Capacity development in educational planning and management

Learning from successes and failures

Steven J. Hite
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Rethinking capacity development

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UNESCO

United Nations
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Cultural Organization

iiep

**International Institute
for Educational Planning**

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CD	capacity development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DEO	District Education Office
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	education management information systems
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GMR	Global Monitoring Report
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	non-governmental organization
NUEPA	National University of Educational Planning and Administration (India)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDAE	Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation agency
SWAp	sector-wide approach
TA	technical assistance
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPE	universal primary education

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
UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)

SUMMARY

Some twenty international experts in capacity development (CD) in education met at IIEP for two days' debate on the reasons CD efforts at times fail to have a long-term impact, on ways to overcome common constraints and on UNESCO's role in this area and how it may be (re) defined.

The report acknowledges that some of the experts had reservations against discussing these issues yet again. However, changes in the aid architecture and on the development agenda have occurred. Challenges remain and new insights may be needed. The importance of context is often emphasized: In general, context matters more than CD modalities, especially in decentralized education systems. Values and behaviour need to change from within, and CD strategies need to be compatible with social structures and belief systems.

Nevertheless, common constraints may be identified: Individual level strategies do not move beyond training; organizational constraints are often linked to poor leadership and legitimacy issues; too often, successful CD strategies remain isolated, making it difficult to induce change.

In order to overcome these constraints, several options were discussed: Performance at the ministry level may be improved through the use of various organizational tools and through better monitoring using incentive systems. Accountability should be strengthened both within the organization and towards civil society, building on other rights-based processes such as ownership, empowerment, and participation. Longer time frames and new evaluation schemes may be needed in order to measure CD efforts correctly. However, in order to trigger organizational change, a certain number of prerequisites such as internal commitment and change-oriented leadership need to be in place.

The experts agreed that CD efforts should give voice to those who promote change, and addressed the need for critical mass in both host countries and aid agencies. The report encourages a clarification of UNESCO's position on CD in order to let other organizations that

work with UNESCO position themselves accordingly. This implies deciding on whether to focus on the supply or the demand-side of CD, and whether to privilege intra- or extra-national efforts. A fitting unit of analysis, to be UNESCO's focal point, needs to be defined for CD in EFA.

RÉSUMÉ

Une vingtaine d'experts internationaux ont débattu pendant deux jours à l'IIPE des raisons pour lesquelles certains efforts de développement de capacités n'ont que peu d'impact à long terme, des moyens nécessaires afin d'éliminer les contraintes et du rôle de l'UNESCO dans ce domaine et comment ce rôle peut être (ré)défini.

Le rapport reconnaît la réticence exprimée par quelques experts vis-à-vis de la réouverture du débat sur le sujet. Cependant, des changements dans l'architecture d'aide et sur l'agenda de développement ont eu lieu. Les défis demeurent et de nouvelles idées peuvent être nécessaires. Ces idées mettent l'accent sur l'importance du contexte : en général, le contexte est plus important que les modalités de développement des capacités, particulièrement dans les systèmes éducatifs décentralisés. Valeurs et comportements doivent changer de l'intérieur, et les stratégies de développement de capacités doivent correspondre aux structures sociales et aux systèmes de croyance.

Néanmoins, les contraintes communes sont identifiables : les stratégies qui ciblent les individus ne vont pas au-delà de la formation ; les contraintes organisationnelles sont souvent liées à un leadership faible et aux questions de légitimité ; les bonnes stratégies restent trop souvent isolées, ce qui rend le changement difficile à provoquer.

Afin de surmonter ces difficultés, le rapport examine plusieurs options : la performance des ministères peut s'améliorer par l'aide de divers outils organisationnels et par un pilotage plus efficace en utilisant des systèmes d'incitation. La responsabilisation doit être renforcée à l'intérieur des organisations et vis-à-vis de la société civile, se fondant sur d'autres processus qui reconnaissent l'importance de l'appropriation, de l'autonomisation, et de la participation. Des cadres temporels plus longs et de nouveaux systèmes d'évaluation sont peut être nécessaires afin de mesurer correctement le développement de capacités. Cependant, afin de déclencher un processus de changement organisationnel, quelques pré-requis comme l'engagement interne ou un leadership orienté vers le changement doivent être en place.

Les experts sont d'accord sur le fait que les stratégies de développement de capacités doivent donner la parole à ceux qui souhaitent promouvoir le changement, et ils ont abordé le besoin d'une masse critique à la fois dans les pays hôtes et dans les agences d'aide. Le rapport encourage la clarification de la position de l'UNESCO dans le domaine du développement de capacités et sa relation avec d'autres organisations. Ceci implique de faire un choix entre une approche axée sur l'offre ou la demande de développement des capacités, et sur les efforts intra- ou extranationaux. Une unité d'analyse pertinente, le point central naturel pour l'UNESCO, doit être définie pour le développement des capacités dans l'EPT.

1. INTRODUCTION

While capacity development (CD) has become a popular concept, focus and activity in recent years, the challenges and preoccupations involved with CD are not new. Over time there have been changes in the terminology, from *institution building* to *capacity building* to *capacity development*, but these different terms basically refer to similar challenges and issues. Modalities and strategies have also undergone some change and successes have been achieved from which useful lessons can be learned. Nevertheless, the overall record remains a source of concern, especially in the least developed countries and fragile states, which are most in need of stronger, internally sustainable capacities.

Within this environment, UNESCO has assumed a mandate that includes a strong component of CD to support countries in achieving their Education for All (EFA) goals. Much of the work at UNESCO aims at strengthening the capacities of its member states through various means, such as training, policy dialogue and advice, and technical support. Within UNESCO, as in many other agencies that play similar roles, there is dissatisfaction with the short- and long-term impact of many CD efforts. These efforts have often strengthened the skills of individuals, but have not succeeded in transforming systematically the organizations to which these individuals belong, particularly ministries of education.

Against this background, UNESCO has received funds from the Norwegian authorities to work on a strategy of 'capacity development for achieving the EFA goals'. The final objective is to prepare a strategy paper on CD that will guide UNESCO's actions in this field and hopefully become a source of inspiration for and collaboration with other partners. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (2005) and recent Global Monitoring Reports have identified the lack of planning and management capacities as a major obstacle to achieving EFA, and perhaps as important as the scarcity of resources. The focus of the strategy paper will therefore be on planning and management. In its preparation, the work undertaken by the EFA partners will be given

due attention. IIEP-UNESCO is coordinating this exercise on behalf of UNESCO.

In the course of preparations for the strategy paper, IIEP-UNESCO determined to bring together a select group of people from different professional backgrounds and geographical locations, all of whom have experience and expertise in capacity development. They represented four different professional spheres: ministries of education, international agencies, training institutions (focused on educational planning and management) and academic settings. Many of the experts have worked in different professional spheres and in various geographical locations. They convened at the IIEP-UNESCO in Paris from 1-2 July 2008 for two days of open discussion on three questions:

- What are the key reasons for the relative failure of capacity development efforts (i.e. failure to improve the effectiveness of organizations in a sustainable manner)?
- What strategies can overcome (or in some countries, have overcome) these constraints?
- What roles can international agencies, in particular UNESCO, perform?

The composition and process of the experts' panel succeeded in bringing together people from geographically and professionally diverse settings who were eager to share their respective viewpoints. This diversity and willingness to share was evident throughout the course of the meetings. Though the participants were at times split in their viewpoints and positions, these differences did not typically follow predictable or consistent professional or geographical patterns: those from one professional sphere were not always unified in their expressions, and geographical clustering was not always evident when differences arose. Consequently, the content of the meetings presented in this report should be considered reasonably representative of the complex sense of clarity or uncertainty, agreement or lack of consensus in perception, views and experience evident across the global CD enterprise.

As illustrative statements by individuals are provided, they are attributed to a professional area in a particular continental location rather than to a specific participant. Each example voices a sentiment or

position shared by a number of participants across spheres and locations. A few examples of capacity development implementation successes and failures are provided to illustrate certain main points. Successes are directly attributed to the countries and institutions involved, while failures are positioned with more generic characteristics. The material in the report is not necessarily presented in the precise sequence in which the discussions actually took place. The presentation of themes is meant to convey logically, rather than chronologically, the main issues and nature of the discussions.

This report is not a literal transcription of the meetings and consequently it should be viewed as an account of the meetings as 'moderated' by its authors. The report is meant to convey the general sense of the discussions. The differences in position and experience arising during the meetings did not create intractable and significant disagreement – in fact, quite the opposite occurred. When differences arose, the discourse was civil but vigorously engaged. However, differences did emerge and remained even after full discussion, leading to the need for a moderated account as provided in this report.

The remainder of this introductory section looks at some transversal questions, such as the usefulness of the discussions on CD and the context within which UNESCO operates. This is followed by four thematic sections, in line with the programme of the meetings. They concern the concept of CD, constraints on its success, strategies for improvement and the role of UNESCO.

Back to basics: 'déjà vu' all over again

> *"Are we trying to 'untie' the knot of this issue, or 'tighten' it?"*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Throughout the two days of meetings, a recurrent theme in the discussion was whether we were convened to discuss something 'new'. Some of the experts felt that the concept of CD had already been discussed and articulated sufficiently, perhaps even overly so. It was clear that the feeling of "we have already discussed this regularly, so why are we doing it once again?" emerged early on in the discussion and was consistently on the minds of some of the participants.

The responses to this question, which were expressed and held tenaciously, pursued several distinct courses. Firstly, some participants were clearly persuaded that since CD had previously been discussed at length by many qualified and experienced people, who had operated globally in the full range of professional spheres, we were unlikely to produce anything new or important. Perhaps the sense expressed that we were dealing with 'quite common' issues that had proved to be at least persistent, if not intractable, was at the root of this feeling of doubt. This group also hinted that it was unlikely that we were going to be able to produce anything more useful than that which had already been achieved historically. It would also be fair to say that some experts felt that past efforts were sufficiently informative but were not adequately implemented, or were implemented without the right contextual factors in place, or were attempted without sufficient time and proper evaluation to rightly determine success or failure.

One response to the reservation about discussing these issues again could be that the CD community, all professional areas and locations included, simply was learning too slowly: it is perhaps not sufficiently responsive enough to keep ahead of current or future needs. It also could be that the CD community believes deeply in what it attempts to accomplish, but does not hold the same level of confidence in the evidence for or against the effectiveness of those efforts. Lastly, it might be that the CD community is more interested in maintaining the status quo, including the positions (and advantages) of those in the community, than in adapting to the evolving needs of the constituent groups targeted by our efforts.

> *"Just because something is 'old' doesn't mean it shouldn't be recycled, re-discussed, or even used. Not all processes are linear; some are iterative."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Another sentiment expressed over the two days was that although there had been much work previously in the field of CD, the challenges had not necessarily been solved or become less important. Nor was CD incapable of benefiting from new and promising insights and approaches identified by the experts' panel. A rather introspective aspect of this position was consideration of what it means for the discourse on CD strategies and effectiveness to appear repeatedly in

the literature, symposia, and agency and ministry meetings but still remain high on the list of issues to raise. Might the very persistence of the CD discourse imply that the issues need to be revisited and re-contextualized?

Similar to the reluctance to re-engage in the CD discourse was the assertion that Berg's (1993) work had effectively 'buried' technical assistance (TA) in the early 1990s. Why is it then that TA has survived? Indeed, many believe that under the new aid architecture more TA would be required than ever before. This provides some insight into why obviously recurrent themes are, and probably should be, revisited: contexts change (country, regional and global), systems change (for example, aid architecture elements such as the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and the sector-wide approach (SWAp), and broad approaches are modified (for example, the *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (PDAE) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)). When substantial contextual and systemic changes occur, 'old' discourses and discussion must be re-engaged, efforts must be re-contextualized, and service trajectories must be adjusted. Some approaches and ideas from the past may prove adequate or appropriate under conditions of change. This needs to be discussed and proved, however – and doing so may from time to time require enduring an individual or collective sense of 'been there, done that'. One last notion in this regard that is important to consider is that not all processes are linear; some are iterative. Perhaps the discourse and processes involved in CD are iterative, and consequently continual revisiting is required.

Partner organizations

While the participants' task was to consider important aspects of CD and the eventual development of a UNESCO strategy paper, a strong sentiment voiced was that the strategy paper should target more than just UNESCO's efforts. Perhaps as important as providing a foundation for UNESCO's efforts in CD is consideration of what the paper would also mean for partner organizations. Partner organizations

> *"Since UNESCO is the appointed leader in EFA efforts, it needs to create something around which its partners can rally."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

would not need to conform their own efforts and processes in line with that of UNESCO, but they should agree with the role the paper will define for UNESCO in global CD efforts. This would not only help UNESCO in defining its role and function, but also provide better clarity to enable other groups to position themselves and their efforts.

In making this happen, it is clear that UNESCO must identify precisely the critical actors in CD, with a special focus on how UNESCO can and should best fit into the complete constellation of partner organizations. Since UNESCO is the appointed leader in EFA efforts, it must create a strategy paper around which its partners can rally.

Contextual dimensions

When discussing the concept of CD, the participants felt that a number of critical contextual dimensions needed to be considered – particularly as applied to UNESCO and its role in CD. These dimensions covered institutional boundaries, supply and demand, exogenous versus endogenous decisions and actions, and national systems of government.

The process of developing a strategy paper for UNESCO's CD efforts in EFA needs to take into account various dimensions of UNESCO's context. But this is not as simple as it might seem. The education sector at UNESCO has institutional boundaries internal to the organization itself. Additionally, as part of the UN system UNESCO has institutional boundaries that are rather contested by other units, such as United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), but at the same time UNESCO is very much part of the 'one UN' movement, which demands that all UN bodies 'deliver as one'. UNESCO also has institutional boundaries influenced by non-UN-specific aid agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Lastly, UNESCO operates within institutional boundaries encompassing governments and units within those governments. All of these contexts operate concurrently and to a significant degree in an associated manner. None of them operates independently of the others – they are part of the same larger context. The internal and external institutional boundaries that define

UNESCO's efforts in EFA are all influential and need to be considered when discussing the concept of CD.

Supply and demand, which emerged in a number of discussions, present an interesting platform for 'context'. Should the concept of CD be contextualized in the platform of supply or demand? Should UNESCO conceptualize and contextualize its strategy paper on CD according to what it is best positioned to supply, or by what is most in demand? It is perhaps too simple to respond that CD must be conceptualized in accordance with a combination of supply and demand. This begs the question of whether UNESCO's policy on CD should be constrained by its ability to supply what is demanded, or whether it should reposition its provision potential according to the demand side.

"We must involve governments in defining CD for their contexts. Donors can't adequately or appropriately define CD for these governments."
International agency worker stationed in Africa

There was disagreement on this issue, with some holding that the contexts of demand should always be pre-eminent, while others contended that the issue of what could be supplied was simply an unavoidable constraint (although changes in what could be supplied were possible, but difficult and slow to achieve).

The issue of endogenous (internal) and exogenous (external) CD efforts and actions will be discussed more extensively in later sections on the readiness of the context, connection between the local and central, and so on, but it must be mentioned here. Relative to the concept of CD, the issue rests on consideration of whether a particular CD effort has a real chance of enduring. It was generally held that real change must draw significantly on efforts and rationales that are internal to the context rather than from an exclusively external perspective. While it is easily argued that donor-driven efforts fail to build upon internal pre-existing processes, UNESCO needs to reflect on the question of how much it differs in this regard, and whether its actions are characterized by greater recognition of these processes.

2. CONCEPT OF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Discussion and debate around capacity development tend to be complex for at least two reasons. Firstly, the concept itself is multifaceted. The definitions that various agencies propose are a good illustration. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (2006, p.5) defines capacity development as "the process of strengthening the abilities or capacities of individuals, organizations and societies to make effective and efficient use of resources in order to achieve their own goals on a sustainable basis". Additionally, the FTI Capacity Development Team (2008: 6) defines capacity development as "the ability of people, organizations and society to manage their affairs successfully". While such broad definitions have the advantage of being comprehensive, they are of limited use when governments and agencies need to identify successful strategies to overcome specific constraints. Secondly, the success and failure of capacity development efforts may depend as much on the specific modalities as on the national context within which these modalities are implemented – and national contexts differ profoundly.

Desired outcomes

"If our concern is achieving EFA, then we must pay attention to the fact that the GMR uncovers that EFA is unfolding very unevenly."
Training institution worker stationed in Asia

Though it was not a major theme of discussion, the participants did mention the need for better clarification of explicit, desired outcomes in UNESCO's definition of CD. This was proposed as the best way to provide an 'anchor' for UNESCO in its CD efforts. This need for explicit clarification of outcomes was driven by the concern that progress towards achieving the EFA goals was unfolding in a very uneven fashion. The Global Monitoring Report (GMR), according to several participants, uncovers this unevenness clearly and dramatically. The discussion of explicit outcomes resulted in the proposal of only very general ones, such as improved efficiency in delivery and improved ability to contract out TA and other technical services. This highlights the difficulty of making

outcomes explicit – the frequent and broadly expressed desire for specifics very often outstretches the ability to arrive at an acceptable set of outcomes agreeable to all the relevant stakeholders.

However, some participants held that UNESCO's historical devotion to finite outcomes such as universal primary education (UPE) (as a more easily measured issue of growth in enrolments, for example) has led to a lack of serious discourse and attention to more substantial rights-based issues. One response lies in recognizing CD as a valuable process, aiming at ownership and participation as indispensable elements of human development.

Definitions and principles

In attempting to define CD and other terms involved in CD, the participants expressed quite different views. Some felt that existing definitions were more than sufficient, but that UNESCO had not given adequate attention to them.

> *"Capacity development' is understood as the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time."*
> (OECD-DAC, 2006: 12)

In particular, the definition of CD found in the OECD-DAC (2006) document was pointed out as salient for consideration – or perhaps even for direct adoption or adaptation by UNESCO. This led to consideration of whether definitions of CD were, or should be, primarily conceptual or operational. In labelling something as overly conceptual, an organization too easily eludes accountability to that definition. Perhaps the issue here is that UNESCO has not yet felt the need to or taken the initiative to reflect fully on what its interpretation of CD actually is, or should be. The present work, in the framework of which this experts' meeting is organized, is aimed precisely at developing such a common interpretation.

On the other hand, there was also a definite sense that UNESCO's definition of CD should include an analytical and evaluative framework for action, whether an explicitly conceptual component was present or not.

Some participants supported the view that definitions are not of particular importance *per se*. Rather, they held that *manifestations* of CD are what matters. This begs the question as to how one would 'know it when one sees it' and whether reasonable and experienced people would even agree on what they see, in lieu of well conceptualized and operationalized definitions.

The common theme of TA emerged again in discussing definitions of CD, with indications that distinctions between TA and policy advice are somewhat artificial. Nonetheless, participants felt that while discussions of TA were not necessarily detrimental to or exclusive of CD, definitions of CD should be super-ordinate to, but inclusive of, functions such as TA and policy advice.

There is an important, and perhaps obvious, assumption that a UNESCO strategy paper would be adopted in order to produce some eventual product. The panel agreed that one of the substantial challenges in the development of the strategy paper would be agreement on the principles and product(s). In terms of principles, a few basic approaches were proposed for CD:

- from the perspective of the issues and systems generated by the 'push and pull' of supply and demand;
- from the practical approach of focusing on the requirements of mobilizing, developing, utilizing, maintaining and retaining capacities;
- from the perspective of examining how CD fits within the rubric of other associated trends and processes, such as empowerment, ownership and participation (running along the entire spectrum of centralized to decentralized actors).

However, it was repeated several times that to start with a focus on CD would be to start in the 'wrong place'. The best place to begin, according to several participants, is from the perspective of organizational change – the principles, conditions and outcomes that are necessary to transform the organization. This means that a strategy paper must contemplate at least two things:

- whether the organization is in the 'mood' or mode to change;
- whether the 'centre of gravity' in the organization is on change.

In addition to identifying whether the organization is ready for change, it is important to determine whether any external agency, such as UNESCO, has the specific ability to facilitate or participate in that change. Finally, it is important to note that, given factors of instability and unpredictability, even if it appears that the organization is ready for change, this is particularly difficult to achieve in any sustainable way in fragile states.

> *"The 'unit of analysis question' is central. If you accept the* Paris Declaration's *unit of analysis, and its other assumptions, then you can move forward."*
> Ministry of education worker stationed in Europe)

In considering the unit of analysis (that specific level of operation that serves as the focus for particular missions and programmes), there are typically four levels of CD that are considered: individual, organization, institution and context. Clearly, the 'unit of analysis' question is central to virtually every conceptual and practical issue when dealing with CD efforts.

The *Paris Declaration* assumes a particular unit of analysis – that of the country or nation-state. If UNESCO or any other agency or organization accepts that focus, then the particular conceptual and practical implications are fairly obvious. Sooner or later – and preferably sooner – the unit of analysis must be made explicit, and all other conceptual and practical definitions and planning efforts must be reconciled to and consistent with that choice.

> ***Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*** (2005)
> Unit of analysis = country/nation
> • Strengthening partner countries' national development strategies and associated operational frameworks (§I.3.i)
> • Exercise leadership in developing and implementing their national development strategies (§II.14)
> • Indicators of progress: to be measured nationally (§III, Title).

The participants were split as to the appropriate unit of analysis. Many felt that the individual would be the most likely and effective unit of analysis for CD efforts, although many documents and official programmes discussed otherwise. This is evident in the discussions described in a number of other sections of this

report, including, in particular, those that refer to the persistence of TA efforts.

The other unit of analysis with broad support on the panel was the ministry of education – or at least, at the ministry level. The main caution in this perspective was concerned with the different realities encountered in highly centralized national governments compared to those found in federations. With federal governments, the CD implications become much more complex and the unit of analysis is not as highly centralized as it would seem to be when declaring a ministry-level focus. In this regard, unit of analysis considerations are further complicated by the fact that not all federal systems are equally, or similarly, decentralized. Indeed, not all federal systems are even decentralized: some may be very centralized despite the seemingly obvious implications of their political status as federations.

A final implication of the question of the unit of analysis relates to the evaluation of CD efforts. Clearly the broader (more highly aggregated) the unit of analysis, the more complex and difficult implementation and effectiveness evaluation becomes. Also, the notion of 'fit' between the unit of analysis and the evaluation effort is implicated. In sum, CD efforts must be more specific and explicit about the unit of analysis of the intended impact, and the match between evaluation efforts and unit of analysis must be more tightly designed and implemented.

Political will

> *"Capacity development is not just a technical act – it is also a political act."*
> Training institution worker stationed in Asia

Political will, including the role and function of that will in CD, emerged in several sessions. The participants agreed on a number of critical issues in this domain:

• Political will and the participation of civil society make a significant, positive difference.
• The degree of ownership in a country, as manifested by political will, strongly influences success in CD.

- Lack of capacity implies a lack of leadership (the political will) to produce and implement change.
- Governments need to exert positive political will (good leadership) in order to increase the likelihood of success.

In focusing on political will and leadership in the government, however, it should not be overlooked that CD efforts must extend beyond the ministries to fully include outside agencies such as local government and civil society, and including unions, for instance. To limit UNESCO's strategy paper to a focus on governments at the country level without including outside agencies would minimize, at best, the eventual impact and sustainability of any CD efforts.

3. CONSTRAINTS ON CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Experience and systematic studies have identified a wide range of constraints to successful capacity development in educational planning and management, which differs significantly between and within countries. These constraints may relate to a lack of qualified personnel; ineffective CD deployment and monitoring; the weakness of communication, coordination and staff support within the ministry; demotivating personnel management practices; the perverse effects of the present incentive systems; disinterested leadership; the loss of faith in the ability of ministries to work towards positive change; or various additional factors. The purpose of the discussion on this vast theme was not to cover all these elements in detail, but to explore how far participants agreed with these ideas and hopefully to discover some systematic elements that may guide the development of the strategy paper in this domain.

Common constraints

The experts were asked to consider which aspects of the constraints to CD were 'common' across settings. They sought to determine whether there are constraints to successful CD efforts that appear to be, in the experience of the experts, encountered regardless of the geographical, organizational or institutional setting. The following are some key elements that were identified by the participants.

Organizational and ministry limitations

> *"In many cases there is a lack of willingness to change – there are simply no rational reasons for the ministry to change (building a school is a great win-win, but political change is often a lose-lose)."*
> Academic stationed in South America, teamed with an international agency worker stationed in Europe

Lack of leadership was seen as a constraint to CD and this is common in many settings, especially when found in connection with corruption in fragile states. Often manifest as weak public sector management, organizational and leadership limitations are likely to lead to

a number of common systemic challenges to effective and long-lasting CD efforts:

- high staff turnover;
- low morale;
- lack of a fit between staff skills and work assignment;
- weak vision;
- unrealistic time frames;
- political appointees who are typically not well qualified;
- resistance to meaningful change;
- lack of systematic performance evaluation;
- low correlation between real needs and training efforts.

Overall, organizational and ministry-level limitations indicate that there is little planning for the cascading downward of skill and expertise throughout the system. This means the impact of most CD efforts is 'localized' within the particular units or within the specific individuals where the CD efforts are situated. The weak organizational structures that result from organizational and ministry limitations commonly lead to a lack of a system-wide desire for change and capacity to plan and design change, ultimately creating a stagnant CD environment at all levels of operation.

Relationship between legitimacy of government and policy change

A brief but poignant issue was raised relative to the common challenge of a poor relationship between government and policy change. Firstly, when government organizations such as ministries of education manifest the challenges described in the preceding section on organizational and ministry limitations, there is a serious question of the legitimacy of that ministry outside of the formal structure – that is, in the public domain.

"Political equilibrium (which is the case in most developing countries) works against change."
Academic stationed in South America, teamed with an international agency worker stationed in Europe

When a government organization lacks public legitimacy, as evidenced by patronage systems in ministries, district education offices (DEOs) and schools, then the likelihood of meaningful and effective policy change decreases dramatically. This occurs because policy

change depends on the willingness of the public (at the appropriate level) for support. When patronage is publicly evident, public willingness to believe in and support change is often low. Additionally, the typical outcome of government organizations that manifest patronage systems is political equilibrium, meaning patronage systems are oriented toward self-maintenance and self-perpetuation. Thus patronage tends to work directly against change, in policy or otherwise.

Culture

Culture was seen as extremely important, evident in every setting, and consistently a contributing factor to challenges to successful CD. Yet the experts approached culture with a somewhat cautious tone. Perhaps this caution is due to the fact that 'culture' is difficult to understand and often it becomes a convenient 'catch-all' for those things that we do not understand in the implementation of particular CD efforts, successful or otherwise.

> *"Culture is extremely important. But culture is more difficult to change than structures are. Culture implies the value systems and behavioural patterns of people."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Nonetheless, culture emerged several times during the discussions as something that was unavoidable. One point of discussion that produced neither disagreement nor resolution was the question of whether cultural change is possible or, if possible, should be attempted. Clearly, if culture does or can undergo change it does so much more slowly than structures do. Consequently, there is a tendency in CD to focus on changing structures rather than attempting much more difficult and sensitive efforts involved in culture change.

Because culture implies value systems and people's behaviour patterns, 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. Additionally, attempts at changing culture (not just observable behaviours) are difficult and should be given significant periods of time to manifest and be evaluated.

Social structures and belief systems

> *"We can strengthen the voice of parents, but we can't reconfigure their beliefs in what matters; that is a powerful result of their historical and socio-cultural context."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

While constellations of social structures and belief systems are particular to a given location, their existence and influence often limit the effectiveness of CD efforts. It is not that social structures and belief systems limit CD efforts *per se*, but rather that the failure of CD efforts to adequately and appropriately assess, account for and deal with these social structures and belief systems significantly deflects the potential for impact.

Often, external CD interventions attempt changes that are not compatible with the social structures and belief systems of the host country or institution. These constraints and realities may not be congruent with the approaches that agencies such as UNESCO have become comfortable in applying. We cannot simply reconfigure what 'matters' in the belief systems of local CD efforts, but we can strengthen the voices of those whose views are compatible with CD and change efforts and who are in a position to make a difference. We must do whatever we can to increase the involvement of civil society if that society is amenable to participation and to the direction of the CD services that we can provide.

Context-specific constraints

Along with constraints that very often occur regardless of the setting, the experts were asked to consider constraints to CD that have occurred in specific contexts though not consistently across settings. Context-specific constraints may be encountered frequently, but are not experienced as predictably or consistently across geographical, social and cultural settings as the more general inconsistencies. Consequently, these types of constraints are more difficult to identify and group, and by definition they elude classification.

Context matters

There is a need to differentiate between contexts; contextual conditions are clearly more important than CD modalities. When donor and aid agencies fail in their CD agenda, the failure is often due to a lack of flexibility or consideration of context-specificity and to the agency's 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 CD effort.

When no obvious or clear relationship exists with the needs or demands of the context, consequent CD efforts will ultimately be disorganized and ineffective. For example, in fragile states the particular reasons for fragility in a particular state (not some ubiquitous 'fragile state factor') must be accounted for in the design, delivery and evaluation of CD efforts.

"Too much training depends on general recipes that are not context appropriate. This is much more a problem where decentralization is in full swing." International agency worker stationed in South America, teamed with a training institution worker stationed in Asia

While there appears to be no 'north-south-east-west' solution, due to contextual matters, some of the participants reflected on whether we can indeed still learn something from diverse settings *where CD efforts appear to have worked* and the lessons learned from them can be applied judiciously elsewhere. This inquiry remained unresolved, but was still presented several times for consideration.

Another issue that arose was whether a 'CD context-by-solution matrix' could be derived from successful experiences: that is, could a list of successful CD solutions be considered for some designated types of settings as potentially successful and appropriate? This gave rise to the concern of whether a taxonomy or typology of training modes is, in fact, realistic. It was also not clear that there was confidence in the notion of a consistent array of contextual conditions that would reasonably align with the hypothetical CD taxonomy/typology.

Finally, it was proposed that the impact of context-specific matters increases as the movement towards decentralization progresses. This

correlation is due to the fact that within large social and cultural contexts there are meaningfully different sub-contexts. The variation within those sub-contexts is great enough to warrant attention when designing, implementing and evaluating CD efforts.

Federation issues

The issue of the impact of federal government systems on CD was presented in different sessions. Each time, its introduction and discussion was brief, but there was near unanimity regarding the importance of considering this constraint to typical CD efforts.

> *"Focusing on the ministry makes sense if the state is unified. Federations, on the other hand, are more complex and require a different approach. Within a federation there really is sufficient autonomy, and a holistic approach in that condition is essential."*
> Ministry of education worker stationed in Africa

While the experts generally agreed that the ministry level of operation is the most likely centralized arena of CD efforts, they had to consider that in federations there are, in effect and sometimes in reality, many ministries. This clearly creates the need for more careful and complex assessment and planning for CD efforts, and perhaps even a re-conceptualization of what CD is at the ministry level in federations. The relative autonomy of ministries in federations demands a much more holistic approach to CD – an approach that is all the more essential as ministries in federal systems (particularly in large nation-states) operate much closer to the decentralized units for which they set policy frameworks and programmes.

Organization and ministry limitations

While organization and ministry limitations can manifest at the level of 'common constraints', they are also seen in context-specific ways. Three countries were discussed by panel members as examples: one in Africa, one in South America and a third in Asia.

Two of the examples dealt with context-specific instability in leadership. In one African country, political pressure brought about the shuffling of eleven different ministers of education in just three years.

Due to political turmoil, the South American country had three ministers of education in a period of just 18 months. This type of organization and ministry instability, while not common, clearly creates context-specific conditions that are not conducive to meaningful CD efforts. While these two examples could not be considered common conditions, they represent conditions that are not particularly rare.

The third example, from Asia, did not deal with the rotation of the nations' leaders of education, but dealt with specific challenges to CD efforts related to limitations created by the rise of the influence of NGOs. While the increasing number and effectiveness of national and international NGOs was largely seen as positive and welcome, the mismatch between the efforts of those NGOs and those of agencies delivering CD programmes was not conducive to effective ministry-level resources. This mismatch was often the result of particular ministry incapacities to coordinate and prioritize these often disparate, albeit valuable, CD opportunities. Although many of these constraints are common to most if not all ministries, the consequent impacts and issues are not the same everywhere. This real potential for dissimilarity in the effects of apparently similar conditions means that there is always a need for careful analysis for each ministry.

Technical issues

Many of the experts agreed that in the broad CD discourse there is too much of a focus on technical issues rather than strategic processes. This was not meant to minimize the need for TA; indeed, most agreed that TA has persisted over time and will perhaps emerge as even more important in the future, given changes in aid priorities and systems. (This is discussed elsewhere in several sections.) Yet the 'TA versus strategic process' dimension of the discussions was persistent and strongly held. The sense was that the need for TA resulted from context-specific conditions and did not represent a need found in most settings.

4. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

Strategies implemented to develop individual and ministry-level capacity aim at improving at least four complementary dimensions:

- the skills and performance of individuals;
- the performance of organizations (such as ministries);
- the public administration to which individuals belong, and which support and sustain organizations (which forms part of the 'institutional' level);
- the social, economic and political context within which individuals work and within which education organizations and systems develop.

These four dimensions are apparent in the following discussion. However, they are not used systematically as organizing categories, given the fact that the experts' discussions were not constrained exclusively by them. Specific attention is given to strategies aimed at improving individual skills and strengthening ministries. These two discussions are followed by a more general examination of various factors that have an impact on the effectiveness of strategies.

Individual-level strategies

Training, in its different forms, is probably the most popular form of CD among individual officers. However, to some extent training is under attack due to the argument that in many cases it has had very limited long-term impact. The same may be true for TA, especially when it takes the form of the 'resident expatriate-local counterpart model'. Such judgements, however, may be somewhat unfair because they render training accountable for changes in areas on which its impact is typically limited (for example, the functioning of ministries). The experts were asked to discuss individual-level strategies in CD, focusing on what has helped or hindered success at this level of delivery.

Discussions surrounding incentives were among the most lively and varied of the meetings. Should incentives be considered an individual, an organizational or an institutional strategy? The answer to this question should have been simple, but it proved more than a

little problematic. Should incentives be financial only, and when financial, should they be linked to the long-term capacity of the country to maintain them? What about the social and institutional impact of financial incentives? Which institution should decide what constitutes appropriate and adequate incentives, and who should set the rates and terms of those incentives? What does the *Paris Declaration* really say about incentives? Is the *Declaration* realistic, and is it being, or should it be, followed?

Financial incentives and linkage

"We commit ourselves to taking concrete and effective action to address the remaining challenges, including insufficient delegation of authority to donors' field staff, and inadequate attention to incentives for effective development partnerships between donors and partner countries. Donors and partner countries jointly commit to [r]eform procedures and strengthen incentives – including for recruitment, appraisal and training – for management and staff to work towards harmonisation, alignment and results. Donors commit to [a]void activities that undermine national institution building, such as bypassing national budget processes or setting high salaries for local staff."
Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005: 1-2, 6, 7)

Prior to presenting the issues regarding financial incentives, it is important to state that a number of the experts were convinced that financial incentives are important in the sense that a basic salary level is necessary. They believed that incentives are indispensable in circumstances where working in education (or the public sector) is not socially desirable and respected and these incentives could create change. In some settings, the non-financial benefits – largely social status and prestige – appear to render financial incentives less potent and less likely to achieve their intended results. While this does not imply that in these circumstances financial incentives are not important or effective, it simply identifies conditions under which financial incentives might have a less direct and measurable impact.

Where social and cultural esteem for education or public sector service is low, financial incentives have the highest likelihood of achieving positive effects. In fact, panel members clearly believed that in conditions of low prestige it is unlikely that CD would succeed without some type of financial incentive structure. However, several potential problems with financial incentives need to be considered.

Firstly, the *Paris Declaration* was referenced several times as either creating problems, promoting confusion, or being 'out of touch with reality' (or at the very least, with common and persistent practice) when considering financial incentives. One participant stated that "the *Paris Declaration* is utterly insufficient in this respect" (referring to financial incentives). It was apparent during the meetings that significant clarification was necessary regarding what the *Paris Declaration* should actually mean in terms of CD and financial incentives. Does the *Paris Declaration* really prohibit, or at least very strongly discourage, the provision of separate financial incentives by international agencies? Should the *Paris Declaration* be accepted as the ultimate and binding authority on the appropriateness of using such financial incentive structures? Finally, does the international political context and reality in which UNESCO operates even allow any latitude to consider these questions fully?

While some felt that the *Paris Declaration* is clear and specific in being generally against the use of incentives, particularly financial incentives, others felt that there are circumstances under which the declaration would allow such incentives. The best way to describe the collective sense of the experts on the *Paris Declaration's* position on incentives would perhaps be to phrase a few dualisms that were not presented in the meeting, but do convey the sense of the discourse. The experts seemed to feel that on the topic of incentives (specifically, financial) the *Paris Declaration* is concurrently clear but unrealistic, assertive but largely ignored in practice, and predictable but insufficiently flexible to local conditions.

"I am worried about certain aspects of the Paris Declaration. 'Countries should be in control' is an interesting notion, but is it realistic?"
International agency worker stationed in Europe

The second issue to be considered regarding financial incentives concerned the short- and long-term impact and sustainability of the financial incentive structure. On the one hand, financial incentives could make the ministry positions even more valuable than before as patronage instruments, thus furthering some fundamental concerns regarding the politicized nature of hiring and promotion. Additionally, if incentives were initially to rely substantially on the participation of external agencies but internally never develop economically to the point that the incentives would be sustainable independently, then their long-term impact could be decidedly negative. A third issue to be emphasized was that financial incentives need to be part of an overall set of incentives, which together promote the behaviour and performance expected from the civil servants. Financial incentives alone are seldom enough to create motivation or to change long-ingrained practices.

Particularly in the case of financial incentives, there must be a well established institutionalized linkage with two elements. This is especially true in fragile states and other areas where systems of patronage have become normalized.

Firstly, incentives ideally must be linked to performance. A clear system of assessment, accountability and quality requirements is needed for the incentive structure to operate. This can take the form of 'performance contracts' or other clearly articulated and calibrated instruments, but without a linkage to performance, incentives – particularly financial incentives – simply will not achieve the desired results.

Secondly, a transparent and binding recruitment system must be set in place. A crucial part of that process must be well-defined job descriptions and a system of valid public posting of vacancies. When recruitment takes place transparently in the public domain and is based on clear job descriptions that include valid performance evaluation, then an incentive structure has a reasonable chance of making the desired impact.

Non-financial incentives

Perhaps the most underutilized and underappreciated incentive structures are those based on non-financial resources. A number of

non-financial incentives were mentioned by participants, including the following:

• career development opportunities;
• public recognition for good work;
• transparency and participation in the staff evaluation process;
• better physical conditions of service (office space and equipment, transport facilities or allowances, and so on);
• 'credit' towards promotion for participation in CD programmes.

Several examples of the application of non-financial incentives were provided (some leading to elements on the prior list), though interestingly it was easier to give examples for teachers than for ministry staff. In Zimbabwe, trees were planted and other environmental improvements were made to the school settings; the attractive environment was highly motivating for the teachers. In Brazil, teachers in government schools were not as happy as teachers in private schools, even though the government teachers received higher salaries. The reason for their discontent was their perception that the social and physical environments of the government schools were inferior to those of the private schools. Whatever the professional or geographical setting, the experts agreed that in CD design, more focus must be placed on non-financial incentive structures. Virtually everyone agreed that non-financial incentives are much easier to sustain internally than financial incentives.

Sustainability of incentives

Examples abound of incentive structures that either did not create the result intended or were unsustainable over time. These instances span every region of the developing world. It was clear to panel participants that when dealing with incentive structures, the tension between internal versus external priorities, issues and decision-priorities is serious, even when issues raised by the *Paris Declaration* and other similar instruments were set aside.

Whatever the ultimate decision regarding incentive structures, a solid civil service environment must already exist or significant civil service reform must *precede* the development and introduction of incentive structures. Ultimately, incentive structures must be a

country-level issue (or in the case of a federation, an issue of the largest reasonable sub-national unit). Incentive structures should not become a UNESCO issue.

Incentive structures must first and foremost be compatible with domestic issues and structures – both educational and economic. This compatibility takes several forms. Firstly, the gap between teacher salaries, administrator compensation, ministry packages and so on, must remain in balance within the larger social and economic environment. For the most part, using incentives to create an elite system that does not 'fit' with the larger historical, social or cultural environment will not achieve the long-term CD design or be internally sustainable, and is likely to create instability in the ministry and the context in which the ministry operates.

Finally, incentives and any donor supplements must be based on a feasible future scenario, for example where the country will 'be' economically in ten years. The internal sustainability of any incentive structure must be a *realistic* possibility within ten years so that donor support is not perpetual and the structure can become a regular part of the country's normal mode of operation.

Match between training and assignment

A prominent theme that emerged in the discussion was that mismatching the assignments and work tasks of individuals has generally resulted in inefficiency and ineffectiveness. While many training efforts targeted at individuals were seen as very successful in increasing the knowledge and capacity of trainees, a pervasive mismatching in assignments has been a significant, if not insurmountable, challenge to the positive impact of those individual-targeted CD programmes.

This mismatching can take many forms. The most typical is a particular posting or long-term tasking that simply ignores what the individual has been trained to do and is best suited to do. But career-track assignment can also be misaligned. An individual trained to be an education planner, for example, may very well be assigned to a ministry other than education. While that person may have a relatively successful career in that other ministry, the human resources loss and potential loss to the ministry of education can be significant. Another

Mozambique: a successful match of training and assignment

"As early as 1981, when the civil war was still raging in the country, several young but highly motivated central level officers were trained at the IIEP. They were given important assignments and rapidly became a strong technical force within the ministry. Without much delay they took the initiative of organizing capacity-building activities for planners at the decentralized level and later actively contributed to setting up and running a national training programme in education planning and administration at the Universidade Pedagogica in Maputo. The Mozambique experience demonstrates the importance of a proper match between training and assignment in facilitating the new competencies acquired by individual officers so that they produce a positive impact on the organisation as a whole."

International agency worker stationed in Europe

possibility is that a person well trained and successful in education may not prove capable of transferring that level of success into another ministry setting, creating problems not only for the individual, but for both ministries involved (for opposite reasons).

A critical point in post-CD efforts is that individuals and others in the units to which they belong must believe that they can perform as required by their assignment. It is imperative that well trained individuals with the necessary capacities be placed in positions where they have the essential skills to make a difference.

Training individuals vs. training organizations

The experts often referred to the need to strengthen the organizations in which even qualified individuals operate. At times this was promoted as an imperative more important than the need to strengthen individual capacity. One participant expressed this sense well, when stating as follows: "The trap I see is that we come back to what is the easiest and which we are most comfortable with – training, or whatever relates to capacity development, in *individuals*. But the problem is not individual capacity, it exists at other levels and locations."

Conversely, many of the experts agreed with the sentiment that 'you can't train organizations, you can only train people'. Their position was that strengthening individuals *is* strengthening the organizations to

which they belong and is perhaps the only way one can really strengthen organizations.

A resolution to these apparently opposing viewpoints was not achieved. Yet the tension between these two perspectives must be explored and eventually solved. Without the targeting potential provided by a resolution, it is difficult to conceive of a way forward in CD that could produce predictable, replicable and sustainable positive results for CD in organizations or with individuals. Possible solutions to this condition are explored briefly in the sub-section on *Organizational change* in the section on ministry-level strategies.

Extra- and intra-national efforts

> *"National institutions with a clear mandate and support from their government are where the most effective individual capacity development can take place. These sorts of institutions are more stable, they are 'inside' the country, and the government prefers to rely on them."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

An important point of consideration in the success of individual CD is the point of origin in the initiation, design and implementation of a CD effort. While most efforts appear to be driven largely by extra-national agencies, some do originate from within the nation itself. Intra-national origination, as well as centrality in linkage to design and implementation, appears to have a significant positive influence on the ultimate success and sustainability of CD efforts and programmes.

A significant factor in the success of intra- versus extra-national efforts appears to be the level of specificity in the design and implementation of the different programmes. Extra-national efforts are clearly more 'recipe-based' and 'formulaic' than those originating within the nation-state. The more formulaic and technocratic approaches of extra-national CD programmes have been shown to provide important skills-based information, but not to have serious or long-term impact on ways of operating or behaving. In these cases, the individuals trained can understand the information perfectly, but that typically does not

lead to a change in operation and behaviour, which requires more than mere information transfer.

It seems evident that, at equal levels of capacity, intra-national efforts and institutions are in principle better placed than extra-national agency programming in identifying, designing and implementing CD efforts. Extra-national efforts should be focused on supporting these programmes rather than competing with them or working in an uncoordinated fashion in parallel to them.

Ministry-level strategies

Focusing on organizations such as ministries of education and their regional and district offices demands work in at least three core areas: (1) the development or clarification of organizational tools such as detailed organizational charts, mission statements or job descriptions; (2) demands for accountability from within or outside the ministry, including by civil society; and (3) supportive staff monitoring linked to motivating incentive systems. Changes in human resources management, however, may also be necessary, and the control of ministerial decision-makers in this domain is at times limited when ministry staff belongs to the civil service.

The experts' discussion was prefaced by the introduction and review of several questions, including the following:

- When ministries function ineffectively and few incentives are available to officers, what capacity development strategies have been successful?
- Who can demand accountability from the ministry?
- How can international agencies have an impact on the functioning of ministries? What actions should they promote in this regard and what actions should they avoid?
- When ministries are ineffective, should other partners – coming, for instance, from civil society – be given priority?

While the discussions were not limited to direct response to these specific questions, they were informed by them.

Organizational change

> *"The question becomes how to get ministries to change. At the top level, planning is the way to get ministries to change. The minister must choose a small group and they must develop the plan. With the plan in place the whole ministry must be mobilized – but this is where the process usually gets 'stuck'."* International agency worker stationed in Europe

The need to change organizations, and not just individuals, was part of a recurrent and prominent theme in the discussions. While the experts mostly agreed that cooperative CD efforts between aid agencies and ministries had for the most part succeeded in strengthening individuals (independent of consideration of their subsequent use), the organizations to which they belong had not realized equal success.

The question, therefore, becomes how to help (or 'get', as it was often phrased) ministries to change. There is a subtle but important distinction between the implications of the terms *help* and *get* when discussing attempts at organizational change. With the term *help*, CD efforts would be seen as cooperative enterprises between mutually interested organizations – the *power* and the *working* relationship would tend to be more horizontal. With the term *get*, CD efforts would tend more towards vertical relationships, with the extra-national partner being the super-ordinate participant and the host organization being in a sub-ordinate position.

The likelihood of organizational change depends at least on the following:

- The host government must take the lead (or have at the very least an equal partner role) in the design, implementation and evaluation of any CD effort.
- The culture of management in the host government must receive serious attention before CD activities are designed and delivered.
- 'One-size-fits-all' or 'recipe' approaches must seriously be challenged and, if implemented, must contain sufficient flexibility to fit the specific needs of and conditions in the host country.

- Individuals must be included as members of teams with sufficient mass to be able to increase the likelihood of substantial organizational impact.

As with many other critical issues, significant and sustainable organizational change is particularly difficult to achieve in fragile states or in nations experiencing substantial instability. Yet even in difficult circumstances, important organizational change can be made if everyone involved is willing to operate with realistic targets and time frames that are suitable and sensitive to the prevailing conditions.

Ministries' relationships with other organizations

Zimbabwe, Sweden and London: collaboration via Sida
"In 1983, Zimbabwe started collaborating with Gothenburg and Linköping Universities in Sweden and the Institute of Education of London University to enable technical subject teachers to receive degree-level studies in subjects such as woodwork, metalwork, agriculture, home economics and technical drawing. This was funded by Sida. These degree-level courses were incorporated successfully into the University of Zimbabwe (even though most Zimbabwean academics believed academic degrees should include classics but not practical subjects!) Through this collaboration, we were able to upgrade and update our technical education programmes, which had previously been below standard."
Ministry of education worker stationed in Africa

Any CD effort at the ministry level must account for the influence, efforts and relationships between the ministry and other relevant organizations. Some of those influential organizations originate and operate from within the nation, while others are extra-national.

At the root of this may be the extent to which the agency attempting to deliver CD services is considered legitimate by the host nation. Closely related is the real or perceived legitimacy of the ministry within its own country or with the involved agency. Of course, this issue of legitimacy could be extended to extreme points, such as a refusal to participate in CD activities due to a claim of low or no legitimacy by the agency or host country against the other. Nonetheless, legitimacy within and between the ministry and

other active partner organizations does have a major influence on the likelihood of CD efforts making a significant or lasting impact.

An interesting point that was raised and agreed to by a number of experts was that the relationship between ministries and teacher training institutions is not as good or productive as it needs to be. In many places, this relationship has deteriorated in recent years. This would appear to be a critical area for CD efforts and programmes in coming years. The question of why resistance to change towards better inter-institutional relationships – which seems so self-evidently necessary and appears to be so easily within reach – remains entrenched, is significant. Participants considered whether better and more productive working relationships require (on both sides) new institutions, new people, or just new approaches.

At least 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 mutually beneficial change and cooperation are likely to be too costly in terms of control. The costs of change simply do not appear to be sufficiently offset by the potential benefits. There are examples of great success in this area, however. Several national institutions have been able to produce capable education planners who are well and properly placed within relevant and influential government units. These institutions generally have a significant level of autonomy in personnel and finance management.

> *"In at least half of Latin American countries the ministries aren't that bad. The bottleneck is the teacher training institutions. They aren't teaching their students how to teach."*
> Academic stationed in South America

Issues of scale

Even conceding the context of discussion at the ministry level, the issue of scale emerges. When a CD initiative is not dealing with federations (which brings issues of scale into play, as noted elsewhere), a focus on the ministry of education makes the most sense only when the nation-state is reasonably unified or stable. Non-federated fragile

states, for example, may require that CD efforts focus on sub-national regions or on highly localised units rather than on the ministry.

Another point of consideration relating to scale is whether a 'ministry-level focus' indeed requires CD efforts at the ministry itself. Alternatively, are 'ministry-level' activities in reality taking place at the level of the sub-ministry organizational unit that is specifically tasked with some significant aspect of designing, planning, implementing and/ or evaluating the education function(s) of interest?

> *"Working with a small island state is very different to working with a large country like China. In CD, we don't differentiate sufficiently between large and small – we assume a 'one-size-fits-all' approach."*
> Training institution worker stationed in Asia

A last issue of scale to be considered, and one that has an impact on all prior issues, is the size of the nation-state involved. Certainly, any CD effort taking place in China or India would have to be approached in a very different fashion, due to issues of scale, than efforts in Togo or Samoa.

Issues of scale emphasize the point that 'one-size-fits-all' and 'recipe' approaches must be reconsidered, if at all attempted, with the implication for agencies such as UNESCO to consider their own 'issue of scale'. It is important to ask whether a reasonably large and historically-laden agency like UNESCO can provide CD services that are sufficiently adaptable and malleable to widely varying conditions that are heavily textured by their own issues and politics of scale.

Strategy effectiveness

Not all strategies are 'created equal', nor are they all equally effective or ineffective across settings and conditions. Yet there may be some strategies that appear to have led consistently to positive and sustainable outcomes and thus may provide a reasonable expectation of success in the future, perhaps in other settings. On the other hand, some strategies may consistently have been ineffective, and the conditions and reasons for these relative failures should also be explored. Perhaps further examination will show that no strategies *per se* succeed or fail, but rather that strategies nested within varying sets of opportunities,

constraints and circumstances may have higher or lower chances of contributing to effective and sustainable CD efforts.

Environment of change

The discussions consistently interpreted CD as a process of change and therefore paid much attention to the conditions necessary for, and indeed *requisite* to, change. This emerged as one of the most significant issues in the two days of discussions, generating perhaps the largest share of agreement among participants. In brief, the assertion was made that the readiness of the country, ministry, unit and individuals for change is the determining factor in success, above all other considerations in CD efforts. The ability of those involved in CD, both internally and externally, to understand correctly and diagnose the conditions of readiness for change is the skill most required. To emphasize this point, the metaphor of 'pregnancy' was used throughout the discussion.

CD is about relationships and micro- and macro-level social change. It is about the process of actors coming together or not coming together. CD simply cannot be accomplished independent of the context. The change environment or the readiness of the environment for change cannot be ignored. Interest in, commitment to and readiness for change must exist on the part of the 'receiving unit' – this is the critical condition.

Pregnancy 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.

Culture

"Culture applies more appropriately to a specific place, and not so well to a generic borderless condition."
International agency worker stationed in Europe

While it is clear that culture alone cannot explain success or failure in CD, it must be conceded that it certainly makes a significant difference. But what is meant by *culture*? Can culture change and/or be changed? Must culture be taken as an

unavoidable, inflexible condition? Differences of opinion were strong on these points.

The literature on the nature and malleability of culture is immense. One group of experts felt that the literature that declares culture to be fixed and not amenable to change is simply incorrect. But this assertion could not be taken at face value. There is research and literature to support the notion that culture can and does change. Furthermore, culture change can be influenced from within and outside of the culture itself. This would be an important consideration in designing, delivering and evaluating CD efforts. While cultural issues and norms should always be considered and respected, there are occasions when efforts associated with CD can and should be made to influence change. Indeed, a CD effort may even target culture change itself as the object of the programme. The notion of *team* or *team building*, as it has functioned in specific national settings, was used to illustrate the challenges encountered when the host culture does not necessarily support a required behaviour, and as an example of how cultural norms that are not initially conducive to such behaviour can be changed to be more supportive.

> **Benin: cultural change through appropriate incentives**
>
> *"The experience of one district education office (DEO) clarifies this issue. The DEO made an agreement with an NGO: The NGO provides the DEO with technical and financial support, and in exchange the DEO makes sure that its files are well kept, that it organizes regular training courses for principals, and that it allows its staff to participate in professional development. It asks the NGO for advice, which is well appreciated. It reports back every year to the NGO, which makes continued financing conditional upon progress made. This has allowed for a relationship of mutual trust to develop and for the DEO to function more effectively."* International agency worker stationed in Europe

However, there may be a significant difference between the meaning and malleability of culture as expressed in a workplace or management environment, in contrast to culture as expressed in the larger civil society. In the sense of culture in the workplace or management environment, the likelihood of change is increased by the fact that workplace settings are by their very nature a 'composite' culture focused on individual and

cooperative tasks and functions. A workplace environment typically brings together individuals from different – sometimes divergent – ethnic, regional, linguistic and other cultural backgrounds. The various combinations of workers' different backgrounds creates a condition in which the staff are brought together to pursue specific functions and tasks that often anticipate actions and decisions that supersede prior background commitments. Whether this actually happens or not is not the issue here. The fact of the combination and the united intention of a cooperative work enterprise create a condition with greater possibility of change than normally exists when a single cultural dimension predominates.

When *culture* is applied in the second meaning, then change may still be possible, and is perhaps desirable and necessary for success and sustainability. Clearly, the impetus for and efforts targeted at changing the larger cultural context come most appropriately and effectively from within – not from and according to the norms and expectations of an external culture or agency.

Critical mass

An important issue influencing the efficiency of CD efforts is critical mass. In terms of CD efforts, critical mass expresses itself in two ways: (1) the critical mass necessary in host nations to build sustainable capacity, and (2) the critical mass necessary

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Cambodia:
conditions ready for change

"As soon as Cambodia began to emerge from decades of war and destruction in 1991, the Ministry of Education with the support of UNICEF and Sida started investing in building capacity for planning. Year after year, one or two officers were sent to the IIEP for training and were posted in responsible positions within the Planning Department. At the same time the Department got properly equipped and was provided with up-to-date information technology. Today the country has one of the best education management information systems (EMIS) in the region and the Planning Department plays a key role in coordinating and monitoring the education sector development process on a SWAp basis. The example shows that successful CD is a long-term undertaking which involves not only a strategic vision, but also some risk taking, serious commitment on behalf of the government and persistent support from donors." International agency worker stationed in Europe

for aid agencies to be effective in their efforts to provide CD programmes and services.

The number necessary to qualify as sufficient critical mass varies between host nation contexts. Sufficient critical mass is influenced by factors such as the size of the ministry or nation, the stability of the host nation and institution, the skill levels of involved personnel, and the complexity of targeted capacity outcomes. It is evident that even in the smallest nations or ministries with good stability, skill levels and modest outcome goals, one or two capable individuals simply would not be sufficient critical mass either to make a meaningful difference or to sustain that difference over time. Among the suggestions given for increasing the critical mass in host nations were using distance education and technology, and encouraging increased support from universities in the region. It is interesting to note that in considering university participation it was believed that 'younger' universities would be more likely to participate effectively in developing critical mass in CD programmes. Older universities, it seems, are considered too conservative and self-contained, and thus likely to display a level of disinterest in adapting to and participating in CD efforts.

In terms of critical mass and aid agencies, the issues are a bit more subtle. It was mentioned several times during the experts' meetings that an important aspect of critical mass is the number of qualified personnel in field offices. It should be noted that the claim for critical mass in this regard does not refer simply to the number of field offices or the number of people in those offices. Rather, the reference is to the number of *qualified* people in the field offices, as well as the *attitude* within the organization for posting to those locations. It is clear that the experts believed that any agency involved in CD efforts needs to have enough qualified and properly motivated people in the field in order to succeed.

> *"There isn't enough critical mass in the field. UNESCO's best people should be in the field. UNICEF people are fighting to go to the field – in UNESCO there isn't much fighting going on to move into the field!"*
> Ministry of education worker stationed in Europe

Time frame

> *"My general experience is that the time it takes to go through the discussion, negotiation and agreement process is much longer than we allocate. It takes a long time to do it right, and we are not patient enough."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Often, CD efforts struggle under the avoidable constraints of unrealistic time frames. This is not to imply that either short- or long-term efforts are always the problem. More often, the problem is a significant mismatch between the prevailing needs and the readiness of the host country, institution(s) and/or actors and the time frames attempted. The source of inappropriate time frames is not always 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 CD needs and realities.

Most contexts and needs require more time to assess, plan, deliver and evaluate than is typically anticipated; there is often a significant amount of time between an action and any measurable result. The typically anticipated time frame of one to four years from intervention to results is simply too short in most aspects of CD. Preferences for 10- to 20-year time frames were evident in the discussions. Clearly, these longer time frames present a number of practical and functional challenges and create perhaps as many challenges as they intend to solve – albeit different ones. It is not clear that the exchange of challenges from short-term to long-term efforts would net a necessarily satisfactory result. However, concern and perhaps frustration with the currently more common short-term efforts has generated a sense that perhaps the challenges associated with long-term efforts would be a welcome change at least.

It was pointed out that in Rwanda, "the fact that DFID made a ten-year commitment was critically important to the success of the CD effort". On the other hand, it was agreed that in fragile states it is desirable first to have short time frames of one to two years before longer-term goals are feasible.

While it does not represent a unified collection, the following brief list of issues that emerged regarding the time frame may be instructive for some of the basic issues that were discussed:

- We must be patient and allow sufficient time to see the results.
- Change involves the long term, even when particular successes might emerge in the short term.
- We should be better at distinguishing between short-term and long-term TA.
- A realistic assessment of the circumstances of the host setting should drive the delivery of either short- or long-term TA, rather than the availability of funding, the priorities of the funding agency, or the preferences of the aid agency.

In either short- or long-term cases the dimensions of a specific CD programme – in terms of the approach, needs, monitoring and evaluation, funding, and so on – will differ considerably depending on the element of time frame.

Accountability

A strong theme that emerged in several arenas was the accountability necessary for success to be a realistic expectation. Accountability was expressed in several ways: conditional funding for meeting performance goals, the presence of real conditionalities, checks and balances in the responsibility mechanism, clear expectations and evaluation systems, and linkage in performance contracts.

> *"We ask for more accountability of developing countries than is asked of developed countries."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Accountability must be balanced by providing requisite competencies and establishing a reciprocal system of free-flowing critical information. Implementing accountability systems without increasing skills and capabilities is not only problematic, but certain to lead to any number of negative outcomes, risking a high probability of failure. A related critical factor is the formalization of clear expectations, the establishment of criteria for performance and deliverables, and agreement on schedules and dates. Without these formal arrangements there will be a predictable breakdown in any accountability system.

While accountability is typically related to the performance of individuals in specific sub-ministry units, the concept of accountability should actually be construed much more broadly. A balanced system of accountability needs to consider and strongly link to, in whatever degree is reasonable, four groups:

- policy-makers at the national level;
- technicians (professional-level personnel);
- implementers;
- civil society:
    - beneficiaries and users;
    - political parties (including the ability to monitor);
    - trade unions.

Accountability systems can easily be destabilized by unclear 'line' and 'authority' mechanisms. The issue of governance can arise in designing and implementing accountability systems, and this can prove to be problematic. It is often not clear that there is a distinct or singular chain of responsibilities between decentralized units and actors and more centralized authorities. There is also a potential for inequities in organizational structures between regions and districts within the same nation. Clear structures of responsibility and accountability must be in place prior to implementation, and potential conflicts and overlaps in lines of authority must be resolved.

> *"This leads to the issue of governance: to whom are the decentralized units responsible? Are they responsible to the central government or the local government? There is a risk that a lack of clarity in the chain of responsibilities between decentralized units and the centre will lead to inequities between regions and districts."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

Evaluation

Issues of evaluation were the only ones that emerged in all of the sessions during the two days of meetings, and they generated some of the most diverse questions and discussions. Have CD efforts failed, or have our evaluation systems failed to investigate them adequately or appropriately? Where CD efforts have not achieved the magnitude

of results anticipated, have evaluation attempts been sufficiently patient to allow those efforts to mature? Have evaluation efforts been sufficient but appear inconsistent simply because sometimes CD works and sometimes it doesn't? These and other questions were expressed or implied during the course of discussions regarding the relevance, effectiveness and sensitivity of CD evaluation efforts. Regardless of the positions that the experts assumed, it was clear that evaluation efforts are critical to CD efforts and that evaluation must improve in a number of ways.

It was proposed that the *Guidelines for capacity development in the education sector within the Education For All Fast Track Initiative framework* document provides an evaluative framework on which future efforts could draw (FTI Capacity Development Team, 2008). It may be true that the FTI Capacity Development Team document and other relevant documents of this sort, such as the OECD-DAC document (2006), can provide some general indications for evaluative 'frameworks'. However, they provide few specific evaluation modalities or technical details to truly guide the design of future CD evaluation systems. As a general framework, these two documents and others merit serious consideration and inclusion in future CD evaluation efforts.

One set of challenges emerging from the discussions related to whether the real changes assessed in CD were based in behavioural observations and criteria, as currently dominate evaluation systems. Certainly, there are

> **Set up monitoring and evaluation modalities for capacity development efforts**
>
> *While designing a strategy, it is key to define how these structured efforts towards capacity development in the education sector will be monitored and evaluated (M&E). M&E of CD should be considered part of a planning cycle, interlinking priority setting, strategy selection, resource allocation and budgeting, and implementation. M&E closes this cycle by delivering information on whether intended outcomes of CD interventions were met, why they were not achieved and whether chosen CD interventions turned out to be relevant in achieving education sector targets.*
>
> (FTI Capacity Development Team, 2008: 29)

significant changes that are not amenable to traditional evaluation approaches and assumptions. However, this does not mean that there are not (or should not be) significant impacts and changes that are amenable to traditional evaluation approaches and assumptions. Consequently, while the argument of outcomes not measurable by present evaluation techniques is valid and thus meaningful to contemplate and pursue, this argument does not answer the question of why outcomes that should and do conform to those techniques are often not manifest.

It may be, as one expert put it, that "we do not have enough patience". It is likely that the outcomes we want most from our CD efforts are not yet manifest because we have miscalculated the 'incubation period' required. Additionally, evaluation systems must be sufficiently flexible to be applied to the nature of the service, context and intended outcomes. Each of these conditions exerts a powerful influence on the appropriate type and timing of evaluation. These factors imply a reasonable resistance to standardized evaluation systems, approaches, timelines and expectations.

> *For CD to work communities, schools and parents must demand it, and support it – otherwise efforts can be too easily reversed.*
> Ministry of education worker stationed in Africa

Another possible explanation is that our evaluation systems are adequate and we exercise sufficient patience, but because we failed to conduct thorough and accurate assessments of the needs and readiness of the change environment and conditions prior to proceeding, the desired results simply did not occur. Evaluation efforts, which most typically proceed during or after the fact, also need to include *a priori* attempts to assess the readiness and adequacy of conditions in the host environment. These pre-design and pre-delivery assessments must be regularized and must be given adequate weight in determining whether or how to proceed.

> *"Needs assessment prior to CD is too weak and superficial; consequently, linkage is poor between what is really needed and the generic solutions applied."*
> International agency worker stationed in South America, teamed with a training institution worker stationed in Asia

Connection between local and central

Successful and sustainable CD efforts must include the full range of impacted organizations, groups and individuals. CD cannot be limited to an investment in ministries or the staff of ministries. It should be seen as unavoidable to include the full range of actors, from the most highly centralized to the most localized units of impact and participation.

The inclusion of groups and individuals at the local level is particularly important in democracies. Full range inclusion is a fundamental assumption of a democratic society, and the impact and sustainability of CD efforts will be severely restricted without it.

While there is an assumed 'natural' tension between central and local needs and action, that tension must be confronted and resolved to ensure the best possible results. While some of the experts felt that change must *always* come from local action and effort, and that support from centralized units must be locally controlled, this position clearly has limited validity in certain cases and conditions. Consequently, while many CD efforts may begin from an assumption of the priority of local influence and control, the best CD solutions and programmes will not always operate from this perspective.

There is reasonable concern that operating from an exclusively local perspective will not produce efforts that are fully robust. The central and local perspectives of operation equally involve risks, limitations and possibilities in CD efforts. The nearly universal assumptions about 'grass-roots' and 'bottom-up' efforts and priorities often defeat CD efforts before they begin. This issue is cultural rather than technical. Where cultural assumptions of hierarchy dominate, and operational solutions and CD efforts must function within that milieu, grass-roots and bottom-up mechanisms simply might not be appropriate. Cultures can be so different that CD efforts and solutions must be highly adaptive and sensitive. This makes the connections between local and central actors more complex than might typically be apparent.

NGOs play an interesting role on the central-local dominance continuum. Local needs are clearly the primary domain of operation for NGOs, and for the most part they do very well in that niche. There can

often be a mismatch or overlapping of efforts, however, between NGOs functioning at the local level and traditional CD efforts that operate on the 'line' functions typically associated with centralized actors. Careful collaboration of efforts must take place to avoid inefficiency and costly conflicts between potentially complementary efforts.

External vs. internal issues

Similar to issues regarding the full inclusion of central and local actors, there is a significant need to consider the relationships and needs of external and internal actors. Often expressed as *tension* between external efforts and internal action, the issues involved persist, and they resist easy resolution.

"Who should decide that an external agency should provide CD services – the country or the agency? The 'optimum' CD service level should be determined by the host country, not the external agency." International agency worker stationed in Africa

In the experts' discussions it was not always external agency personnel who were asserting the priority of exogenous perspectives and efforts, and nor was it always locally-situated experts who were asserting the priority of local control. Often, internal actors, wrapped in the realities of their host country, look to external agents and organizations to take the lead in identifying the most important CD needs and designing and delivering services. External actors, meanwhile, often champion the priority of local actors. Rather than engaging in a discourse of 'hierarchy', where a clear and universal determination is made of whether external or internal actors should have priority, efforts should focus on determining which perspectives should guide a specific CD effort and in what particular proportion of external/internal 'mixture'. Often, the mixture of external and local may change in the course of the CD effort, depending on the nature of the host environment and the institutional and capacity 'target' of the CD programme. Also, internal and external actors have to agree on the goals and approaches used.

5. ROLE OF UNESCO IN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN EFA

UNESCO and other international development and funding agencies play an important role in supporting and financing many CD activities. Because UNESCO has a fairly centralized structure and is not a financing agency, it needs to develop partnerships. Its focus should probably not be on the implementation of programmes and projects, but on more upstream areas where technical expertise is of more importance than implementation capacity. Such areas could include policy advice, needs assessment or institutional analysis, which needs more emphasis from the international community. All of this should be better focused and refined in terms of UNESCO's mandate and role as the global leader in EFA. How UNESCO determines to fulfil its future role as *the* global leader in CD efforts in EFA may very well define its relevance and impact as an organization and global leader.

EFA focus

Since UNESCO is the appointed leader in EFA, and the primary function of the experts' panel was to provide an input towards the creation of a UNESCO strategy paper on "capacity development for achieving EFA goals" (De Grauwe, 2008: 1), the group pushed for an 'EFA focus' in the discussions. There is clearly a need to contextualize UNESCO's efforts and policy obligations in EFA – especially because of the tendency to focus on less comprehensive CD subjects, opportunities or services.

Any effort on the part of UNESCO to cross institutional boundaries without full contextualization in EFA will lead only to non-sustainable results. This is an issue of UNESCO's competitive advantage, which rests on EFA. UNESCO is, above all, about *ideas*. Ideas cannot be contextualized in the abstract. EFA is the focal point on which UNESCO needs to base its priorities and assess its competitive and comparative advantages, as well as the

> *"The situation at the school level is actually much less depressing than at the ministry level – but that is largely due to the actions of NGOs."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

area in which its ideas can and should find their most concrete future possibilities.

Unit of analysis

It is self-evident that UNESCO must make clear and operational the 'unit of analysis' it intends to use for future CD efforts in EFA. Historically, the focus has primarily been nation-states – ministries of education in particular. Perhaps the country or nation-state unit of analysis in the *Paris Declaration* and the OECD-DAC document should guide UNESCO's selection. Whatever choice is made, the unit of analysis should be the starting point. The typically weak linkage between ministries and schools means that clear targeting of one or the other as the unit of analysis is critical, since it is difficult to assume that operating at either the school or ministry level will consistently have an impact on the other.

Establishing a clear unit of analysis as the starting point improves targeting, scale and the scope of intended services and operations, evaluation techniques, and timing – among other functions critical for effective implementation and sustainability. Care should be taken to avoid being drawn into efforts at too many levels at once. It is best to determine the highest 'leverage' opportunity for UNESCO and move confidently in that direction. Considering that the UN system has stewardship over only 2 per cent of the aid monies in the world, and UNESCO's budget is only a fraction of that amount, highly focused efforts based in a realistic and contained unit of analysis framework are the only rational option for the future.

Accountability

While the experts felt that accountability includes important implications for UNESCO, various groups construed the role very differently. Positions on this ranged across the full spectrum, from asserting that UNESCO *must* hold governments directly accountable, to the belief that UNESCO *can't* be involved in holding countries accountable.

Those who took the position that UNESCO must or should hold governments accountable made it clear that the implied systems of

accountability should include not just centralized government units, but also communities and other sub-national government units as well. However, they did not present or even approach any mechanisms by which UNESCO could hold governments and other entities accountable. Given donor and aid funding systems, global political roles and UNESCO's traditional position (and its likely future position), it seems very unlikely that a function as an 'agent of accountability' will ever materialize.

Conversely, some of the experts presented strong arguments asserting that UNESCO simply could not become involved in holding governments accountable, especially via direct strategies. This position included the sense that even the use of 'conditionalities' in CD efforts is not appropriate for UNESCO. Accountability, conditionalities, incentives and so on should remain the purview of the host government and of internal agencies and funding units. The assertion was credibly made that UNESCO-centred systems of accountability are simply inappropriate.

> *"For ministries to become more accountable, civil society must first be reinforced. Government structures (that is, ministries of education) can't be made to be more accountable until their civil society is such that this can be done. The role of UNESCO is to see how civil societies can be reinforced by NGOs and knowledge-based institutions like universities, and so on."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

The 'middle ground' appeared to be the belief that UNESCO does indeed have a role in accountability, but that role should be moderated through alliances and moderated efforts with NGOs, indigenous institutions such as universities and training units, as well as international aid agencies. In this scenario, UNESCO has somewhat of a 'brokering' role. Again, no specific mechanisms or approaches were proposed, but the general idea was presented as the most likely role for UNESCO in the domain of accountability.

Organizational issues

> *"The OECD paper definition required a major shift in thinking, away from historical successes, discourses and commitments. The gap is enormous between the practice of CD and the OECD paper definition."*
> International agency worker stationed in Europe

It was clear that the participants were not interested in 'judging' UNESCO, but rather in exploring and offering suggestions to help create the most relevant and useful strategy paper possible. Questions about the possibility or legitimacy of exploring organizational issues relating to UNESCO were raised a number of times. The approach to such questions seemed rather cautious, indicating a concern that organizational issues might be somewhat delicate at UNESCO. One participant reflected on whether UNESCO was prepared to evaluate and challenge its own definitions and processes. A delimitation was made to not consider UNESCO's *internal* organizational and capacity issues, but rather to focus on the relationships between UNESCO and other organizations.

Organizations and governments obviously seek UNESCO's involvement – but why is this? Some may do so in the belief that UNESCO remains neutral. Perhaps the 'brand name' of UNESCO is attractive to potential partners seeking an organizational relationship. In any case, UNESCO must become more proactive in seeking out organizational partners and must broaden its search beyond the ministry level to include NGOs, sub-national government units and aid agencies.

Although UNESCO's internal organizational and capacity issues were not a focus of this group, a few ideas in these areas circulated and emerged in different discussions. The most prominent of these was the issue of UNESCO's field offices and patterns of deployment. First, clearly the sentiment was universal that UNESCO's main value is its people, not its financial support. Consequently, the experts felt that the best (most competent) people should be in the field. There was a sense that the quality of the field offices had deteriorated over time, and that UNESCO needs to find ways to reverse this trend.

UNESCO and its partners

> *"You can't do CD in a 'silo'!"*
> Academic stationed in Europe

While the goal of the experts' meeting was to help provide a basis for UNESCO's strategy paper, it was also necessary to consider what other organizations are, can and should be doing in CD and EFA. This broad approach provides a more realistic landscape of the context in which UNESCO's paper must be positioned, as well as a more comprehensive picture of UNESCO's role and function in that context.

> *"UNESCO needs to acknowledge the role and ability of other agencies, make partnership commitments over the long term, avoid establishing redundant systems, establish strong networking relationships, and increase its own diversity."*
> International agency worker stationed in Africa

An important issue to resolve is how UNESCO relates to and interacts with its partners. The experts observe that UNESCO often interacts quite differently with partners such as member states, NGOs and aid agencies than it does with other international groups such as UNICEF and the World Bank. To some degree this may be inevitable, or even preferable, given UNESCO's particular commission and organizational position. On the other hand, UNESCO may simply have fallen into institutional patterns that are not necessarily essential, preferable or productive. It is important to consider how to define not only who UNESCO's partners are, but how UNESCO should interact with them in a functionally productive way.

Along with identifying UNESCO's potential partners, the group realized that it is imperative to determine from whence the 'push' for this strategy paper is coming. Does the impetus come from one of UNESCO's partners or a group of partners, or does it result from a larger set of reforms and change forces that have created the necessity for UNESCO to reposition or redefine its perspective and functional imperatives on this issue? This determination makes a substantial difference in how to proceed, how to target the strategy paper and how to bring together partners in a united effort.

6.   CONCLUSION

A meeting of experts with the combined experience of more than 500 years can be expected to be a forum for rich discussion and some areas of disagreement. Such disagreement results not only from the experts' different positions and their own more or less successful experiences in CD, but also from the complexity which characterizes CD and the impact of the contexts within which CD efforts are implemented. It may be more instructive in this conclusion to move beyond these disagreements to highlight the points on which the experts agreed.

CD only succeeds when individuals and organizations are ready for change. Precisely because CD is linked intimately to individual incentives and organizational cultures, its implementation will unavoidably imply profound change and will therefore encounter resistance. If those who resist change outweigh by far those who promote it, CD programmes may remain superficial and generate no sustainable impact. Without internal commitment, external efforts make little sense.

Readiness for change depends on the type of leadership at the national level as well as within organizations. External incentives or conditionalities cannot replace national leadership and direction; at most, such factors may help create them. The implication is, therefore, that CD programmes may need to include specific interventions to identify prospective leaders and support leadership that is oriented towards change and development.

A more general implication is that successful CD programmes cannot be limited to a few one-off training courses, but may have to be comprehensive and multifaceted, focusing on building individuals' skills, organizational transformation and institutional reform. Training is undoubtedly a part of CD programmes, but training alone does not change bureaucratic practices. CD is intrinsically a complex and challenging endeavour, but without capacity, sustainable development is not possible.

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The book

Capacity development, a very popular concept in recent years, has a fairly mixed record. While successes have been achieved, from which useful lessons can be learned, the overall record remains a source of concern, especially in the least developed countries. In July 2008, IIEP invited international experts for a debate on the reasons capacity development efforts at times fail to have a long-term impact, on ways to overcome common constraints and on UNESCO's role in this area and how it may be (re)defined.

This book comments on the differences of opinion between experts but also highlights points of agreement on capacity development strategies which may be more successful than present approaches. The focus should shift from the individual to the organization and action should move from simply providing training to a more complete set of interventions. These can include the development of organizational tools, better monitoring using incentive systems, and stronger accountability, both within the organization and towards civil society. Longer time frames and new evaluation schemes are needed to measure efforts correctly. However, in order to trigger organizational change, a certain number of prerequisites must be in place, such as internal commitment and change-oriented leadership.

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