

The EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide: How to make peer-to-peer support and learning effective in the public sector?

The EIP Peer Learning Guide and the study which informed the guide are undergoing a final phase of consultation until 1st February 2016. The premise behind peer learning is that no one knows the challenges facing development practitioners better than the practitioners themselves. Peer learning is increasingly being used as an alternative approach, one that moves away from the traditional approach of technical assistance.

The EIP collaborated with Matt Andrews and Nick Manning to develop the EIP Peer-to-Peer Learning Guide. This innovative and user-friendly guide helps actors to think through how to engage in and generate effective peer-to-peer support and learning. A comprehensive study of various peer learning initiatives was undertaken as a basis for the guide.

The work of the EIP aims to fill the evidence gap on how, when and why peer sharing and learning works. The guide is not a set recipe for peer learning, but identifies principles of effective peer learning, as well as key stages of the peer learning process. Peer learning in our field has the potential to accelerate results and impact in order to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 and in particular 16.6.

Rwanda and DFID shared their views as to their attempts to get more out of capacity development efforts and how they see peer engagement and learning as a promising approach.

Peer learning - the coaching and mentoring approach: the new approach to capacity building in Rwanda

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Every year, members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have contributed about \$25 billion to developing countries, much of which is aimed at delivering what is increasingly being referred to as ‘capacity development’.

In order for countries with a similar context to Rwanda, to depart from the traditional mode of capacity development and achieve the dividends of new approaches like the coaching and mentoring approach which was piloted in Rwanda, it would be advisable to make reference to the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) peer to peer learning guide, and learn from Rwanda through the National Capacity Building Secretariat (NCBS) and receive peer learning support.

Despite the aforementioned traditional capacity development investments, many of these interventions do not demonstrate any clear evidence that they are having the desired impact. A number of studies based on evaluations of the impact of capacity development programmes support this concern and highlight shortcomings in the efforts of development partners. These studies make it clear that despite substantial international investment, there is little evidence of clear development outcomes.

The Government of Rwanda has learned from experience of the conventional 'technical assistance' that has sometimes produced mixed results; become a channel for gap filling or quick fixes; was too generalized; and basically more of short-term in term of fly-in and fly-out consultancy arrangements and whose assignments were output based rather than also providing skills and knowledge transfer.

In 2011 to June 2015, under a program known as the Strategic Capacity Building Initiative (SCBI), the Government adopted a coaching and mentoring approach as a more effective mechanism of using technical assistance in priority areas, for example - Energy, Agriculture, Mining, Investment Promotion and Export Promotion.

A second Phase has commenced from July 2015. Early successes of SCBI as reported in various literature, has demonstrated that capacity development should not be taken as a short-term gap fixing arrangement but rather it should be government driven, priority focused as well as outcome and impact focused.

The short term objective of the coaching and mentoring program in Rwanda is to enable the transfer of skills, knowledge and other professional and technical competencies to young Rwandans supported by experienced technical experts as coaches and mentors while concurrently supporting the implementation of delivery of top Government-identified priority development results in the sectors. The long-term objective behind mentoring and coaching is to create a critical mass of future competent experts and leaders for a highly performing government.

The operating principles of the coaching and mentoring approach when it is piloted in another country, should be premised on the following strategic imperatives:

- The National Leadership defining their strategic priorities and championing the capacity development agenda;
- Learning from past experience and intelligently making reference to good practices at home and abroad;
- Designing technical assistance programmes to show clear evidence of how skills and knowledge will actually be transferred to national counterparts and institutions;
- Ensuring that experts brought in from other countries are recruited on the basis of their experience and skills in coaching, as well as their technical skills;
- Having a clear governance and institutional arrangement for capacity development in order to coordinate such a program;
- Having in place capacity development tool-kits and guidelines to support the monitoring and evaluation of this approach.

Peer engagement in public administration: an experience from DFID

By the National School for Government International, DFID

Since 2012, the National School for Government International (NSGI), has been operating as a small cross cutting unit in Her Majesty's Government (HMG), to support overseas partner governments to build capacity and strengthen the centre of government to improve governance and service delivery. The NSGI team is made up of UK civil servants with practitioner experience of reform. The team provides support and advice to partner governments on local reform initiatives using a peer to peer model and by brokering and managing access to UK civil service practitioners' skills and experience, who then work in partnership with the local teams to identify and address the specific service delivery problems. To date, NSGI has undertaken over 200 short term interventions in over 15 countries.

For example, working with DFID Zambia, NSGI has been engaged with the Government of the Republic of Zambia for over 3 years providing strategic advice to the Cabinet Secretary to develop a programme of reforms to improve Human Resource Management across the public service. The aim is to address some of the inefficiencies in processing HR cases by reducing transaction layers through delegation from the service commissions to the line ministries.

NSGI has worked in partnership with the locally appointed team leading the reforms to provide advice on the concept of the reforms, the change management, and supporting the design of the future HR operating model, supported by a NSGI Resident Adviser and other HR experts from the UK.

This transformative programme is still in its early stages but there is positive feedback and evidence that the peer to peer approach is welcomed by the range of Zambian stakeholders engaged in developing the reforms.

The flexibility of the peer to peer approach with a focus on change management and reform processes rather than prescriptive technical inputs may offer an important complementary tool to more traditional forms of capacity building. There is a need to better understand how and when peer-learning works. The EIP's learning guide contributes to filling this evidence gap and has the potential of guiding practitioners in engaging in more effective peer learning initiatives. Although in its early stages, NSGI is working with DFID colleagues and more widely to learn from and develop its emerging model.