spaces exist for the creation of a relationship of accountability, which is beneficial to the administration and to the schools, as the example of a district education office in Benin demonstrates (*Box 9*).

**Box 9. Benin: creating accountability for better performance**

An interesting example comes from a Benin district education office (DEO). While most of these offices function in a rather chaotic manner and their staff shows little initiative, in one district the situation was completely different. The head was competent and committed; the files were well organized, regularly updated and contain useful information about the situation of the schools and the teachers in the district; the DEO organized activities which were useful to the schools, such as leadership training for principals and pedagogical exchange meetings between teachers. What lay behind this apparent exception? The DEO made an agreement with an NGO: the NGO provided the DEO with technical and financial support. In exchange, the DEO made a commitment to function effectively for the benefit of the schools. When needed, it asked the NGO for advice on how to do so. It reported back every year to the NGO, which made continued financing conditional upon progress being made. This had allowed for a relationship of mutual trust to develop and for the DEO to function more effectively, for the benefit of the schools.

Accountability has, of course, become a very popular concept and at times the impression is given that whenever an organization is

not functioning effectively, a simple strengthening of the demands for accountability will easily solve the problem. Accountability demands do not automatically lead to better performance, however. There are many fundamental difficulties with such a policy. We would like to underline three, which were identified as particularly important in our case studies.

Firstly, officers, who are made accountable for a particular performance should have the resources and competencies to provide this service. In many public services, this is not the case at present. One reason why officers may feel unaccountable is because the state does not provide them even with the basic tools necessary for their proper functioning. As the Benin example (*Box 9*) demonstrates, the chances of success increase when the officials from whom accountability is demanded receive the support needed to improve on their work and when there is recognition of or reward upon good performance. If the strengthening of external accountability is not accompanied by genuine efforts towards professional development, a de-professionalization of the public service may ensue.

Secondly, questions of accountability are also questions of power. In every society, there are always some groups that receive good services because they have the power to demand performance and, if necessary, they can choose to go to the private sector. Simply setting up accountability mechanisms without strengthening the social groups that need better public services may lead to greater disparities. There is, therefore, an increased trend towards social accountability: civil society organisations and the media rather than individuals demand performance from public services on behalf of disadvantaged social groups. The successful examples of EFA committees and the like or the record cards prepared by the users of a public service show the potential of social accountability mechanisms to lead to better managed and better performing services. One promising actor is the media. Our studies showed indeed that the media, though at times somewhat timidly and in certain contexts undoubtedly with some form of self-censorship, are increasingly pointing at problems of concern to the population, for instance high unofficial school fees, teacher absenteeism or the abuse of funds. In one country, some years ago, some newspapers decided to publish a league table of ministers, based on their performance during

the year. The initiative wasn't a complete success as some ministers apparently decided to pay newspapers for a good ranking. These examples illustrate nevertheless both the potentially influential role of the media and the need for developing their independence.

There is a third serious difficulty with accountability-based reforms. Evidently, social accountability is easier to put in place when the output of a specific effort is clearly visible: has a water well been built, as promised? Is a teacher present in the classroom? The immediate impact of the work of planners and managers is nearly impossible to assess. Moreover, the public debate on complex educational issues, such as how to improve the quality of education, is not always well informed and may lead to a demand for popular but costly and fairly ineffective measures. In one country, an active NGO coalition is pressuring the government to put EFA on the top of the political agenda. However, it also chose as its key priority an increase in teacher salaries, which may not be the most important constraint, but seems popular with both parents and teachers, whose associations are well represented in the coalition.

**Where officers feel a sense of accountability, organizations tend to function better. Efforts to strengthen accountability encounter many difficulties, however, and may be counterproductive if no support is given to officers and if the demands by disadvantaged social groups are not heard.**

Gender is an issue that unfortunately receives fairly little attention within capacity development programmes in educational planning and management. On the basis of our analyses we can highlight three key challenges. Firstly, the number of men and women in educational planning and management departments tends to reflect their position in society, as the following examples illustrate. In Benin and Ethiopia, we find few women in these departments; in Vietnam, their number is much higher but few occupy leadership posts; in Guyana, on the other hand, the small planning department counts almost only women. In general, women are less well represented in educational planning and management positions than in teaching positions and, while their share in the teaching profession is increasing, this is less visible in planning and management. This may be because these are considered

more ‘technical’ areas and less ‘pedagogical’ ones, and according to some stereotypes therefore less appropriate to women.

Secondly, though training programmes try to give preference in their selection to women, in several cases the number of women in the profession is so small that they make up a very small share of participants in training. This may be even more the case for overseas training. The numbers themselves are a source for preoccupation. In addition, when women form a small minority within a group, they may participate less and the preconceived idea that they are less interested in such technical matters may be reinforced. Thirdly, in their content, capacity development programmes in educational planning and management do not tend to pay much attention to the gender issue. This may partly be because this is considered a purely technical area and therefore ‘gender-neutral’. This view is somewhat blinkered, however. The decisions that planners and managers make or influence evidently have an impact on gender positions and relations. And the continued under-representation of women in such key posts may make for decisions and advice that offer little attention to this issue.

**In many countries, women form a small minority in educational planning and management departments. At the same time, capacity development in these areas has paid little attention to the issue of gender.**

While we noticed many differences among the countries where the research was undertaken, in one area there was great similarity – namely, in the absence of a genuine professional development plan. In Guyana, for instance, although a capacity assessment was carried out a few years ago, no explicit holistic plan for capacity development had been put in place within the MOE. There have been many piecemeal approaches, often introduced as parts of different projects, in which training has taken place, using a variety of different modalities. Yet none of those interviewed said that they had ever been asked what courses they would like to receive training in. The same is true elsewhere. Even in countries where staff management issues were generally not problematic, one regularly finds that the culture of staff development for educational administration is weak: needs assessments are seldom undertaken, while training is being offered in function of the ad-hoc availability of training opportunities, not after a systematic and regular

assessment. Staff development funds exist, but they are not always used fully. Staff development is much more supply- than demand-driven and the supply, in particular in the area of educational planning and management, seems more the result of external donor proposals than of an internal reflection on the need for stronger or different planning skills.

The feebleness of staff development is particularly deplorable in an environment where financial incentives are scant and where non-financial incentives may therefore gain in importance. At present, as is well known, posts in public administration are in many countries rather unattractive when compared to the private sector. In some contexts, a change in the culture of the public administration towards more effective and more accountable performances may unfortunately be illusory as long as the issue of incentives is not solved. In some countries, these incentives will probably have to be financial in part, which may be extremely difficult when governments face severe budgetary limits. More money does not automatically lead to better performance, however. Several studies have illustrated the limited impact of financial incentives, for instance in the health sector, where conscience, vocation and professional ethos are important motivational factors (Mathauer and Imhoff, 2006). Grindle's study on the performance of public organizations finds that "while higher salaries may have contributed to better performance in some cases, this factor did not strongly differentiate between the categories of performance" (1997: 484). It should not come as a surprise that improvements in financial incentives do not automatically translate into better performances. Civil servants interpret such increases as a response to longstanding claims and as something which in any case is their due.

Our case studies demonstrate that, while there is an evident concern in the least developed countries with the low level of salaries, many other factors can act as incentives. Our survey shows in this regard an interesting paradox: more than three quarters of the respondents (61 out of 78) expressed dissatisfaction with the financial conditions of their post, but nearly 60 per cent (44 out of 77) nonetheless would choose the same career if they had the choice. Such results do not mean that the salaries of public servants should not be increased, but



rather that, within the present financial constraints, action that has no financial cost can be taken and may lead to more motivated staff and better functioning offices. Incentives, which may contribute to positive change in practices, include a sense of belonging to an organization with a valuable mission and the strength to make a difference, the recognition of individual work, opportunities for meaningful work, the availability of professional development and good management practices. One particular disincentive lies in the scant attention given by decision-makers and heads to the work undertaken by the planning officers or to their advice.

The present incentive structures tend to reward individual attitudes that may be harmful to the organization as a whole. Examples are the frantic search for incentives through the monopolization of files in Benin; or the undue respect for rules and regulations in Vietnam as part of a tradition of centralized planning, while creativity and autonomous action are now more needed. In the worst cases, this may lead to a culture where “hardly anybody proposes any innovation, since the chances of promotion depend on avoiding mistakes rather than on taking initiatives, particularly in organizations demoralized by salary cuts and downsizing” (Lopes and Theisohn, 2003: 100). Breaking such a culture is possible, but when it is part of a public service system as a whole, it may demand changes at that level. Yet because institutional cultures build upon the value systems and behavioural patterns of people, individually and collectively, if we do attempt to change a culture it should only be attempted as change from *within* the culture, not from outside.

While financial incentives for public servants may be weak in many countries, several non-financial incentives can play a strong motivating role: a sense of mission, supportive staff development and participation in decision-making. These may demand a change in the organizational culture of the ministry, which needs to come from within and cannot be imposed from outside.

### **The institutional level: the public service**

Some form of political control over the public service and especially the civil service cadre is standard in every country. The

civil service is expected to implement government policies and some control is therefore considered essential. This is even more so for those governments that have few other resources at their disposal and where the private sector is not strong and therefore contributes little to national development. However, in a number of countries the civil service has become a significant source of patronage more than a tool for national development. In a context of job scarcity and insufficient government resources for long-term development, political leaders, in order to gain loyalty and support, do not have much other capital at their disposal to build or reward a support base than the posts in the civil service. The civil service is therefore used more to create employment than to lead and manage the development of the country. As a result, the standing of the public service has suffered severely in certain countries. This is in itself a reason for its lack of attractiveness and for the demotivation of many civil servants, who are eager as individuals to contribute to national development. Having once been at the forefront of nation-building, the civil service bureaucracy is now at times perceived “as an agent of exploitation rather than a provider of services”, to quote a former Indian Prime Minister (Caiden and Sundaram, 2004: 379). In extreme cases, “the civil service was broken: far from being the vehicle for developing the country, it was a vehicle for looting it” (Collier, 2007: 111).

The status and the effectiveness of the public service are probably the most distinguishing factors among countries and have a profound and widespread impact on the functioning of the ministries and their different departments. The need for reform is widely acknowledged. In the Paris Declaration, “partner countries commit to undertake reforms, such as public management reform, that may be necessary to launch and fuel sustainable capacity development processes” (article 20). Most governments have started such reforms and in many there is a ministry or a department for public management reform. In Benin, for instance, there is a clear political discourse in favour of the transformation of the public service into *une administration de développement*, with demands to separate clearly political from technical posts, to develop job descriptions and to prepare training plans.

Public service reforms generally include several pillars aimed at increasing the accountability and effectiveness of the public service:

public financial management and budget reform; tax administration reform; the provision of adequate management information and financial control systems; administrative reform, such as decentralization; and civil service reform. Examining the implementation and impact of such a complex package of reforms in a diversity of contexts is obviously not our purpose here (a comprehensive and insightful analysis of the characteristics and impact of public service reform can be found in Bangura and Larbi (2006); equally interesting is the evaluation of the World Bank's programmes (World Bank, 2008*b*)). Nor is it our belief that capacity development efforts in a specific area, such as educational planning and management, can on their own change the public service. Our purpose is not to propose specific interventions at this level. We need nonetheless to be aware of the great significance of this level on capacity development efforts that aim at individual and organizational change. We therefore need to be able to adapt interventions in function of the characteristics of the public service.

**The public service can be a tool for national development but in some contexts it has become mainly a source of patronage and an employment-creation mechanism. The characteristics of the civil service in particular have a widespread impact on the functioning of ministries of education.**

Our main interest is in understanding the impact of public management reforms on capacity development in educational planning and management, within the educational administration. Within this theme, the civil service reform is of particular importance. While our studies did not concentrate thoroughly on this question, the impression that consistently comes out of the various country studies is that there is so far little impact of civil service reform on the ministries of education. This is consistent with findings in other sectors, as reported in a comprehensive study by UNRISD: while there is “a broad trend of the widespread adoption by governments of the language of management reform, there has been generally much weaker implementation” (Bangura and Larbi, 2006: 11). One reason resides in the lack of inter-ministerial collaboration and the fact that the ministry or department in charge of public management reform does not seem to have the authority or the credibility to enforce reform. These reforms are usually not planned through and implemented together

with the sectoral ministries. They are central exercises of fragmented governments which the education sector considers as something decided from outside. The education administration does not develop ownership and sees itself at the receiving end only.

But there is more than the question of communication and planning. The main criticism addressed to this reform package is that it is not adapted to the public services of many developing countries. This package was to a large extent designed for countries where the state was felt to be too intrusive, too powerful and a constraint on productive private enterprise. The public service needed to be streamlined and more focused on core tasks. The power of the civil service professionals needed to be counterbalanced by stronger internal control over their performance and more forceful external incentives, for instance through offering choice to the beneficiaries of these services. This was described as a move from Old Public Administration (OPA) to New Public Management (NPM). However, the public administrations in many developing countries – and especially in the least developed ones – do not have the characteristics of the Old Public Administration: they are weak rather than powerful; they are distant if not absent rather than intrusive; their civil servants lack professional development and incentives rather than control and accountability.

Many of the poorest countries have yet to achieve the OPA stage. They lack a professional civil service and rely a lot on patronage and informal networks. In these circumstances, trying to transform existing bureaucracies along NPM lines may create little more than an empty managerial shell. Countries need to complete the process of building effective OPAs before embarking on NPM (Bangura and Larbi, 2006: 21).

Fiszbein (2005: 17) arrives at a largely similar analysis for Latin America.

**Many public management reforms have so far had little impact on ministries of education, partly because some of their precepts are not adapted to the specific needs of administrations in developing countries.**

In many countries, the reform package that has been proposed was based more on ideological convictions, built up in a different

context, than on a deep analysis of the specific constraints, strengths and needs of each country. As a result, what has been implemented has at times been mechanical and at other times harmful. In some administrations, the reform has become an empty technocratic exercise, with a concentration on its most simple interpretations, but also at times its most contentious, such as results-based management or performance-related pay. These can be and are easily manipulated. In one country, the ministry for public administration reform was mainly occupied with preparing formats for yearly, monthly and weekly staff planning and evaluation, without any reflection on the meaning of such instruments in an administration where evaluation has no impact and where planning makes little sense because of the plethora of unforeseen requests and the insufficient knowledge of long-term funding. Studies have shown, including in OECD countries, that “managers can manipulate information on performance management indicators” (Bangura and Larbi, 2006: 12) and that the implementation of performance-related pay experiences serious challenges, especially in an environment where there is little trust.

In some cases where public management reforms have been implemented, their impact on the functioning of the ministry of education has been mixed, if not negative. The example of Moldova is instructive in this regard. As part of the Central Public Administration Reform, in recent years, the staff of the central ministry was cut drastically from about 150 posts to 57 at the time of writing. In line with this cut, the Ministry of Education was expected to review its mandate and tasks, to shift from operational to strategic work. However, the changes in working practices and institutional culture needed for the effective implementation of this new mandate have been slow. The Ministry continues to play the role of an administrative supervisor and arbiter rather than policy formulator, planner and manager. The planning functions are actually performed by the Ministry of Finance. The operational functions should be executed by the district administrations; however, the central Ministry still receives demands, complaints and petitions, in part because of the tradition of centralization. As a result, the staff is too overloaded with this routine to have a strategic perspective. The system of educational planning and management (even from the inside) is seen as rigid, conservative and

resistant to change. The potentially negative impact of cutting back on the size of the civil service has been known for many years (for instance, Lindauer and Nunberg, 1994 or Grindle and Hilderbrand, 1995). Such cutbacks should be accompanied by capacity development programmes and the creation of positive incentives, but this has rarely been the case as they have been implemented with fiscal rather than capacity concerns in mind.

There are evidently examples of more successful reforms. They are characterized by strong national leadership and a more profound assessment of the various social groups, which may defend or oppose reforms. They acknowledge “the need to sequence and phase in reforms to meet existing capacity for implementation or to reduce reform ambitions. Given the weak capacities, the approach to reforming the public sector may be to take small incremental steps, starting with the reform of basic incentives that strengthen accountability and improve performance” (Larbi and Bangura, 2006: 285).

**The impact of public management reforms on the effective functioning of ministries of education has at times been superficial or even negative. More successful reforms have included a focus on strengthening capacities.**

It is perhaps somewhat unfair to evaluate the impact of public management reforms only a few years after their implementation. These reforms tend to take time, because they are particularly ambitious. They are also extremely intricate politically. A very recent evaluation of the work undertaken by the World Bank, probably the most active international agency in this area, by the Bank’s own Independent Evaluation Group concludes: “despite the continued efforts and some modification of the approach, civil service reform has been relatively unsuccessful. (...) The case studies show that reform in the area of civil service and administrative reform has been extremely challenging, even in a relatively supportive environment” (2008*b*: 53). The fundamental reason for the disappointing record of civil service reform is that their costs are immediate and concentrated on well organized groups such as civil service unions, while their benefits in terms of better service delivery are only visible in the long term and are widely but lightly spread.

We can probably draw two fundamental implications from the analysis of these reforms for capacity development efforts in educational planning and management.

- Firstly, some form of participation in reform design and implementation by those who are immediately concerned by it may be an imperative, even if this may slow down the process. Those concerned are the civil servants themselves as well as those who pay for and benefit from their services. Many studies on public management reform present the civil service unions as opponents of change. They do not have to be. In several case studies in a recent IDS Bulletin (White, 2008), groups of reformist public sector professionals played the central role in pushing for reforms that increased service coverage and quality. Our own studies showed that there are many officials who are eager to contribute more enthusiastically to national development and who accept evaluations and accountability demands, but who feel that the 'system' does not allow them to take initiative and that the space for change is extremely limited. Such change leaders need to be nurtured and trade associations, including teachers' unions, need to be brought on board.
- Secondly, it may make more sense to focus on a minimum number of basic reforms rather than to attempt to implement a hugely ambitious package which, even in the most resourceful and developed environments, has encountered serious constraints. Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995: 453) suggest two basic conditions:

First, salaries must be provided that attract qualified, capable people to the public service. As a minimum, public servants must know that they will make enough money to live on. (...) Second, some minimal level of structures and processes must be in place. Organizational structures, job descriptions, hiring procedures, reporting relationships, supply lines and information systems are among the factors that must exist before other kinds of interventions will 'pay off' in terms of improved performance.

Our own studies confirm this but add a third basic condition: that the professional capacity of public servants be strengthened. We need

to identify and prioritize interventions which at the same time develop national capacity and help reform the public administration.

There are also a number of uncomfortable questions. Firstly, where the public administration and the state apparatus as a whole are not contributing to national development but are tools in the hand of an exploitative elite, should capacity development continue to work towards strengthening this self-interested public administration? Or should our efforts focus on non-state actors and should we promote an 'outsourcing' of some basic tasks of the state to actors who have the public interest at heart? Secondly, how should organizations that do not have much of a role to play in this area, such as UNESCO, take into account the importance of the characteristics of the public sector and what activities can be undertaken that promote the strengthening of a development-oriented public service? This synthesis will attempt to formulate some answers in this regard in a later section.

**Public management reforms are extremely difficult to implement politically. It may be useful to involve civil servants and their trade associations more in the reform and it may be necessary to guarantee that the reform develops the professional capacities of public servants.**

## **External support to capacity development efforts**

International agencies play an important role in financing many capacity development activities, in particular, training and technical assistance. Our findings show that in more complex matters related, for instance, to organizational effectiveness and institutional norms, their involvement is marginal. As a result, the impact of the many externally funded capacity development programmes and projects on sustainable capacity remains limited. Where there is national commitment and leadership, these programmes can make a difference, but where internal constraints are deep-rooted, many programmes tend to cause only superficial and short-term changes. This is not a recent phenomenon. Studies in the 1980s and more so in the 1990s showed the ineffectiveness of some enduring approaches and strategies. The report *Rethinking technical cooperation: reforms for capacity building in Africa*, prepared in 1993 for UNDP by Elliot Berg, offered a comprehensive criticism of traditional technical assistance models,



such as the ‘resident expatriate – local counterpart’ model. Such studies and a general disappointment with the impact of external support (to which the first part of this paper referred) led to deep reflection within international agencies about the complexity of capacity development. Our own studies and those of others show, nevertheless, that this reflection has not yet been translated into significantly new approaches in country operations. A range of factors help explain the difficulty for external support to have a profound impact and to achieve sustained success.

Earlier, we mentioned two of these. Firstly, capacity development is a complex process which, for its success, depends on the coming together of various positive elements at different levels and which therefore demands joint interventions in a wide range of areas. Moreover, it is a process that touches on profound political issues and may encounter serious resistance from policy-makers. Secondly, while several countries face similar challenges, the deeper-rooted causes may be different. It is therefore very difficult, if not impossible, to define strategies that work everywhere or to transfer successful strategies from one country to another. However, when a strategy has worked well in a specific context, there is an understandable tendency to interpret this as proof of its general validity. In the same manner, when an organization has built a strong reputation in a particular activity, it tends to refuse to move away from this activity, even if its relevance is decreasing and new demands are arising.

**There is much external support for capacity development, but its impact remains limited where there is little national ownership, partly because of the political complexities of the capacity development process.**

A third factor lies in continued donor preference for interventions that, paradoxically, are not the ones most prone to developing long-term endogenous capacity, such as technical assistance or technical cooperation (TA/TC) and short-term training courses and workshops. It remains a regular occurrence that TA/TC does not lead to a genuine transfer of skills: in many ministries, planning departments work with technical assistants who are more successful in producing plans than in collaborating with their counterparts. While training succeeds

better in skills transfer, it does not necessarily lead to organizational improvement. External agencies, though, continue organizing many training courses. *Box 10* illustrates the strength of belief in the power of training. It is, however, fundamental to emphasize here that training and TA/TC can have a positive impact on capacity development and that they have done so in various programmes. Much depends on the form they take and on how they are integrated into an overall policy. *Part 4* will offer suggestions on more successful ways of using these modalities for sustainable capacity development.

**Box 10. The popularity of training as a capacity development modality**

In summary, donors and the government have made efforts to build the capacity of educational planners at different levels of the education system. They provided equipment and training. The approach and focus of all donors was the same; only the magnitude of their interventions differed. They all considered short-term training as a solution. Training needs assessments were carried out, topics for training were identified, training materials were developed, trainers were trained, and the actual training was conducted. In spite of all the efforts made, there was no new approach for addressing the capacity problem. An education sector development programme had identified staff turnover as a key reason for lack of capacity: trained staff were leaving their posts since the training enabled them to secure more attractive employment elsewhere. In fact, training was not the only reason for the staff turnover, but it did play a role. Nevertheless, the education sector development programme planned to continue capacity building training. It may be surprising that it planned to train more while training was identified as a reason for staff turnover. But the strategy seems to be to train more people until the market no more demands their skill, rather than looking for a strategy that would help retain the trained staff.

Source: expert opinion paper

There are at least three explanations for the continued popularity of training and TA/TC:

- Firstly, these modalities can be implemented even in politically complex situations, precisely because they do not have much impact on political issues and are politically neutral: they hardly change the power relations within departments, ministries or the country as a whole.

- Secondly, these modalities help meet performance targets. This is particularly true when technical assistants prepare the plans and strategies that may be considered essential to a country's progress. This raises the issue of monitoring and evaluation, to be discussed later.
- Thirdly, much external assistance remains supply-driven, partly because national demands are not always well expressed but also because external actors have their own (national or institutional) interests at heart and prefer to offer support which they can indeed provide. Supply and demand are not always in contradiction but may meet up, which is the case for much training desired and needed by nationals and easily offered by external partners.

The use of traditional donor conditionalities offers a fourth explanation for the limited impact of external support. They do not easily apply to the complex reform processes that successful capacity development demands. Our studies show that the conditionalities which at times have been formulated, such as staff retrenchment or the introduction of performance-related pay, were not only difficult to implement politically, even in the most stable contexts, but may have led to unintended effects, such as the loss of the most competent officials. The Outcome Document of a Round Table at the Accra Forum (OECD DAC, 2008: 19) recognizes that

most development actors are familiar with the substantial criticism of the policy conditionality employed in the past which infringed on national sovereignty and was generally ineffective in promoting development. There is now substantial evidence that reforms are only effective when there is strong domestic support for them and that *using aid to buy reforms from an unwilling government does not work* (italics quoted from IDD, 2006).

One way forward is to emphasize accountability to national actors and the Paris Declaration indeed demands greater participation by civil society and greater parliamentary accountability. These trends, however, may come into conflict with the belief in international best practices that countries are asked to adopt. There may also be a contradiction between international policy advice and national policy choices.

**The limited impact of external support to capacity development may also find its source in inappropriately implemented technical assistance and one-off training courses, and in the use of counterproductive conditionalities.**

One conditionality may be to prove that resources have been well spent. This seems an innocuous request, but it may become a fifth reason behind the limited impact of external support. Indeed, the usual evaluation criteria and tools are not appropriate to capacity development programmes. Capacity development is a long-term process that occurs through a series of changes, many of which relate to values, attitudes and norms and which are difficult, if not impossible to measure. Evaluation tends to focus on short-term changes and to examine what is easy to perceive. The result is that at times we privilege short-term efforts that lead to visible change, even if they may be detrimental to long-term and sustainable improvement. The recent World Bank evaluation of public sector reform recognizes the difficulty: “the knowledge of outcomes is imperfect, because of measurement problems and the long lag between the start of reforms and seeing their full effect” (World Bank, 2008*b*: xiv). Nonetheless, there seems to be almost an obsession in trying to use at all costs measurable indicators for what are complex social and political processes, as if what is not measurable is of no importance.

More precisely, there are three separate but closely related problems with the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development. They concern criteria, tools and actors.

The evaluation criteria relate both to the programmes and to the external staff responsible for them. Criteria refer more to the speed of implementation and of disbursement than to the impact of an intervention. Two quotes from our studies offer interesting illustrations. A first concerns programme evaluation: “An important gap exists in relation to the quality assurance of the capacity development that has taken place. There have been project completion reports, and there have been numbers trained, but no substantive investigations or evaluations of whether the modalities chosen or the trainers utilized resulted in good value for money.” A second quote comments on staff evaluation:

one systemic reason why more hasn't been done on capacity development in the education sector can be traced to the donor

community and particularly to the incentive structure for donor representatives acting in-country. Development partner officials tend to be judged predominantly in relation to outputs and joint recognized outcomes. They tend not to include assessment against long-term, sustainable, institutional capacity development.

The *Review of UNESCO's capacity development programmes* (UNESCO, 2008: 57) reflects a similar situation: “expectations of immediate results, frequently associated with programme funding cycles and the pressure for programme funds to be spent quickly, meant that insufficient time was often accorded to the contextual analysis of capacity development priorities during the design and planning of interventions”. In other words, the evaluation criteria lead programme designers and implementers to focus on short-term outputs, at times to the detriment of long-term impact.

The tools used for monitoring and evaluation tend to be the same as those used for planning short-term projects, namely logframes and results-based management matrices. These tools are useful for projects where a specific action leads clearly and directly to a specific result, where the results are measurable and where there are rather few and easily identifiable risks, which can be overcome without significant change to the project. These tools may therefore be of use in the evaluation of the implementation of a specific intervention, but they are inappropriate for the evaluation of the impact of a programme. They may even be harmful because, in a similar way that the inappropriate criteria do, they tend to bias staff towards what is short term and measurable. A synthesis of studies undertaken by ECDPM concludes that some successful cases “would have generated less performance if they had followed the traditional approach to results-based management” (Baser and Morgan, 2008: 92). Berg (2000: 7) argued that “blueprint approaches such as are incorporated in the logical framework concept are not right” for activities such as capacity development and pleaded for “more flexible, experimental approaches, not for refined logical framework concepts”.

One characteristic of such new approaches (*Box 11*) is a focus on the evaluation process as a capacity development exercise in itself, therefore with the greater involvement of the national partners. Indeed, the present evaluation criteria and tools run the risk of

serving the accounting needs of the external partners more than the joint accountability of internal and external partners towards local communities.

### **Box 11. Monitoring and evaluation of capacity development**

The difficulties of monitoring and evaluating capacity development are well known: attention to inputs or short-term outputs rather than to outcomes and impact; strong belief in data and figures, even if capacity development aims mainly at changing less visible and immeasurable characteristics; and the use of tools that suppose a linear and predictable process, while capacity development is highly unpredictable and full of feedback loops, at times with counterproductive effects. Inappropriate evaluation models may lead to action that focuses more on an immediate output than on developing sustainable systems.

However, when evaluation tends to focus on the impact of capacity development on long-term objectives, measurement and attribution difficulties quickly become evident. In addition, the fact that one actor is seldom responsible for the overall impact means that some form of joint accountability has to be thought of. But joint accountability with many actors could mean that nobody feels finally accountable. The advantages of having clear results and precise responsibilities should not be forgotten in an effort to change the way capacity development is evaluated.

There is no easy solution to this conundrum. Some new approaches however may succeed better in assessing the impact of capacity development. They are characterized by stronger participation by the beneficiaries in the definition of what capacity has to be developed and in the assessment of change. They use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. They devote much attention to the relevance of interventions in specific contexts. Most importantly, they want the monitoring and evaluation process to be a form of capacity development; in other words, participants need to learn through and from the evaluation how the programmes and their own practices can change for the better.

One example of these approaches is that of storytelling related to how change and capacity development occurs. A mosaic of stories told by the actors themselves before, during and after an intervention may provide a deeper understanding of the change process and its meaning: *“As participants in development interpret and express how different capacities became meaningful (i.e. useful, relevant) and applied it becomes easier to see what matters and what leads to impact. And in the process their capacities for “evaluative thinking” are developed, which is fundamental for M&E of capacity development”* (Ortiz and Taylor, background paper; see Annex 2). Evaluative thinking may then in turn lead to better capacity development by encouraging self-reflection, learning and performance.

Thinking may then in turn lead to better capacity development by encouraging self-reflection, learning and performance.

**Conditionalities and monitoring and evaluation approaches used by external partners can be counter-productive because they lead staff to focus on short-term outputs rather than the long-term impact.**

A final factor in explaining the doubtful impact of external actors is related to their own functioning. Relationships between agencies for the exchange of information are still rather rare, especially when they transcend a specific sector. In the same way as there is little linkage between a ministry in charge of administrative reform and the one in charge of education, there is little linkage between an agency working on the former theme and one working on the latter theme. The *Review of UNESCO'S capacity development programmes* (2008: 41) notes that

few questionnaires or regional reports described or gave mention to how UNESCO's activities tie in with broader support frameworks for capacity development in the public sector. Rightly or wrongly, this would seem to indicate that UNESCO's own programming is designed and managed in isolation of capacity development taking place already within the broader development community.

This is surely a challenge transcending UNESCO.

There has been noteworthy progress towards more coordination within the UN and the donor community as a whole, but its unintended effect in some cases seems to be that more time may be spent on the administrative aspects of the coordination than on the actual exchange of information and collaboration. Another unintended effect of new aid mechanisms such as budget support may be that external agency staff spends less time actually engaging in the field in projects and programmes. Their expertise may have suffered. An evaluation of the World Bank on its work in middle-income countries makes the point that "local perspective on how to implement development solutions is essential. In this regard, the Bank's knowledge services, perhaps in part because they have not fully used or helped build national capacity, have too often been good on diagnostics but weak in applying expertise to specific situations" (2007: 4). The IOS review of UNESCO's work also recognizes the challenge of internal capacities: "Most staff interviewed for this review expressed doubts about UNESCO's own capacities in relation to its capacity-building function. They noted

weakness in UNESCO's technical expertise, a dearth of experience in change management and organizational development, challenges related to intersectoral programming and communication" (Stiles and Weeks, 2007: 3).

**International agencies have to strengthen their own expertise in order to be able to design and implement more successful capacity development programmes.**



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## **4. TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT: PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES**

The previous section demonstrated the complexity of capacity development processes, even in a fairly restricted field such as educational planning and management. It is evident therefore that developing strategies that can address such a complicated and interlinked set of issues is particularly challenging. It is useful to keep in mind that for several decades, governments and international agencies have looked for successful capacity development strategies and that so far nobody has yet come up with a workable formula for guaranteed success. The simple reason is that such a formula does not exist: both the complexity of processes and the diversity of contexts preclude such a formula. This obviously does not imply that nothing can be done and that one simply has to wait for capacity to grow autonomously. Nor does it mean that there is no distinction between strategies. Some strategies have proven to be more successful than others; and some fit well with the mandate of international organizations such as UNESCO and their comparative strengths while others do not.

This part will propose a number of strategic principles and a series of strategies that can help improve the impact of capacity development. These principles can apply to all international organizations. The strategies have been thought out with UNESCO in mind. They may therefore be of particular relevance to UNESCO, but will probably be of interest to others. While the focus will be on educational planning and management, the chapter may form a source of inspiration in other fields, precisely because many challenges are not specific to any field.

While this paper makes suggestions for the implementation of several strategies, two difficulties with making such proposals are worth emphasizing again. Firstly, the relevance of a strategy very much depends on the context of each country and, to some extent, each organisation. While this is a general rule, there is a more specific need to adapt strategies to the context of fragile states. Though here again, it should not be forgotten that each fragile state is to some extent unique. Secondly, the ideal capacity development strategy forms a package of different interventions. The total possible effect of such a package is worth much more than the simple sum of the different interventions.

**Box 12. Adapting strategies to context: a complex endeavour**

A general statement on the need to adapt strategies to context may not be of great use to policy-makers who want to improve their national capacities, or to international staff wanting to support them. A more precise answer could be found in a matrix that relates the characteristics of a country (for example, the effectiveness and attractiveness of the public administration; the legitimacy of the state; or the level of political commitment) to appropriate capacity development strategies. Some efforts have been made to put more details on this ‘fitting’ process. A study on Latin America (Fiszbein, 2005: 57-59) identifies four key dimensions: the state’s overall strength and formality, the prevailing type of political representation, the degree of social and economic inequality, and the present characteristics of service delivery. Two key characteristics, used increasingly in the context of fragile states, are political will and capacity (Teskey, 2005; Brinkerhoff, 2007). On this basis, a distinction can be made between four types of fragile states, or more precisely, four scenarios of fragility: deterioration, post-conflict transition, arrested development and early recovery.

While such distinctions are useful, an actual matrix linking groups of countries to sets of strategies may encounter several problems. It is tricky to assign countries to a specific group, for political as well as conceptual reasons. It may lead to a fairly mechanical and not always appropriate application of recipes to a specific country. It may also result in bypassing the process of institutional analysis undertaken by the local actors, which in itself can be a genuine capacity development exercise. We suggest a simpler approach that may nevertheless be helpful, as the following example shows. This approach is less demanding because it starts from a clearly defined constraint in terms of capacity development and not from a set of global country characteristics.

Three countries face a similar constraint, namely the planning department fails to undertake its work in a competent manner. To understand the reason, we need to look at the different levels, as follows:

	Country A	Country B	Country C
Individual	Lack of competences	Lack of competences	Sufficient competent staff
Organizational	Mismatch between competences and tasks	Match between competences and tasks; the right person is in the right position	The leadership does not encourage the use of skills for better planning
Institutional	No significant challenges	No significant challenges	Reward and incentive structures do not recognize performance

In country B, training is an efficient capacity development strategy, because the potential of translating individual training into organizational performance is higher than in the others. In country A, a change in staff management rules need to accompany training. In country C, training in planning may have little impact until the problems at a higher level are solved.

## Strategic principles

Based on the analysis undertaken in *Part 3*, we propose five key principles for the successful design and implementation of capacity development strategies. These principles have a number of implications, which we address here briefly, and which feed into the choice of strategies. Some EFA partners have also defined a number of strategic principles. UNDP's can be found in *Annex 5*. We suggest, in addition to the general principles, a few specific ones of relevance to fragile states (*Box 13*). This separation between principles for non-fragile and fragile states is not clear cut; neither is the distinction between fragile and non-fragile states. Arguably, all principles apply to all situations, but some are more important in certain contexts.

### **Box 13. Some specific capacity development principles for fragile states and situations**

The following principles do not apply uniquely to fragile states. They remain fairly general, but they are of particular relevance to fragile states and situations.

- Prioritize capacity development even though the way forward is not clear

Ultimately, the improvement of conditions in a fragile state hinges on the state's ability and willingness to address its social problems. Humanitarian assistance, however well intended and necessary, is only a temporary measure – never a long-term solution. Therefore, it is essential that efforts to increase national capacity (at the centralized and decentralized levels) are incorporated from the outset. Generating buy-in for capacity development among government officials is the first step in doing this. This can be a challenge as senior officials are often under immense pressure to show 'immediate' results, especially in post-conflict situations. This principle also implies considering how efforts to improve capacity can be built into all activities.

- Build trust and good inter-personal relationships

Without trust on both sides, it will be difficult to make a meaningful impact. Part of this can be established by finding ways of building in longer-term relationships. Especially in emergencies and post-conflict situations where there is significant donor interest, consultants can come and go within short periods of time. One reason is that it is expensive for technical experts to spend significant amounts of time on assignment. It is possible to ensure some type of long-term commitment of consultants to work on a specific area. Though any one mission may not be very long, multiple visits over a period of years may help establish relationships and build trust. Even more important is showing respect for the expertise and

knowledge that national staff members have and which is indispensable for setting up a successful capacity development approach.

- Produce a capacity development plan, even if it is a small one

While it will take time to produce, a capacity development plan will help identify areas where specific skills or knowledge are needed and ideally should help different partners coordinate efforts and ensure that all necessary areas are addressed. The needs analysis should include input from local officials, while recognizing that their input will be based on their experiences and therefore may not represent all needs.

- Give people the tools they need to do their jobs

International organizations expect national staff to produce data and reports but these staff may not have the skills of report writing or, even if they do, they may not have the computer skills (or the computers!). A lack of these skills among national staff also makes it more probable that international TAs will simply 'do the work' rather than invest in trying to transfer the skills. It is essential to invest also in generic skills training such as language and computer training. In addition, in most fragile states there is a need to supply resources (from paper clips to vehicles). This must be done cautiously or it will consume the entire project budget, but it is not fair to expect ministry staff to do their jobs if they do not have the needed tools, while international consultants have ready access to resources, including laptop computers, printers and vehicles. Some capacity development efforts, especially training, suffer because the national officials do not have the required resources to implement the training.

- Capacity development needs internal leadership and ownership and needs to develop internal leadership and ownership.

Capacity development is very much an endogenous process. External agents cannot and should not attempt to replace internal actors: the objective is precisely to strengthen internal ownership of EFA plans and their implementation. Capacity development only succeeds in the long term where there is commitment and where such commitment is reflected in internal ownership and leadership. The paradox though is that, while a government needs to take leadership for capacity development to succeed, in some cases government capacities arguably are so scarce that its staff cannot take leadership. This, however, is not absolutely correct: in all countries, there is some space for action and, within the government and elsewhere, there are actors who strive for national development and units that are prone to change.

The implications are that external support to capacity development efforts needs to identify and support these actors and units. Our focus needs to shift from pointing at gaps and deficits to identifying points of strength and opportunities for change. We need to invest in change leaders, even at the risk of seeing only a few of them succeed. Identifying such change leaders demands good knowledge of a particular country. Short workshops with a bigger group may help to spot them. A further point is that we need to seek out opportunities for our partners to learn as part of all the activities we implement, even if at times this may lead to slower implementation.

- Capacity development strategies must be context-relevant and context-specific.

A profound understanding of the context within which educational planners and managers operate is fundamental to the identification of relevant strategies. There is an evident need to diversify policy suggestions in function of the specific situation and characteristics of each country. A successful strategy in one country does not necessarily work elsewhere. “One size does not fit all when it comes to capacity development, particularly that which is focused on the dynamics of change in organizations” (Stiles and Weeks, 2007: 21). The characteristics of the context may be more important than the choice of strategies.

Recognizing that context is more fundamental than strategies does not imply that strategies are of no importance. The key point is rather that the choice of strategies, the decisions on how they will be implemented and the speed of implementation need to take into account the context. In the contextual analysis, local actors play a central role as they know the context better than outsiders. Outsiders can, however, contribute in three ways. Firstly, they can be guides and coaches in this exercise of analysing capacity development processes and linking them up with relevant strategies. Secondly, because as outsiders they are less linked to internal interests, they can become brokers between the actors participating in this analysis. Thirdly, because of their better knowledge of other countries, they can confront the specific situation of this particular country based on that of comparable places and they can turn what seems a complex and challenging strategy into something feasible based on its successful implementation.

- Capacity development needs to be an integrated set of complementary interventions, though implementation may need to proceed in steps.

In many countries, a capacity development programme will need to deal with capacities at different levels and will probably have to combine several strategies. These may include the development or clarification of organizational tools, such as detailed organizational charts and mission statements, or job descriptions for units as well as for individual officers; professional development activities, which include but go beyond training; the development of a common vision that inspires staff; the establishment of incentive schemes; and demands for accountability from within or outside of the organization. While each individual strategy has a contribution to make, their effectiveness increases when linked with other strategies. The weight and importance of each of these strategies differs from country to country.

However, such integrated programmes are difficult to manage and to take on board, especially in countries where they may be most needed. They tend to become too complex to be feasible. The simultaneous implementation of such a long menu of capacity development prescriptions may be a recipe for disaster.

It may therefore be more appropriate, in particular in countries where absorptive capacity is weak, to break down this complex process into more manageable elements. Not only is this easier to handle; it also offers greater possibilities of some progress and some success, which may be needed to keep the process going. It is important, however, to focus early on on those elements that may have a ripple effect. This could, for instance, be the setting up of a corps of educational planners, which may have several benefits in various areas: it would force a reflection on the number and profile of planners needed at each level of the education system; it would ensure that posts are occupied by staff with at least a minimum level of competencies; and, it would limit the room for appointments based uniquely on political criteria. It could be the training (for example, through joint work on an institutional assessment) of a key group of directors within the ministry of education in order to create the critical mass needed for organizational reform.

- Commit to a long-term investment in capacity development, while working towards some short-term achievements

Capacity development is a long-term exercise. Most contexts and needs require more time to assess, plan, deliver and evaluate than is typically anticipated – there is very often a significant amount of time between an action and any measurable result. The more typically anticipated time frame of 1-4 years from intervention to results is simply too short in terms of most aspects of capacity development. It is not always the case that the source of inappropriate time frames is external agencies and actors. In many instances, internal forces, for practical or political reasons, request or demand time frames that are ill-suited to the needs and realities. The focus on short-term results can lead to a decrease in long-term impact.

Many agencies and governments now recognize that 10- to 20-year time frames may be more appropriate, in particular in countries where capacities are least present. The IOS Review of UNESCO's work also recognizes that "successful capacity-building programmes (...) are long-term initiatives, which have received consistent support from UNESCO and other development partners, at times for eight years or more" (Stiles and Weeks, 2007: 18). Clearly, these longer time frames present a number of practical and functional challenges: national and international partners need to see progress to remain motivated and committed and they may need to show short-term progress to obtain continued funding and support. Progress needs to be monitored, so that all can be sure that the movement is in the right direction. While the change is long term, particular successes may emerge in the short term. In other words, we need to include concrete outputs and outcomes in the long change process in order to build on success and build confidence. It is essential that national partners are the ones deciding on these outputs or outcomes and on the timetable, and that they lead the work towards them. In order for these intermediate products not to become the end-all, the partners need to maintain flexibility. Experience has shown that a rigid and severely time-bound concentration on a particular product, such as an EFA plan, may indeed lead to the successful completion of this plan, but without the indispensable involvement of national actors, therefore sacrificing the capacity development opportunity the plan preparation presents.

- Before any outside intervention, assess its impact on national capacities at the individual, organizational and institutional levels.

This fifth and final principle is of a more pragmatic nature. Before planning any outside intervention in capacity development, detailed consideration needs to be given to its possible impact on national capacities at all levels and, in the context of this strategy paper on EFA, to the country's capacity to achieve that goal. The principle is similar to the one that is being followed for all infrastructure projects, which now include an environmental assessment. This should be done even when national actors demand outside support. Demands by a particular person or unit are at times uniquely inspired by their own limited interests without caring about the wider development interests of the country.

The suggestion is not to proceed through a complex and time-consuming appraisal. In any case, it may be unworkable to foresee from the start all the possible outcomes and impacts of a specific intervention. However, what should be possible is a short 'estimation' of the medium-term effects of the intervention on the country's capacity to achieve EFA in an autonomous and sustainable manner. Such an estimation should refer to the outcomes and impacts of previous, similar interventions in similar contexts. This may help avoiding repetitions of capacity development exercises that failed to achieve much progress or may have been unhelpful.

There is an evident risk that such a 'rapid assessment forecast' may become a mechanical form-filling exercise. But this risk may be less important than the risk of disregarding the possibility of the negative impact of an intervention or of taking for granted that whatever is called capacity development is intrinsically positive.

### **Working towards a supportive context**

The analysis in *Part 3* has shown the profound impact that the national context and the characteristics of the public service may have on capacity development processes. It is only fitting that any international organization remains modest about the influence it may have on these broad contextual factors: change at these levels should be the reflection



of national priorities and the result of nationally led initiatives. Public sector reform is a particularly complex enterprise and few, if any, international organizations have a clear mandate in this area. There are, nonetheless, areas of action where an international agency can play a role and strategies which it can implement to develop a context that is more supportive of EFA and more recognizant of the need for effective educational planning and management in this regard.

### *Promoting political leadership on EFA*

Political leadership stands central to successful capacity development. However, political commitment to capacity development has not always been visible when plans are being prepared: capacity dimensions are often not addressed systematically in EFA national action plans. It is not rare that EFA plans prepare projections for the yearly recruitment of teaching staff but do not include similar projections for the recruitment of administrative, supervisory, planning and management staff, who are necessary for the useful deployment, support and monitoring of these teachers.

The promotion of political leadership does not have to rely simply on international meetings. It is important that such leadership is not located among only a few individuals at the highest level, but that it transcends the various levels of the administration and that groups other than those presently in power are equally committed to and support the EFA programmes. Some strategic suggestions made on the following pages address this issue. Among the activities that an international agency can help initiate and promote are the following:

- support and strengthen national coalitions for EFA, and provide them with relevant knowledge on EFA strategies;
- contribute to the preparation of national EFA monitoring reports (the UIS data and indicators can be particularly useful in this regard);
- prepare policy briefs.

**Capacity development for EFA demands political leadership. International organizations can promote such leadership at the national level through support to EFA coalitions and national EFA monitoring reports.**

*Recognizing the professional character of educational planning and management*

There may be a need to reflect on some normative or guidance instruments in the specific area of educational planning and management, without entering into decisions that are a part of national sovereignty, however.

A finding that occurs throughout our national analyses concerns the lack of attention given to the need for a specific professional profile for educational planners and managers. This is particularly preoccupying at the district levels, where staff members with teaching experience are only regularly, if not systematically, assigned to planning posts. International organizations could take action at the international and national levels. At the international level, this could consist of helping to set up an international association of educational planners and managers (in a similar way as such associations exist for school principals, among others). This association could, for instance, help define generic profiles (by groups of countries) for planners working at different administrative levels. At the national level, support could be given to countries that are thinking of giving the posts of educational planners and managers a specific professional character, either through the creation of a specific corps or the integration of this staff into an existing professional corps. Still at the national level, we may also promote the setting up of national associations of planners and managers. In some countries (seven out of the 42 in our survey) such associations exist already, supported to some extent by IIEP. The survey respondents recognize the professional support such associations can offer (*Box 14*).

The capacity development analysis in Benin proposed the creation of a sub-corps of educational planners, to be integrated into the existing corps of planners. This suggestion was welcomed by both the national authorities and the international agency representatives in the country. While this specific proposal is relevant to Benin, it may not be relevant to other countries. They may want to address the need for a clearer profile, to guide recruitment, deployment, training and evaluation practices, through a different strategy. What should in all cases be avoided is that planning becomes a purely technical exercise, isolated

from implementation and without reflection on its relationship with policy-making. While planning needs certain technical skills, it should also be a transversal exercise in which various ministry departments participate.

**Box 14. The role of planners' associations**

Planners' associations have various tasks and engage in many activities. Their mission is typically threefold: firstly, to engage in policy advocacy. This includes research, policy advice, and policy-related debate and analyses, mainly through the organization of lectures and conferences. Secondly, they allow for professional exchanges among planners, through diverse dialogue mechanisms. Thirdly, they help mobilize and motivate educational planners as a group. The Ethiopian planning association exemplifies the latter. It was created by the Department for Educational Planning and Management at the Addis Ababa University in order to strengthen the links between graduates of the department: this appears to be an interesting strategy which could contribute to increasing the motivation of planners and their feeling of belonging to a specific profession. All three functions may be considered tools for capacity development. Of course, they are not mutually exclusive; the very existence of a planners' association constitutes recognition of planners as a professional group, which may be a motivational factor even if the mission is much more focused on policy advocacy on a wide range of educational issues.

**International agencies can promote recognition of the professional character of educational planning and management, for instance through support to national and international associations of planners and managers and through developing generic profiles.**

*Promoting social demand for better performance*

The analysis in *Part 3* called attention to the need to work on both supply of capacities and demand for capacities. Supplying better capacities through training or technical assistance may not have much impact when there is within the country little demand for the use of these capacities. Different groups demand better performance by the ministry: the beneficiaries of the ministry's services, in particular parents and students; those who help to fund some operations, such as NGOs or local authorities; or the political authorities who recognize educational improvement as a priority.

A capacity development strategy should therefore stimulate both the demand for and the supply of capacities. In some cases, demand-focused interventions may be more important. They may also have a positive impact on political will. The OECD/DAC admonishes that “where the temptation to mount parallel initiatives arises from a perceived lack of commitment on the government side, donors should consider the scope for enhancing demand-side pressures, by promoting mechanisms such as service delivery surveys or citizen report cards, or by developing civil society and private sector advocacy capacity”(2006: 25). The development of civil society capacities should not only be seen as a strategy to put more pressure on the public service, but as a valuable goal in its own right.

The usefulness of civil society and community support to EFA needs little discussion. Their contribution is important not only in quantitative terms, but also because of the innovative approaches they may bring. They can act at the national level by influencing general policy, and at the local level with more focused support. In several countries, civil society coalitions exercise a significant role in reform design, implementation and above all, monitoring. Among many local initiatives, we may mention a recent study by Mehta (2008) which notes how public bodies made up of school welfare committees representing teachers, parents, education officials and NGOs monitor learning centres together in Delhi. In the specific area of educational planning and management, civil society and non-governmental organizations do not play much of a role, however. This is not surprising as system-level planning and management remains very much a government responsibility. It may even be preferable that such domains are somewhat buffered from political pressure.

There are, nonetheless, three areas where an international organization can work with and for civil society organizations with a view to strengthen capacities in educational planning and management.

Firstly, collaboration with northern and southern civil society organizations and NGOs can encourage their interest in and understanding of educational planning and management issues. Many UN agencies already have a good record of working with NGOs and

some collaborative mechanisms are in place. Where NGOs have worked towards EFA, their attention has generally been much more on the school level and on teacher-related matters than on the system level. Many NGOs are now aware of the need for higher-level action. Work in this regard could take the form of genuine collaboration in research or training exercises, or it could consist of specific training for the officers of these NGOs. Two examples of such collaboration, though in different fields, can be found in *Box 15*. Special attention has to be given to teacher associations. They are potentially a very important and powerful actor to support EFA. However, in several countries where we worked, these associations showed little interest in developing a more effective educational administration. Their preoccupations were mainly with the working conditions of teachers.

#### **Box 15. Examples of UNESCO collaboration with NGOs**

The involvement of a network of 21 local NGOs in the design of the ‘Capacity Building for Literacy and Adult Learning’ programme in Kosovo was integral to identifying capacity development needs and ultimately, the programme’s acceptance and legitimacy. The proximity of different NGOs to beneficiary groups meant that it was possible to organize house-to-house visits to motivate potential learners. Their familiarity with the learner’s life circumstances meant that these NGOs were also the most qualified for developing learning content. They were thus consulted from the outset in the development of curriculum and learning materials. The ability to draw on the real-life success stories of different learners was critical for mobilizing other learners and raising awareness in broader society.

IIEP has undertaken research on challenges to the implementation of decentralization in West Africa, in collaboration with ministries of education, national research institutes and the international NGO Plan. This has allowed IIEP to benefit from Plan’s field-based knowledge of action at the local level, while Plan was able to gain insight from IIEP’s international expertise. The collaboration has also brought Plan and the ministries of education closer together. Plan has therefore been able to reinforce its impact at the system level, while at the same time integrating the conclusions from the research into its local-level programmes. The national research institutes were able to develop their capacities through this collaboration, which has also led to a closer linkage between research and policy-making.

Secondly, the public debate about education and about EFA is, in most cases, vigorous though not always well informed. International organizations could inform and influence the debate on EFA and on the

role of educational planning and management in at least two ways: by providing training to journalists, under different forms (actual training sessions and internet fora) and by preparing articles for publication by newspapers. Thirdly, by strengthening civil society organizations and national institutions, an international organization can support their role in holding governments accountable. The reinforcement of civil society is a more sustainable strategy of developing governmental accountability than any accountability exercised by an outside actor. UIS plays a role in providing relevant data and analytical reports on EFA progress.

**International organizations can promote social demand for public service performance through working with civil society organizations, teachers' associations and the media to strengthen their expertise and their role in social accountability.**

### **Increasing the effectiveness of ministries and planning departments**

This section will discuss the strategies that an international organization may undertake or may support in order to strengthen the effective functioning of ministries of education and, in particular, their departments in charge of planning. The next section will then look at strategies to strengthen the individuals who make up these departments. Such a separation is in reality difficult to make. All 'organizational' strategies have to have an impact at the individual level, while strategies aimed at developing individual capacities should also aim at strengthening the organizations to which they belong. When a strategy succeeds in addressing weaknesses at both levels, its impact is evidently stronger. We have, nevertheless, kept to this distinction for analytical reasons and for the ease of the reader. For similar reasons, we present separate strategies though ideally a capacity development programme will combine several strategies into one package.

Before examining strategies for increasing the effectiveness of ministries, regional and district offices and planning departments, it is useful to summarize briefly the key conclusions from the analysis undertaken in *Part 3*.

### *Key conclusions about effective planning departments*

A complex set of interventions can help improve the effectiveness of organizations such as district and regional education offices, ministries of education and their planning departments. These will differ from country to country but our analyses indicate a few important and arguably universal elements.

A first step consists of the creation of a common vision about the role and responsibilities of the organization. This vision needs to be shared as far as possible by all staff members.

Closely linked to this is a second element, namely the development of a 'normative framework' for the organizational unit (be it the ministry, a planning department or a regional or district office). This framework could consist of an organizational chart that clarifies the mandate of each unit or department and links this to the overall mandate of the ministry. This chart is accompanied by detailed job descriptions for each of the units and for the individual officers in each unit. Ideally, officials work together on the development of these tools, so that a strategic reflection takes place on the role of the ministry, each unit and each staff member. Such frameworks have the additional advantage of helping to regularize the recruitment, nomination and promotion processes and they may limit the margin of manoeuvre for purely political nominations.

A third step consists of improving staff monitoring and evaluation within ministries. Internal monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are becoming more participatory and output-oriented, linking the work of the individual staff member to the ministry's mandate and roles. Monitoring and evaluation tend to have a more positive impact on the functioning of the organization, when a) there is a clear connection between decisions about staff promotion and rewards; and b) when it is performed in a supportive atmosphere: the support received from superiors as part of an evaluation is a strong source of motivation.

Fourthly, organizations need to pay more attention to staff development. Few ministries develop a genuine staff development programme, and neither do they incite their staff members to take personal initiative in this regard. Especially when there may be more

pressure from the public demanding accountability, staff development is indispensable to enable more effective performance. The deprofessionalization and demotivation of the civil service is a real risk, if the strengthening of external accountability is not accompanied by efforts towards professional development. The creation of professional associations, to which we referred earlier, can be part of such a staff development approach: “building professional identities can also encourage ethical behaviour among staff and build commitment to mission-driven activities” (Grindle and Hilderbrand, 1995: 457).

Finally, incentives need to be available to individual officers and should promote their performance and commitment, but they should also strengthen the public service as a whole.

The influence of any external agency on factors that are intricately linked to the internal functioning of an organization is evidently limited. There are, nevertheless, several strategies that can be initiated or supported.

### *Collaborating in an analysis of the functioning of planning departments*

The first strategy consists of working with a team from a specific organization (let us focus in this context on the planning department) to better understand its functioning. Indeed, the decision on actual capacity development interventions has to be preceded by an analysis of organizational functioning, which allows for the identification of the most significant constraints and bottlenecks, and of areas of strengths and opportunities for change. This may help avoid undertaking activities that may be inappropriate or the impact of which may be very limited or short term. “It is important to get beneath the surface of an organization, and look for both formal and informal, hidden aspects that may crucially affect performance” (OECD/DAC, 2006: 22).

The leadership in this exercise should be taken by the staff of the organization, the subject of the review. This analysis offers at the same time a unique opportunity for collegial learning by the international experts, who can ask probing questions and refer to experiences elsewhere, and the national staff, who are much more aware of specific constraints and of space for change but may not always interpret these



within a wider framework. The realization that countries and colleagues elsewhere face similar constraints and have succeeded in overcoming them can in itself be an important source of motivation. Such collaborative analyses can best be guided by a fairly specific question, such as: “Why does the department have difficulty in preparing an EFA plan autonomously?” The analytical process may pass through a few workshops or discussion sessions. It does not have to be called an ‘institutional analysis’ if such a term may be intimidating. The final objective – to understand what needs to change for the organization to function more effectively – is what counts.

Such analyses are more useful in order to develop comprehensive capacity development programmes than training needs assessments, which tend to pay attention almost exclusively to the capacities of individual officers without examining the influence of organizational and institutional characteristics. Several agencies have in recent years developed guidelines or manuals that are helpful to the implementation of such an analysis (for example, EuropeAid, 2005 and Caprio, 2008 – *Box 16*). UNESCO, for instance, has undertaken several such analyses and has built up expertise in this field (for example, Radi and Chang, 2003, on Niger; De Grauwe and Carron, 2000, on Grenada; Saidi, 2000, on Palestine).

**International organizations can support national actors who lead a process of institutional analysis as a first stage in the design of a capacity development programme.**

*Using and promoting participatory and learning-oriented evaluation models*

The methods used for monitoring and evaluating capacity development processes have a significant impact on the nature of the process itself. Concentrating on short-term results may lead to neglecting sustainability and the long-term impact. However, a focus on achieving objectives that are far into the future and not always directly linked to the specific intervention may lead to a loss of direction and motivation. While there are probably no easy solutions to this paradoxical and complex area, we may draw two conclusions from the experiences of innovative programmes (*Box 11*).

**Box 16. FTI guidelines for capacity development analysis in the education sector: a brief summary**

*Step 1: Set the stage for participatory dialogue around a capacity development strategy*

- Strong, long-term commitment and consistent leadership
- Broad ownership of and inclusiveness in the capacity development process
- An informed debate on capacities

*Step 2: Understand and build on the country context for an effective capacity development strategy*

- Establish a baseline for capacity development
- Analyse the institutional context: change processes and constraints
- Embed education sector capacity development into the framework of broader reforms

*Step 3: Conduct a capacity gap analysis*

- How to conduct a capacity gap analysis
- Key areas for the capacity gap analysis

*Step 4: Design a capacity development strategy – mobilize resources and set priorities*

- Mobilize domestic resources
- Involve technical and financial partners
- Formulate a strategy based on priority trade-offs
- Define time-bound implementation modalities, through a one- to two-year action plan

*Step 5: Define a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the capacity development process*

- Set up monitoring and evaluation modalities for capacity development efforts
- Summarize the overall capacity development process
- Learn from experience and share lessons at the national and international levels.

Firstly, an evaluation focuses best on what a programme can and aims to achieve, while keeping in perspective the final objective of sustainable capacities. One of UNDP's policy statements in this regard (2008: 6) is that it "focuses on evaluating its contribution at the output and the outcome level. At the 'impact' level, the question of attribution makes it difficult to draw a direct link between UNDP's support and development results achieved." Sida's manual (2005: 43) in a similar way asks the question: "At what levels is it reasonable to define

project and development goals? This choice must be based on what is actually done in the project. It is not reasonable that the development goal of a project that trains teachers of tax administrators should be better service to the citizens.” The World Bank’s management, in a response to an evaluation by the IEG of its training activities, argues similarly: “IEG’s evaluation framework assumes that training should always achieve monitorable and measurable changes in workplace behaviours. Such an assumption is unrealistic and inappropriate for the many activities that provide partners with information about policy options or emerging global issues and that are likely to contribute to development objectives in the longer term” (2008a: xvii). Such an approach, in practical terms, may translate into the use of results chains rather than logical frameworks. When carefully employed and interpreted, a results chain allows for a more appropriate evaluation, and will guide the actors towards strategies that have outcomes not only at the individual level but also at the organizational level. *Box 17* gives a detailed example of how such a results chain could be used.

**Box 17. A results chain as a mode of evaluation**

Programme to be evaluated: an IIEP training programme

Expected result 1: Improvement of individual capacities, on condition that the training is done well, that the content is useful and that the participants have the chance to test their newly acquired skills (these factors are under the control of the programme organizers).

Expected result 2: The units to which individuals belong have improved their functioning, on condition that the participants in the training are chosen well, they are supported by their organization upon their return, and they work in a motivating environment (some of these factors are under the control of the programme organizers, while others can be influenced by them).

Expected result 3: The ministry or organization of which these units are a part find it easier to achieve their objectives, on condition that the leadership in these organizations has defined a common vision, and that the leadership supports, rewards and sanctions staff in function of their contribution to this vision (none of these factors is under the control of the programme organizers, but they can influence some).

Expected result 4: The education system is improving, on condition that there is political stability in the country, that socio-economic conditions allow for individual and national investment in education, and that education is recognized

as a priority (these factors are not under the control of the programme organizers, but they may have some influence on a few).

With such a results chain as the background, IIEP can be evaluated on four points:

- Have we implemented our capacity development interventions as planned (number of activities, number of participants, and so on)?
- Has result 1 (improvement of individual capacities) been achieved?
- Have we taken the necessary steps to improve the chances of result 2 being achieved? For example, have we contacted unit heads after the training to discuss the use of the new skills acquired by participants? Have we discussed with participants what they can do to improve their reintegration?
- Are our interventions relevant to the context? More precisely: when designing our interventions, did we take the various conditions mentioned in the results chain into account so that there is a better chance of results 3 and 4 being achieved?

A second implication is that an international organization should promote the profound involvement of beneficiaries in the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development programmes, and the use of evaluation tools and methods that allow for such involvement. Such involvement may to some extent help solve the conundrum presented above: participants and beneficiaries in capacity development programmes may be best placed to decide on the intermediate results they want to see obtained on the road to longer-term progress. To ensure that their voices are heard, a mixture of different methods may need to be used.

**International organizations can, in their own capacity development programmes, use monitoring and evaluation methods that give a greater say to the participants in these programmes and pay attention to long-term progress and short-term outputs.**

*Advising governments on structural reforms for more effective planning*

A second possible way in which an international organization may assist in the improvement of organizational effectiveness is supporting organizational restructuring, through giving advice and helping to implement the structural reform. This could follow logically from its involvement in an analysis of the ministry's functioning. In the area

of educational planning and management, this means more precisely working with governments on the mandate and the organizational location of a planning unit, on its internal constitution and on the profile of its members, at the central and decentralized levels. Where possible, this should be part of an overall rethinking of the structures of the educational administration.

However, in many ministries the main challenge is not structural but one of organizational culture. In politically uncertain environments, where the staff is poorly motivated and where incentives towards improvement are missing, structural reorganization risks being superficial and confusing for staff. Structural changes tend to be more successful when they are the result of an internal process of reflection and when they form part of a wider programme of organizational reform. IIEP's capacity development programme in Egypt (*Box 21*) offers an example of such a multifaceted reform.

**International organizations can advise government on the structural reform of planning departments, as part of a comprehensive rethinking of the educational administration.**

*Strengthening leadership within the ministry and its decentralized offices*

Political leadership for EFA at the national level needs to be translated into and supported by technical leadership within the ministry, based on a common vision about how to achieve EFA. Bringing together the leading staff within the ministry for workshops aimed precisely at developing a common vision has proven to be helpful. It appears that such sessions may at times be particularly useful for hearing the voice of women, who are often a minority and who, when given the opportunity through such workshops, may feel more comfortable in presenting their point of view.

Equally important is the support of potential change leaders. In the specific area of educational planning and management, for instance, UNESCO, through its regional offices and in particular through IIEP's Advanced Training Programme (ATP), has succeeded in creating such change agents within many ministries. Evaluations of the impact of long-term training (for instance, Gilboy, Carr, Kane and Torene, 2004)

show that models such as the ATP can lead to important gains in critical thinking, initiative-taking or self-confidence, in addition to stronger technical skills, which are important for future leaders. They also draw attention to the usefulness of training a group of like-minded change agents within specific organizations and to the need to build follow-up into training. The follow-up is particularly important for staff from fragile states, where organizational constraints can quickly outweigh any benefits obtained from long-term training. In such contexts, relying on a diversity of training interventions that all form part of a capacity development package may be necessary.

**Within capacity development programmes, international organizations can strengthen leadership within the ministry and its decentralized offices by supporting the professional development of potential change leaders, so that they gain in critical thinking and initiative-taking, in addition to stronger technical skills.**

### *Promoting inter-ministerial collaboration*

Technical assistance of the ‘long-term expert – counterpart’ model has rarely succeeded in having a significant impact on the organizational constraints that explain the weakness of planning. Various agencies have therefore promoted the use of a very different model, one conveniently called ‘twinning’, though the term inter-ministerial collaboration may be more appropriate in the case of ministries. The idea is to link two public organizations with a similar mandate, generally one from a developed country and one from a developing country. The support arrangements are flexible: collaboration during workshops and study visits, short-time consultancies, support to the development of specific tools and training.

While there have been few evaluations of such twinning programmes, they have on the whole been fairly positive. A recent evaluation of inter-ministerial cooperation programmes between Norway, Zambia and Nepal concludes that “this support has been very beneficial for personal and organizational capacity building in selected thematic areas” (Kruse and Hoppers, 2006: 6). The evaluators identify “the use of ‘colleagues’ from another system, who combine knowledge with a broader perceptiveness, whose expertise is grounded

in the home system, and who do not claim to be global experts” as “a crucial element that makes for a significantly different kind of learning experience” (2006: 7). This collaborative model seems to have succeeded in developing ownership of the external advice, mainly because the colleagues who offer technical assistance are more focused on developing, in a collegial manner, appropriate responses to local problems than on offering ready-made solutions. Such twinning arrangements do not have much impact, however, on systemic issues and continue to work within fairly unequal relationships.

An international organization may want to promote such inter-ministerial collaboration programmes, in particular between educational planning units. Evidently, such programmes should be well thought out and cannot be limited to a study visit or a simple training programme. They may be most useful when the programme works towards a specific product and when the agenda is decided by the ‘beneficiary’ unit. Such collaborations do not have to be limited to a North-South scenario; they undoubtedly could include South-South cooperation. Some planning units in the South have significant expertise especially in dealing with new challenges, such as SWAPs or a move towards decentralization.

**International organizations can promote inter-ministerial collaboration as a model that allows for sustainable learning and appropriate responses to local challenges.**

### **Competent and committed educational planners and managers**

The analyses and research that form the basis of this strategy paper lead to several conclusions about constraints at the level of the individual planners and managers, and about strategies to overcome these constraints. We want to emphasize again that ideally these strategies form part of a package of interventions, decided upon at the national level, supported by international organizations and aimed at improving the organization as a whole rather than the individual member of staff. Before identifying the various strategies, we will now briefly recall the key conclusions from the analysis in *Part 3*.

*Key conclusions about capacity development processes at the individual level*

There are many differences between countries and within countries: in some cases, planning departments have sufficient competent and committed staff who contribute effectively; in others, there are enough trained people, but they are used inefficiently and incentives to engender commitment are missing; in other cases still, there is a significant lack of well trained staff. In general, training needs are diversifying and changing in nature because of governance reforms. It is precisely during moments of change that training can be an important modality to facilitate the change process and lead it in the desired direction. Staff in regional and district offices need access to a well developed and integrated training programme, which should ideally be offered by national institutions.

The characteristics of successful adult training are by now well known and are probably true for most countries. One needs to move away from theoretical teacher-centred lectures to work-based discussions, mixed with practical exercises. Training can take the form of a learning-by-doing approach, where trainers become ‘coaches’, ‘facilitators’ or ‘guides’. Such an approach links learning to the expected tasks and outcomes of participants, while offering them opportunities to interrogate critically their usual work practices. At the national level, a series of short workshops, interspersed with on-the-job application, is generally a more useful model than one or two lengthy one-off courses. Focusing on a group of colleagues rather than on a single person tends to lead to easier application of the skills and techniques acquired. While international consultants may have more expertise in certain areas, relying on competent national institutions and resource people is more appropriate, especially for provincial and district training, because of their better knowledge of the context and their easier interaction with participants.

Beyond the issues of skills level and training needs stand the questions of motivation and incentives, and the existence within the organization of a staff development policy and plan. For training to have a better chance of leading to organizational development, several factors have to be in place: there need to be opportunities to try out



and apply the new ideas; there must be support for this process from superiors and colleagues; participants should be given the formal opportunity to share their newly learned knowledge and skills with colleagues; and training should be in line with institutional signals on how officials are expected to behave.

These findings have several strategic implications. Training is a necessary part of a capacity development strategy, but as an isolated intervention its chance of leading to organizational improvement may be limited in certain contexts. Training strategies and programmes need to be adapted to the national context; they therefore need to be demand rather than supply driven. Because of the diversity in contexts, those who supply training should offer a diversity of courses and programmes.

should offer a diversity of courses and programmes.

Technical assistance of the resident expatriate-counterpart model has had little success in transmitting skills and as a rule has failed to change organizational culture. But other technical assistance models have been much more successful (*Box 18*).

These findings have several strategic implications for international agencies: although they may not have control over several of the above-mentioned factors, these factors do have an impact on their work.

#### *Providing on-demand technical assistance through mobile teams*

In several countries, and especially in the least developed ones, there remains a profound need for technical assistance in educational planning and management. For instance, one area where countries may need assistance is the planning process, which ideally is bottom-up and links school development plans to district and regional plans, and so to a national plan. Another area is monitoring and evaluation, including the assessment of student achievement. A third area is recognition of the need to give attention to gender issues in educational planning and management. At the same time, the availability of greater financial resources for EFA through FTI, in particular, raises again the absorptive capacity issue.

### **Box 18. Technical assistance as capacity development**

The record of technical assistance/technical cooperation (TA/TC) as a tool for individual learning as well as organizational development is poor. Reports since the late 1980s have commented upon the intrinsic difficulties with the way in which most technical assistance was delivered. The comprehensive 1993 Berg report concludes that, as a training vehicle, the expert-counterpart system is “artificial and untested: it can be found nowhere else but in the world of technical cooperation. No public or private organization has developed institutionally or trained its staff through such an instrument” (1993: 104). Among the reasons are the differences in background and the extreme disparities between the expert and the counterpart. As an instrument for organizational change, it is victim of a basic paradox: “Its effectiveness depends to an important extent on the existence on the ground of some degree of organizational cohesion and stability. When organizational disarray is profound, sustainable impacts are likely to be few, even when technical cooperation programmes are well planned and carefully designed, superbly staffed and diligently supervised” (1993: 203).

One fundamental weakness is that this modality is in many cases based on a wrong perception, namely that countries suffer from capacity gaps, while the problem is not one of gaps (there are enough capacities) but one of constraints (the capacities are not used or their use is neither promoted nor rewarded). TA/TC could be an answer to capacity gaps, but it is seldom an answer to capacity constraints. In certain cases, the provision of TA/TC may well make it easier for governments to continue under-using or under-rewarding their own capacities.

This is not to say that some gap-filling may not be necessary in particular cases. The fundamental question is, what are the characteristics of TA/TC that best help fill such gaps on a sustainable basis and help promote effective organizations? For TA/TC to play a useful role, profound changes in its delivery are needed and recommendations made for many years have led to changes in practice, though old models survive. This strategy tends to work better “when it has been used for a discrete and well-defined technical task and the client agency has sufficient core capacity to both oversee and benefit from the contribution” and “when it has been used in the context of a clear TA strategy with a plan for phasing out the assistance without loss of policy or programme momentum” (World Bank, 2005*b*: 31). The principles of such capacity-focused TA/TC include: strong national ownership (TA/TC is fully demand driven and locally overseen); a flexible and responsive design rather than any standard offer; a move from direct interventions (whereby the expert or consultant undertakes certain tasks) to indirect interventions (where the expert supports and facilitates local teams with their work); and greater appreciation of national expertise.

This translates into changes in the actual TA modalities: the replacement of the long-term expatriate TA model by a series of short-term assistance missions that become shorter with time, in order to put increased demands on local personnel;

national working groups with one outside facilitator who accompanies the process on demand; and the promotion of South-South networking between institutions. An important change that needs to accompany this process is a shift in the evaluation of TA towards examining the process of collaboration with government staff and its effects on the capacities of these staff members rather than the actual products and outputs.

An argument can be made (Fredriksen, 2005) that recent trends may limit the technical assistance available to countries: because of their move towards budget support, the technical capacity in specific sectors of many aid agencies has decreased and ministries of education have less say over the use of these budgets, which are regularly controlled by the ministry of finance. A market exists for technical assistance but it does not work well: there is imperfect information on the availability and quality of assistance and the price mechanisms are distorted because the beneficiary is not always the one who pays.

One potentially more successful strategy could consist of creating a few specialized teams that have the technical expertise and the international experience coupled with a genuine understanding of the complexity of internal constraints and change processes. These teams, specialized on specific themes, should be available at short notice to offer tailor-made support and advice on demand. This could take different forms but in the neediest countries may include a series of short visits and workshops over a relatively lengthy period, so that a collegial and trustful relationship can develop and internal capacities can be developed sustainably.

**International organizations could promote a new model of technical assistance that does not substitute for the use of existing national capacities and which coaches and guides national experts, for instance through regular support provided by mobile technical assistance teams.**

### *Setting up and strengthening national and regional training and research centres*

For a sustainable improvement of capacities in educational planning and management within the administration, many countries may need a national centre specialized in this area. The decline of

existing centres or the sheer absence of national training opportunities help explain the disintegrated nature of many training programmes and the continued reliance on outside institutions, even for short workshops. The existence of a national centre with a clear mandate in training and research in educational planning and management is probably a precondition to developing a coherent and locally owned training programme. This needs to be addressed with some urgency, especially as policies of decentralization demand that district and regional staff play key roles in designing and implementing EFA plans. The training of staff based at the regional and district levels in most cases needs to be taken care of by a national centre. Regional centres may be more appropriate for small island states, for example, in the Caribbean and in the Pacific. Such regional hubs could in any case be useful in all regions to support the national centres. The Review of UNESCO's programmes undertaken by the Education Sector recognizes that most of the interventions were targeting the central level (only two out of 65 programmes focused on district actors).

International organizations can help set up or strengthen national and regional centres, in two areas in particular. Firstly, they can advocate among governments for the core role of such centres, within an overall policy of paying attention to higher education as an indispensable support to EFA. The OECD/DAC recognizes that "there may be a case for large new investments in training capacity. In some countries, it may be time to be concerned less exclusively with primary and secondary schooling and give greater attention to rebuilding national training institutions – public and private – and the institutional conditions for them to work well" (2006: 29). Secondly, an international organization can help develop the capacities of these centres by training their staff and providing them with resources, such as libraries and documentation centres. The precise nature of these centres – they can be university departments, autonomous institutes or units of the ministry of education – and their mandate – they could focus exclusively on educational planning and management or they could include this theme among a wider range, linking up for instance with school leadership – depend on the particular situation of each country.

UNESCO's experiences can be instructive in this area: since the early years, it has supported the creation of national and regional institutions in all its fields of competence. In educational planning and management, the regional offices at one time functioned to some extent as regional training centres. IIEP has consistently supported national and regional centres. Experience has shown that creating an institution or a centre is easier than to keep it functioning effectively for a long period. The centres that have worked most successfully have generally had a significant level of autonomy in staff recruitment and in financial management. UNESCO's advocacy should also emphasize the need for more regular and fruitful relations between ministries and training centres. Probably the fundamental issue concerns the government's genuine commitment, which should express itself in the necessary financial support, while allowing for autonomy in key management decisions.

**International agencies can support national and regional training and research centres, through advocating among governments for the need for such centres and through offering training and knowledge resources.**

### *Setting up and supporting regional and international networks*

One particularly useful strategy for supporting national centres is to strengthen their relationships with comparable centres in other countries. The potential usefulness of such networking is well known. Precisely because they have a similar mandate in comparable situations, the centres regularly face the same problems and solutions that some have already tried and which may be useful to the others. Exchange and mutual learning are therefore beneficial to all, and take place within fairly equal relationships. It is well known that in adult learning, one tends to learn easiest and most pertinently from colleagues who work within similar environments. When such centres all undertake training activities, in principle the exchange of training materials between centres could be a win-win strategy. Networking is also a form of South-South cooperation.

UNESCO, for instance, has supported and continues to support several networks in training, research or information exchange and it has done so in various fields, including education innovation, literacy

and educational planning and management. Not all networks have survived and to keep them functioning may have become even more difficult over time, especially because financing for regional activities among major international agencies is less easily available than before, with the decentralization of much funding to local donors or to recipient governments.

Beyond financing, networking faces two other major challenges. Firstly, although in principle all network members benefit from collaboration and exchange, few may be eager to make the effort that will benefit all others. It is the typical ‘free rider’ problem. This is why a network generally needs a core actor who brokers collaboration, distributes resources and ensures that all members draw some benefits. IIEP has been playing this role quite successfully with various networks (*Box 19*). Secondly, the monitoring and evaluation of networks is notoriously difficult. This is not only due to the complexity of developing an evaluation tool flexible enough to accommodate the situational contexts in which different constituents find themselves, but because not all constituents are dealing with the same organizational challenges. Certain network members may have stronger organizational capacities and are therefore able to benefit from the interventions at a faster rate. In addition, the outcomes of networking (related, for instance, to the confidence and credibility of its members) may be even more difficult to perceive than for classical capacity development interventions, while much investment is needed upfront. However, several useful tools exist now to assess the intensity and the nature of interactions within networks (Bloom, Reeves, Sunseri, Nyhan-Jones, 2008) and new approaches to the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development in general are equally relevant to networks.

**Networking between training and research centres in educational planning and management is a useful strategy to offer relevant support to these centres and to draw benefit from their rich experiences. There is a continuous need to support these networks and to advocate their usefulness among international and national partners.**

#### *Offer a diversity of training options*

Training needs remain high in many countries and training is recognized everywhere as an important part of a capacity development

package. The appropriate training strategy and the relevant content may differ from country to country. Our analyses and studies show that the context does indeed have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the training.

### **Box 19. UNESCO's support for networks**

IIEP has set up different networks, which have to a large extent a common objective, namely to develop capacities through south-south collaboration, with IIEP playing the role of a network convener and supporter.

The networks bring together different kinds of actors: ministries of education and their research divisions, in particular in SACMEQ (working in eastern and southern Africa); research and training institutions in educational planning and management in ANTRIEP (in South and East Asia); and individual researchers and officials working mainly in public organizations in the areas of technical and vocational education and social inclusion policies in the redEtis network (in Latin America).

The three networks employ different strategies. SACMEQ focuses on one main activity: the monitoring of student achievements through a regional survey in which all of the region's countries take part. Throughout this process, the national staff assumes leadership and gets support while preparing, implementing and analysing the surveys, three of which have been undertaken so far. ANTRIEP publishes a newsletter, organizes seminars on various teams and invites its members to participate in collaborative research and training activities. redEtis promotes exchanges among its members and collaboration on the relationship between education and the world of work and social inclusion. It publishes a regular newsletter.

All three networks have succeeded in developing the capacities of their members through creating close collaboration among actors faced with similar policy questions. All three networks also pay close attention to linking research and policy.

Under IESALC's co-ordination, the 'Observatory of Higher Education (HE) in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)/Map of HE in LAC' offers an occasion for sharing academic research on the changes within education systems. Researchers with an in-depth knowledge of the needs of population groups, and comparative knowledge of different dimensions of education policy, are able to share their expertise with interested parties throughout the regions. This is important for (i) inputs to sound education policy development and formulation at the national level; (ii) inputs to educational management and governance in national infrastructures; (iii) monitoring the quality of education provision; (iv) the discovery of shortages of expertise and technical capacity in all of these areas.

This has two implications. Firstly, international agencies and institutes should ensure a flexible training offer. The needs and contexts are too diverse for a standardized approach to be effective. Diversification should concern the public, the methods and the content. The alternative options can include:

- training staff from national and regional training centres;
- training leaders in educational administration through collegial workshops;
- a specialized and high-level international course for future leaders and change agents;
- training ministry teams through distance education programmes.

Secondly, before finalizing a national training programme, international agencies should reflect carefully with the beneficiary country on the contextual and institutional constraints, on the relevance of different training approaches and evidently on the most appropriate content. This may imply in some cases that, rather than to organize training, other interventions are proposed – related, for example, to staff management – which need to precede a comprehensive training programme.

**International organizations need to reflect on the necessary diversification of their offer of training programmes and models to ensure their relevance to national contexts.**

*Promote the integration of training within a professional development package*

It may indeed be appropriate for educational planners and managers to move away from the concept of ‘training’ to the more comprehensive one of ‘professional development’. Training is an integral part of professional development, but it is only one part. Precise job profiles, competitive and open recruitment on the basis of such profiles, on-the-job support through guidance and manuals, and regular and supportive monitoring and evaluation all form part of an overall professional development package. When training forms part of such a package, its benefits will be felt much more widely.



The professional development of educational planners and managers does not depend on an international partner; it depends on the employer. However, international organizations can and should promote this change in approach. They can prepare specific guidelines on professional development and possibly, develop training materials.

**International organizations can advocate that governments pay attention, beyond training, to the professional development of educational planners and managers.**

### *Knowledge linking*

Information on educational planning and management is increasingly available in various forms: research reports, training materials, statistical databases, policy briefs, and so on. Much of this is available free of charge on the internet. But for planners and managers and for those who undertake research or training on these themes, two challenges have to be overcome. Firstly, notwithstanding significant progress, in developing countries the digital divide still exists and translates into an information divide. A second challenge is not limited to developing countries: while we have access at times to massive amounts of information, we may not have the capacity to transform this information into knowledge – that is, to select the most important bits of information and to deduce the key lessons.

An organization such as UNESCO can play a key role here, fitting fully within its mandate (it recognizes ‘clearing house’ as one of its five main functions): it can help open up sources of information and knowledge to the staff of ministries and of training and research centres throughout the world. This could take the form of linking ministries and centres in the South to UNESCO institutes such as IIEP and UIS, perhaps along the lines of a model described in *Box 20*, or of making internet-based sources of information (for example, web sites with access to major scientific journals, portals and clearing houses) available to their staff. It needs to be accompanied by an analysis of this information and its synthesis into planners’ briefs and policy briefs.

### **Box 20. Knowledge linking**

Scientists at the Cheikh Anta Diop University (UCAD) in Dakar (Senegal) are now better placed to cooperate with researchers overseas, thanks to the installation of the first computing grid at the university, the fruit of a joint effort by the UNESCO/Hewlett-Packard project 'Reversing Brain Drain into Brain Gain for Africa' and the Grid Computing Institute of France's National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). The project aims to provide universities in five African countries with grid computing technology so as to reduce the migration of African university graduates by giving them the tools they need for their research.

Launching this first link represents an important step in bridging the digital divide between North and South. It will facilitate international scientific cooperation for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and for Senegal in particular. Thanks to this link, scientists at the University of Dakar now have access to considerable information technology resources.

Internet and grid computing are key tools for the development of emerging centres of excellence on the African continent and their integration worldwide. This is all the more important in view of the crucial role of digital technologies for economic development.

This project follows the successful implementation of a similar UNESCO/Hewlett-Packard project for south-east Europe, launched in 2003. It has helped create websites, databases and new research projects in several universities in the region. Four universities have become entirely self-sustainable in the use of grid technology and the project continues in three others.

The provision of knowledge should also include the provision of tools, manuals and training materials, which ministries can use in the educational planning process. UNESCO's 'Open Training Platform', which offers free access to a wide and diverse range of training materials, is an example of what can be initiated.

**International organizations can strengthen their knowledge-linking roles in educational planning and management, to help bridge the knowledge divide.**

### **Box 21. Capacity development for strategic planning in Egypt**

The Egyptian Ministries of Education (MOE) and Higher Education (MOHE), together with IIEP and UNESCO, have carried out a series of studies and activities in an attempt to systemize strategic planning. These studies concluded that there is a need to create a common understanding of the concept of strategic planning and to develop appropriate organizational structures, processes and technical skills at the national and decentralized levels.

Both ministries have made a considerable effort to strengthen dialogue between themselves and among different education stakeholders, and to establish a soundly-based strategic planning system. To this end, the following capacity development activities have been implemented by the ministries in close association with IIEP and local counterparts.

- (i) **Training:** The MOE has adopted a learning-by-doing approach in order to develop the capacity of its staff at the central level and in the governorates. Eight members of staff, four from both ministries, have participated in IIEP's Advanced Training Programme (ATP) between 2004 and 2008. IIEP has also designed short-term training for officers from both ministries. In June 2006, the World Bank Institute (WBI) held a practice-based workshop on education reform for personnel from the ministries.
- (ii) **Developing plans:** In March 2006, the MOE began to prepare a five-year (2007-2012) national strategic plan for pre-university education, with technical support from IIEP. It is based on two complementary and comprehensive components: 14 priority programmes identified through situational analysis and participatory workshops with major stakeholders, and an analysis and projection model to be implemented at both the national and governorate levels. The MOHE has also developed a master plan for higher education with a horizon of 2021, in which both quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed.

With technical support provided by IIEP, a Policy and Strategic Planning Unit has been created in both ministries. The main tasks of the units are to prepare education national strategic plans and annual recurrent and investment budgets; assist in formulating plans at the governorate and institutional levels; produce annual progress reports; work on policy issues; and keep the information databases needed for strategic planning up to date. Within the framework of decentralization, 14 of the 27 governorates in Egypt have now formulated their own strategic plans. Great emphasis is being placed on cooperation, coordination and the exchange of experience among planning teams at both the central and governorate levels.

*Source:* El Bilawi and Sharaf, 2006.

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## CONCLUSION

Implementing capacity development programmes that represent sustainable and long-term strategies of national development is a complex exercise. It demands intervention at different levels, which can seldom be implemented by one single actor. Precisely because capacity development is a complex and overwhelming challenge, cooperation and partnerships are imperative. Partnerships should be conceived not only as initiatives that bring together external partners, but above all they should link international and national institutions. The ‘One UN’ and the UNDAF reforms are changing profoundly the ways in which UN agencies work at the national level. These changes are in line with the overall movement within international development agencies towards greater coordination and country leadership.

The key challenge to the successful implementation by international agencies of capacity development programmes may not be financial. Resources are available. What may be more difficult to achieve is to build long-term relationships with national partners. This demands that we see ourselves as colleagues to the national staff, with whom we will work. It starts from a vision of capacity development as a mutual learning process, where we work, plan and agree on activities and ways forward together. It includes collaboration towards the success of these programmes, joint accountability for their results and a common pride in their achievements.

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## **ANNEX 1. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF COUNTRIES FOR DETAILED CASE STUDIES**

Detailed case studies were undertaken in Benin, Ethiopia and Vietnam. The choice of these countries results from a combination of several criteria and considerations and allows us to examine a variety of situations. Without going into all the details, the following elements show this diversity:

- The three countries are different in terms of size and administrative organization.
- Their present educational status is equally different: in 2004, Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at primary level in Benin was estimated at 83, in Ethiopia at 46 and in Vietnam at 95,
- In 2005, GNI per capita was estimated at US\$ 160 in Ethiopia, US\$ 510 in Benin and US\$ 620 in Vietnam.
- Recent economic development (expressed as annual GDP growth over the past three years) has been strong in Vietnam (7.6 per cent), even stronger in Ethiopia (nearly 9 per cent, though from a lower basis) and weaker in Benin (4.3 per cent).
- The population growth rate over the same period was 3.1 per cent in Benin, 2.1 per cent in Ethiopia and 1.1 per cent in Vietnam.
- All three countries received support from the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), as of January 2007.
- Vietnam is one of the eight pilot countries where the UN reform, labelled 'One UN' will be tested.
- Vietnam is one of the UNESCO National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) pilot countries.
- In Ethiopia, collaboration among international agencies, including the UN agencies, around the theme of capacity development in education is particularly strong, and the UNESCO office plays an important role in this regard.
- Until recently, for a number of years the UNESCO Institute of Statistics had an officer in Ethiopia; Vietnam is being supported by UIS through its staff based in Bangkok, and Benin through the staff based in Dakar.

- UNESCO has a national office in Vietnam; it has a cluster office based in Addis, which is responsible for several countries including Ethiopia; UNESCO does not have an office in Benin, which is under the responsibility of the cluster office in Accra (Ghana).
- In all three countries, IIEP has several graduates from its Advanced Training Programme.

The authors of the case studies were:

Benin: Anton De Grauwe and Koffi Segniagbeto, with Maoudi Johnson, David Odushina, Hyacinthe Gbayé and Thierry Lairez.

Ethiopia: Dramane Oulai, Candy Lugaz, Marc Bernal, Teklehaimanot, Alemayehu Minas and Marcus Edward.

Vietnam: Anton De Grauwe, Le Thu Huong, Nyi Nyi Thaung and Eisuke Tajima.

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## **ANNEX 2. LIST OF BACKGROUND STUDIES PREPARED IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME**

- *The impact of donors on capacity development* (Abby Riddell): While the three country studies gave some attention to the role of donors, their focus was on governments. Two separate studies (on Guyana and Bangladesh) therefore specifically examined the role of donors and their impact on capacity development.
- *An analysis of the functioning of ministries of education*: Constraints on the development and use of capacities are at times the result of ineffectively functioning ministries (for example, unclear mandates, lack of communication and insufficient or unhelpful staff monitoring). Somewhat surprisingly, few institutional analyses have been undertaken of the functioning of ministries of education. This brief paper summarizes the findings of a comparative analysis of seven such ‘audits’ (Bolivia, France, Grenada, Nepal, Niger, Palestine and Zanzibar).
- *The role of NGOs in capacity development* (Inger Ulleberg): In many countries, particularly where the state’s resources are limited and its effectiveness subject to much criticism, non-governmental organizations play a key role, at times even supplanting the government. This analysis of the literature examines how NGOs interpret capacity development and what impact their action has on the government’s strategies in this regard.
- *Transforming a ministry: the examples of Argentina and Chile* (Inés Aguerrondo): The Argentinean Ministry of Education has gone through significant change in the past two decades, which has allowed it to become a more effective leader in education in this increasingly decentralized country. This study (in Spanish) analyses this change process and highlights key factors. A second study looks at a similar though quite different process in Chile. A synthesis compares the two experiences.
- *The status of educational planners and managers: an international survey* (Anton De Grauwe and Inger Ulleberg): In many countries, educational planners are not a group with a clear professional identity and are not part of a professional corps, other than the

teaching corps. Eighty planners from about 50 countries responded to a survey.

- *Capacity development in teacher training with new technologies: the experience of South Africa* (Temechegn Engida, Monica Mawoyo and Neil Butcher): IICBA has worked intensively with South African institutions in developing innovative models in capacity development in teacher training, relying on new technologies to widen their impact. This paper examines the impact of this experience and draws lessons from it for capacity development strategies in general.
- *Incentive structures as a capacity development strategy in public service delivery* (Inger Ulleberg): Country studies have confirmed that in order to attract competent staff on a long-term basis to the public service, present incentives may not be sufficient. However, budgetary limits on government spending make it difficult to render these posts more attractive. Governments and international agencies have tried to create special incentive schemes. This analysis of the literature identifies different schemes and examines their results.
- *Learning purposefully in capacity development. Why, what and when to measure?* (Alfredo Ortiz and Peter Taylor): Many capacity development programmes and processes aim at long-term, sustainable change, which depends on seeing many smaller changes in at times almost invisible fields (rules, incentives, behaviours, power, and so on.). Yet, most evaluation of capacity development tends to focus on short-term outputs and on clearly visible changes. This paper offers some ideas on how to deal with this paradox by examining how monitoring and evaluation could make a difference to capacity development.
- *A historical analysis of UNESCO's action in capacity development* (Maud Juquois): Since its creation, UNESCO has undertaken work which can be considered 'capacity development'. This paper, prepared on the basis of an analysis of UNESCO documents, describes the evolution of the organization's action and reflections with regard to capacity development.
- *Public management reform and education sector planning and management* (Hannes Siege): The country case studies

and several thematic studies have emphasized the important relationship between capacity development within ministries of education and the rules and regulations which characterize public service management. These studies have also shown that public administration reform has not yet had a significant impact on the functioning of ministries of education. This paper looks at this relationship with specific attention to the impact of new public management.

- *Decentralization and capacity development*: Increasingly, planning and management tasks are undertaken at the district and regional levels, where challenges may be more daunting than at the central level. The responses may also have to be different. The three country studies show the diversity of scenarios. In addition, a specific study was undertaken on Hungary (by Ivan Bajomi), which has gone through a radical decentralization process and where several initiatives were undertaken to overcome local capacity constraints. A brief position paper on capacity development in a context of decentralization has been prepared by Candy Lugaz and Anton De Grauwe.
- *Capacity development in fragile states* (Lynne Bethke): A paper has been prepared on the specific context of fragile states. It is based mainly on the author's experiences, on an analysis of the literature and on a few interviews with key informants.
- *Capacity development in a state in transition: the example of Moldova*: IIEP undertook a specific study, through a field mission, on capacity development in Moldova. Some key findings are available in a mission report.
- *The role of universities in capacity development in Africa*. One significant constraint to capacity development in many countries concerns the absence of a sufficiently large pool of well qualified people. This can in part be explained by the incapacity of universities to provide such staff. Brief country studies (Botswana, Ghana and Nigeria) were prepared.
- The five opinion papers prepared for the experts' meeting are: *Capacity development through training in the education sector*, by Fadimata Alainchar

*Can training bring about organizational change?* by Claudio de Moura Castro

*Capacity development and the role of external actors*, by Ingemar Gustafsson

*Lack of planning capacity: a persistent challenge to the Ethiopian education system*, by Tesfaye Kelemework

*Capacity development for educational planning in Caucasus Region: challenges and perspectives*, by Giorgi Machabeli.



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### **ANNEX 3. KEY ISSUES IN AN ANALYSIS OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

The graph that follows presents in a somewhat simplified manner the various dimensions of capacity development: the individuals work within organizational units as part of public administration, which functions within a specific context.

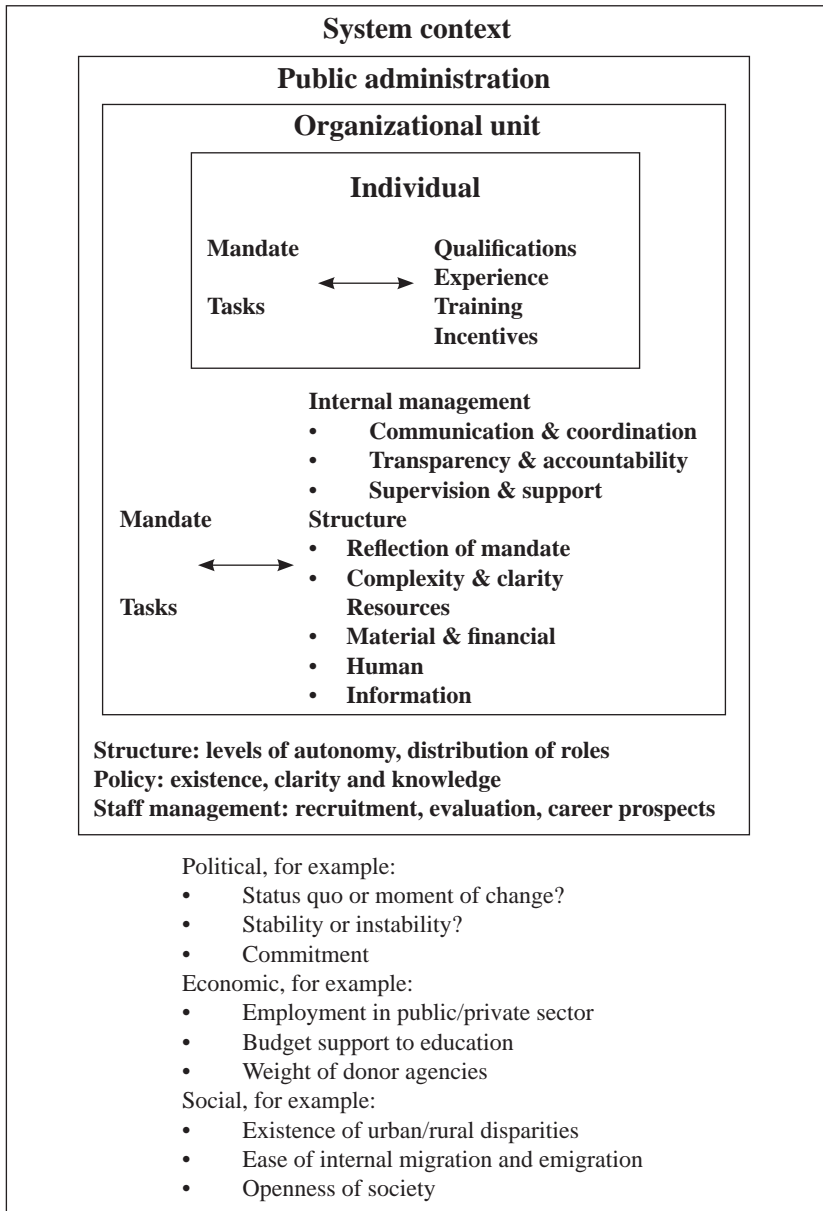
The *individual officers* (the educational planners and managers) each have a mandate, as reflected in their job descriptions, and perform certain tasks, which may be different from their mandate. Their effectiveness depends on a combination of qualifications, experience and training, on the relevance of this combination to their mandate and tasks, and on the presence and strength of incentives and the absence of inhibitors.

The individual officers work within an *organizational unit*: this can be the planning department within the ministry of education; but planners and managers also work at the regional or district levels, and the unit can then be a regional or a district education office. This unit has a mandate to fulfil and tasks to perform. Its effectiveness depends on the performance of the individual officers but it is also the result of three organizational elements. Firstly, the ways in which internal management is helpful for the effectiveness and motivation of individual officers, through developing an efficient internal communication flow, through clear lines of accountability and through supportive supervision. Secondly, the relevance of the organizational structure – whether it reflects the unit’s mandate and is sufficiently clear and simple. Thirdly, the availability of the necessary human, material and financial resources plus the availability of relevant information.

The organizational units, in our analysis, all form part of *public administration*. Three issues are of specific importance in this area: the distribution of tasks among units and their level of autonomy; the existence of an education policy and a capacity development strategy; and most importantly, the management of the public service – including, for instance, recruitment and evaluation criteria and procedures, and their impact on staff performance.

Finally, several factors relating to the political, economic and social *context* may have a positive or detrimental impact on the performance of the public administration and its officers. Among these factors is the ease with which employment can be found outside the public sector, the weight of donor agencies and the willingness of political decision-makers to listen to technical advice.

**Graph A.3 A selection of issues to be considered in an analysis of capacity development policies and strategies**



## ANNEX 4. SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The survey involved 80 respondents from 42 countries, as follows.

Region and countries	LDCs	Survey respondents
<b>Africa</b>		
Burkina Faso	Yes	6
Niger	Yes	6
Republic of Guinea	Yes	2
Mali	Yes	4
The Comoros	Yes	2
Côte d'Ivoire	No	4
Senegal	Yes	5
Burundi	Yes	2
Morocco	No	1
Gambia	Yes	3
Madagascar	Yes	1
DR Congo	Yes	5
Congo-Brazzaville	No	1
Nigeria	No	2
Benin	Yes	2
Lesotho	Yes	1
Cameroon	No	2
Egypt	No	1
Tanzania	Yes	3
Mauritania	Yes	4
Ethiopia	Yes	1
Eritrea	Yes	1
Sao Tome-et-Principe	Yes	1
<b>Asia</b>		
Nepal	Yes	2
Bangladesh	Yes	1
Korea	No	1
Cambodia	Yes	1
Afghanistan	Yes	1
China	No	1
Sri Lanka	No	1
Pakistan	No	1
Maldives	Yes	1

<b>Region and countries</b>	<b>LDCs</b>	<b>Survey respondents</b>
<b>Middle East/Eurasia</b>		
Kuwait	No	1
Armenia	No	1
Iran	No	1
<b>Caribbean</b>		
Grenada	No	1
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	No	1
The Bahamas	No	1
Trinidad & Tobago	No	1
Saint Lucia	No	1
<b>Europe</b>		
Belgium	No	1
<b>Pacific</b>		
Fiji	No	1

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## ANNEX 5. UNDP PRINCIPLES FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

UNDP: Default principles for capacity development  
(Lopes, 2003: 13)

1. Don't rush. Capacity development is a long-term process. It eludes delivery pressures, quick fixes and the search for short-term results.
2. Respect the value system and foster self-esteem. The imposition of alien values can undermine confidence. Capacity development builds upon respect and self-esteem.
3. Scan locally and globally; *reinvent locally*. There are no blueprints. Capacity development draws upon voluntary learning, with genuine commitment and interest. Knowledge cannot be transferred; it needs to be acquired.
4. Challenge *mindsets and power differentials*. Capacity development is not power neutral, and challenging mindsets and vested interests is difficult. Frank dialogue and a collective culture of transparency are essential steps.
5. Think and act in terms of *sustainable capacity outcomes*. Capacity is at the core of development; any course of action needs to promote this end. Responsible leaders will inspire their institutions and societies to work accordingly.
6. Establish positive incentives. *Motives and incentives need to be aligned with the objective of capacity development*, including through governance systems that respect fundamental rights. Public sector employment is one particular area where distortions throw up major obstacles.
7. Integrate *external inputs into national priorities, processes and systems*. External inputs need to correspond to real demands and be flexible enough to respond to national needs and agendas. Where national systems are not strong enough, they should be reformed and strengthened, not bypassed.
8. *Build on existing capacities* rather than creating new ones. This implies the primary use of national expertise, the resuscitation and strengthening of national institutions, as well as the protection of social and cultural capital.

9. *Stay engaged* under difficult circumstances. The weaker the capacity, the greater the need.  
Low capacities are not an argument for withdrawal or for driving external agendas. People should not be held hostage to irresponsible governance.
  
10. Remain *accountable* to ultimate beneficiaries. Any responsible government is answerable to its people and should *foster transparency* as the foremost instrument of public accountability. Where governance is unsatisfactory, it is even more important to anchor development firmly in stakeholder participation and to maintain pressure points for an inclusive accountability system.

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## The book



Capacity development is a fashionable notion as well as a popular activity, on which governments and international agencies spend much time and effort. However, these activities have not always led to the expected impact: while improving individual skills, they have seldom succeeded in transforming the organizations to which these individuals belong, including ministries of education. Against this background, IIEP/UNESCO undertook a wide range of studies to examine the reasons for this relative failure and to propose innovative and relevant policies and strategies.

The conclusions are that capacity development is a very complex endeavour: the constraints are not related simply to lack of skills but to a wider and intricate web of factors, constituted for instance of ineffective use of staff, counterproductive incentives, absence of leadership and weakness of internal and external monitoring systems. Training as an isolated intervention does not have much impact, because it fails to change bureaucratic cultures. Capacity development demands that more attention be given to organizational development and change.

This synthesis paper ends with an overview of strategies which international organizations can implement and with a set of principles which can guide all actors.

## The author

**Anton De Grauwe** is Senior Programme Specialist at IIEP and heads the team in charge of technical assistance activities. His research work has focused, among other things, on organization and management of education systems. He coordinated the programme on *Rethinking capacity development*.