A study of peer learning in the public sector

Experience, experiments and ideas to guide future practice

Part One:

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Executive Summary

What do we mean by peer learning?

Peer learning is a potentially powerful way of sharing knowledge about doing public sector reform. This learning involves individuals exchanging knowledge and experience with each other, and potentially diffusing this learning back to their organisations to ensure an impact—at scale—on reform initiatives. While peer learning entails complex organisational logistics, it avoids the risk of focusing on process rather than product. It recognises that ultimately learning takes place between individuals and it facilitates interpersonal interchanges that are well-matched and that are based on trust and commitment.

Peer learning can be evaluated based on whether peer engagements and sustained individual contacts produced the right learning outcomes for the right personnel to achieve changes which matter.

What are the principles of effective peer learning?

Peer learning is most effective when:

- Learning objectives are clear, and peer engagements are structured to maximise these objectives.
- Individual peers are matched appropriately, and authorised and empowered to engage effectively.
- The organisations authorising peers to engage give formal authorisation to these peers.
- Peers engage with each other in an honest and committed manner.
- Peers engage with each other over a medium to long run period.
- Peers engage in multiple ways, including through shared work and site visits.
- Peers do things together, and reflect regularly on what they are learning.
- The learning gains of individual peers are communicated back to those authorising the engagement of these peers, to ensure continued support for the learning process.
- The home organisations of each peer commit to allow peers to communicate their learning back into the organisations, and structure a strategy to ensure this is done regularly.
- Facilitators simplify the process of peer engagement, to ensure peers find this process as easy-

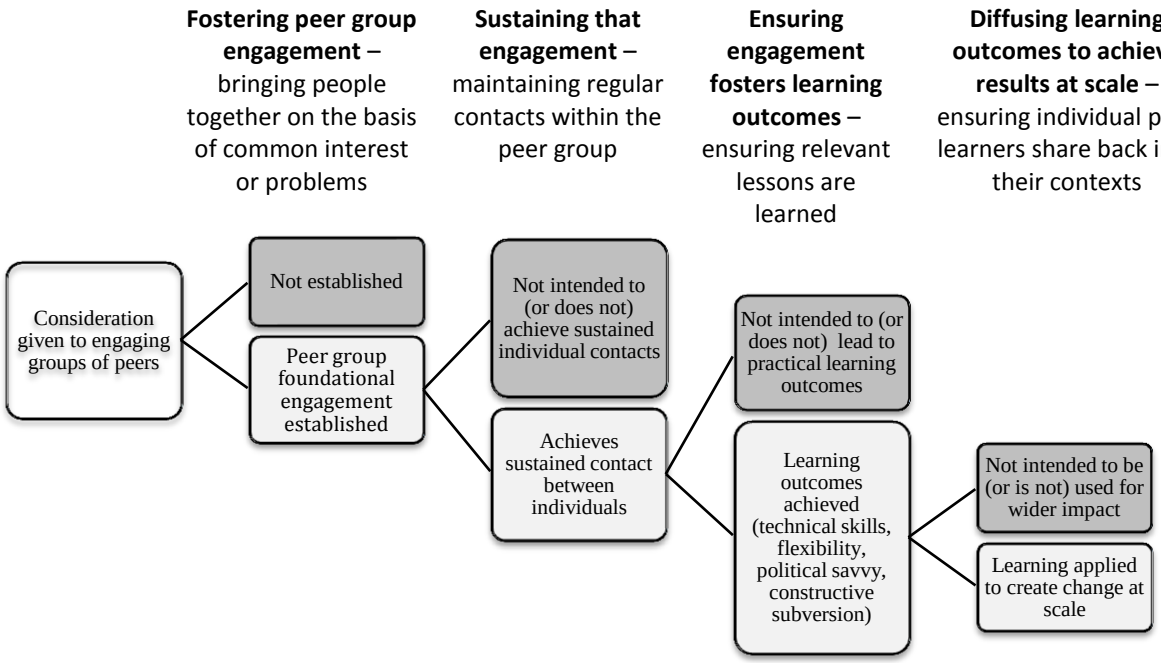
as-possible (with limited administrative demands and costs).

- Peers are encouraged and empowered to share their learning back into their organisations.
- The many facets of peer learning gains are evaluated—from initial engagement through individual learning, to organisational learning (from the peers) and final reform impact.

- There is strong current interest in injecting realism into reform and development processes; the focus for achieving improvements in public organisations and in public service delivery has shifted from pre-defined solutions to more realistic approaches for supporting reforms in contested and complex contexts.
- Peer learning advocates hold that *people embarking on reforms can learn about such realism from peers who are also going through (or have experienced) similar reforms*.
- Peer learning is *potentially potent in facilitating the transfer of tacit knowledge about the softer dimensions of change (like managing politics, inspiring teams, or building coalitions) between individuals* and beyond, to organisations, sectors, and nations.
- *There are many efforts to facilitate this kind of peer learning*, across the developing world, and *many people involved in reforms now have experience with peer learning*.
- There is little analytical work about how well peer learning initiatives are working, or what works, what does not work (and why). This study attempts to (partially) fill this gap.
- The study identifies peer learning as a potentially valuable process where *individual reformers learn from each other and then transmit lessons back to their contexts*.
- The study also emphasises that *peer learning is a particular method of learning, which is most valuable in fostering the exchange of tacit knowledge between actual reformers about how they do reform*. Technical knowledge, about the types of reform one can choose, for instance, is more amenable to traditional transfer (like classroom teaching); peer engagement can also add value to this dissemination, but peer learning is less valuable for technical knowledge exchange and may not be as effective.

- The study notes that *there are many ways to do peer learning*, which prohibits identifying a pro forma toolkit or set of guidelines on exactly how to do this kind of work.
- *Effective peer learning is difficult*, especially when focused on tacit knowledge transfer. The evidence that initiatives claiming to facilitate peer learning successfully foster the transfer of deep, relevant tacit knowledge between peer individuals and ensure that this knowledge diffuses back to organisations to achieve impact at scale is very limited.
- Whereas *there is no magic recipe for peer learning*, and indeed all peer learning initiatives will look different (given the many tools available to do this work and the need to match tools to the peer learning context), *the mapping study suggests common stages involved in the peer learning process*. These combine into a peer learning process map and involve (1) engaging peers, (2) sustaining that engagement over time, (3) ensuring the engagements actually foster relevant learning outcomes in individuals, and (4) diffusing learning from individuals to their organisations to foster impact at scale.

Figure A: A stylised peer learning process map



- Achieving deep individual peer learning that also diffuses and leads to impact requires addressing challenges in all four stages; initiatives that do not pass through these stages

can still add value (facilitating peer engagement, for instance, or adding to the learning of individuals) but *the real potential of peer learning involves covering the full territory shown in this process map*.

- Readers of this study who are actively interested in peer learning can find a parallel product that lists guiding questions (and ideas) to help potential facilitators of peer learning—and peer learners—through the stages in this process map. *The questions are relevant to most or all peer learning initiatives*, even if the answers will differ across these initiatives.

Introduction and Structure of the Report

Realism in reform, and the role of peer learning

The 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan called for a less didactic, "one size fits all" approach to development and public sector reform in developing countries. The Effective Institutions Platform (EIP)[1] responded to this call by fostering discussion about the topic between participants from over 60 high, middle, and low income countries and organisations. The discussion contributes to a "new realist" approach to development, which emphasises a practical change agenda instead of one dominated by technical best practice ideas.[2]

Box 1: What's political about peer learning?

Public sector management is not separate from politics – political influences and interest group preferences pervade every system, every relationship and every transaction. There are the "big" politics with identifiable elites driven by the self-interest of remaining in power or in office and self-enrichment and there are the "small" politics of inter-ministerial rivalries, union concerns, and cadre and bureaucratic rivalries. We know this, and we know that it matters, but how does peer learning help engage with this reality when supporting productive change?

The challenge of thinking politically is how to address the implicit and the unseen – the pressures that maintain the status quo or which support, or distort, formal institutions. Politically-smart thinking recognises that there is limited information about the real risks or gains from reforms and that there are many incentives for over-emphasising anticipated rather than real impacts from public sector reform. Peer learning emphasises the tacit, experiential knowledge of practitioners responsible for reform, downplaying the traditional emphasis on standardised solutions. Peer learning replaces abstract notions of "vision" and "political will" with an emphasis on practical problem-solving. Peer learning recognises that practitioners who have lived through reform are more likely to know its actual impact, and

[1] http://www.effectiveinstitutions.org/

[2] A term coined by Richard Batley, Emeritus Professor of Development Administration, University of Birmingham, to describe a variety of materials ('Doing Development Differently' workshop, 2014; Andrews, 2013c; Andrews, Pritchett, & Woolcock, 2012; Blum, Manning, & Srivastava, 2012; Booth, 2014; Booth & Unsworth, 2014; World Bank, 2000, 2012b).

practitioners who must implement reform are more likely to spot early on whether it seems to be doing what was claimed.

Practitioners actually involved in reforms are centrally important in this approach because of the tacit knowledge they have about the practicalities of reform. This tacit knowledge is usually earned through engaging in the political battles around reform, making tough choices about technical compromises because of capacity constraints, dealing with overly-demanding donors, and more. The importance of such knowledge is emphasised in prior work about the strategic side of public sector reforms and the role of people in the change process. For example, prominent texts on policy and reform processes in development have long emphasised the importance of the people involved in reforms, the way they engage and the experience they muster (Brinkerhoff & Crosby, 2002; Grindle & Thomas, 1991; Rondinelli, 1993; Thomas & Grindle). The ideas also overlap with recent work on institutional reform and change, which emphasises the importance of institutional entrepreneurship by individuals and groups (Andrews, 2013c; Dorado); and the role of learning in organisations and coalitions (Gramont, 2012; Leftwich & Wheeler, 2011)

It is hard to capture this tacit practitioner knowledge and package it for broad sharing—especially using traditional training and knowledge dissemination mechanism (like documents written by experts or lectures taught by academics who have only studied practice). As a result, there is growing interest in new ways of fostering learning; sharing knowledge directly between practitioners involved in reforms. Such interest has spawned a focus on peer learning in development. This interest manifests in many facilitated initiatives to bring reformers from different walks of life together to share stories and lessons from their experience. The idea is that these peers, if engaged effectively, can learn from and with each other—and ultimately take lessons back to their home countries and foster more effective reforms and development processes.

Peer learning initiatives are common in development, and particularly in the public sector reform domain. International organisations are committed to facilitating opportunities for peer learning in areas as diverse as national policymaking, budgeting, auditing, civil service

reform, and anticorruption. Many of the facilitating organisations have some kind of affiliation with the EIP. They support initiatives to foster pee-to-peer learning about technical options for reform, change management processes (including having flexibility and humility in such), being "politically savvy" when doing reform, and even learning about "constructive subversion" and resistance to promotion of poorly fitted reform packages (See Annex 1 for a list of common peer learning topics).

Learning about peer learning

There is a growing appetite to learn from current and past peer learning initiatives. This appetite is most explicitly reflected in demand from a set of Learning Alliances that were launched at the Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation in 2014. These alliances are multi-stakeholder groupings created to actively share experiences on and approaches to public sector reforms through "different peer learning tools and methods [that go beyond] ad hoc learning events, but allow for continuous, mutual learning about effective approaches to public sector reform and what makes peer learning processes successful…" (GPEDC, 2014, p.1).

There has been no systematic overview or study of peer learning activities in the public sector reform arena in peer learning to date. Hence the current study, which intends to provide a view on the landscape of activities as well as some ideas on what works and why in doing peer learning amongst public sector reformers in developing countries. The study has three major sections. A first section maps out experiences in doing peer learning in this reform arena, culminating in a practical view on what the peer learning process commonly looks like, what we know might work, and what gaps we have from our maps. A second section reports on various informal experiments undertaken to provide better information in the areas where our mapping exercise produced gaps. It culminates with a revised view of the peer learning process.

The study has a number of annexes, including a glossary and list of acronyms. These sections are often presented at the front of a report like this; they appear at the back of the current volume to ensure that readers have easy access to the actual narrative and substance. The effort to make this report easy to read is wholly intentional, given that the overall aim is to

inform and inspire those who are already engaged in this kind of work (as facilitators or peer learners). To this end, the report is partnered with a shorter summary and a practical list of key questions and ideas for doing peer learning which summarises the fundamental findings in this study. We hope that you find it a useful tool in informing your peer learning engagements, but also hope that you find shortcomings and gaps in the list of questions and ideas it conveys. The questions and ideas document is meant to be living; it will improve and become more useful when more studies like this are undertaken and when more experiences with peer learning are captured, described and learned from. So, we are grateful that you have decided to read this study and invite you to communicate with the EIP about your own views on what you read, and about your experiences.

Mapping Past Experience

Mapping an emergent field of practice

There is a growing awareness that effective and sustainable development solutions emerge when those actually doing development learn from each other; about new ideas and about how to make new ideas work in new contexts. This recognition has led to an interest in peer learning, especially in areas like public sector reform. Many organisations now facilitate interactions between people involved in similar reforms in different sectors or countries, whom they call peers. These facilitators hope to foster learning between the peers, with the further hope that the peers will ultimately share these lessons back in their own organisations and countries, and that the shared lessons will lead to large scale reform success.

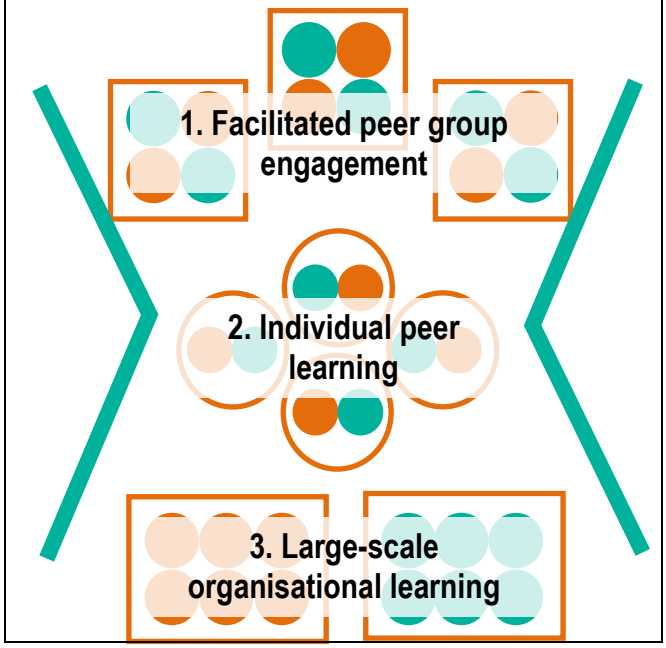
Given that this peer learning field is still emerging, it should not be surprising that limited analytical work exists on the topic. There are few if any studies describing the many facilitation activities that do exist in this space, or the experience of peers in these activities, or the final impact of these activities. As a result, we lack a disciplined view of what initiatives are being tried out or which kinds of initiatives foster learning more effectively than others.

This mapping exercise intends to fill this gap, and provide a view on the terrain. Given the lack of organisation in the field, however, the mapping exercise resembles what one might expect from an exploration of new territory; focused on showing general patterns and advising on directions, not on identifying specific routes and landmarks. As with any exploration initiative, the exercise thus produces an incomplete map, and a living map that will become more complete as adventurers explore the territory and contribute their lessons and experience. Given this thought, we hope that the work here provokes additional mapping activities that are more detailed and specified and that offer increasingly actionable lessons about how to do peer learning in public sector reforms in development.

"This is an incomplete map, and a living map...which will become more complete as adventurers explore the territory and contribute their lessons and experience."

The mapping exercise was informed by a stylised model of the peer learning process, summarised in Figure 1, which provided a basic framework for research and analysis. The figure shows a peer learning hour glass, reflective of a process, involving: (i) facilitated peer group engagement (where groups of potential peers are brought together to explore potential learning opportunities); (ii) individual peer learning (where the peers actual learn from each other, as individuals); and (iii) large scale organisational, sectoral or national learning and impact (where lessons are transferred from individual peers to broader groups who then act on the lessons to achieve impact).

Figure 1:
The peer learning hour glass From engagement to results at scale via individual peer learning



Envisaging peer learning in this way raises important questions for analysis: Why are peer group engagements facilitated around some areas of public sector reform and not others? Which kinds of engagement lead to real peer learning, and which do not? How (and how often) are the lessons learned by individual peers effectively transferred back to their home context to ensure results at scale? Answers to these questions are likely to reflect on different strategies to do per learning, the politics of peer learning (and of public sector reform), the practicalities of the peer learning process, and more.

In order to shed light on some these answers, and build more detail into this model, the mapping approach taken in this study focused on all parts of the peer learning hourglass. It did so by collecting and describing three types of data about past and current practices:

- The first type of data centred on the facilitators of peer engagement activities in development, especially in the area of public sector reform. Over 50 facilitation initiatives were identified, through a process that involved purposeful and snowball

sampling (A full listing with introductory web addresses is available in Annex 2). The goal was to identify a set of facilitated initiatives that would be rich in information, which was sourced primarily from online materials provided by the facilitating organisations. In some cases, additional information was collected through interviews.

- The second type of data focused on individuals inhabiting the public sector reform arena who had experienced being 'peer learners' themselves. They were accessed through professional organisations and executive training programs and asked to complete a survey (available from the authors) which inquired about their peer learning experiences. The number of respondents was 84, which does not represent any kind of representative sample of 'peer learners' but is considered an appropriate sample for the current study given the exploratory and inductive nature of the work.
- A third type of data came in the form of brief case studies intended to provide thicker sources of information on peer learning needs, processes, gaps, and lessons (see Annex 3). Cases were identified purposefully by the authors and examined the way individual peer learning actually takes place and when and how this individual peer learning transfers to organisations, sectors and countries to produce impact at scale.

The mapping exercise is limited in various unavoidable ways, given the nature of the study and the intended audience. First, it is limited to peer learning originating in organised peer group engagement activities (excluding self-organised ad hoc peer learning activities). This is not because facilitated initiatives are the only starting point for peer learning, but rather because organised facilitation could, in principle, stimulate peer learning at scale and because many members of the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP) are in positions to provide such facilitation (or are already facilitators). Second, the study has a bias towards facilitation activities with an international dimension (where peers were engaged across borders) because these activities are of explicit interest to members of the EIP. There are many country-level initiatives that were excluded as a result and could (and should) be examined in future work. Third, the mapping provides a snapshot of peer learning initiatives at the current time and not a moving series of pictures. This means that it does not shed light on various dynamic aspects of peer learning (like how this learning equips peers with new political skills necessary to

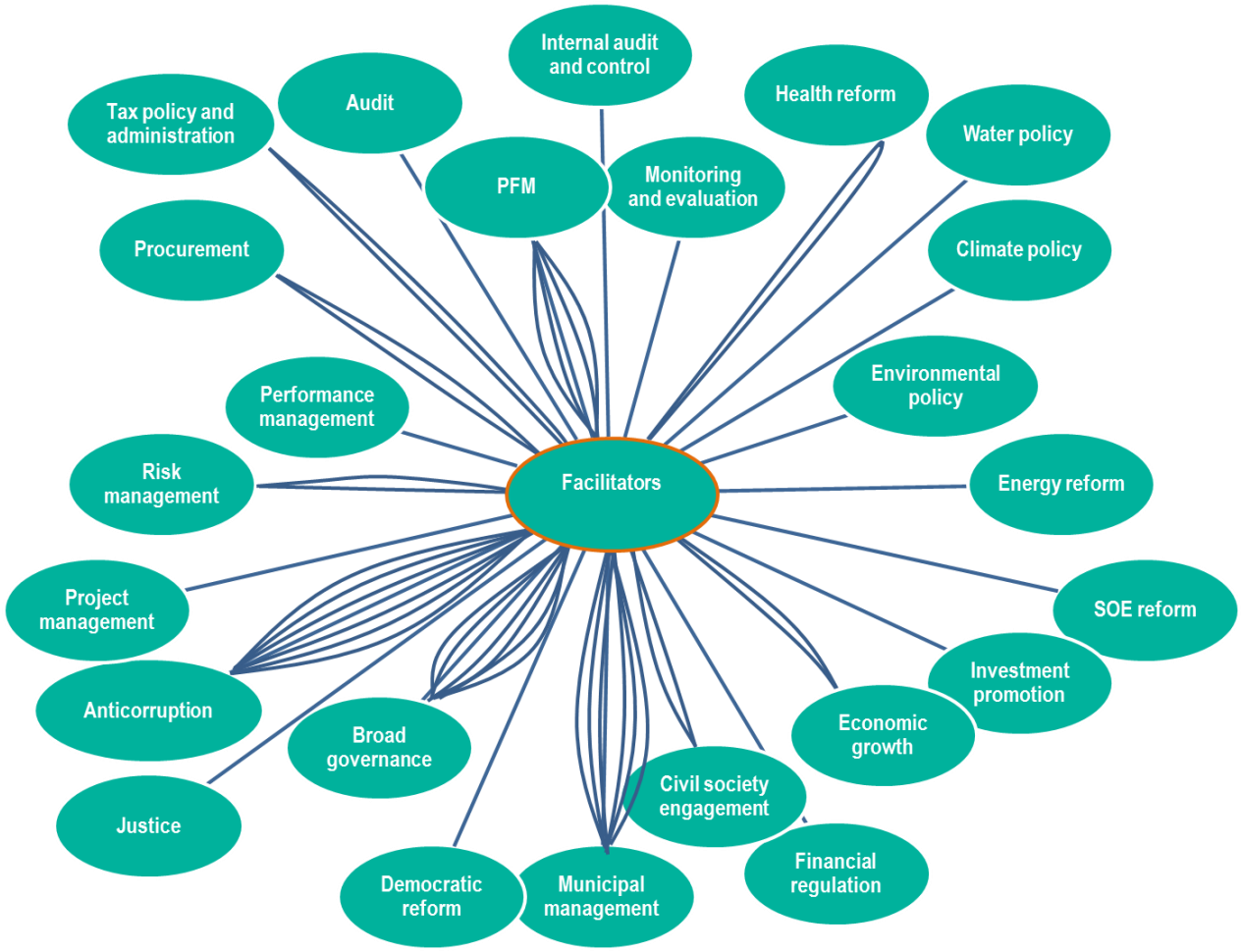
introduce reform into complex systems). This kind of work requires a more longitudinal study, which we recommend for future. The text reflects on some of these time-overlapping themes by drawing on studies in other literatures (like education) (See Annex 4 for a summary of relevant literature).

Describing the peer learning terrain

What opportunities exist?

A sample of 52 peer facilitation initiatives was built by gathering lists of organisations affiliated the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP). These included facilitators like the Collaborative African Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). This sample was augmented by adding peer engagement initiatives identified by interviewees from the first set of initiatives or from the individual survey process (but not affiliated with the EIP). The full sample includes facilitated initiatives covering many different areas in the public sector reform domain, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The many areas of peer engagement in public sector reform



Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

The figure shows how many initiatives focused on different areas of public sector reform, as defined by the facilitation organisations themselves. For instance, CABRI focuses on PFM in general[3] along with five other facilitation organisations (captured at the top of the figure). There are other facilitated initiatives that are more focused on specific PFM-related areas, however, like the Tax Administrators Exchange for Global Innovative Practices (TAXGIP), which engages peers to think about tax policy and administration only. Similarly, APRM was classified as working on 'General Governance' because it has a very broad mandate (with a

[3] http://www.cabri-sbo.org

selection of other facilitating entities), but the Corruption Hunter Network works more narrowly on bringing peers together to address anticorruption issues.

Figure 2 is not meant to provide a holistic view onto the peer engagement terrain in development; there are many other initiatives that focus on peer engagement that are not included here. It does, however, provide an important starting point in the mapping process and reveals the scope of coverage of peer engagement initiatives. The sample is only of 52 initiatives, and the coverage is extremely broad, extending from core areas of public sector management (like PFM and municipal management) to reforms in service delivery sectors (like water and health) and to administrative and policy reforms in strategic parts of the broader social and economic development agenda (focused on democratic reform, civil society engagement, economic growth, financial regulation and investment promotion).

This indicates the influence of ideas about peer engagement in the public sector reform arena in development. Many of these areas were dominated by technical agendas in the past and emphasised the work of external experts and not internal peers. Many of the international organisations working in these domains sponsored such interventions as well, but they are now focusing at least some resources on a different approach—engaging peer practitioners actually doing reforms, helping these peers learn from others, and fostering an emergent and contextually fitted agenda rather than a technically driven one.

This growing focus on peer engagement and learning is reflected in the survey results of 'peer learners' as well. Over 90% of the 84 respondents to the survey answered 'yes' when asked if they had been involved in a peer learning engagement. This shows that the idea of peer learning is one that individuals relate to and that many have experienced directly. Beyond this, over half of these respondents noted that the engagements had been facilitated by entities like those listed in Annex 2 (37% of the individuals noted that a third party organisation facilitated the interaction, and a further 23% said that a professional organisation was responsible for such facilitation). One respondent noted that the peer learning was sparked at the European Consortium of Policy Research Summer School on Parliaments in 2010, for instance, and another said that the peer learning started after going to a "'master class' organised by a professional association of international sustainability professionals." Other entities that were

mentioned included the Commonwealth Peer Review Group, European Union Visitors Programme, the Public Expenditure Management Network in Asia (PEMNA), CABRI, and the Centre for Excellence in Finance (CEF) in Slovenia.

The bottom line is that individuals involved in reforms are open and interested in this kind of learning and many organisations are now facilitating this kind of learning. There are both demand and supply dimensions to the terrain, and the challenge is to ensure these are synergised and balanced most effectively.

"The bottom line is that individuals involved in reforms are open and interested in this kind of learning and a range of organisations are facilitating this kind of learning."

Who are the peers taking these opportunities?

A fundamental question for all those involved in peer learning is simply, "who are the peers engaged in the learning process?" The question was raised because literature on peer learning offers a variety of definitions of 'peers' but also notes the importance of being clear about who the 'peers' are. Without clarity about who the peers are, studies suggest, 'peer learning' initiatives can flounder. This is especially the case because the peers are both the source of lessons and targets of learning.

When the facilitating organisations were analysed, it became obvious that there are many different ideas about who the peers are. At the most simple level, it is apparent that different facilitators target peers at different levels of engagement in the reform and development process. Facilitators like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and OECD's Anti-Corruption Network (ACN) in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have a primary emphasis on peer countries for instance[4], whereas facilitators like Collaborative African Budget Reform Initiative (CABRI) are more focused on peer organisations in the PFM process. The African

[4] The ACN, for example, describes its mission as follows: "[The] main objective is to support its member countries in their efforts to prevent and fight corruption. It provides a regional forum for the promotion of anti-corruption activities, exchange of information, elaboration of best practices and donor coordination. The ACN operates through general meetings and conferences, sub-regional initiatives and thematic projects." See http://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/aboutthenetwork/

Union's Regional Anticorruption Programme for Africa targets state and non-state organisations working on anticorruption initiatives.[5] Other facilitators like the CityNet and Urban Futures programs emphasise peer cities. Facilitators like the Corruption Hunters and the Club de Madrid's "Leaders Engaged in New Democracies" (LEND) network focus more on explicitly matched or targeted individuals (in these two examples the focus is on legal professionals engaged in anticorruption initiatives and hand-picked emerging leaders).

The different 'targets' of facilitation are shown in Figure 3. The majority of the facilitators target organisations as 'peers' and very few explicitly focus on 'specifically matched individuals' as peers. This targeting is a reflection of the facilitators' objectives and the theories of change they have about public sector reform. The APRM, for instance, focuses on governance reforms at the country level and espouses a theory of change in which peer relationships enhance accountability for reforms and open up channels for knowledge transfer to enhance reform designs and improve the likelihood and quality of reform implementation. The fact that most facilitators emphasise 'peer organisations' shows that organisations are at the centre of the underpinning theory of change (or theories of change) in public sector reform in development. Facilitators like the Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning network (PEMPAL),[6] the WHO Peer Learning District Initiative, and OECD Knowledge Sharing Alliances focus on organisations like Budget Directorates and Internal Audit Agencies, District Health Secretariats, and Government Ministries. These are seen as the focus and target of change and reform, and the underlying theory of change is that peer exchange can promote important lessons about 'what' reforms should be done and 'how' they should be done by those organisations. Some of the facilitators speak explicitly about 'learning organisations' when describing the goals of their 'peer organisation' initiatives, building on the idea that reforms should be organic and emerge within organisations (where learning is a constant and intrinsic to the organisation). Peer learning between peer organisations is seen as a key aspect of the learning organisation.

[5] http://www.auanticorruption.org/uploads/Regional_Anti-Corruption_Programme.pdf.
[6] http://www.pempal.org/success-stories/

Figure 3: Peers targeted by facilitators

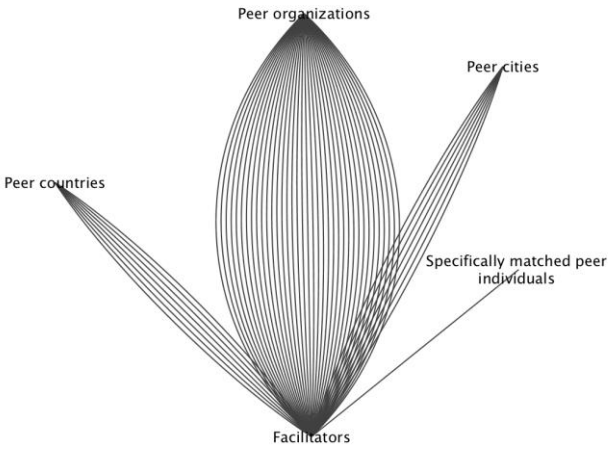
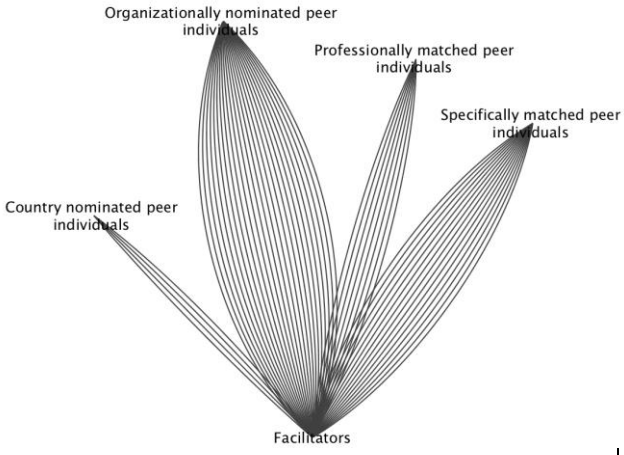


Figure 4: Peers engaged by facilitators



Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

Figure 4 shows a different view of 'who' the peers are in the facilitated initiatives. This is the view one gets when looking at 'who' actually engages in the facilitated engagements (like the APRM Peer Reviews, MENA-OECD Peer Procurement Network meetings, and GoPemPal events). In all these cases, the actual peers engaged are individuals. In most cases, the individuals were representatives of the peer countries or organisations targeted by the facilitators—including heads of states or ministers of finance, budget directors or mayors and municipal managers. They are invited to engage because of their positions and formal roles, given that facilitators tend to target countries and organisations for participation and the countries and organisations that send 'peers' are hoping these interactions yield larger scale impact. At the end of the day, however, the peers are still individuals. The learning happens directly with them, not with their 'countries' or 'organisations' (who must hope that there is an indirect diffusion or scaling of the learning, as discussed later in this paper).

"At the end of the day...peers are still individuals. The learning happens directly with them, not with their 'countries' or 'organisations'"

This is clearly reflected in the case studies presented in Annex 3. The case studies of people involved in peer learning initiatives readily commented on how it was they (as individuals) who learned from the interactions, and not their organisations. Consider, for instance, a comment from Joe Abah (the Director General of the Bureau of Public Sector Reforms (BPSR) in Nigeria) about *his learning* from involvement with the Commonwealth Peer Review Group: "It helped *me* to learn about prioritising change, identifying the immediate challenge amongst a long list of problems, and helped *me* reflect on how to strike a balance between whole of government reforms and a narrower focus on specific reform adaptation." Abah notes that he translated the lessons to colleagues in his home organisation, but this act of diffusion was a personal one and not part of the facilitated initiative.

Edit Németh (the Head of Department, Central Harmonisation Unit for Public Internal Control, Ministry for National Economy, Hungary) gained similarly on a personal level through peer engagements: "The long term *personal relationships* established through the Public Internal Control Working Group and the PEMPAL Internal Audit Community of Practice (IACOP) [that] were of great value. [They *helped me* understand the scope of the task when I was new in my job." Ms. Németh's learning was certainly of value to her organisation, especially as it pertained to management of change teams, but the learning was still predominantly hers—happening at the discrete level of the individual.

The World Bank South-South exchange case studies[7] also reinforce the observation that peer learning is fundamentally about exchange between individuals. In all of the cases, one finds a description of exchanges between countries followed by a list of actual people involved.

Box 1 provides an example, reflecting participants in various study visits in a West African exchange program centred on nutrition. This does not mean that one cannot foster learning by individuals in a group (which Box 1 suggests was the strategy in this case). There is

[7] http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/results. See specifically: "Strengthening nutrition programs in West African countries" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/strengthening-nutrition-programs-west-african-countries); "Strengthening Social Protection in Vietnam" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/strengthening-social-protection-vietnam); Strengthening Land Administration in Honduras (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/strengthening-land-administration-honduras); "Enhancing the quality of Uzbekistan's exports" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/enhancing-quality-uzbekistans-exports); and "Strengthening Natural Resource Revenue Management and Lowering Volatility in Papua New Guinea" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/strengthening-natural-resource-revenue-management-and-lowering-volatility-papua-new-guinea)

still a challenge to ensure that the lessons for individuals are shared within the group and lead to group learning. The additional challenge is to transfer the learning from the group on its study visit or in its peer engagement back to the home organisation.

Box 1: Participants in nutrition study visits

Ghana to the Gambia (February 2012)

- Mrs. Wilhelmina Okwabi, Head of Nutrition Dept., Ghana Health Service & Nutrition Focal Point for ECOWAS Nutrition Forum
- Mr. Dennis V. Gbeddy, District Director, Ghana Health Service
- Ms. Paulina Addy, Head of Food Security Unit, Ministry of Food and Agriculture
- Mrs. Mary Mpereh, Nutrition Focal Point, National Development Planning Commission
- Ms. Nana Ayim Poawwa, Hunger and Malnutrition Focal Person
- Mr. James Krodua, World Bank Nutrition Desk, Ministry of Finance

Senegal to Ghana (March 2012)

- Mrs. Ndèye Mayé Diouf, Ministry of Finance,
- Mrs. Mame Mbayame Gueye Dione, Ministry of Health
- Mr. Adama Nguirane, Project Manager, Association Régionale des Agriculteurs de Fatick
- Mr. Abdoulaye Ka, National Coordinator, Cellule de Lutte contre la Malnutrition

Gambia to Senegal (April 2012)

- Mr. Modou Cheyassin Phall , NaNA Mr. Bakary Jallow, Principal Programme Officer, NaNA
- Mr. Dawda Joof, Action Aid International
- Mr. Suwaibou Barry, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
- Dr. Mamady Cham, Director of Health Services
- Mr. Jankoba Jabbie, Regional Health Director, Lower River Region

Gambia to Ghana (September 2012)

- Mr. Modou Cheyassin Phall, Executive Director, NaNA
- Mr. Bakary Jallow, NaNA
- Mr. Dawda Joof, Action Aid International The Gambia,
- Mr. Swaibou Barry, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs
- Mr. Alhagie Sankareh, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- Mr. Dawda Ceesay, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
- Mr. Musa Humma, Ministry of Agriculture
- Dr. Momodou Darboe. Medical Research Council.

What makes someone a peer?

On a mechanical level it is obvious that exchanges happen between individuals – the Bureau of the Budget cannot attend a meeting or join in a discussion as an entity – it has to be individuals

that learn and then feed lessons back to their organisations, which is a second order interaction that often is not considered in designing peer learning initiatives. Related to this, it matters whether peer learning engagements involve the individuals as people as opposed to transient and easily-substituted representatives of their agencies. A number of facilitators seem to recognise this distinction explicitly, focusing on specifically matched individuals—where they choose peers to engage with based on more criteria than just their position and formal role. These include the PeerCities Network, the African Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (AfCoP), and the R4D TAP program. These initiatives try to bring individuals together based on the tasks they are doing, the experience they have, and other factors. The goal is to ensure that they are well matched, sharing various similar attributes. This is considered important for the peer learning process, where better-matched peers are expected to have more to share with each other and are also expected to be more open to building the kind of trust needed for real sharing to take place.

The survey of peer learners indicated that these specifically matched individuals were the peers from whom lessons are most effectively gleaned. Figure 5 shows that 60% of the peer learners referred to such individuals when identifying who they see as a 'peer' and when describing the peers with (and from) whom they had learned in the past. While some of the respondents considered that peers could be organisationally or professionally matched (fellow Auditor Generals or Accounting professionals, for instance), the vast majority of respondents noted that peers needed to be specifically chosen and matched—not just appointed to engage.

shows the factors that these individuals wanted to see matched.

Figure 5: Who the learners see as peers

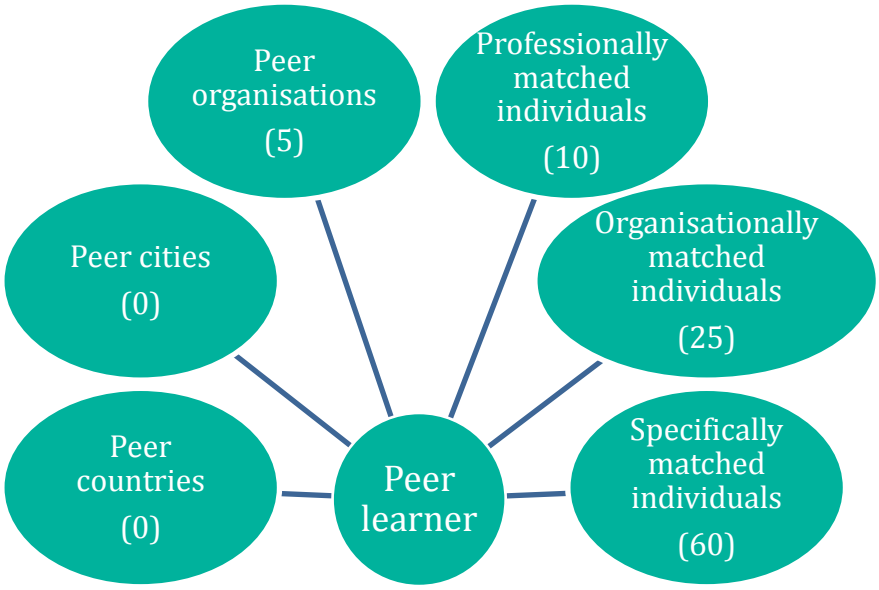
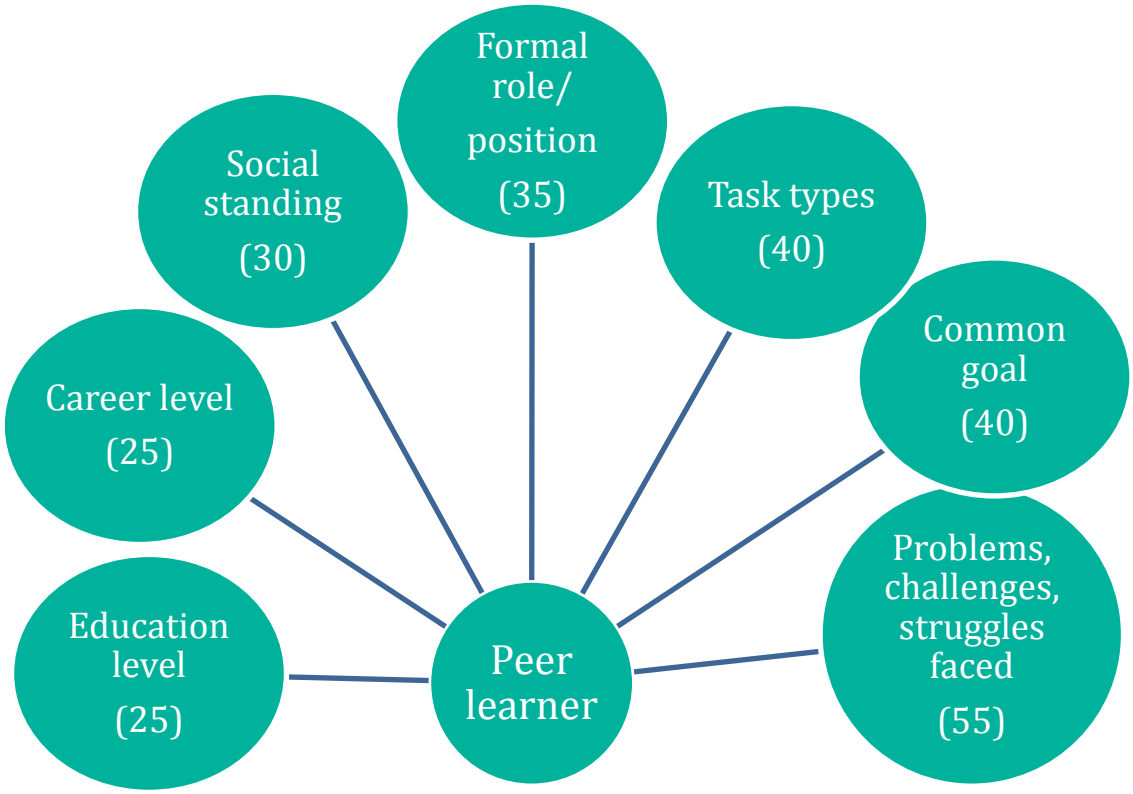


Figure 6: Factors to 'match' learners



Source: Authors' analysis of peer learner survey results.

The categories in both figures were identified when coding responses to questions about 'who' the peer learners considered peers. (The numbers add up to more than 100% given that respondents typically identified multiple factors.) The major factors that they mentioned included facing common problems and challenges and having common goals and tasks. The literature shows that these kinds of similarities promote trust and a feeling of comfort and equality among peer learners, which allow for more effective transfer of tacit knowledge between peers (they all feel that their experiences will be understood by the others, and kept in confidence, because they have shared risk profiles and difficulties) (Adam, Skalicky, & Brown, 2011; Griffiths, Houston, & Lazenbatt, 1995; Heavey, 2006; Tosey, 1999)

The bottom-line is that facilitators often focus on peer entities like countries, cities, or organisations, but peer learning is primarily about transfers between people. Further, transfers are likely to be most effective when the people are specifically matched to foster trust and sharing. These are interesting findings and highlight the tension flagged in the introduction which lies at the heart of peer learning. On the one hand, facilitators target peer learning 'at scale' (in countries and organisations and cities), given a theory of change that results at scale require diffusion of lessons across a significant body of individuals, but on the other hand the peer learning actually happens more discretely in the hearts and minds of individuals, partaking in specific personal relationships) This tension is well described by a recent AfCoP publication, which points to a "consensus that building individual capacity … is an important first step" but also notes that this kind of learning is insufficient "in order for countries to experience real change …"[8]

"[Learning] transfers are likely to be most effective when the people are specifically matched to foster trust and sharing."

[8] AfCoP-Pan African peer learning on managing for results. http://www.southsouth.info/photo/2009-nov-joint-cop-meeting-in?context=album&albumId=3952417%3AAlbum%3A2558

How are peers matched?

The survey of peer learners asked respondents to identify major challenges they encountered in peer learning experiences. Table 1 lists key challenges identified in these comments. The first set of challenges centres on identifying peers and throws more light on the question of whether peers are selected on the basis of their position or other attributes. As discussed above (and shown in Figure 5 and

), most facilitators work with 'peer countries' or 'peer organisations' and engage individuals on the basis of pre-determined criteria that relate to job title and position or professional affiliation. This means that the 'peers' are pre-selected by participating organisations, often through internal political processes, and the facilitators cannot impose a more purposeful selection and matching regime. The result is that peers are matched purely on the basis of position (as Auditors General or Budget Directors or heads of Civil Service Bureaus, for instance) and facilitators must depend on luck to ensure that matches exist on the other criteria important to individual learners (as

shows, these include having: shared problems, challenges and struggles; shared goals and tasks; similar social standing, career levels, and education levels). Facilitators must also depend on the participating countries and organisations to keep the individuals in their positions for long enough to build relationships necessary for effective relationship building between peers. Frequent changes in the representation of different organisations, due to staff turnover or other factors, undermines this relationship building and frustrates the peer learning process.[9]

[9] This was an issue for the South African Community Grantmaker Leadership Cooperative, where the peer community was disrupted because members left through succession planning in their own organisations. http://www.sacglf.org/documents/First%20Narrative%20Report%20to%20Ford%20Foundation%20FINAL.pdf

Table 1: Challenges of facilitating peer learning with individual peers

Challenges with 'who' the peers are
Identifying 'the right' peers to engage with/ Involve in process
Ensuring peers are effectively matched through initial events
Managing differences among peers (personalities, cultures, etc.)

Challenges with getting peers to engage fully in the process
Building trust among peers
Ensuring all peers have the same willingness to learn
Ensuring peers are fully engaged from the start
Ensuring peers have authority to engage fully in the peer learning process

Challenges with the logistics of peer interaction
Ensuring peers have the time to engage with peers (at face-to-face events)
Ensuring peers have means, time to engage with peers (after face-to-face events)
Finding the appropriate venues for face-to-face peer engagement
Finding the appropriate media for non-face-to-face peer engagement
Ensuring logistics are effectively and continuously addressed (so as not to get in the way of peers wanting to engage)

The challenge of peer selection and matching can be addressed in different ways. One purposeful peer identification strategy was evident in a number of the cases reviewed in Annex 2 and the World Bank South-South exchange case studies.[10] Facilitator organisations using this strategy gather information on all these appointed peers, using mini surveys that ask about the 'matching factors' in Figure 6, and then work to connect peers with similar profiles in small groups or even paired engagements. In the peer learning experience centred on social protection in Vietnam, for instance, an emergent lesson centred on the importance of selecting "Participants from a knowledge receiving country … based on their degree of influence over reforms and the programs addressed by the exchange." A key lesson after the peer learning initiative intended to help Uzbekistan with its exports was to select peers that have "pursued similar goals in the face of similar challenges."

[10] See footnote 7.

Although not raised in the cases, even if peers are carefully selected, facilitators still need to garner commitment of the individuals engaged, and still depend on the home organisations keeping these individuals in their positions.

"Even if peers are carefully selected, facilitators still need to garner commitment of the individuals engaged, and still depend on the home organisations keeping these individuals in their positions."

Another strategy identified to help counter this issue involves building broader peer communities. Membership would extend beyond individuals appointed because of position. Facilitators of these communities of practice still need to gather information about participants and actively match peers. The broad community of practice (CoP) approach helps to overcome risks that participants drop out because they move position. There would still be a risk related to personal commitment, however, as facilitators rely on the individual commitments of CoP members.

Ultimately, peer learning has to arrive at the individual level. It has to be individuals that learn and then feed lessons back to their organisations. However, it is open to discussion whether the individuals are selected because of their personal traits or whether they are transient and easily-substituted representatives of their agencies. Some facilitating organisations focus on individuals who have been matched on criteria beyond their position and formal role. These include the PeerCities Network, the African Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (AfCoP), and the R4D TAP program. These initiatives try to bring individuals together based on the tasks they are doing, the experience they have, and other factors. They consider this important for the peer learning process on the premise that better-matched peers have more to share with each other and hence likely to be more open to building the kind of trust needed for real sharing to take place.

The mapping suggests that specifically matched individuals were the peers from whom lessons are most effectively gleaned. As noted above, the majority of peer learners surveyed referred to such individuals when identifying who they see as a 'peer' and when describing the peers with (and from) whom they had learned in the past. – a conclusion which is supported by the research literature.

"Most 'peers' tend to be pre-selected by participating organisations, often through internal political processes [which make] it difficult for facilitators to impose a more purposeful selection and matching regime."

The challenge however is that most facilitators work with 'peer countries' or 'peer organisations' which supply individuals to the peer learning process on the basis of their job title and position or professional affiliation; 'peers' tend to be pre-selected by participating organisations, often through internal political processes making it difficult for facilitators to impose a more purposeful selection and matching regime. In addition to building hurdles to mutual trust and learning, it leaves facilitators in the position of depending on the "supplying" countries and organisations to keep the individuals in their positions for long enough to build relationships necessary for effective relationship building between peers. Frequent changes in the representation of different organisations, due to staff turnover or other factors, undermines relationship building and frustrates the peer learning process.

One purposeful peer identification strategy is to defer requests for nominations to the peer learning exercise until a mini survey has been completed, with the country's or organisation's approval, that asks about the 'matching factors' then pro-actively propose the nomination of peers with similar profiles. In the peer learning experience centred on social protection in Vietnam, for instance, an emergent lesson centred on the importance of selecting "Participants from a knowledge receiving country … based on their degree of influence over reforms and the programs addressed by the exchange." A key lesson after the peer learning

initiative intended to help Uzbekistan with its exports was to select peers that have "pursued similar goals in the face of similar challenges."[11]

Peer engagement and learning tools

The third part of this mapping exercise involved examining the tools used in peer learning initiatives. In terms of tools, the focus was on identifying the mechanisms and devices used by different facilitating entities to engage peers and foster learning between the peers. A large number of tools were identified in this process. This is reflected in Figure 7, which identifies how frequently different tool types are used by the facilitators. The frequencies add up to more than 100% again, given that every facilitator uses more than one tool. The PEMPAL initiative, for instance, describes itself as primarily facilitating a peer learning network but actually uses many tools in this process; including large group meetings (like annual workshops), externally produced knowledge products (like expert papers on different budgeting reforms), site visits (where different delegations can visit others to learn first-hand about new ideas), and more. The OECD review processes similarly use common assessment products (review templates), expert group review (where external experts analyze reviews), and various kinds of reflection and dissemination mechanisms.

[11] See "Strengthening Social Protection in Vietnam" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/strengthening-social-protection-vietnam) and "Enhancing the quality of Uzbekistan's exports" (http://wbi.worldbank.org/sske/story/enhancing-quality-uzbekistans-exports).

Figure 7: The types of tools facilitators use in promoting peer exchange

Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

What peer learning tools exist, and who uses these tools?

The most common tool types are large group meetings, externally produced knowledge products, and training sessions. Over 60% of the facilitating organisations use these tools at some point or other, hosting large conferences and workshops, sponsoring written reports or studies by consultants, academics and other experts, and providing professional training events (often tied to some kind of certification process, especially where the peer groups are professionally affiliated). The next most common tools are peer-produced knowledge products (like case studies of a peer's own experience) and small group meetings (where only a few peers engage in more close-quarters engagement than an annual conference would allow). Half of the facilitators used these tools to foster peer engagement and learning.

Over 35% of the facilitators used different kinds of common assessment products (like the APRM and OECD review mechanisms, or report cards used in the R4D-TAP program on transparency, or benchmarking devices used in various initiatives). A similar proportion supported site visits, where peers would get a chance to see how other peers did things.[12] These visits were sometimes one-sided (where PEMPAL, for instance, sponsors a visit of various ministry of finance officials to another country) or reciprocal (where officials from two countries might visit each other's context and compare notes on the site visits). More than 32% of the facilitating organisations also sponsored joint peer activities, which take a variety of forms. World Bank Knowledge Hubs attempt to engage peers in common projects intended to foster creativity and discovery of new ways of thinking, for instance. The Horizontal Learning Program in Bangladesh involves peers in hands-on projects to ensure knowledge is tested and disseminated while on-the-job.

Smaller proportions of the sample used a variety of other tools, including online and virtual engagement mechanisms and telecommunication devices (allowing peers to connect outside of face-to-face contexts). Paired engagements were also not that common and, while many organisations fostered some kind of peer assessment (often based on common assessment mechanisms), the precise arrangements for doing this were quite different. About a quarter of the facilitators supported expert reviews (where a panel of outside specialists would use an assessment tool to examine a 'peer' system) or multi-peer assessments (where a number of peers fill out the common assessments and then compare scores and notes with each other). About ten percent of the facilitators supported individual peer review processes (where one peer would assess its processes using the common assessment tool).

Interestingly, there were few tools in place to foster reflection on the lessons learned in these engagements. The tools included processes where individual peers were asked to note what they had learned from other peers and how they would act on these lessons. Multiple-peer reflection tools were used by about 10% of facilitators and included efforts to get peers

[12] For example, 'in-field exchange events' are facilitated by the Africa-Asia Drought Risk Management Peer Assistance Network (AADP). These events bring peers together on study tours and targeted seminars to learn directly from each other's experiences. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Environment%20and%20Energy/sustainable%20land%20management/AADP%20Brochure.pdf

discussing their lessons amongst each other, often aiming to foster the common identification of positive deviance processes and ideas (that promote better results in some peers and could be replicated by all peers). As an example of this, the WHO Peer Learning District Initiative gathers peers from different health clinics together to benchmark their organisations, discuss the benchmarking results, visit those clinics with the best results, and then discuss (together, as a group) what they saw as the keys to success and how these ideas might be diffused.

The fact that all facilitators of peer engagements use multiple tools raises a variety of questions. The primary question is whether different combinations of tools yield different types of engagement and learning. This important question goes beyond the scope of this study and is discussed further below. It is interesting to note, for instance, that there is variation in the tool mix used for doing peer reviews by the APRM,[13] Results for Development Transparency and Accountability Program (R4D TAP),[14] INTRAC's Peer Learning Programme for Small and Diaspora Organisations,[15] the African Development Bank's WOP Africa Project,[16] and MENA-OECD Procurement Network. The APRM, for instance, relies on single-peer country self-assessments and expert group peer review (where one country assesses its performance against a set of benchmarks and this assessment is then reviewed by a high-profile panel of peer experts). The assessment is extremely broad and the assessment process seldom brings all 'peers' together to reflect in a mutual manner. The R4D TAP process brings individuals together from organisations involved in tackling corruption, has all of them fill out a report card of their performance (in multi-peer self-assessment), supports a multi-peer review and reflection process (where the peers all compare scores and performance and identify potential idea-leaders) and then sponsors joint engagements to experiment with new ideas or with 'good practice' ideas emerging from the reflections. The comparison of this mix of ideas could

[13] http://aprm-au.org

[14] http://r4d.org/about-us/press-room/r4d's-transparency-and-accountability-program-convenes-african-civil-society-org

[15] INTRAC's program was included in the sample because its work with diaspora organisations is focused on impacting civil society engagement with public policy. This is a key issue in public sector reform agendas in many countries. The program blends review mechanisms (in the form of benchmarking exercises) with other peer learning tools. As described in their own materials, the organisations provides "year-long support [that] includes facilitating workshops, action learning sets and benchmarking clubs, on topics of interest to peers, as well as creating relevant tools and providing an online hub for peers to share their experiences and resources." (http://cgi-africa.org/who-we-are-plp/)

[16] http://www.afdb.org/en/projects-and-operations/project-portfolio/project/p-z1-ea0-005/

generate interesting ideas for both facilitators and for others using peer reviews to foster engagement and learning.

A second question centres on why multiple tools are used in facilitating peer learning. The peer learner survey results offer some help in addressing this. The survey instrument asked respondents to reflect on experiences with peer learning, including the kinds of mechanisms they used in such process. Over 90% of these respondents identified more than one 'tool' in answering these questions, noting that they met the peers in various settings, spoke by telephone, read prepared materials, and more. The average number of 'tools' used in the peer learning experiences was more than 3, showing that peer learning is a complex process involving multiple types of interactions and facilitated by multiple types of tools.

"The average number of 'tools' used in the peer learning experiences was more than 3, showing that peer learning is a complex process involving multiple types of interactions and facilitated by multiple types of tools."

One can better understand why various tools are needed in the learning processes when recognising that peer learning is seldom achieved in a one-off event. This was apparent from the peer learner surveys, where over three quarters of respondents noted that their most memorable peer learning experience took place over a few weeks or more. Some of the experiences seemed to be 'quick and thick'—where peers met at some event and then engaged daily or weekly for a few weeks or month via a mix of site visits, telephone or email engagements, and more. Other experiences seemed to be longer and more drawn out, however, with 45% of the respondents noting that their most memorable peer learning experiences lasted for one year or more and involved multiple interactions. These peers seemed to meet at some forum and then engaged over many months and even years in a process of continuing connection that included paired engagements (where peers were matched in pairs), site visits, and joint activities.

A good example comes from recent support by the IMF's African Technical Assistance Centres (AfriTAC) to countries concerned about low growth.[17] Delegates from various countries met at an initial conference held in November 2014 in Mauritius. They then engaged with each other using 'cost effective knowledge tools, including online' communications devices. A smaller set of delegations met again in February 2015 in Senegal, and an even more select group of 'comparator countries' continue to work together on 'an active peer learning effort' that is slated to include site visits and joint activities.

Other examples come from the case studies presented in Annex 3. Where the individual cases reflect on more effective peer learning experiences, for instance, it is obvious that the interactions happened over time with various types of engagement. Jean-Paul Mabaya (from the Democratic Republic of Congo) described experiences with various peer learning processes including regional workshops on CSR in Africa (African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development/CAFRAD) and peer mentoring relationships. He noted that the most effective peer learning occurred in engagements that were "long term, sustained over several years [where the peers] visited each other's workplaces and maintained contact by email."

All of the World Bank South-South exchange cases[18] reflect on peer learning that happened over time with various tools employed in repeated engagements. The work on Uzbekistan's exports incorporated site visits and dissemination workshops, for instance, and the intervention on natural resource revenues in Papua New Guinea blended large group conferences with small group 'dialogues' and site visits.

Locating the tools within the peer learning process

Given these observations, the sequence envisaged in the top part of the hourglass set out in Figure 1 seems reasonable, with peer learning happening in a process, over time, with an early stage requiring a foundational engagement—where peers meet and a peer learning agenda is framed. This often happens at some kind of convening forum (like a large group meeting or

[17] http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2014/car121614a.htm
http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/so/2015/car020215a.htm

[18] See footnote **7**

conference or a small group meeting or workshop). In stylised terms, a second part of the process involves continued connection between the peers—where individuals participate in repeat engagements like site visits or joint activities (and communicate using online tools, telephone or virtual mechanisms). A subsequent step concerns using that continued connection to achieve learning outcomes.

These process stages are shown in Table 2, which distinguishes between tools that assist in: (i) interaction facilitation, which involves bringing individual peers together; (ii) knowledge generation, centred on promoting some kind of knowledge to share; (iii) sharing and exchange, which involves fostering knowledge sharing among peers; and (iv) reflection, application and diffusion, which centres on supporting efforts to ensure that lessons learned by individuals are reinforced and could be taken to scale. The table also shows which tool types are commonly used in each part of the learning process. The mapping of tools to parts of the peer learning process was done on the basis of impressions of how peer learning initiatives are structured. It is a descriptive, not prescriptive, subjective mapping intended to show how different tools are used. It is not arguing for any specific modality.

As noted, the table is not comprehensive or objective. It shows how different tools appear to be used in promoting peer engagement and learning by the facilitators examined in this study:

- Various tools are used to foster foundational engagements: Peers are matched in various ways as discussed above, convened through meetings, and various knowledge products are presented (including common assessments like benchmarking studies and externally produced products like reports). Peers are encouraged to share and exchange lessons at these fora, often through assessment and review mechanisms. Some initiatives include tools at such meetings to promote reflection, application and diffusion of lessons learned (including activities that force peers to discuss what they learned and develop strategies to share lessons learned back into their organisations).
- Additional tools are used to promote sustained individual contacts: Peers are encouraged to keep working together through tools that facilitate continued

interaction (like paired engagements, online networking and virtual engagements). Other tools facilitate new knowledge creation through the sustained individual contacts (with knowledge emerging through site visits and joint peer activities, for instance).

- Further tools are used to help achieve learning outcomes. Most particularly, knowledge is shared and exchanged through mechanisms that are ongoing and repeated, and continuous reflection exercises help to solidify lessons and promote application and diffusion by peers in their organisations and countries.

Table 2: Different tools promote different parts of the peer learning process

Parts of the peer learning process	Interaction facilitation	Knowledge generation	Sharing and exchange	Reflection, application and diffusion
Creating the foundational engagement	• Purposeful matching • Large group meetings • Small group meetings	• Common assessment product • Externally produced knowledge products • Peer produced knowledge products • Training sessions	• Expert group peer review • Single peer self-assessment • Multi-peer self-assessment	
Sustaining individual contacts	• Paired engagements • Online networking, virtual and telecom engagements	• Peer produced knowledge products • Site visits • Joint peer activities	• Community publications • Site visits • Joint peer activities • Defining learning objectives • Good natured competition between peer groups[19]	
Achieving learning outcomes				• Single-peer reflection • Multi-peer reflection

Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

Interestingly, the mapping exercise suggests that facilitators of peer learning processes employ tools unevenly, leaving various gaps in many processes. Table 3 shows this by drawing

[19] This tool was identified subsequently in the experiments described in the next section.

on the frequency data in Figure 7. Based on these data, it seems apparent that many peer engagement facilitators emphasise foundational engagement (what the AfCoP call 'event-focused' knowledge sharing) over sustained individual contacts (what the AfCoP refer to as a more "sustained version of peer learning").[20] These data show that, in general, facilitation efforts also seem to focus more on interaction facilitation and knowledge generation than sharing and exchange. The biggest gap across all of the initiatives in the sample is in reflection and application; facilitator entities seldom employ explicit tools to ensure that lessons are well understood by individual peer learners and sufficiently structured to allow practical peer learning suitable and relevant for application back in their home context.

[20] This terminology is taken from the AfCoP-Pan African peer learning on managing for results. Available at http://www.southsouth.info/photo/2009-nov-joint-cop-meeting-in?context=album&albumId=3952417%3AAlbum%3A2558. One can see the 'event focused' approach in a number of the peer facilitator approaches, including the International Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies, which hosts annual workshops and conferences as the major tools of peer engagement. http://www.iaaca.org/Events/

Table 3: Tools are not evenly used, leaving gaps in many peer-learning processes

Parts of the peer learning process	Interaction facilitation	Knowledge generation	Sharing and exchange	Reflection, application and diffusion
Creating the foundational engagement	• Purposeful matching • Large group meetings • Small group meetings	• Common assessment product • Externally produced knowledge products • Peer produced knowledge products • Training sessions	• Expert group peer review • Single peer self-assessment • Multi-peer self-assessment	
Sustaining individual contacts	• Paired engagements • Online networking, virtual and telecom engagements	• Peer produced knowledge products • Site visits • Joint peer activities	• Community publications • Site visits • Joint peer activities Defining learning objectives	
Achieving learning outcomes			• Good natured competition between peer groups[21]	• Single-peer reflection • Multi-peer reflection

Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.
Notes: The darker the shading of each block, the more one is likely to find tools employed in facilitating peer engagement and learning. Lighter blocks are those in which few tools are employed (or where tools are employed less frequently).

Moving from sustained individual contact to practical peer learning is a weak link in many of the facilitated peer engagements. This is the case with engagements that involve one-off events and even with initiatives like peer review processes that have repeat interventions over multiple years. These initiatives employ few tools to foster the reflection, application and diffusion considerations necessary to achieve practical, implementable learning.

[21] See footnote 19

Peer engagement and learning goals

The results sought by facilitators are generally stated in terms of ultimate impacts on public sector reforms, and not learning gains between peers. For instance, the Transparency International School of Integrity emphasises improved transparency as a driving goal, and the Regional Anticorruption Programme for Africa focuses on decreased corruption.

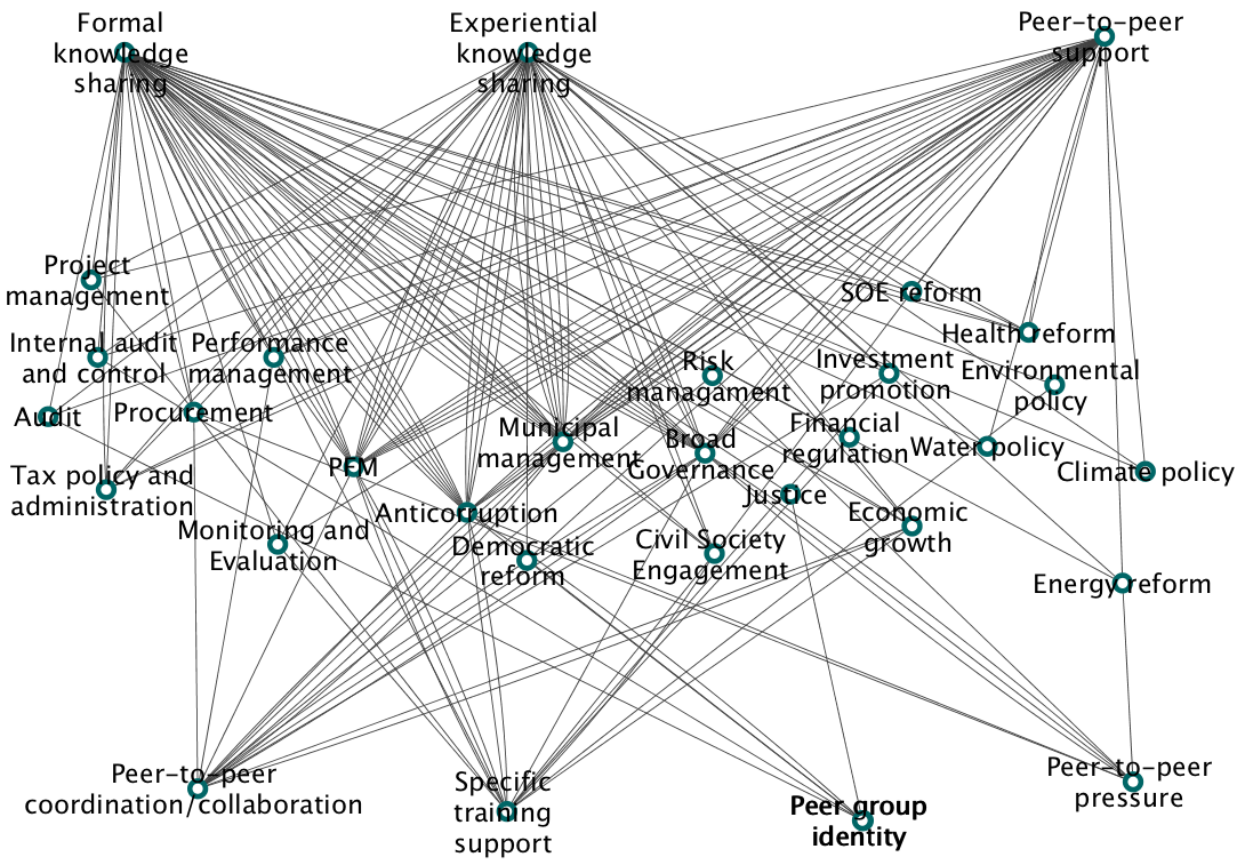
It is important not to overwhelm the tacit knowledge acquisition, which is after all a key advantage of peer learning, with a long list of formal and explicit learning objectives. However, it is also important not to go too far in the opposite direction and avoid any specificity in learning objectives.

One can glean the implicit learning goals generally only through reading descriptions of the initiatives or background documentation explaining how the initiatives actually work. These implicit learning goals were categorised in seven ways during the analytical process, reflecting facilitators' intentions to promote: (i) formal knowledge sharing (through documentation); (ii) experiential knowledge sharing (where tacit knowledge is shared between peers); (iii) peer support (where peers motivate and encourage each other); (iv) peer-to-peer coordination and collaboration (where peers work together to achieve common goals); (v) specific training support (where peers are brought together to undergo common training); (vi) peer group identity (where peers are convened in a manner that helps them relate to each other, or to a common profession); and (vii) peer-to-peer pressure (where peers are held accountable to other peers, in an effort to promote commitment to reforms).

Figure 8 shows the way in which facilitated initiatives in different areas of the public sector reform arena emphasise different implicit learning goals. Initiatives in all areas had more than one of these goals with the most common learning goal centring on formal knowledge sharing (95% of initiatives refer to this, in some form or another). The next two most common learning goals are experiential knowledge sharing (where about 75% of the initiatives tried to engage peers to share tacit lessons about how to get reforms done) and peer-to-peer support (where about 70% of the facilitated engagements, like the PEMPAL, aimed to bring practitioners together to show that they face common struggles and can support each other in

addressing such). These three goals were emphasised together in more than half of the facilitated initiatives, including examples as diverse as the OECD Knowledge Sharing Alliances, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, TAXGIP,[22] and the Africa Electricity Regulator Peer Review and Learning Network.

Figure 8: Peer engagement and learning goals of facilitators, by reform type



Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

The other four engagement and learning goals were much less apparent in the review of facilitators' intentions. About 35% of the initiatives emphasised peer-to-peer coordination and collaboration as a learning goal, and about 25% were focused on using the peer engagements to foster specific training results. The training goals tended to be emphasised by peer engagement initiatives associated with professions or other certification bodies (like the various associations of auditors and accountants and South Africa's Management Effectiveness

[22] http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/tax-lessons-peers

Tracking Tool (METT) which focuses on training public, private and non-profit agencies to promote wilderness protection). About 15% of the facilitator organisations were explicitly focused on promoting group identity or peer-to-peer pressure through the initiatives. The peer-to-peer pressure focus was almost exclusively a goal for organisations facilitating peer reviews (including APRM and the OECD-MENA Procurement network).

Figure 9 and Figure 10 (see Part 2) summarise the complexity in Figure 8, showing the relative importance of different peer engagement and learning goals for facilitators. The relative importance can be compared with actual learning gains of peer learners, which were identified with reference to respondents' comments about what they learned from peer learning engagements. These comments showed first that the gains emerged from an interactive process where peers learned from and with each other. Referencing such learning, 85% of the respondents used words like "sharing", "exchange", and "reciprocal" to describe what they gained.

Figure 9: Peer 'learning' goals of facilitating entities

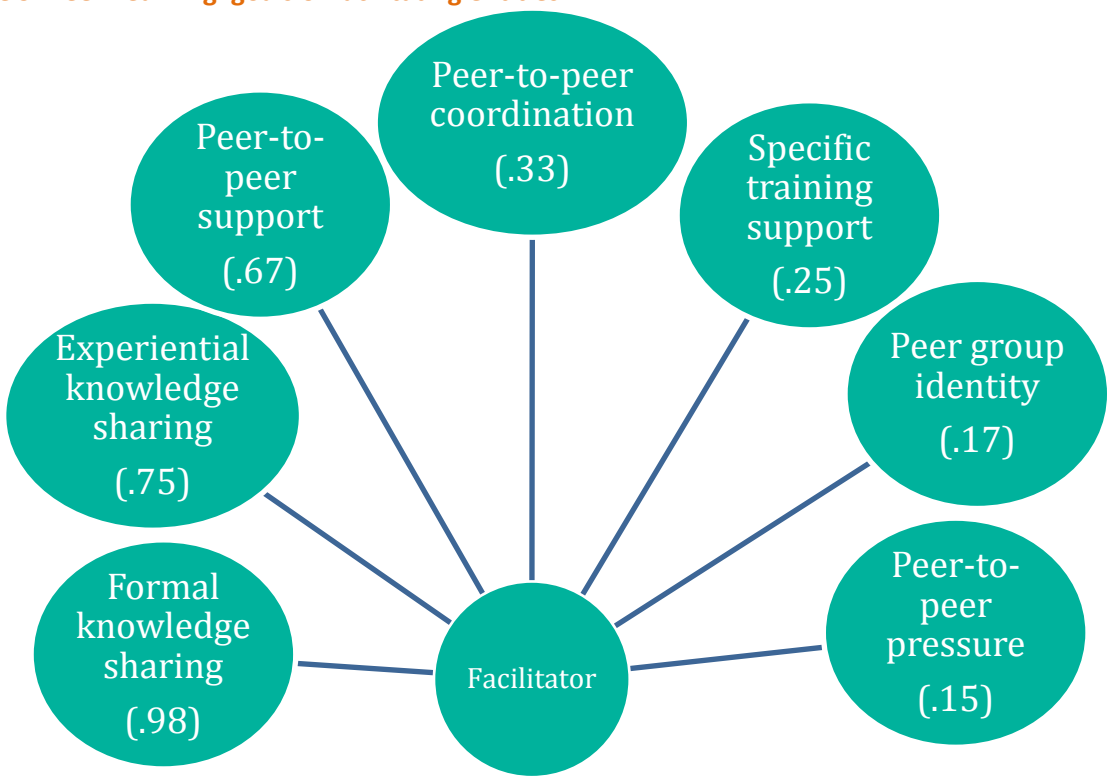
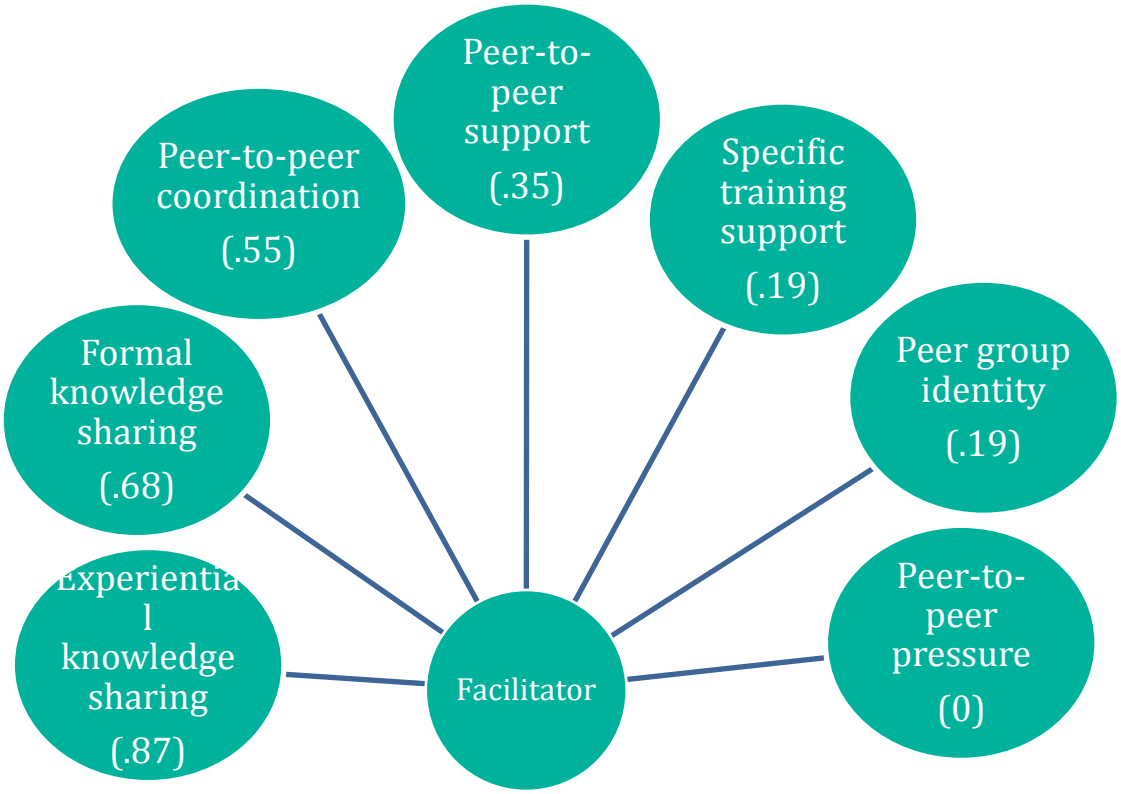


Figure 10: Actual learning gains of peer learners



Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives and peer learner survey results.

The vast majority of the peer learners identified experiential knowledge sharing as the key gain of their experience. This kind of exchange fostered learning about 'softer' issues of reform, like building teams and managing political tensions and maintaining political support, and dealing with cultural challenges. This experiential knowledge sharing also helped participants learn about prioritisation and sequencing reforms. Such learning is extremely difficult to codify and formalise in documents and is therefore often a peculiar product of peer learning exchanges—where peers can exchange tacit experiential knowledge with other peers who have enough in common to make sense of the informal sharing process.

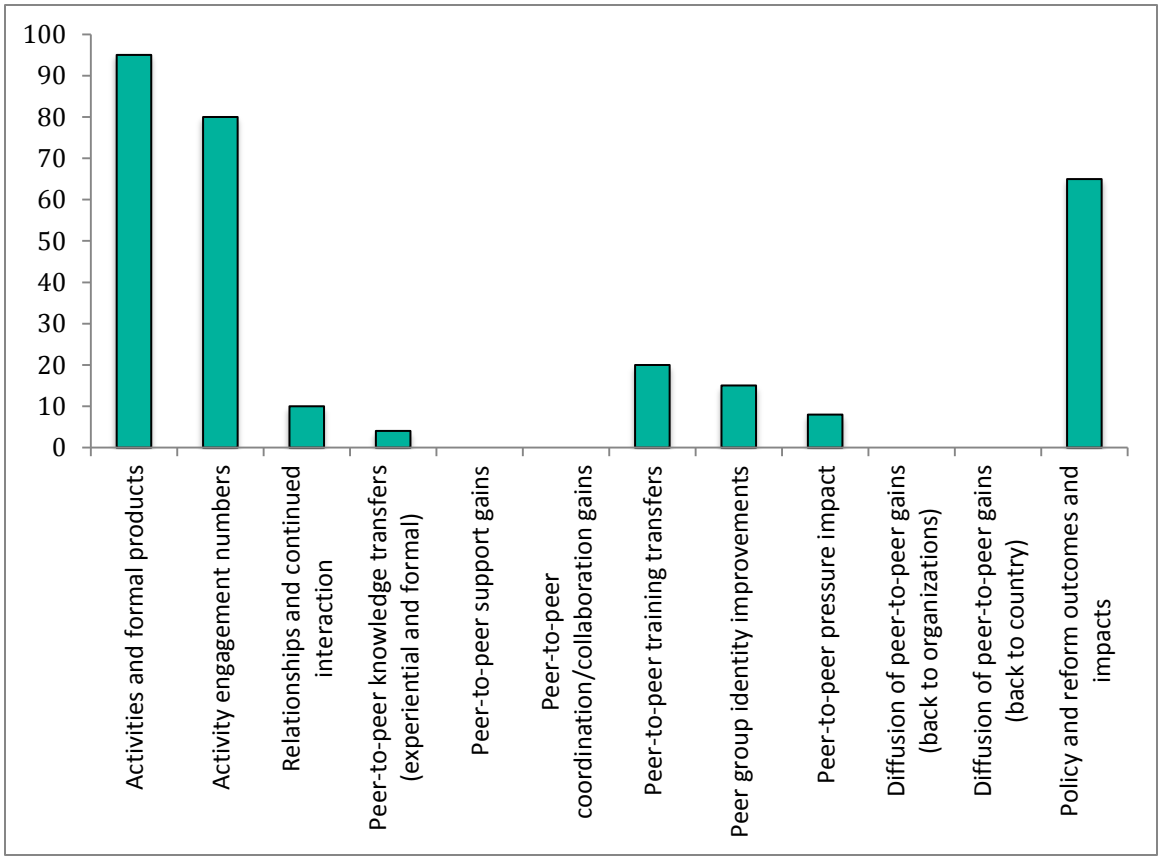
The second most common form of learning gains by peer learners arose through formal knowledge sharing. Examples of this included written case studies and the formal sharing facilitated by common assessments—where peers could refer to written descriptions of peers with better scores on common benchmarks. The topics around which knowledge like this were shared are many, but some important dimensions of the development and public sector reform process are discussed below. The peer learners also referred frequently to gains from peer-to-peer coordination, collaboration, and peer-to-peer support. Examples of such comments include a respondent who noted that, "I have worked with the peers on common strategies and found that we can generate products that are better than I could on my own." Another respondent noted that the connections with new peers "proved valuable when I returned to work and encountered struggles, which my peers could relate to. The peers gave me advice on how to deal with the struggles and this was very useful." Another respondent spoke of the encouragement they received from peers, especially around dealing with challenging decisions in reform processes: "The peer contacts helped me think about sequencing issues and how to get support for my decisions."

"There is quite a lot of synergy between the list of peer learning goals of facilitators and actual peer learning gains by surveyed peer learners. This is a very positive observation that suggests some overlap between thinking on the supply

side of peer learning (by facilitators) and its demand side (by potential peer learners).”

There is quite a lot of synergy between the list of peer learning goals of facilitators and actual peer learning gains by surveyed peer learners. This is a very positive observation that suggests some overlap between thinking on the supply side of peer learning (by facilitators) and its demand side (by potential peer learners). The positive nature of this observation is tarnished by the fact that facilitators seldom focus on these learning goals when evaluating their initiatives. This focus was assessed by looking at evaluation documents for 34 of the 52 facilitator organisations (documents could not be found for the other initiatives). These documents tended to emphasise activities and ‘event focused’ participation and/or overall impact, and ignored the more direct peer learning goals discussed above. Figure 11 shows this clearly, illustrating how frequently different facilitator organisations evaluated different dimensions of the peer engagement and learning process.

Figure 11: The factors considered by facilitators in evaluating peer engagement results



Source: Authors' analysis of 52 peer engagement initiatives.

The figures shows that evaluation documents of over 80% of the initiatives emphasise numbers of official events and products and attendance (like the number of conference meetings and written case studies, or participants in meetings), and about 60% of the initiatives reflect on overall impacts (like progress with reforms).[23] These two focal points (products and

[23] For instance, the African Risk Capacity Agency report on the use of peer reviews discusses the number of groups created, reports produced, and impacts on country-level strategies (www.africanriskcapacity.org/documents/350251/389546/PRM_Report1_EN.pdf). A 2009 report by the South African Community Grantmaker Leadership Cooperative focuses on peer engagement activities, detailing the number and type of events and participation and membership. It describes how these events create spaces for learning and lists topics addressed, but does not give evidence about who learned what and how lessons were shared or diffused to home organisations. www.sacglf.org/documents/First%20Narrative%20Report%20to%20Ford%20Foundation%20FINAL.pdf. The 2013/2014 CLEAR initiative report describes the number and type of peer learning events, identifies participation data, and even points to products (like new monitoring and evaluation strategies developed by country teams) but does not actually specify peer learning gains.

attendance and overall impacts) are arguably the book-ends of any theory of change that involves peer learning. In between these book-ends are the peer learning gains and goals discussed above, which are commonly not evaluated. For instance, only about 20% of the initiatives assessed the results of training transfers; a smaller group assessed the improvement in group identity after peer engagements; some of the peer review initiatives reflected (unscientifically) on the peer pressure gains; and a smattering of facilitators evaluated whether peers maintained relationships or experienced gains from knowledge transfers.

The Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning network (PEMPAL) provides an example of how to assess learning gains. One of the mechanisms they use is Etienne Wenger's questions to evaluate learning in communities of practice. The approach is described in a recent 'success story':[24]

> Interviews were made based on a questionnaire suggested in the Wenger et al. conceptual framework, and included the following questions:
>
> - What is the most meaningful PEMPAL activity that you have participated in and your experience of it (e.g., conversation, working session, project)?
> - Please describe a specific resource this activity produced for you (e.g., and idea or document) and why you thought it might be useful.
> - Please tell how you used this resource in your practice.
> - How did this affect your personal success?
> - Has your participation contributed to the success of your organisation?

The African Transitional Justice Research Network is another peer learning facilitator that pays some attention to actual peer learning gains (albeit not as much attention as is given to basic engagement data). They survey 'members' of the network to track the usefulness of web-based resources in fostering supportive interactions and research skills and capacity:[25]

> "A majority of survey participants (63%) found the Network "helpful" or "very helpful" in enhancing contacts; and over half of participants (56%) found the Network "helpful" or "very helpful" in enhancing research skills and capacity. All

[24] http://www.pempal.org/data/upload/files/2012/06/pem-pal_success_web.pdf.
[25] http://www.transitionaljustice.com/images/docs/atjrnevaluation.pdf

of those who considered themselves part of the Network found it helpful in some way in terms of enhancing contact. The vast majority found it helpful in terms of enhancing research skills and capacity."

The World Bank South-South 'Results Stories' shown in Annex 3 also provide examples on how to evaluate more direct peer learning gains, although the 'results' they allude to are presented quite generally. An example comes from the peer learning engagement focused on social protection in Vietnam, where results are stated as follows:

"The delegates increased their capacity to develop and implement policies and programs to protect the poor and vulnerable in Vietnam:

- Delegates *increased their awareness* of new approaches and mechanisms for designing and targeting social programs for the transient poor and the poor in rural and urban areas.
- Delegates *increased their knowledge and skills* to manage and monitor social security and social insurance programs and benefits, including through use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). As suggested by the Vice-Chair of Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA), the "efficiency of the record keeping system of the new pension system in India is extremely relevant to strengthening SP programs in Vietnam." The Vice-Chair of the Vietnam Social Security Administration also noted that "the application of ITCs in management work on a large-scale [in India] is extremely well-organised . . . and lessons could be applied . . . in modernising the social security system."
- The exchange helped officials within MoLISA agree on ways to support social protection in Vietnam. Since the exchange, Vietnamese officials have conducted workshops and technical meetings to share lessons and build consensus on next steps for reforms."

The general failure to assess peer-learning gains gives one the impression that the facilitated initiatives are more explicitly about peer engagement than about peer learning. This may be too rigid an interpretation of the evidence, however, and a more nuanced perspective

might be that the facilitators are not yet clear about how to measure learning gains. This is a crucial observation that needs to be addressed if learning is actually one of the true focal points of the initiatives, however. The learning dimension of peer learning appears to be a black box that needs to be better understood if peer engagements are to lead to peer learning.

The bottom line is that while there are many potential gains from peer learning which materialise when peers are effectively matched and engaged, most of the explicit learning gains are not included in evaluations by facilitators. Evaluations assess engagement (how many peers are attending workshops) but not learning from such engagement. The gap in evaluation may reflect a bias towards facilitating engagement over learning or just difficulty in thinking about what learning results look like. The gap needs to be closed for more effective capture of peer learning gains (to know what works and why).

"The bottom line is that while there are many potential gains from peer learning which materialise when peers are effectively matched and engaged, most of the explicit learning gains are not included in evaluations by facilitators."

Peer engagement and peer commitment

The challenges of ensuring peer commitment include the difficulty of building trust among peers, ensuring all peers have the same willingness to learn, are fully engaged from the start, and enjoy authorisation to engage fully in the peer learning process. These concerns are crucial when thinking about creating the relational context needed to foster effective peer learning. Without trust and willingness to learn and engage, individuals are unlikely to be effective participants in a peer learning process. Obviously many social, political and organisational factors influence these issues. The complex relational contexts in which peer learning plays out have a large influence on the real and stated goals of engagement, for instance, and whether the individuals and organisations involved have similar interests in learning and diffusing learning.

The challenge of building peer commitment to the learning process plays out through time. Facilitators need to first engage commitment in peers and then foster committed connections over weeks, months, and even years. The challenge is partly about the individuals themselves and partly about their organisations (especially where initiatives engage individuals through organisations). One peer learner noted this clearly, describing the key challenge as "ensuring the 'learning focus' is relevant to all peers *and their organisations*." Another peer learner commented that the challenge was to "get all peers *and their organisations* to quickly and continuously recognise the value in engagement."

This challenge overlaps with the difficulty of managing logistics in the peer learning process. This difficulty relates to ensuring peers have the time to engage (at face-to-face events and after face-to-face events), finding the appropriate venues for face-to-face peer engagement and the appropriate media for non-face-to-face peer engagement, and dealing with logistics so that administrative details, costs and so forth do not to get in the way of peers wanting to engage.

Various ideas emerge to address these challenges; from views expressed by the peer learners and the experiences of some facilitator organisations. The more general literature on peer learning is also helpful (see Annex 4). The main idea centres on the importance of proving value of engagement early on and continuously (with the individuals engaged and the organisations from which they come). A key lesson in this light centres on ensuring that the peer learning is sufficiently focused and that the focus is directly relevant to targeted peers (and their organisations). Peer learners noted, for instance, that it was important for facilitators to address particular topics in learning engagements, and to ensure that these topics are relevant to the learners. One peer learner suggested that facilitators should even canvas potential peers ahead of peer learning initiatives to identify topics of interest. This might lead to a smaller peer engagement event but the peers at the event are often more likely to continue engaging after the event is over (because they self-select to some degree). An example of this comes from the approach taken to defining topics for attention in the Demand

for Good Governance Peer Learning Network, where peers were contacted through a listserve and asked to refine broad topics for group meetings.[26]

Another approach to specifying agendas that are relevant involves doing research on the kinds of problems targeted peers commonly face. An example comes from the International Financial Corporation's (IFC) 2009 peer event on *Doing Business* reforms. The IFC convened a variety of countries in this initiative, and worked hard to ensure the topics were relevant by assessing the kinds of reforms they commonly struggled with. They focused on these areas, excluding some other issues in the interests of ensuring relevance:[27]

> "To determine which areas of reform were priorities in the region, we analysed the *Doing Business* data across all topics and talked with our colleagues working in the field. We found that most of the participating countries were either in the process of reforming (or needed to improve) along four common themes: business start-up, construction permits, access to credit, and trade logistics. Other topics, such as insolvency procedures and investor protection, were also important, but we needed to focus the agenda to ensure a coherent discussion. We wanted to be sure the participants would take away meaningful and specific advice on a few topics, rather than just skim the surface of several."

This approach poses a challenge for peer engagement initiatives that are either very broad (like some of the peer review approaches) or are driven by pre-defined agendas (that are not open to shaping by participating peers). These initiatives are often inherently political in nature, and focus more on fostering peer-to-peer pressure around some key and pre-set ideas and agendas. This makes it difficult for facilitators to exert influence over the peers engaged (and hence match peers) or to ensure that the topics are specified sufficiently to ensure individuals are hooked in to commit to the process of learning. The peer learning gains of individuals involved in such initiatives may be limited as a result (which should probably be accepted, since the objectives are more about creating peer-to-peer pressure than learning).

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[26] http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:21589459~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363,00.html

[27] https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/10497/547650BRI0IFC011peer0learning0event.pdf?sequence=1

Peer learners and some facilitators also noted the value of combining more directed and specific training (sometimes tied to certification) with more emergent peer learning activities. The training activities have stand-alone value for individuals (and their organisations) but could also provide opportunities for peer engagement and relationship building, and offer ways of framing more flexible follow-up peer learning connections. For instance, one of the respondents to the survey noted that they attended a public financial management (PFM) training event to get a new certificate but met new peers at the event and stayed connected for many months afterwards. Training like this is a key aspect of the peer learning initiatives facilitated by STAREP (Strengthening Auditing and Reporting in the Countries of the Eastern Partnership).[28] Peers are engaged in a community of practice where they can learn interactively but also receive formal training and receive certificates of achievement. This is crucial in peer networks focused on professional groups (like accountants and auditors, in this case, or experts on anticorruption in the case of Transparency International's School on Integrity[29]).

Peer learners also mentioned the use of peer contracts to foster commitment by individuals and their organisations. The brief descriptions of these contracts suggested a focus on working together, attending peer meetings, communication regularly, and applying lessons learned in one's own organisation. These contracts are symbolic and are obviously difficult to enforce. However, they provide some basis for facilitators to set expectations of the peer participants, which is particularly useful when establishing sustained individual contacts by specific peers.

Ongoing communication was also emphasised as a potential remedy for these challenges. A handful of respondents pointed out that their organisation had to sanction their engagement over a number of months, and needed constant reassurance about the value of the interaction. This required the facilitators structuring the peer-to-peer interactions to allow regular report-backs to those authorising peer participation. One example is to create a 'course' around the peer learning engagement, where peers participate monthly in a mix of directed sessions (focused on specific training, alongside peers) and less directed peer-to-peer learning

[28] web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTCENFINREPREF/0,, contentMDK:23468684~menuPK:9341783~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:4152118,00.html

[29] www.transparency.org/news/event/transparency_international_school_on_integrity_lithuania

interactions. The peers remain committed because of the structured nature of the engagement and their employers remain supportive because of consistent reports of progress. Some survey respondents noted that the reports to employers even included estimates of potential return on investment for the interventions.

"The peers remain committed because of the structured nature of the engagement and their employers remain supportive because of consistent progress reports."

Clear logistics management was also considered vital. This is where a third party facilitator plays a very pivotal role. A number of survey respondents noted, for instance, that third party facilitators could deal with finances in a more effective way than their employers could. This could overcome financial barriers to peer engagement. Beyond this, facilitators could address the administrative burdens of organising and hosting meetings, which a number of survey respondents said could be real impediments to sustained individual contacts. This logistical assistance is obviously vital in facilitating large group meetings (like conferences). Three survey respondents pointed to the continued importance of such role after such events, however, and noted that third party conveners were required to continuous connections (by organising site visits between paired peers, for instance, and even setting peers up with virtual communication software).

From peer learning to impact at scale

The study also raised questions about diffusing or scaling lessons learned through peer learning initiatives. As discussed earlier, it is clear that individuals are the direct learners in any peer learning initiative, but most facilitators are focused on the impacts of peer learning at an organisational or even city and country level. This leaves one wondering how to spread learning from discrete individuals to broader sets of actors who may not be directly engaged in the peer learning processes. Think, for instance, of how the head of an African electricity regulator takes

lessons back home from a meeting of the Africa Electricity Regulator Peer Review and Learning Network.

The peer learner survey respondents identified a range of challenges related to this issue. Table 4 categorises these challenges into two areas: getting peers to 'share forward' (ensuring lessons learned go beyond the individual to the organisation) and ensuring that home organisations are open to learning from returning peers. Once again, these challenges play out at both the individual and organisational levels. Respondents to the peer learning survey suggested some ideas to address the challenges at both levels. The most relevant comment emphasised the importance of building commitment to take lessons home among peers participating in learning initiatives. Another respondent noted that peers participating in events could be required to interact with groups in home organisations before and after the events are over, and contracts with peers could even require them to 'share forward'. One idea in this respect involves getting peers to work with colleagues in their home organisations when they contribute to ideas about the topics to be addressed in peer learning initiatives. The same peers could be required to make presentations on these topics when they return to their home organisations. These engagements could be included as part of the evaluation of peer learning efforts.

Table 4: Challenges of diffusing and scaling the peer learning of individual peers

Challenges of getting peers to 'share forward'
Ensuring 'peers' reflect effectively on their peer learning gains
Ensuring 'peers' are willing to share learning back into their organisations
Ensuring 'peers' are able to share learning back to their organisations
Challenges of ensuring home organisations are open to learning
Ensuring organisations are open to learning from 'returning peers'
Ensuring organisations are willing to invest in learning from 'returning peers'
Creating time and spaces to bring lessons home

These ideas do not effectively address organisational constraints to learning that might impede the potential to diffuse learning from individual peers to organisations in which they

work. It is quite likely that countries and organisations send peers to events with no expectation of broad impact afterwards. There may be no infrastructure in place in the home organisation to allow lesson diffusion, including time, money and facilities. Five respondents noted that these challenges were best addressed by ensuring organisational commitment to diffusion prior to the engagement of any individual peers. They mentioned the importance of formalising ideas about expected learning gains for individuals and plans to transfer these gains to others. These plans should include practical attention to the time off needed for diffusion, financial requirements of such, and possible beneficiaries.

There are examples of facilitated initiatives that pay attention to this diffusion issue. The Horizontal Learning Program in Bangladesh, for instance, provides peer learning opportunities for officials from regional and local governments. [30] The opportunities are not limited to individuals, however, with teams from different governments engaged in a variety of activities (including benchmarking, site visits, and knowledge sharing events). The program also includes pre-planned dissemination events to ensure that lessons learned are widely communicated:

> "As part of dissemination of learning, the Local Government Division, Ministry of LGRD&C with support from partners under the horizontal learning program, organised a national dissemination workshop on October 30, 2008, at the Winter Garden of the Sheraton Hotel, Dhaka. The purpose of the workshop was to: (a) share the lessons learned from the first year of the horizontal learning program among a larger audience; and (b) formulate a roadmap for the future, with the consensus of potential players in the sector, to strengthen capacities of local government institutions through the horizontal learning program. More than 300 participants representing government, local government institutions, non-governmental organisations, and development partners participated in the workshop."

The program budgets for opportunities for new peer engagement that may arise in these kinds of events—especially joint activities where new peers are engaged with peers already engaged in the initiative. This means that the peer learning extends beyond simple sharing of knowledge to include new experiments and interventions based on the knowledge

[30] www.wsp.org/sites/wsp.org/files/publications/horizontal_learning_strenthening_capacities.pdf

sharing. In this way, the peer network grows through time and the learning opportunities expand.

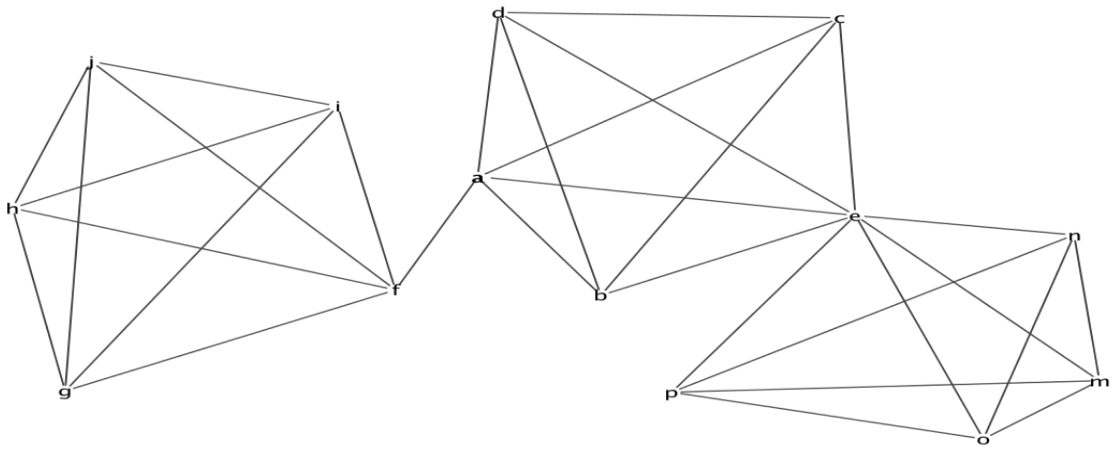
Another example of this planned diffusion comes in a World Bank project in Kyrgyzstan, the Transparency and Accountability in Budgeting Peer Assisted Learning Network[31] inspired by the regional Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning (PEMPAL) initiative. Public financial management officials at the central level had been engaged in PEMPAL where they benefited from peer learning gains. They noted that the lessons learned from other countries were not trickling down to regional and local governments, however, where these was even weak transmission of lessons about positive deviance in the Kyrgyz system itself (where local governments were performing better than average because of home-grown solutions). Inspired by the PEMPAL example, and with World Bank assistance, government officials created a network in Kyrgyz, blending ideas of a community of practice with other peer learning tools (like study tours and online knowledge sharing):

> "[The initiative sponsored] 11 peer-to-peer study tours involving over 100 local government and council representatives across the country. [It] has also developed a dedicated website (www.msu.kg) to address needs of local officials, and providing updated information and innovative approaches in local government."

This is an example of an intentional effort to ensure learning diffusion within and across 'home' organisations. In the simplest form, it involves a clear strategy to facilitate peer-to-peer connections in the home context, where individuals who have gained from peer interaction are connected to other peers to transfer those gains. This is an essential characteristic of any learning organisation (where individuals are constantly encouraged to learn and connections between individuals are facilitated to allow for peer-learning opportunities). Figure 12 captures this kind of structure, showing how different groups of individuals might be able to connect to others and diffuse new ideas and ways of doing.

[31] www.efca.kg/project-view/transparency-and-accountability-in-local-budgeting-peer-assisted-learning/

Figure 12: Diffusion of peer learning through horizontal connections



Imagine that five individuals (a, b, c, d and e) participate in a peer learning initiative and gain from such in discrete ways (where learning happens in their individual heads). Individuals b, c and d return to their organisations and do not share their learning with others. Individual a, on the other hand, connects and shares with individual f who connects and shares with individuals g, h, i, and j; this ensures diffusion of the peer learning gains enjoyed by individual a. Individual e also shares peer learning gains from the a, b, c, d and e interaction—but more directly by convening individual m, n, o and p.

Variations on this approach seem to be the most prominent (and only) way of ensuring that discrete peer learning gains diffuse and scale. It seems to be a demanding and transaction and resource intensive approach that many facilitators would probably not be able to resource or support. This may be why most facilitator organisations do not include such activities into their agendas. However, some examples do exist and offer ideas on how to achieve scale in a cost effective and organic manner.

An example is World Vision's internal Project model Accredited Learning and Support program[32], which "is an online community learning approach that delivers facilitated module based learning and support to World Vision economic development programming staff based in

[32] https://www.worldvision.com.au/Libraries/SEED_page/PALS.pdf

the field." It employs online mechanisms to facilitate learning by peers (blending training and less structured peer-to-peer interaction), which is both cost effective and "allows for the different time-zones, travel commitments, and connectivity issues facing the global participants whilst also ensuring they move through the activities at the same pace and benefit from being part of an online interactive community learning together." The peers engaged in this community are connected in a system resembling that in Figure 12.

Another example is the African Community of Practice on Managing for Development Results (AfCoP). It uses a variety of tools and mechanisms to foster diffusion of learning from core groups of peers to others. These include sub-regional meetings and national chapters of the CoP. These are "autonomous bodies, launched at the initiative of senior-level government officials and linked to national processes" (much like the e, m, n, o and p cluster in Figure 12). A national chapter in Niger was started by a member of the full AfCoP, who "mobilised 300 civil servants, representatives of civil society, the private sector, and development agencies, whom at the end of the week had become eager to implement MfDR (Managing for Development Results) concepts in their organisation." The national chapters allow AfCoP peer learners to engage back into their home contexts, with little demands on the AfCoP facilitators:

> In terms of sustainability, national chapters are supported by their national government. Donors contribute to their activities on a case by case basis. The regional AfCoP platform ensures that knowledge and information is continuously shared in both directions between the regional community and national groups.

As Box 2 highlights, the existing research literature throws relatively little light on the question of how to move from peer learning to impact at scale.

Box 2: Findings from the research literature

The overview of the literature provided in the Annexes suggests four groups of findings:

1. There are generally upbeat and positive, although somewhat impressionistic, findings about how the various forms of peer engagement are employed in particular contexts (Mahon & McBride, 2008; NEPAD, 2015; OECD, 2007, 2014; Pal, 2012)
2. There are more robust evaluative findings about when and how individual peer learning works at the individual level in higher and further education (Adam et al., 2011; Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 2001; Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Griffiths et al., 1995; Heavey, 2006; Keijzer, 2013a; Kimmins, 2013; McLeay & Wesson; Tosey, 1999; Van der Veen, 2000; Willey & Gardner, 2010).
3. There are also findings (offering a distinctly mixed picture) about the way peer engagements foster constructive policy transfer (Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials, 2003; Bing-Pappoe, 2010; Casey & Gold, 2005; King, Keijzer, Spierings, & Matthews, 2012; OECD, 2008b; Pal, 2014; UNCTAD, 2011; World Bank Institute, 2013a, 2013b)
4. A fourth set of findings examine foundational peer engagements and ultimate policy or institutional change but with little or no consideration of how individual contacts play their part. This literature falls under the general heading of analysis of "soft modes of governance" (Borrás & Conzelmann, 2007) by which policy dialogue is pursued and a general "best practice" agenda is set, without any particular concern to develop individual skills. See (Conzelmann, 2014a) in particular for a discussion of this in relation to the World Trade Organisation and the OECD's Economic and Development Review Committee. This literature concludes that peer reviews of this type are exercises in the management of information rather than learning mechanisms (Conzelmann, 2014b).

From a map of the territory to a model of practice

We started this investigation with basic conceptual peer learning hourglass model in mind (see Figure 1) which suggests that peer learning has three parts: (i) facilitated peer group engagement (where groups of potential peers are brought together to explore potential learning opportunities); (ii) individual peer learning (where the peers actual learn from each

other, as individuals), and (iii) large scale organisational, sectoral or national learning and impact (where lessons are transferred from individual peers to broader groups who act on the lessons to achieve impact).

The mapping exercise has given us a view of past (and current) work in this field that allows development and extension of this model; taking lessons from the territory into a model of practice. The resulting conceptual model is an observationally informed view of the challenges and processes involved in peer learning. It is not normative (we do not know enough to assert that this is the best way of seeing connections between actions or that steps identified really are causally connected) and it is not theoretical (while informed by many theories, they have little combined predictive power), but it is evidence-based and (hopefully) useful.

Before detailing our thoughts, we should note that any peer learning model needs to be sufficiently clear to withstand confusing cross-winds and be modest enough to recognise the need for further improvement. As already discussed, the peer learning community is still emergent and, a characterised by uncertain language and untested claims. The term "peer" is now a common adjective used to describe a host of very different arrangements (from informal communities of practice, through didactic lesson-giving platforms, to structured benchmarking exercises between organisations or even countries). Proponents of these arrangements tend to declare victory in favour of their activities[33] but it is often unclear if their activities are really abut peer learning or if there are gains from their activities or if the gains are a result of peer learning or something else. The research literature does not settle such questions. Studies do not provide much firm ground on which to base a determination of what peer learning is or when it is likely to be effective in this context, largely because they focus on western countries and are biased to peer learning in the higher education process (yielding hypotheses that are not well shaped for application in the public sector reform context in developing countries).

Mindful of these challenges, and with a desire to add clarity to the field but at the same time also recognise the need for more thought and continued work, we offer an emerging conceptual model of the peer learning process in Figure 13.

[33] Keijzer (2013b) offers a particularly useful overview

Figure 13: From peer engagement to peer learning to results at scale

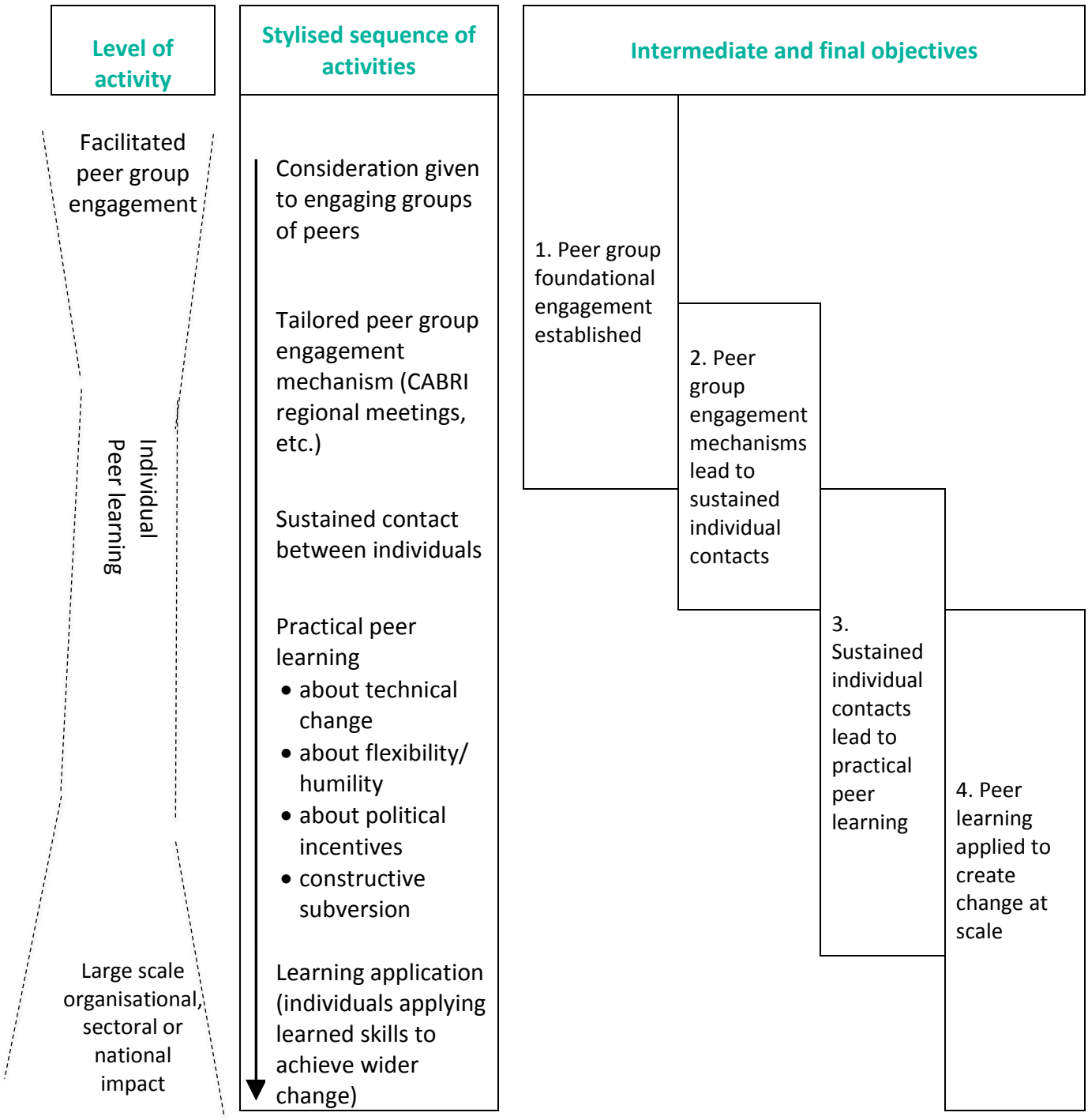


Figure 13 sets out a stylised sequence of activities that we see as characteristic of peer learning initiatives, beginning with someone considering engaging groups of peers. How this happens is not clear but we offer some informed speculations below. These considerations can

lead to approaches which are tailored to suit particular topics, regions or countries, producing arrangements (such as the CABRI regional meetings or the PEMPAL Budget Community of Practice Regional Meetings) which can link peers together in groups (in real time and space or virtually) and foster sustained, individual-level contacts.

Those sustained contacts can offer peer learning, producing practical skills which can then be applied to achieve wider change. The model is hour-glass shaped in that it proposes a sequence from the large scale organisational arrangements necessary to establish the peer group engagements, to individual level gains in knowledge and insights, and back to the large scale in making impacts at the sectoral or national level. Linking individual peer learning with its organisational origins and its ultimate impact, distinguishes this model from other typologies of peer learning approaches which tend to either focus entirely on the organisational (Keijzer, 2013a, figure 1) or which discuss peer learning in isolation from the mechanisms that enable it (Boud et al., 2001; Keijzer, 2013a). The Public Expenditure Management Network in Asia (PEMNA) "Value Added Chain" is broadly consistent with this model (World Bank, 2013, figure 2) as are the outcomes proposed by the 2012 strategy of the Public Expenditure Management Peer Assisted Learning Network (PEMPAL) (PEMPAL Steering Committee, 2012), although neither PEMNA nor PEMPAL identify individual level peer learning as fundamental.

The model in Figure 13 makes a distinction between "peer group engagement" (where the primary unit of analysis is the agency or the country) and "individual peer learning" (where public officials or others with some responsibility for reform design gain practical insights into technical reform options and tactical modes of implementation). This recognises that not all "peer group engagement" is intended to lead to "peer learning". For example, OECD public governance peer reviews are a "peer group engagement" and are intended to assist in setting an agenda for reform, delineating the types of developments emerging in other OECD countries (Unalan, 2009). This includes "learning opportunities for all involved as countries share how they have addressed shared challenges and objectives" (OECD, 2010, p.8) but that does not necessarily refer to improving the knowledge and skills or specific senior staff through sustained individual level contact – although it might. Similar points apply to the Pacific Forum Compact Peer Reviews (Forum Secretariat, 2013) and the Open Government Partnership which

produces biannual independent progress reports for each participating country in order to motivate improvements in transparency but with no stated intention to link this to skill-building at the individual level. Country participation in the triennial surveys of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is also intended to stimulate debate and policy change by comparison between peers, but is not linked to individual learning.

As shown in Figure 13, the outcome of the model is that peer learning has been applied to create change at scale. Associated prior intermediate outcomes are that the peer group engagement mechanisms were adjusted for context and led to sustained individual contacts, and that sustained individual contacts led to practical learning.

Operationalising the model (lessons and tools)

The mapping exercise offers insights into how the model is being operationalised currently and how it could be operationalised most effectively. This exercise showed, for instance, that 'peers' are individuals who are looking for other individuals to learn from, but with characteristics similar to their own (peers are not organisations, therefore, but individuals who are matched to learn from each other). The learners also noted that peer learning happens through deep and ongoing engagement with these peers, where trust-based exchange produces opportunities for lesson transfer. The peer learners spoke to how important joint work is in these interactions, and how learning gains tend to centre on the knowledge that is shared through such interaction. The main gains are in the sharing of experiential or tacit knowledge, but gains also take the form of more formal knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer collaboration and support.

The mapping exercise also uncovered much variation in the peer engagement and learning efforts of facilitators (entities that lead initiatives to provide peer engagement and learning opportunities). These facilitators engage in different areas of public sector reform, use different tool mixes, and emphasise different learning and engagement goals. The variation is not always extreme but is sufficient to complicate any effort to identify clear dimensions along which one might think of organising facilitation types.

The tools have been discussed in some detail and we have some idea about how often they are used (Table 5) and even what they look like. We do not know how well they are used, however, of what contingency factors influence their effectiveness and value.

Table 5: How frequently are different engagement tools used?

Proportion of facilitators surveyed	Tools employed	Examples of facilitators using the tools (See Annex 2 for contact details of the relevant facilitator)
Over 60%	Large meetings (annual workshops, conferences), externally produced knowledge products and sponsored written reports; studies by consultants, academics and experts, professional training events (often tied to certification, especially where peer groups are professionally affiliated).	PEMPAL
Over half	Peer-produced knowledge products (like case studies of a peer's own experience) and small group meetings (where only a few peers engage in more close-quarters engagement than an annual conference would allow).	Africa-Asia Drought Risk Management Peer Assistance Network (AADP)
About a third	Common assessment products (review templates, report cards or benchmarking devices) and expert group review (where external experts analyse reviews).	OECD reviews, APRM, R4D-TAP, INTRAC's Peer Learning Programme for Small and Diaspora Organisations, the African Development Bank's WOP Africa Project, and MENA-OECD Procurement Network.
	Site visits (where different delegations visit others to learn first-hand about new ideas - sometimes one-sided such as sponsored visit by ministry of finance officials to another country) or reciprocal (where officials from two countries might visit each other's context and compare notes on the site visits)	PEMPAL
	Joint peer activities (engaging peers in common projects intended to foster creativity and new ways of thinking, and to ensure knowledge is tested and disseminated while on-the-job).	World Bank Knowledge Hubs, Horizontal Learning Program in Bangladesh
About a quarter	Expert reviews (where outside specialists use an assessment tool to examine a 'peer' system) or multi-peer assessments (where a number of peers fill out the common assessments and then compare scores and notes with each other).	APRM, Results for Development Transparency and Accountability Program (R4D TAP)

Risks and pitfalls

The mapping also points to risks of doing peer learning and gaps in our knowledge.

The risk of "magic bullet" thinking – "it's peer learning, and must be good"

It is clear that there is considerable investment of effort and optimism about the potential of peer learning. The associated question is whether this has "magic bullet" overtones, where yet another generic solution is offered to the confounding problem of public sector reform. Evidence from the 52 peer facilitation initiatives, the 84 individual survey respondents and the range of case studies examined points to enthusiasm for peer learning. Notions of "success" were too varied to allow any simple aggregate ratings of the degree to which peer learning is "effective", but it is clear that the idea of peer engagement has found a firm place in discussion of public sector reform and development. The previous technical agendas have been, at least, supplemented by an approach which seeks to engage peer practitioners doing reforms, helping these peers learn from others to identify a contextually relevant reform approach. Individuals involved in reforms are open and interested in this kind of learning and many organisations are now facilitating this kind of learning.

There is a clear supply side to this growing enthusiasm, with the growth in number and scope of facilitators ranging from the African Peer Review Mechanism, the OECD's Anti-Corruption Network in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the Collaborative African Budget Reform Initiative, the African Union's Regional Anticorruption Programme for Africa, through to the Club de Madrid's "Leaders Engaged in New Democracies" network). But the growing enthusiasm is also marked on the demand side, with individual respondents reflecting on the possibility that, in retrospect, they could have learned more from peer engagements than they did (see the case studies in the Annexes). This raises questions for further consideration about whether the supply and demand for peer learning are matched and whether the supply is always linked to concern for effective public sector reform or whether it can also reflect other professional or career incentives from public officials and development specialists.

"This raises questions about whether the supply and demand for peer learning are matched and whether the supply is always linked to concern for effective public sector reform or whether it can also reflect other professional or career incentives from public officials and development specialists."

The risk of hitting the formal target but missing the politically-smart point

The mapping suggests that the focus on managing the logistical challenges of organising meetings and maintaining peer engagement can often exceed the focus on the larger objective of using peer learning to achieve reform results at scale. This leaves the possibility that some of the continuing engagements are more formalistic than substantive, with little prospect of inculcating skills for "politically smart" practice. The static snapshot provided by the mapping was not able to identify whether and to what degree such skills are taught successfully in the peer learning initiatives studied, and so these points emerge from the literature and are more speculative.

"Politically smart" strategy skills entail flexibility and humility in change management, putting into practice the insight that reform approaches should aim for some degree of agnosticism about preferred processes or organisational forms seeking ideas which are locally-led and adapted as lessons emerge during implementation. They help operationalise the insight that apparent dysfunction can be a misunderstood functioning arrangement (Grindle, 2012, p. 261; Srivastava & Larizza, 2013). They also can entail "constructive subversion" or the resistance to promotion of commodified reform packages. The mapping could give no reassurance that these soft skills are the persistent focus of sustained peer engagements.

The risk that learning outcomes are not tailored to results at scale

The mapping exercise highlights that organised peer engagements are generally not designed to achieve all the intermediate objectives and did not consistently have change at scale as a guiding final objective. There is an emphasis on the early and somewhat logistical stages of the process, with evaluations focusing on whether the peer group foundational engagements were established, well-resourced, and attended and, to a lesser degree, whether the engagement

mechanisms led to sustained individual contacts. Questions of whether the individual contacts sustained through the facilitated peer engagements led to practical peer learning, and whether the peer learning was subsequently applied to create change at scale were largely ignored. In sum, facilitated peer group engagements were rarely designed and implemented with the full hourglass model in mind. Attention was focused on the mechanics of establishing the engagement at organisational and at individual level.

The literature on peer learning (summarised in Box 2 and reviewed in detail in Annex 4) also shows that researchers have rarely considered the complete process envisaged in the hourglass. The literature falls into four broad categories, each offering only a very partial insight into an effective peer learning process. The literature is also very focused on western countries and is heavily biased to the higher education process (explaining how students can learn from each other), yielding hypotheses that are not well shaped for application in the public sector reform context in developing countries. Most importantly, it offers few insights into navigating the entire process from engaging groups of peers, via sustained contacts at the individual-level and individual learning culminating in impacts at the sectoral or national level. Most typologies of peer learning approaches focus entirely on the organisational level (Keijzer, 2013a, figure 1) or discuss peer learning in isolation from the mechanisms that enable it or the results which follow (Boud et al., 2001; Keijzer, 2013a).

However, while there are some important insights, the key conclusion from a review of the current literature is that, unfortunately, we know little about moving along the entire path from peer engagement to peer learning to results at scale.

"Unfortunately, we know little about moving along the entire path from peer engagement to peer learning to results at scale."

The risk that standard reform solutions are promulgated via peer learning

As noted above, the challenge of "being politically smart" requires that reformers are both politically informed (with an awareness of what has happened previously and an in-depth understanding of the context, including embedded structures, informal institutions,

relationships and actors) and politically astute (using information about the politics with intelligence, creativity and the skills to be clever operators working with the politics or around them according to what works best in the context) (Booth & Unsworth, 2014, p.3). These requirements apply both to the process of setting up the peer learning (Why is this being done? In whose interests and why now?) and to the learning outcomes that it should provide to peer learners (Can the learning assist in developing the negotiation and coalition-building skills necessary to accompany technical reform proposals?)

On the politics of the process of setting up the peer learning agenda, the mapping gave glimpses of the complex incentives at work. For example, peer engagement facilitators need funding and they are subject to the same pressures to show that funding will achieve demonstrable results in the short term as other actors in the development field (Independent Evaluation Group, 2011). The facilitators can be subject to pressures to demonstrate that they are adhering to current development fashions (Carothers & Brechenmacher, 2014). On the learning outcomes, it is not clear that peers automatically want to use the opportunity provided by the peer learning to develop skills for realistic public sector reform. The incentives to promote a commodified reform package are very present for officials within the public sector, including for the organisers of peer learning.

The risk of weak evaluation of the peer learning engagement

The mapping points to three persistent problems with setting goals for peer learning. First, goals are often more implicit than explicit and need to be uncovered from descriptions or background documentation explaining how initiatives actually work. Second, when they are identified, goals are either somewhat high level and general (stated in terms of ultimate impacts on public sector reforms, and not learning gains between peers) or focused on process rather than the learning outcome. Third, the goals are often not used for evaluating the peer learning. Instead, evaluations emphasise activities and 'event focused' participation, not the learning of attendees.[34]

[34] Evaluation documents of over 80% of the initiatives show numbers of official events and products and attendance (like the number of conference meetings and written case studies, or participants in meetings), and about 60% of the initiatives also reflect on overall impacts (like progress with reforms). For instance, only about

Overcoming these problems requires evaluating peer learning in a more disciplined and systematic manner, focusing on setting learning goals, and actually examining if peers are learning (and if the learning impacts outcomes). These are demanding requirements and ones that may also be politically difficult to act upon, which would mean that many efforts aimed at peer learning may never be able to evaluate their peer learning objectives fully.

Getting back to a map of the peer learning process – and filling an initial gap

Figure 14 brings these ideas together, mapping out the process we see as characterising most peer engagement and learning practices. It allows for variation in what these practices look like, given choices by facilitators (or even the peer learners themselves). It also outlines common tools used in different stages in the process and risks we see at each stage.

The process starts with someone considering engaging groups of peers. How this happens is not clear. Our research arrives on the scene at the time when someone has identified themselves, or more likely been identified by an organisation, as "the facilitator". We now know what they do and something about what works as they proceed along the path of peer learning – but we are not sure what gets them to the starting block. What persuaded or empowered them to assume this role is not clear. Discussions with peer facilitators are suggestive but not conclusive. It seems that they had a clear view on the institutional arrangements or areas of the public sector in which they hoped to see improvement and, often more implicitly than explicitly, a working theory of change about how these improvements would be achieved. They also had some conviction that the distinctive focus of peer learning on tacit knowledge was particularly valuable to achieving those changes – and that they wanted to foster professional networking or support as well as learning.

Once they move past consideration towards action, the question then becomes how to establish a 'foundational engagement'- a step which might entail creating or joining a community or practice or initiating a peer review process, or just hosting an annual meeting of

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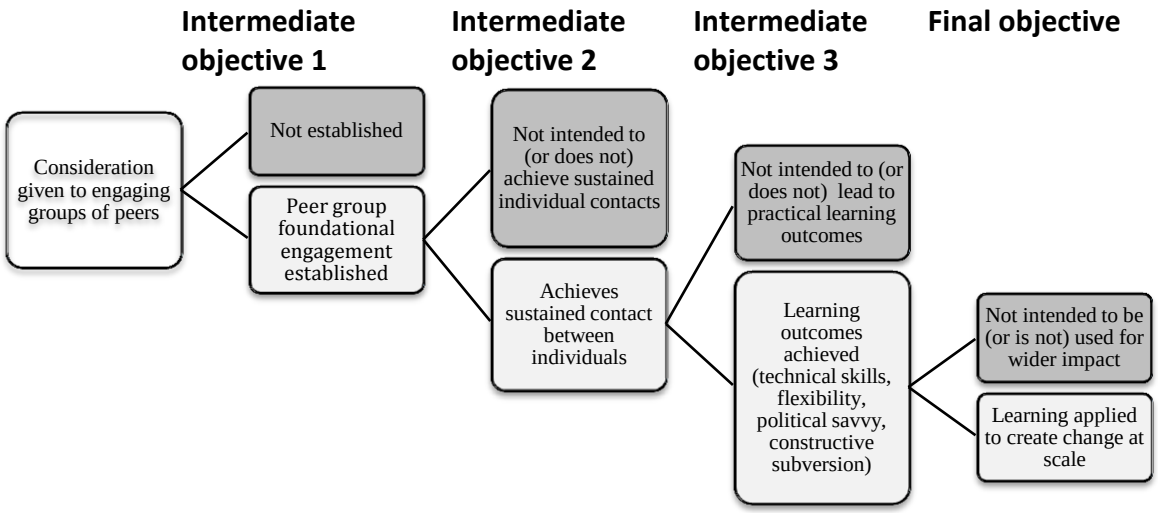
20% of the initiatives assessed the results of training transfers; a smaller group assessed the improvement in group identity after peer engagements; some of the peer review initiatives reflected (unscientifically) on the informal group pressures amongst the peer learners; and a smattering of facilitators evaluated whether peers maintained relationships or experienced gains from knowledge transfers.

some or other group. The goal is to bring people together. The effectiveness of such 'foundational engagements' depends on a number of factors: How well are peers matched? Do the meetings actually bring groups together? Is there a common product used to assess engagement? Are there any anchoring products or training sessions used to attract and mobilise peers? A well-intentioned effort at facilitating peer learning—or participating as a peer learner—can fail quickly if these and other factors are not given serious attention.[35] In such cases one may fail to attract peers to the engagement, or to match peers effectively, or build trust between peers, or ensure that peer see value in engaging. There is a major risk of not attending to such issues, however, because of the assumption that any kind of engagement is good or that peer learning 'just happens'.

Even if a foundational engagement works, however, one is not assured of effecting real peer learning. Some engagements bring peers together without any larger learning objectives (where the initial engagement is a political signal or a coalition building exercise, for instance). Most foundational engagements do not yield very high levels of peer-to-peer learning, however (except, perhaps, about very obvious opportunities, where peers from one context learn about a technical solution in another context, for instance). Deeper learning (especially about softer and more personal dimensions of experience, or about the difficulties of actually doing reforms—like the challenge of implementing a technical solution one peer may see in another context) requires that individuals engage for longer periods, through paired engagements, online interactions, co-production exercises and more. This sustained contact is needed to foster trust-based relationships and create opportunities for reflection and sharing (where the most valuable peer learning, which is not obvious and is not open to more didactic methods, occurs).

[35] Some reviewers of this document noted that it might be useful to separate the preparation requirements for the foundational event from the event itself, given that both need to be done well to facilitate learning. The idea is to have a pre-foundation stage included in the process map. While this point is well taken, the current study keeps the preparation and event together, given the direct causal link between what one might call pre-foundation activities and foundation activities.

Figure 14: A stylised peer learning process map



	Intermediate objective 1	Intermediate objective 2	Intermediate objective 3	Final objective
Tools	• Purposeful matching • Group meetings • Common assessment product • External/peer knowledge products • Training sessions • Expert peer review • Single/multi peer self-assessment	• Paired engagements • Online networking • Peer produced knowledge products • Site visits • Joint peer activities • Community publications	• Peer produced products • Site visits • Joint activities • Community publications • Single/multi peer reflection • Good-natured competition • Defining learning objectives	• Individuals from the same organisation learning as a group* • Ensuring organisational mandates provided to individual learners* • Report back sessions* • Domestic communities of practice to feed lessons forward*
Risks	• "Magic bullet" thinking – "it's peer engagement, so must be peer learning, so must be good"	• Hitting formal target but missing the politically-smart point	• Standard reform solutions are promulgated via peer learning	• Weak evaluation of the peer learning engagement • Learning outcomes not focused on results at scale

* These were not in the earlier list of tools because they are not commonly used, but emerged through individual cases as ideas to adopt to foster scaled learning (as described in the text).

The sustained contact between individuals does not itself lead to learning outcomes, however. It is very possible that contact happens in a way that fosters the building of collegial relationships but with no real learning. This could happen if a peer engages with another peer over a specific period (and facilitators can count the meetings) but there is a consistent failure to actually engage in a manner that fosters learning. This could happen because the peers were not properly matched to start or because they did not engage in good faith or because their

host organisations did not really welcome learning (all discussed in the text). This means that one may hit formal targets in fostering interaction but miss the real value of peer learning. It will result in the peer learning process stopping short of producing real peer learning outcomes for the individuals involved—where these individuals learn about doing reform (for example, being flexible, politically savvy, and able to be constructively subversive). These outcomes are, however, facilitated by purposeful efforts to ensure peers are engaged in activities that foster both co-production and personal and co-reflection (where they do things together and reflect on these things together and as individuals). The joint activities of doing and reflection are crucial in the peer learning process, and can be fostered using a variety of tools. They are not fostered when the learning activity is located in a more traditional dialog or process dominated by orthodox ideas, however, or where the process itself undermines the space for learning. This could happen if the peers do not feel that they are in the relationship to learn new things (but rather to legitimate old ideas) or if the peers do not feel supported by their host organisations, or if the facilitators see the peer learning space as an opportunity to sell pre-baked reform ideas.

These kinds of factors manifest in real risks to effective learning at the individual level. Even if one overcomes such risks, however, there is no guarantee of reaching the final stage of peer learning potential—where learning transfers from the individual learner to her organisation, sector or even country. This allows learning at scale, which could generate behavioural change and even reform modification at scale as well (where organisations, sectors and countries actually change). This is the ostensible goal of doing any peer learning in the context of public sector reforms in development. It is a goal that we do not see being met in most of the initiatives we examined, however, mostly because facilitating organisations commonly fail to assess such impacts. Where evaluations are done, they typically focus on inputs or process dimensions of peer learning and not these at-scale impacts. We do see contrasting examples, however, where peer learning initiatives focus explicitly on ensuring learning transfers from individuals to groups. These initiatives employ various tools aimed at such goal, including mobilising groups to co-participate in the peer learning experience, formalising reporting and dissemination activities for those returning from peer learning

engagements, and even creating internal communities of practice to allow diffusion of lessons from individuals to groups.

We wish there was more evidence about what works and why in the latter box of the peer learning process map in Figure 14. This is the area where we found the biggest gaps in our maps of past practice. In particular, while we have evidence of one or two good ideas that have been used to foster diffusion of lessons within a government, we really do not know much about when these make sense or how they work. We are very concerned about this gap, given that it could be the difference between a peer learning initiative contributing to the careers of lucky individuals in governments and the governments actually growing through such individuals. There is a lot of evidence of officials in power ministries attending workshops but never transferring lessons learned to colleagues in distributed parts of government (Andrews 2013). It would be unfortunate if peer learning initiatives exacerbated this gap, and need to better understand how to reach broad groups through peer learning.

We see other key gaps in the mapping evidence. This evidence tells us quite a lot about the importance of matching, for instance, but we do not have any evidence of how matching mechanisms actually work. This is a fundamental issue for peer learning (given that failure to match peers will almost certainly limit learning between the peers) and raises some important questions: Are some matching mechanisms better than others? Why? Does it depend on context? We also know less than we would like about what peer learners are actually looking for in the peer learning engagements—and what motivates their continued engagement and effort. It could be that most peers are just engaged to meet new colleagues and learn obvious lessons, and feel that the real costs are greater than the potential value of co-production and co-reflection with another peer. Do peers actually want to put in the hard work required by peer learning? Is a trust-based peer relationship really considered politically and practically useful? Finally, we know very little about the process by which learning between individuals occurs, and what kind of technical assistance can foster effective learning. This is an important gap as many donors looking to facilitate peer learning often try to use traditional tools (like technical assistance) to do so. Twinning is a very good example, as are study visits to best

practice locales. Do these technical assistance modalities foster peer learning, and under what conditions?

We embarked on a series of informal experiments to shed light on the answers to these questions, given the dearth of evidence arising from the mapping exercise. The next section discusses these experiments and shows how lessons from such help to fill gaps in our knowledge.