

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT



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Photo: Ken Opprann

Evaluation of Norwegian support to capacity development **Annex 6: Literature review**

Annex 6 Literature Review

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Overview

The Literature Review is designed, as with the country studies and the desk reviews, to identify evidence which will input into the evaluation on the evaluation questions and related hypotheses. The evaluation matrix serves as the point of reference for this literature review, however, the majority of the questions relate to question 9 of the evaluation matrix, *“What characterises those strategies and interventions for CD support which seem relatively more effective, compared to those that seem relatively less effective? (ToR question 10)”*. This document is not intended to be an extensive review, but to distil key findings across a range of relevant literature.

This document is divided into two sections: the first section comprises of a review of completed literature reviews; and, the second section is a review of relevant Norwegian Capacity development reviews, evaluations and synthesis.

Section 1: Review of Completed Literature Reviews

This review includes the following documents:

- Literature review commissioned by SIDA in preparation for the evaluation (Christoplos, Hedquist et al. 2014)
- Approach Paper commissioned for this evaluation, Niels Boesen, 2014
- Annex B: Emerging Trends in Development - A literature Review, Danish Development Assistance, Inception Report Draft Final Submitted to Danida 16 December 2014
- Mizrahi, Y., Capacity Enhancement Indicators-Review of the Literature, World Bank Institute Working Paper
- LeBlanc, R.N. Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a Focus on Capacity Development, EU Evaluation Paper Series, 2010
- Itad Literature Review of Capacity Development on Research for Policy, 2015 (available from Itad)

1.1 Concept of Capacity Development

There is little agreement on the definition of capacity development with a number of divergent definitions¹². Despite the lack of consensus on the definition of capacity development, a review of the literature identifies three distinct analytic dimensions of capacity development³⁴⁵:

- Individual (human skills, productivity, technical capability);
- the organisational (structure, quality management, working practices, internal systems),
- The institutional setting, which includes the broader context within which the organisations exists. The institutional level is described as contextual factors which are external, and not under direct of control of the organisation.

Although these three dimensions are seen as distinct, any combination of these three levels can be implemented simultaneously⁶⁷. Historically, capacity development initiatives are seen to have evolved from the *Individual level* focused interventions, such as training, to progressively becoming more multi-dimensional. The shift in the focus is largely due to the recognition that a piecemeal approach does not result in effective interventions, and the importance of considering the wider contextual factors which often shape the interventions success. Albeit, the literature highlights that capacity development interventions still struggle to implement initiatives that appropriately address the multiple levels of CD. The SIDA review highlights that under current understanding there is broad recognition that relevant capacity development initiatives assume a 'multidimensional perspective', working at the various levels⁸⁹.

Further, it is observed that complexity of the capacity development interventions increases at each subsequent level (Individual, Organisational, and Institutional). For example it is less complex to train staff (Individual level) than to build working groups to address policy issues (Institutional level) with external stakeholders¹⁰¹¹.

¹ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, Page 9

² Nils Boeson, Annex 2: Approach Paper, 2014, Page 5

³ Developing Capacity? An evaluation of DFID Funded Technical Cooperation for Economic Management in Sub-Saharan Arica, Synthesis Report, EV667, June 2006, Page 49

⁴ How Can Capacity Development Promote Evidence-Informed Policy Making?, Evidence Review for the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) Programme, Melanie Punton, Page 50

⁵ Developing Capacity? An Evaluation of DFID-Funded Technical Co-operation for Economic Management in sub-Saharan Africa, Synthesis, Oxford Policy Management Groups, Page 19

⁶ Ibid, Page 49

⁷ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 16

⁸ Nils Boeson, Annex 2: Approach Paper, 2014, Page 2

⁹ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 5

¹⁰ Nils Boeson, Annex 2: Approach Paper, 2014, Page 10

¹¹ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 11

1.2 Identification of Need and Design

The literature points towards a failure to conduct appropriate assessments and analysis during the preparatory stages of capacity development interventions. This includes baselines, assessments of capacity of existing structures and institutions, and contextual analysis which should include existing efforts to reform, or repel reform^{12,13}. The implications include interventions not being aligned with actual needs, structures and priorities of the recipient institution, or country, and no benchmarks being established for the measurement of capacity development. Moreover, the definition of objectively verifiable objectives cannot be done without the collection of robust baseline data. A consensus was observed in the documentation that without appropriate baseline data CD cannot be measured in a concise manner¹⁴. In a similar vein, the literature points out that sometimes capacity development actors are driven to undertake something that is ‘new’ and overlook national efforts. This can result in a misalignment with national priorities and initiatives¹⁵. A common theme was the degree of harmonisation and buy-in from stakeholders through alignment to national priorities¹⁶.

One study cited that development institutions prefer vague goal setting, at the beginning of interventions as it helps achieve consensus between stakeholders¹⁷. In a similar vein, a significant issue identified within the literature is that goals and objectives are often set in line with what donors want without sufficient analysis of the ‘bridging outcomes’. In other words, ultimate goals are defined along the priorities of donors, but the steps, or the actions required to get to the ultimate goal are not appropriately defined¹⁸. Furthermore, prioritisation of activities and goals based on the priorities of donors sometimes leads to parallel or nonaligned initiatives that compete with national priorities. This problem of donor driven objectives and goals is compounded by donors often setting overly ambitious and unrealistic targets for interventions¹⁹.

1.3 The Importance and Ownership and Commitment

Country ownership, political will, and commitment of the recipients of CD were highlighted as an importance aspect of effective CD. It was seen as vitally important to the success of CD intervention, and that at a minimum, commitment and willingness to engage of the recipient actor should be identified before the commencement of a CD project²⁰.

The literature highlights that not enough focus is given to national and regional capacities to lead CD initiatives. It was argued that there needs to be a change in practice from donor/supplier driven initiatives to better support local efforts to assess and determine capacity development priorities. This was identified as a ‘new paradigm’ and involved a fundamental shift in focus from the *transfer knowledge* to building capacity for the *acquisition of knowledge*²¹. This barrier to the ‘new paradigm’ shift was the lack of strategic initiative to move away from engaging in short term CD activities, to longer term collaboration engagements to ensure capacities to assess, design and lead on CD is anchored in local capacity²².

1.4 The Importance of Understanding the Context

The literature emphasises the importance of context analysis as a precondition to the design of effective CD. It is put forward that that context will largely determine the effectiveness of different design options and modalities chosen for the implementation of a CD intervention. A context analysis should consider the following: gaps in human resources, organisational and administrative systems in relations to prevailing cultural factors, the wider legal and regulatory system, and contextual factors that may constrain or enable CD. Importantly, there is also a

¹² Ibid, Page 36

¹³ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 6

¹⁴ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 33

¹⁵ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 7

¹⁶ Developing Capacity? An evaluation of DFID Funded Technical Cooperation for Economic Management in Sub-Saharan Africa, Synthesis Report, EV667, June 2006, Page 60

¹⁷ Ibid, Page 4

¹⁸ Ibid, Page 16

¹⁹ Ibid, Page 18

²⁰ Capacity Enhancement Indicators, Review of the Literature, Yemile Mizrahi, WBI Working Papers 2014, Page 15

²¹ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 13

²² Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 18

need to understand the prevailing historical and cultural factors that frame how key stakeholders perceive and interact each other²³.

There is also some discussion on ‘isomorphic mimicry’ within the literature. Essentially isomorphic mimicry is when ways of working in one context is transposed to a different context. The basic argument is that no two contexts are the same, therefore replicating ‘best practices’ from one location will not automatically result in best practices in another location with contextual factors are highly complex and specific to a certain environment^{24,25}. This raises questions around the viability of blueprint approaches, which seek to transpose initiatives from one location to another.

1.5 Articulating and Measuring Change

Some of the challenges faced evaluating higher level effects include, the absence of baselines, weak monitoring systems, indicators are not measurable, and objectives are not within the scope of the intervention²⁶. Due to the limited preparatory assessment and the difficulty associated with developing meaningful results frameworks, the evaluations tend to only measure direct outputs and activities without appropriately measuring outcomes and impacts²⁷. This SIDA review identifies ‘palpable exasperation’ with the limited evidence about effectiveness, attributing this to: the gap between measuring activities and measuring ultimate goals and impact; and, a lack of realistic theories of change²⁸.

1.5.1 Indicators, Analytic Frameworks, and measuring change

The difficulty with the measuring of CD is that by definition is it a process^{29,30} and not a specific output, or outcome, which can be easily described and measured. Capacity development can lead to different thresholds that are difficult to define. Capacity development usually involves a complex interplay of learning and adaption with progressive change at individual, organisational, and institutional levels. This makes defining indicators and measurement tools that encapsulate these complexities and differentiate between the different dimensions or levels of capacity development very difficult. For this reason it is argued that capacity development is best measured through benchmarks³¹.

Capacity and performance are not synonymous and should be clearly differentiated in the measurement of CD. The literature argues that the assumption that capacity development leads to greater performance, through improved capacity, is not inherently true. It is important to distinguish between seeking to measure capacity development and performance, as capacity can be developed and improved without it having an impact on performance. For example, weak performance of staff to undertake a certain activities may be as a result of weak management, lack of incentives, lack of technical skills, or combination of these factors. Therefore, it is very important to distinguish between these in the measurement of capacity development. The failure to distinguish between the two can lead to misleading conclusions in the measurement of capacity development³².

Identified as the comprehensive analytic framework for the measurement of results, outlined in Mizrahi’s review, and cited in SIDA review, is Hilderbrand and Grindle analytic framework. They define five analytic dimensions, which go beyond the three commonly identified dimensions, through which capacity can be analysed and should be guided:

²³ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 21

²⁴ Annex B: Emerging Trends in Development - A literature Review, Danish Development Assistance, Inception Report Draft Final Submitted to Danida 16 December 2014, Page 2

²⁵ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 20

²⁶ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 36

²⁷ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 4

²⁸ Ibid, Page 26

²⁹ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 15

³⁰ Nils Boeson, Annex 2: Approach Paper, 2014,, Page 4

³¹ Capacity Enhancement Indicators, Review of the Literature, Yemile Mizrahi, WBI Working Papers 2014, Page 4

³² Ibid, Page 4

*“(1) **The action environment**, or the political, social, and economic context, (2) **The institutional context of the public sector**, (3) **The task network** (organizations involved in accomplishing any given task), (4) **Organizations** (5), **Human Resources** (level of skills and the retention of skilled personnel within organizations)³³.”*

Mizrahi comes to five broad conclusions from a review of numerous analytic frameworks of capacity development³⁴

- There is recognition that there are three analytic dimensions of capacity development, individual, institutional, organisational and institutional. The recognition of the relationship or interplay between this three dimensions is fundamental to the measurement of capacity development and for indicators to be meaningful they have to be clearly defined within these three analytical dimensions.
- If indicators do not relate appropriately to the real world they serve little utility. It is important to ask two central questions when developing indicators: capacity for what? And capacity for whom?
- Capacity development is a complex process and therefore indicators need to be defined at different levels of capacity development.
- Capacity development is dependent on political will, and the willingness to own and accept change as a result of the initiative. This is a difficult dimensions to measure but at a minimum is it be ascertained whether it is present before any initiative is commenced.
- The final aspect they mention is the need for champions, they cite Stephen Petersen’s (1994) concept of institutional saints³⁵. In any initiative there will be winners and losers and it is important to identify people who will champion the intervention, introduce reforms and confront any potential opposition. The notion of champions and knowledge brokers is also referred to in the BCURE literature review³⁶.

It is argued that due to the highly dynamic and complex nature of CD, the common model for evaluation, which relies heavily on ex-post evaluations, is not suitable for appraising CD. For these reasons, LeBlanc put forwards a new approach that involves the following four elements:

- *“Ongoing assessments to provide opportunities for changes in strategies as required,*
- *Highly participative and owner-driven CD,*
- *Joint evaluations that involve decision-makers much more than in the past and*
- *A much greater reliance on in-depth qualitative approaches to evaluation³⁷.”*

1.5.2 Intervention Logic and Theories of Change

In light of complex dynamic and complex nature of CD, the literature reveals a dearth of clear and realistic theories of change that clearly articulate how impacts will be achieved. The SIDA review puts this down to a lack ‘bridging outcomes’ to describe linkages and steps between inputs and goals³⁸. **The most commonly used tool to depict intervention logic and the steps through which change will be achieved is the logical framework.** It is noted that logical framework are an overly simplified representation of a complex intervention and that they are not understood by all stakeholders in the same way³⁹.

³³ Text is taken directly from, *Capacity Enhancement Indicators, Review of the Literature*, Yemile Mizrahi, WBI Working Papers 2014, Page 9. Original source Merilee S. Grindle. Ed. *Getting Good Government. Capacity Building in the Public Sectors of Developing Countries*. Harvard Institute for International Development. Harvard University Press 1997, pp.35-37

³⁴ Capacity Enhancement Indicators, Review of the Literature, Yemile Mizrahi, WBI Working Papers 2014, Page 14-15

³⁵ Stephen B. Peterson, *“Saints, Demons, Wizards and Systems: Why Information Technology Reforms Fail or Under perform in Public Bureaucracies in Africa.”* Harvard Institute for Institutional Development, Harvard University. Development Discussion Paper, n.48. May, 1994. (Original source not accessed)

³⁶ How can Capacity Development Promote Evidence-Informed Policy Making?, Evidence Review for the Building Capacity to Use Research Evidence (BCURE) Programme, Melanie Punton, Page 50

³⁷ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 5

³⁸ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 16

³⁹ Literature Review on the Evaluation of Technical Cooperation with a focus on Capacity Development, LeBlanc, Page 27

Due to the linear and often overly simplistic representation of intervention logic frameworks, there has been move towards developing theories of change⁴⁰. One school of thought identified within the literature described the development of ToC to be an exercise in navigating between naivety (unrealistic expectations, timeframes etc.), and cynicism (the extent of the complexity and issues required for capacity development is beyond the scope of the resources available). An opposing school of thought to the naivety vs cynicism is that of realism. Discussion on the realism of theories of change gives greater emphasis to the spheres of influence that lie outside of the influence of donors. They give an understanding of the political economy of a context as a requirement for greater realism about the spheres of influence that affect CD interventions.⁴¹

1.6 Cost-Efficiency

There is not a large amount of documentation on cost-efficiency but for the purposes of this review it has been included. The Sida review identified a study that found cost-benefit analysis are infrequently undertaken. The study itself examined the cost-benefit of twinning versus technical assistance by examining unit costs and perceived advantages of the two modalities. **After correcting for some very expensive individuals they found that technical assistance on average appeared to more expensive than twinning ‘when expressed at a contract per month base’.** Another study found that international consultants and other forms of technical assistance is more expensive than CD efforts undertaken by national consultants and experts. They also found that the perception that Civil Society Organisations are a cheap alternative to providing TA has led to large sums of money being disbursed to CSOs that push them beyond their areas of competence too quickly⁴².

⁴⁰ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 17

⁴¹ Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 5, *Original Boesen, N. & Therkildsen, O. (2004) ‘Between Naivety and Cynicism- A Pragmatic Approach to Donor Support for Public-Sector Capacity Development’, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Danida).*

⁴² Capacity Development Literature Review, Sida, Page 45

Section 2: Review of Norwegian Documentation

This review considered the following documents:

- Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans, 2010
- Evaluation of Norwegian Health Sector Support to Botswana, 2011
- Evaluation of Norwegian Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) and NORAD's Programme for Masters' Studies (NOMA), 2009
- Facing the Resource Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Programme, 2012
- Institutional Development Cooperation in Statistics Norway, Statistics Norway, 2013
- Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Centre for Partnership in Development (DiS) with the Nordic Consulting Group (NCG), Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 1998
- Inter-ministerial Cooperation - An effective Model for Capacity Development 2006
- Real Time Evaluation of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative, 2014
- Synthesis Study on Best Practice and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low income African Countries, 2008
- Synthesis Study: Support to Legislatures, 2010

Two documents recommended for inclusion but were not included were:

- Evaluation of Norway's Bilateral Agriculture Support to Food Security, 2012
- Study: Contextual Choices in fighting Corruption, Lessons Learned, 2011

These two studies were not included because they did not contain information that was deemed to be pertinent to the scope of the evaluation.

2.1 Capacity needs assessments and Design

A common theme in the literature was that systematic processes for assessing needs and identifying gaps prior to the commencement of capacity building initiatives are seldom undertaken⁴³⁴⁴. The lack of needs assessments was also associated with a lack of understanding of needs, overly optimistic planning, weak monitoring and evaluation systems, and 'programme drift' during project implementation. More specifically, underestimating the political will for the capacity development implementation led to delays, limited achievements of results, and ultimately the discontinuation of interventions. Poor assessments of the underlying capacity of the partner institution led to circumstances where the Norwegian partner had to undertake simple tasks (gap fill) which could have been undertaken faster and cheaper by local external experts⁴⁵⁴⁶.

The process identifying priorities and needs was commonly described in the literature as an incremental or flexible approach⁴⁷ to formulating priorities which frequently includes a series of consultations at senior technical and political level. This process was associated with starting quickly, building trusting relationships, and ensuring commitment and ownership from key stakeholders, which is commonly associated with successful CD⁴⁸⁴⁹. It was reported that a stringent donor driven approach to building result based management systems during the initial stages of the programme can negatively affect the working relationships and can hinder engagement and ownership of CD initiatives by partners⁵⁰.

⁴³ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 101

⁴⁴ Inter-Ministerial Cooperation: An Effective Model for Capacity Development?, Page 24

⁴⁵ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 128

⁴⁶ Evaluation of Norwegian Health Sector Support to Botswana, 2011, Page 58

⁴⁷ Inter-Ministerial Cooperation: An Effective Model for Capacity Development?, Page 21

⁴⁸ Ibid, Page 24

⁴⁹ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 39

⁵⁰ Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 31

Understanding implementing partner or supplier capacity for CD in different contexts is seen as important aspect of planning. It was observed that because institutions were specialised in their own fields they did not come equipped with the knowledge for providing technical assistance in less developed countries, nor were they obvious partners, because they were public institutions with national experience⁵¹. It was further observed that a precondition for successful institutional development is the implementing partner/supplier having the technical and social/cultural skills to cooperate with institutions in different contexts. The literature referred to the burden of adapting to the local context is often taken on by the deployed member of staff/s during technical assistant arrangements⁵².

One approach to preparing staff for international work is to have a department dedicated to training and supporting staff for technical collaboration in international development contexts. Statistics Norway have a dedicated department with eleven full time members of staff. The rationale for the department is a recognition that technical cooperation goes beyond sound statistical knowledge. A key ingredient is the ability to transfer knowledge in new cultural settings and the ability to adjust working methods to new working environments. They offer short training courses to all Statistics Norway Staff in languages and working in different cultures to prepare staff to for short term advisory roles⁵³.

2.2 Characteristics of Successful Capacity Development

The literature identified three characteristics of successful CD: (i) robust local ownership of the activities, ii) commitment towards the achievements of results; and (iii) the importance of creating a collaborative atmosphere where people are brought together with clear line of communication and joint decision making processes⁵⁴.

The Evaluation of Norwegian Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) and NORAD's Programme for Masters' Studies (NOMA), found that the built-in 'asymmetric relationship' in the NUFU programme, which gave overall responsibility of the grant to the Norwegian partner which was most likely to be counterproductive in the long-run. **In the short-term the asymmetric relationship was leading to administrative tasks being undertaken to Norwegian Standards but it has not allowed for any administrative capacity to be built in the South.** In line with the observation for the need to build wider administrative capacity, there was an argument for a more holistic approach to CD should be adopted, beyond focusing primarily on individual researchers. In addition to supporting research and education, more should be done to strengthening institutional capacity through building local ownership of facilities, curriculum development etc. They are clearly making an argument that long-term success is hinged upon the southern partners taking more ownership in the interventions and the need to apply a broader approach to capacity development.

The long-term engagement of Norwegian support was seen as a key ingredient to fostering trusting relationships and was seen as a key attribute to successful capacity development. For example, the Oil for Development (OfD) programme is a relatively recent approach, initiated in 2005, however, Norwegian support through Norwegian Petroleum Department (NPD) dates back to 1983 in Zambia. The long term engagement is perceived to have played a significant role in building good working relationships. A key supporting factor was the continuity of key individuals who have helped foster a 'culture of trust' over the years and gained an in-depth understanding of the priorities of the partner. The literature describes that beyond trusting relationship collaboration seems to improve overtime as organisations find 'functional' ways of working together. The longevity of the partnership has allowed for the institutions to find functional ways of working together⁵⁵. One report quotes a Norwegian technical Cooperation partner as stating, *"The idea of working together as colleagues in a long term perspective provides the opportunity to develop a sustainable technical support system with mutual understanding of the problems."*⁵⁶

The notion of fostering building trusting relationships was also in the in the Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans. The success of Norway's support to Security Sector Reform was attributed

⁵¹ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 40

⁵² Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 38

⁵³ Institutional Development Cooperation in Statistics Norway, Statistics Norway, 2013, Page 30

⁵⁴ Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 37

⁵⁵ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 43

⁵⁶ Inter-Ministerial Cooperation: An Effective Model for Capacity Development?, Page 24

myriad of contributing factors related to the long-term historical relationship between Serbia and Norway. **The literature discussed a certain degree of like-mindedness between the Serbs and Norwegians, the historical links between the two countries, and support Norway extended to Serbia during a time of isolation, all contributed to the building of a trusting relationship.** The trusting relationship fostered the foundations for the security sector reform to move ahead successfully⁵⁷. The success of the intervention was also attributed to it being part of a larger transformational forces driven European Approximation⁵⁸.

The support to Legislatures review argued that interventions to support parliamentary strengthening do not provide any 'quick fixes'. In particular, impact can only be achieved through long-term engagement, and that support to legislatures should be considered over several political cycles. **They state that long-term relationship, and continuity of staff, can build trusting relationships which is crucial to the success of parliamentary assistance programmes**⁵⁹. In addition they cite the important of interventions be based on strategic plans for parliamentary strengthening that are locally owned⁶⁰.

The longevity and continuity of relationships is not always portrayed as a positive contributing factor to capacity development in the literature. The evaluation of NUFU states that the asymmetric relationship was not conducive to building a strong collaborative engagement, and was more akin to patronising relationship⁶¹. It is therefore important to distil the type of working relationship, and division of responsibilities, to foster trusting relationships.

A review of NGO literature found that emphasis was given to the time needed for a supplier to adjust and learn during the initial phases of an intervention. They explicitly recognised that the implementation partners have to go through a process of learning and adaptation to ensure the approach is appropriate⁶². However, OfD evaluations simply put it down to the willingness of implementing partners/suppliers to be patient and continue working until such a point when the partnering institutions are able to engage more broadly in the services offered by the Norwegian partners.⁶³ Overall, they argued that time and patience is the most important aspect to allow for changes to be 'compatible with political will'⁶⁴.

2.3 Importance of Context and Political Will

The synthesis of best practices found three aspects of the national context to be important to consider: whether the country is in a state of emergency; the strength of civil society; and, the degree of politicisation. The synthesis does not put forward an argument that capacity building is more suitable in certain contexts but offers different opportunities and requires different approaches dependent on the context. They argue that unstable weak institutions in volatile contexts may offer greater scope to shape to mould organisations basic systems and functions, whereas working with organisations that operate within a more stable environment will probably involve working on wider changes within better established bureaucracies⁶⁵.

The review of Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans, which had several capacity development components, **found that weak political commitment was linked to poor achievement of results.** In probably the most severe case referred to in literature was when political support to a civil service reform project was lost due to the Prime Minister being killed⁶⁶.

The review of support to legislatures found that 'contextualisation is the watchword', and that blueprint approaches are not advisable because politics and parliaments are dynamic. The range of parliamentary structures, political systems, and party systems is so diverse that robust approaches to supporting legislatures

⁵⁷ Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans, 2010, Page 63

⁵⁸ Ibid, Page 4

⁵⁹ Synthesis Study: Support to Legislatures, 2010, Page 48

⁶⁰ Ibid, Page 49

⁶¹ Evaluation of Norwegian Programme for Development Research and Education (NUFU) and NORAD's Programme for Masters' Studies (NOMA), 2009, Page 40

⁶² Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 33

⁶³ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 99

⁶⁴ Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 37

⁶⁵ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 40

⁶⁶ Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation with the Western Balkans, 2010, Page 68

need to be customised to the context. They argue that donors require experts that can produce political economy analyses and adjust interventions accordingly⁶⁷.

In the OfD programme, the success of the twinning between petroleum regulatory bodies was attributed to the technical nature of the work that was largely devoid of politicisation. They argue that working with institutions such as the Ministry of Finance where the work is highly politicised and at the core of the State's decision making structures, involves influencing government decision making processes, which is more complicated than playing a technical advisory role.⁶⁸

The degree of politicisation and political will were recognised as playing an instrumental role in the success of capacity building interventions. Evidence of the importance of the need for supportive political environment emerged from the Evaluation of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI), which supports the development of the REDD+⁶⁹ international agenda and architecture, and has numerous capacity development components. The NICFI portfolio has been most successful in countries where the underlying context has been supportive. In Brazil, Guyana, and Indonesia the government had made public commitments to avoid deforestation, or to reduce emissions from forest loss before engaging with NICFI⁷⁰. This context of political commitment and support was perceived to be a key ingredient to the success of NICFI in these countries. Interestingly, the OfD evaluation found twinning with environmental institutions has been the least successful part of the programme due to limited political backing for this in programme countries which was coupled with weak capacities of the twinning institutions engaged in the technical cooperation⁷¹.

A noteworthy example of the importance of system/level political acceptance is provided in a report detailing lessons learnt from the 'Institutional Development Cooperation in Statistics Norway'. In 2004, Statistics Norway commenced a capacity building initiative with the National Statistics office (NSO) of Eritrea. The modality used for capacity building was two long-term advisors. They noted a strong underlying capacity within the NSO and 'savvy' management. Over the 5 year engagement the capacity building made significant progress in establishing an information technology system to gather country wide data. The issue began when it came to using the data. The information generated was only published within the government and did not allow for open policy discussion. This was in breach of the fundamental principal of statistics being available for all and resulted in the project being discontinued. This is an example of how the 'broader social system' and the lack of independence of the NSO making it impossible for the intervention to achieve desired outcomes.⁷²

2.4 Modalities

2.4.1 Institutional Collaboration and Twinning

Twinning as a type of cooperation can be seen as an umbrella modality with several sub-modalities that typically include an annual meeting at institutional level to agree upon an annual report and an annual plan, one or more long term resident advisors, and a programme of short term activities and study visits⁷³. Twinning is described as an approach that provides the recipient with a broad range of services through a Norwegian sister-institution which has a comparable institutional mandate, with the cooperation normally containing both learning in technical areas, as well as management and institutional issues⁷⁴.

The synthesis on best practices of capacity development identified a number of factors that contributed to the success of twinning arrangements (i) a mutual partnership based on shared objectives and values (ii) focus on achieving sustainable results (iii) scope for long term collaboration that could extend beyond the end of the project (iv) the use of activities and inputs was highly flexible, adjusted to changing needs (v) learning takes place

⁶⁷ Synthesis Study: Support to Legislatures, 2010, Page 41

⁶⁸ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 100

⁶⁹ The REDD+ Partnership serves as an interim platform for its partner countries to scale up actions and finance for initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) in developing countries.

⁷⁰ Real-time Evaluation of Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative Synthesising Report 2007-2013, Page 76

⁷¹ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 100

⁷² Institutional Development Cooperation in Statistics Norway, Statistics Norway, 2013, Page 26

⁷³ Ibid, Page 21

⁷⁴ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 13

on an individual and organisational level. The synthesis highlights that by nature of the arrangement, based on a mutual relationship, there is quicker acceptance of the supplier that can lead to a more collegiate collaboration between twinning partners. The strength of twinning arrangements is the range of modalities which include training and technical assistance which is usually based on flexible long-term commitments to capacity building⁷⁵.

A risk associated with twinning is that of 'lock in', where the 'supplier' no longer becomes relevant to the partner institution, the evaluation of Inter-Ministerial cooperation found that the Norwegian twinning ministry was strongly involved in the initial stages of the intervention. Once activities had been decided there was a process of delegating external activities consultants and technical advisors external to the ministry. This resulted in the ministry becoming a coordinator rather than a direct implementer. This distanced the Ministry from the day to day running and dialogues of the intervention and oversight of decision making processes⁷⁶. The evaluation viewed this to be a deviation from inter-ministerial cooperation. The OfD review recognises this process of delegation of activities to external stakeholders as an inherent part twinning. They provide the example of National Petroleum Department (NPD), which although it is the agreement holder, most of the inputs are from actors outside of NDP and its areas of expertise.⁷⁷ They characterise the coordination and contracting of external stakeholders to undertake activities outside their scope of expertise as the flexibility that is built into twinning arrangements.

A study found that committed individuals is a key ingredient to successful institutional development/twinning, in particular, in public institutions. The survey they conducted found that one or a few individuals often play a vital role for the development of the projects. They put forward that the quality of the collaboration is largely dependent on the personal qualifications of the individuals involved⁷⁸. The study also found that twinning arrangements are relatively small with 90% of cases involving less than 10 people from the Norwegian institutions. This makes the model highly dependent on a few individual experts who are experience and specialised in international cooperation. They found the 'classical' model of technical assistance was commonly being used as part of the twinning arrangements⁷⁹. It should be noted that the study was conducted in 1998, therefore, twinning arrangements may have changed significantly since then.

2.4.2 Technical Assistance

In the evaluation of the OfD evaluation they argue that twinning as a modality focuses on *capacity building*, whereas technical advisors tend to become *delivery capacity*. This should not be interpreted as a negative, and technical assistance can play an important role in low capacity environment. They argue that technical assistance is not for when institutions have strong systems and capacity, but when institutions are weak, technical skills are scarce, and the institution cannot engage in technical support to a sufficient degree. It was reported that OfD resident advisors found themselves having to undertake much lower levels of technical input, as a result of the weak institutional capacity. The overall conclusion is that to technical assistance is often too high a level and not targeting carefully identified needs. They argue that technical advisors should scale down the level of technical input while investing in engaging over longer terms to support institutions capacity. However, it could have been argued that this could have been resolved by simply identifying needs and tailoring technical assistance accordingly⁸⁰.

The literature cited that the debate on technical advisors usually revolves around their cost and the pay they receive relative to local staff and main weakness is that it focuses on short term assignments⁸¹. They argue that it is essential for technical advisors to have exit strategies and the need for a clear job description. They also describe that technical advisors contracts are often owned by the donor agency making the technical advisors directly accountable to the donor and not the institution they are meant to be supporting⁸².

⁷⁵ Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 31

⁷⁶ Inter-Ministerial Cooperation: An Effective Model for Capacity Development?, Page 32

⁷⁷ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 99

⁷⁸ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 37

⁷⁹ Institutional Development in Norwegian Bilateral Assistance, Development through Institutions: Synthesis Report, Page 38

⁸⁰ Facing the Curse: Norway's Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 101

⁸¹ Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 48

⁸² Synthesis Study on Best Practices and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low-Income African Countries, Page 49

It was alleged that more attention should be given to preparing technical advisors for deployment⁸³. A common theme was the high technical competence is not a substitute for cultural awareness and the ability to transfer knowledge and work in different contexts. The lack of clear guidelines and policies on management, expected results, and modalities of collaboration compounded difficult working arrangements in different contexts. Although, technical experts were highly competent in their own fields, they do not have expertise in change management, or the new bureaucracies they were trying to support. They had to learn on the job how to support ‘cross –fertilisation in a very different working environment.’⁸⁴ In some circumstances technical experts had to define their own responsibilities which caused some difficulties but on the other hand it created an opportunity for the technical advisors to be creative⁸⁵

2.4.3 Training

The OfD report cites the common problem of training is it makes staff members consequently highly desirable to better paid jobs in other institutions. The twinning arrangement is particularly conducive platform for ‘training for organisational failure’ because it is a modality which promotes collaboration on an organisational level and does not engage with the larger labour market. The point they are making refers to twinning arrangements primarily working at an individual, and organisational level, and not addressing the broader contextual factors that could affect staff turnover. **They put forward that Petrad⁸⁶’s training needs assessment tool to assist authorities design their own capacity building programmes⁸⁷ may provide a useful starting point for dialogue between OfD and key stakeholders in priority countries.** Depending on country context how the tool would be applied and discussions held would vary, but it could be a starting point to design a more long-term capacity development programme that looks more broadly at the labour market.⁸⁸

⁸³ Facing the Curse: Norway’s Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 103

⁸⁴ Inter-Ministerial Cooperation: An Effective Model for Capacity Development?, Page 33

⁸⁵ Ibid, Page 31

⁸⁶ Petrad is a capacity building institution for the petroleum sector

⁸⁷ Facing the Curse: Norway’s Oil for Development Program, Norad, January 2013, Page 91

⁸⁸ Ibid, Page 103