Capacity development in international aid

A contribution to theory and practice

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Capacity development in international aid – A contribution to theory and practice

Abstract
Although capacity development has been a key aspect of global aid policy for decades, success is limited. Capacity development is defined as a process, based on a partnership, to develop capacity to achieve a goal. The purpose of this thesis is to increase our understanding of why capacity development does not work as intended, and to inform the discussion on addressing the challenges. Two research questions were asked: 1) What are the principles and practices of capacity development? 2) Why is the current implementation of capacity development not leading to the desired results?

Data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 115 participants from the international aid community. A framework of eight principles, four fundamental challenges and a typology of seven project failures is presented. The results reveal significant gaps between theory and practice. The challenges stem from terminological and conceptual ambiguity, clashing principles, misguided accountability, risk aversion and the need for control. The aid system is built on short-term feedback, but capacity development requires long-term processes and commitment. Outdated worldviews, resistance to change, mindset lag, and power imbalances further complicate the situation.

Based on the results, this thesis recommends an overhaul of the aid system, with power being redistributed along the aid chain. To develop sustainable capacities, three requisite types of capacity – technical, processual and contextual – are suggested. An equal partnership, flexible and adaptive roles, and mutual learning are crucial for capacity development to work. Effective capacity development requires donors and external partners to allow enough time, relinquish control, share risks, and embrace flexibility and adaptability over longer timeframes. Sustainability depends on the success of the principles, and the need for a mix of activities and methods.

The principles need to be taken seriously so that the focus is not only on what the project should achieve, but also on how it is achieved. A change in mindset, attitude and role allocation is needed. By prioritising differently than today, there is a good chance of achieving the goal of sustainable capacity development.

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Summary

Capacity development is an integral part of development cooperation in general. In particular, it is an essential element in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the Sendai Framework. Many bilateral and multilateral organisations support capacity development—examples include governmental agencies and donors, United Nations agencies, regional governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. However, although capacity development has been an integral part of global aid policy and frameworks for decades, it has yet to demonstrate a substantial impact on the ground. **The purpose** of this thesis is, therefore, to increase our understanding of why capacity development is not working as intended, and to inform the discussion on addressing the challenges. Two research questions were asked:

1) What are the principles and practices of capacity development?

2) Why is the current implementation of capacity development not leading to the desired results?

Capacity development is defined as a process, based on a partnership, which seeks to develop capacity to achieve a goal. Data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 115 participants in the international aid community. Participants were selected for their position, organisational affiliation and experience in capacity development. Experts, program managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donors have the power to influence the international aid system due to their position, and they were selected for their specific knowledge.

Several principles for successful capacity development were identified from a review of current scientific research, and input from practitioners. This thesis makes both conceptual and empirical contributions to structuring, organising and operationalising capacity development. It presents a coherent and comprehensive **framework of eight principles** (ownership, partnership, contextualisation, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability) along with **four fundamental challenges** (complexity, dynamic change, uncertainty and ambiguity) (Figure 1, Chapter 5). Additional capacity development challenges are described in detail, and explained based on a substantial body of empirical material. Finally, some more speculative ways to address these challenges are suggested.

Five studies were carried out (see Appendices), and their synthesis identifies various challenges that impede the ability of capacity development to bring about notable and sustainable change. In particular, there are significant discrepancies between the eight principles (**theory**) and how capacity development is implemented (**practice**). A proposed **typology of seven project failures** provides an insight into current practices, and may be helpful for partners to avoid repeating

common mistakes when designing and implementing capacity development projects (Figure 2, Chapter 6.1.3). The more these failures occur, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes. The synthesis also indicates the detrimental impact of **terminological and conceptual ambiguity**, so-called **Babylonian confusion** (Chapter 6.2.1). This problem is likely to be the source of misunderstanding between both individuals and partner organisations.

These challenges are inevitable symptoms of systemic problems in the entire aid sector. **Clashing principles** result in accountability being misguided towards donors rather than internal partners (Chapter 6.2.2). Donors have an intense need for **short-term feedback**, while successful capacity development requires long-term processes, engagement and flexibility (i.e., there is **temporal discord)**. Despite the obvious need to address such challenges, this synthesis shows how efforts are hampered by **outdated ideas** of the world, **mindset lag**, **a lack of motivation for change**, the **expert blind spot** problem, and a **technocratic approach**. Other challenges concern **power relations.** Many problems arise from **risk aversion**, complexity and uncertainty, which creates discomfort. In addition, the unrealistic and impractical **need for control** undermines the effective implementation of all of the other principles. Relinquishing control means relinquishing power.

An overhaul of the system should include the redistribution of **power** along the aid chain. Three requisite, interdependent types of capacity—**technical, processual**, and **contextual**—are suggested (Figure 3, Chapter 6.3.2). Static, fixed **roles** must be abandoned; instead, they should be flexible and adapted to the context, project and partnership (Figure 4, Chapter 6.3.3.2). An **equal partnership** and **mutual learning** are essential for capacity development to work, as is the ability to listen, have an open mind, share experiences, and propose suggestions for improvements. There is value in **allowing time** to develop capacity through friendship and mutual collaboration. Significant change could be initiated and sustained by extending timeframes, explicitly allocating time for local ownership to emerge, building partnerships, ensuring mutual accountability and learning, running context analyses, and assessing existing capacities.

Effective capacity development requires donors and external partners to **relinquish control**, and allow **flexibility** and **adaptability** over longer timeframes. This requires, in turn, explicit **risk-sharing agreements** along the aid chain. **Sustainability** depends on the success of the other principles, and a mix of activities and methods. The latter include interdependent capacity levels and types, short- and long-term commitments, and an equal focus on capacity **creation**, **utilisation** and **retention**. Local universities have an essential role in institutionalisation and sustainable education, and should be preferred to *ad hoc* short-term training or workshops. The principles need to be taken seriously so that the focus is not only on what the project should achieve, but also on how it is achieved. A change in mindset, attitude and role allocation is needed. By prioritising differently than today, there is a good chance of achieving the goal of sustainable capacity development.

Although the research presented in the five appended articles has been recognised and implemented in practice, further efforts are needed to back up the reported empirical findings from perspectives such as governmental agencies, municipalities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations, as this would broaden the analytical generalisation. Furthermore, there is a need to test, measure and evaluate the proposed principles, recommendations and solutions through cross-disciplinary teamwork and collaboration, as this would provide insight into how different views on science and solutions can challenge entrenched capacity development ideas.

Summering

Kapacitetsutveckling är en integrerad del av det internationella utvecklingssamarbetet och har pekats ut som vägen framåt för genomförandet av Agenda 2030 och Sendai Framework for Action. Flertalet av bilaterala och multilaterala organisationer stödjer detta, t.ex. statliga myndigheter och givarorganisationer, FN-organisationer, Europeiska Unionen, Rädda Barnen och andra icke-statliga organisationer samt rödakors- och rödahalvmånerörelsen. Kapacitetsutveckling definieras som en process, baserad på partnerskap, för att utveckla ökad förmåga inom ett eller flera områden mot ett definierat mål. Även om kapacitetsutveckling har varit en del av den globala biståndspolitiken de senaste decennierna, har biståndet ännu inte haft så stor påverkan som man har hoppats på. **Syftet** med avhandlingen är att få en djupare förståelse för varför kapacitetsutveckling inte har varit framgångsrik, hållbar över tid och fungerat som avsett, samt att komma med förslag på förbättringar och hur utmaningar kan hanteras. Två forskningsfrågor ställdes:

1. Vilka är principerna (framgångsfaktorerna) och metoderna för kapacitetsutveckling?
2. Varför leder den nuvarande implementeringen av kapacitetsutveckling inte till önskat resultat?

För att studera forskningsfrågorna samlades forskningsdata in genom strukturerade intervjuer med 115 deltagare från det internationella (biståndssamfundet. Deltagarna valdes ut på grund av sin position, organisationstillhörighet och erfarenhet inom kapacitetsutveckling. Experter, projektansvariga och höga beslutsfattare (aktörer som vill stödja processen), interna partners (aktörer som vill utveckla sin kapacitet), samt givare med makt att påverka det internationella biståndssystemet på grund av sin position, valdes ut för att intervjuas. I en av studierna gjordes en analys av projektdokumentation från nio biståndsprojekt för att se om man följer de riktlinjer och råd som finns inom området.

Utöver intervjuer och projektanalysen gjordes en noggrann genomgång av aktuell vetenskaplig forskning. I avhandlingsarbetet identifierades flera principer för framgångsrik kapacitetsutveckling och avhandlingen ger en syntes av fynden. Avhandlingen ger både konceptuella och empiriska bidrag för att bättre strukturera, organisera och operationalisera kapacitetsutveckling i framtiden. Avhandlingen presenterar även ett sammanhängande **ramverk med åtta principer** (ägarskap, partnerskap, kontextualisering, flexibilitet, lärande, ansvarsskyldighet, långsiktighet och hållbarhet) tillsammans med **fyra grundläggande utmaningar** (komplexitet, dynamisk förändring, osäkerhet och tvetydighet) (figur 1, kapitel 5). Ytterligare utmaningar för kapacitetsutvecklingen beskrivs i detalj och förklaras utifrån empiriskt material. Slutligen föreslås några sätt att hantera dessa utmaningar.

Fem studier genomfördes (se bilagorna), och i syntesen identifieras olika utmaningar som hindrar kapacitetsutvecklingsprojekt från att leda till hållbara förändringar. Framför allt finns det ett **gap** mellan **teori** (åtta principerna) och **praktik**. Vidare ges en sammanställning av **sju vanliga orsaker till att projekt misslyckas** samt en inblick i nuvarande praxis, vilket kan vara till hjälp för partners för att undvika att upprepa vanliga misstag när de utformar och genomför kapacitetsutvecklingsprojekt (figur 2, kapitel 6.1.3). En viktig insikt i avhandlingen är de negativa effekter som **begreppsmässig otydlighet** och förvirring leder till (kapitel 6.2.1). Begreppsförvirring mellan parter som ska samarbeta, där samma ord betyder olika saker för olika aktörer, leder till frustration, språkförbistring och missförstånd mellan både individer och partnerorganisationer.

Utmaningarna som identifieras i avhandlingen är symptom på de systemiska problem som finns inom hela biståndssektorn. Det finns ett **felriktat ansvarstagande** till finansiären som leder till att ansvarsskyldigheten riktas mer mot givarna än mot den interna samarbetspartnern (mottagaren) (kapitel 6.2.2). Givarna har ett stort behov av kortsiktig återkoppling, medan framgångsrik kapacitetsutveckling kräver långsiktiga processer, engagemang och flexibilitet. Det finns alltså en **konflikt mellan lång- och kortsiktighet i systemet**. Trots det uppenbara behovet av att ta tag i sådana utmaningar visar analysen i avhandlingen att kapacitetutvecklingsprojekten hindras av **föråldrade idéer** om världen, eftersläpning i tankesätt (eng. **mindset lag**), **bristande motivation** för förändring, och problem med externa experter som **fokuserar på** sin **expertis** och **tekniska lösningar**. Dessa experter ser därmed inte helheten eller befintliga lokala kapaciteter och behov, vilket påverkar utfallet negativt. Andra utmaningar som identifieras i avhandlingsarbetet rör **maktrelationer** mellan partners. Många problem i biståndsprojekt uppstår på grund av komplexitet, osäkerheter, givarnas och externa partners **ovilja att ta risker** och motvilja till förändring av arbetssätt. Dessutom finns det ett överdrivet **kontrollbehov** som underminerar ett effektivt utnyttjande av de rekommenderade åtta principerna. Att avstå från kontroll innebär att avstå från makt.

För att uppnå effektiv och långsiktig kapacitetsutveckling krävs att givare och externa partners **släpper kontrollen** och tillåter **flexibilitet** och iterativa processer över **längre tidshorisonter**. De åtta identifierade principerna behöver tas på allvar så att fokus inte bara är på vad projektet ska åstadkomma, utan även hur det sker. Det behövs en **förändring** av **tankesätt, attityd och rollfördelning**. En översyn av biståndssystemet bör omfatta en omfördelning av maktbalansen längs biståndskedjan till fördel för den interna partnern (mottagaren) som ska utveckla sin förmåga. Tre ömsesidigt beroende typer av kapaciteter – **teknisk, processuell och kontextuell** – föreslås i avhandlingen (figur 3, kapitel 6.3.2). Statiska och traditionella roller måste överges; i stället bör rollerna vara flexibla och anpassas till den lokala kontexten och partnerskapet (figur 4, kapitel 6.3.3.2).

Ett **jämlikt partnerskap** med **ömsesidigt lärande** är avgörande för att kapacitetsutvecklingen ska fungera, med öppen dialog och förmåga att **lyssna**, dela med sig av erfarenheter och komma med förslag till förbättringar. Det är av största vikt att ta sig tid till att utveckla förmåga genom **förtroende** och ömsesidigt samarbete (och vänskap). Betydande förändringar kan åstadkommas och upprätthållas genom att förlänga tidsramarna och **avsätta tid** för att stärka lokalt ägarskap, partnerskapsuppbyggnad, ömsesidig ansvarsskyldighet och lärande, inklusive kontextanalyser och utvärdering av befintlig kapacitet. Den stöttande, externa partnern behöver släppa på kontrollen, ta sig tid att lyssna och ha ett **coachande förhållningssätt** istället för att komma med förutbestämda lösningar. Det behöver finnas tid och resurser såväl under som efter projektet för att kunna använda och underhålla den kapacitet som utvecklats. **Lokala universitet** har en viktig roll när det gäller institutionalisering och förankring av utbildningsstrukturer, och bör föredras framför tillfälliga kortsiktiga utbildningar och workshops utan lokal förankring.

Forskning som presenteras i de fem artiklarna och som ligger till grund för avhandlingen har uppmärksammats i praktiken bland de som arbetar inom fältet. Dock krävs ytterligare ansträngningar för att belysa fynden från andra perspektiv, så som statliga myndigheter, kommuner, den privata sektorn och icke-statliga organisationer, för att möjliggöra generalisering. Därutöver finns det ett behov av att testa, mäta och utvärdera de föreslagna principerna, rekommendationerna och lösningarna genom tvärvetenskapligt samarbete. Sådant samarbete skulle ge insikter i hur olika synsätt på vetenskap och pragmatiska lösningar kan utmana föråldrade idéer om kapacitetsutveckling och leda till hållbart arbetssätt.

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Lund, 8 January 2024, thank you all,

Magnus Hagelsteen

Reader's guide

Babylonian confusion: Terminological or conceptual confusion when there is no consensus and agreed-upon language.

Blueprint: Copy and paste.

Capacity: Ability to do something and get things done.

Capacity development: A process, based on a partnership, to develop capacity to achieve a goal.

Cascading conditionalities: At each step along the aid chain, the funding provider adds conditionalities for the receiver, which aggregate and increasingly restrict the use of the money and the work that is done.

Contextual capacity: Understand the local context, existing capacities and needs.

Challenge: Conditions that make it harder to achieve a goal or follow the principles of successful capacity development.

Development: Progress – Good change.

Donor: Financial funder.

Eight principles (elements in paper II): 1) terminology, 2) local context, 3) partnership, 4) ownership, 5) capacity assessment, 6) roles and responsibilities, 7) mix of activities and methods, and 8) monitoring and evaluation for learning.

Eight principles (paper III): 1) ownership, 2) partnership (+ roles and responsibilities), 3) contextualisation (+ local context and capacity assessment), 4) flexibility, 5) learning, 6) accountability, 7) long-term, and 8) sustainability (+ a mix of activities and methods).

Element: Context-independent statement of a good idea or values, equivalent to principles.

Expert blind spot: The focus is on external experts' technical capacity and their lack of ability to appreciate the value of local knowledge, which consequently prevents them from understanding the local context, capacities and needs.

External partner: An organisation that is attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organisation.

Four fundamental challenges: 1) complexity, 2) uncertainty, 3) dynamic change, and 4) ambiguity.

Internal partner: The organisation that is attempting to develop its capacity.

Isomorphic mimicry: The tendency to mimic other partners' successes and import or duplicate processes, systems and best practices.

Lack-frames: Important information is left out.

Lock frame: The project or plan is fixed and not updated.

Logic-less frames: A pre-existing plan or pre-set matrix, or the log frame format is used.

Mindset lag: The lag between the rapidly changing context of capacity development, and the pace of change in the mindsets of the partners involved.

Misguided accountability: Upward accountability to donors instead of internal partners.

Quixotic: Unrealistic or impractical.

Practice: Context-dependent application of the principles.

Principle: Context-independent statement of a good idea or values, equivalent to elements.

Processual capacity: The capacity to manage a project or an organisation, and facilitate the capacity development process.

Risk aversion: The aversion of donors and external partners to engage in the perceived risks associated with applying the principles in practice.

Seven principles (elements in paper I): 1) terminology, 2) the local context, 3) ownership, 4) capacity assessment, 5) roles and responsibilities, 6) a mix of activities, and 7) monitoring and evaluation for learning.

Seven project failures: 1) no capacity assessment, 2) the external partner develops the project plan, 3) no time allowed for implementation, 4) only *ad hoc* training is provided, 5) pilot studies are not scaled-up, 6) no focus on utilisation, and 7) no focus on retention.

Technical capacity: The technical knowledge, skills and competence needed to perform sector-specific technical activities.

Technocratic approach: A focus on developing individuals' or organisations' technical skills through training.

Temporal discord: Capacity development requires long-term processes and engagement, while the system requires short-term feedback.

Three requisite types of capacities: Technical, processual, and contextual.

To Kristine,

- for future adventures

To Luna and Morris

- believe in yourself and never stop learning

1 Introduction

Capacity development is a central aspect of international development cooperation. It has been emphasised at several global conferences and high-level fora over the years (OECD, 2005, 2008, 2011), and is highlighted in the current 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). Many bilateral and multilateral organisations are supporting capacity development—examples include governmental agencies and donors, United Nations agencies, regional governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Capacity development is defined as **a process, based on a partnership, which seeks to develop capacity to achieve a goal**.

Nevertheless, despite years of effort, the literature highlights that results are unsatisfactory (CADRI, 2011; OECD/DAC, 2006, p. 11). While capacity development has attracted intense international attention, and attempts have been made to address its challenges, many remain sceptical about its effectiveness (Eyben & Savage, 2012; McEvoy et al., 2016, p. 533; Scott & Few, 2016). So far, **there is little evidence of significant and sustainable change** (Anderson et al., 2012; CADRI, 2011, pp. 7-8; Scott et al., 2015; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, pp. 12-16). While several influential books and policy reports identify challenges for capacity development in general (Anderson et al., 2012; Grejin et al., 2015, pp. 6, 22; Ubels et al., 2010), **most arguments lack empirical support, or fail to recognise the reasons for the challenges**.

Capacity development has always been closely linked to international development cooperation. Most of the fundamental elements can be traced back to the start of organised international development cooperation in the 1950s and 1960s (Smillie, 2001, p. 8). Since then, our understanding of what capacity development entails, and what makes it effective has evolved significantly (McEvoy et al., 2016, pp. 530-531). Although the term ‘capacity development’ belongs to the 21st century (Becker, 2014, p. 207), a more-or-less identical agenda was proposed in the 1990s, based on the term ‘capacity building’ (Eade, 1997). In practice, the international community has been engaged in capacity development for decades, but with different names, and with slightly different focuses (Becker, 2014, pp. 207-208). Other examples include institution building (Esman, 1967), institutional development (Whyte, 1968) and capacity strengthening (Kuyvenhoven, 2014).

There are various well-established approaches to its implementation—for example, through ownership, alignment, harmonisation, accountability, shared responsibility and partnership (OECD, 2005, 2008, 2011). The contemporary keyword is local ownership (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 2), which implies that primary responsibility and ownership rest with internal partners[1], while external partners[2] have supporting roles (OECD, 2005, pp. 3-5; Ubels et al., 2010, p. 6). However, external partners regularly arrive in-country with preconceived priorities, and one-size-fits-all blueprint[3] solutions that fit their own and their donors' agendas (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 25; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. xii; Schulz et al., 2005, p. 63; Scott & Few, 2016, p. 149). External partners tend to have a 'right answer' or 'know better' approach, which is not tailored to the needs of the targeted organisation or country (OECD/DAC, 2006, pp. 3-4). At the same time, there is an inclination to ignore established systems, strategies and capacities. This leads to the creation of parallel structures (Twigg, 2004, p. 289), and projects are usually abandoned soon after external expertise is withdrawn (UNCRD & Seeds, 2002, p. 1). Moreover, many projects focus on training individuals and capacity substitution, and fail to pay enough attention to organisational issues and structures, and how organisation interact with each other (Fisher, 2010, pp. 109,112; James, 2010, p. 15; OECD/DAC, 2006, p. 3). Therefore, external partners can struggle to facilitate the development of sustainable capacities for internal partners.

In early 2023, the Scopus database held details of more than 4000 journal articles that mention capacity development, or closely-related concepts (Appendix 1). The scoping study revealed a limited number of articles and academic research specifically on capacity development for disaster risk reduction, which is in line with the findings of reviews by Scott and colleagues (2016, p. 151; 2014, p. 9). Similarly, Venner (2015, p. 94) highlights the lack of empirical support for the claims made in the literature. The limited empirical material, and the lack of uptake of well-established concepts regarding how to think about and practice capacity development, indicate a **research gap**. While project management frameworks, such as the theory of change, adaptive management, results-based management or the logical framework approach are routinely used for capacity development projects, there is no guidance on capacity development and how to implement them.

Although various theoretical ideas have been put forward as a way to support capacity development (Land et al., 2015, p. 7), translating them into practice remains a challenge (Anderson et al., 2012; Boesen, 2015, p. 22; Grejin et al., 2015, pp. 6, 22; OECD/DAC, 2006). At the same time, coherent strategies or guidance are

[1] An internal partner is a partner belonging to the organisation that is attempting to develop its capacity.

[2] An external partner is a partner belonging to an organisation that is attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organisation.

[3] Copy and paste.

sometimes lacking (DFID, 2010, p. 4; James & Hailey, 2009, p. 70; Lipson & Warren, 2006, p. 3; Otoo et al., 2009, pp. 1-2). Therefore, it would be useful to find a way to structure these ideas, which, in this thesis, is referred to as **a framework of principles.** Principles are good ideas or values that are context-independent, while practices are context-dependent applications of these principles. As things stand today, there is no coherent way to address either the principles themselves, or the substantial discrepancies between theory and practice. There is also a lack of good explanations for why these discrepancies exist. While no one can be sure that following all of the principles would automatically lead to successful capacity development, understanding the reasons for the discrepancies is important when attempting to identify the challenges that undermine its effectiveness. Knowledge about capacity development, what it involves, and what works is still a complex and emerging practice.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to increase our understanding of why capacity development is not working as intended, and to inform the discussion on how to address the challenges. It seeks to answer the following two research questions:

1. What are the principles and practices of capacity development?
2. Why is the current implementation of capacity development not leading to the desired results?

The scope is international development cooperation with a financial donor. In general, the thesis is written from a capacity development perspective, but three out of the five articles are based on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is composed of seven chapters, an appended scoping study, and five appended scientific papers. An overview of the appended papers is given in Table 1. Chapter 1 presents background information, the problem definition, a description of the evolution of capacity development, the research purpose and questions, and the published articles. Chapter 2 describes the conceptual framework. Here, the aim is to familiarise the reader with the key concepts that are used throughout the thesis, such as capacity, capacity level, capacity types, development and capacity development. Chapter 3 presents the methods and limitations. Chapter 4 is a summary of the results of the appended papers, which focus on the same theme but

from different perspectives. Chapter 5 describes the empirical contributions of the thesis. Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the results and their implications from three perspectives; describing, explaining and addressing the challenges in capacity development. Chapter 7 summarises the conclusions and their contribution to closing the knowledge gap, and provides reflections for the future.

Table 1. Overview of the appended five papers.

Paper	Purpose & RQ	Methods	Results	Main conclusions
I	Purpose: Investigate gaps between theory and practice RQ: How do external experts approach capacity development?	Descriptive 35 qualitative semi-structured interviews with external experts	Seven principles (elements in paper I): Terminology, local context, ownership, capacity assessment, roles and responsibilities, mix of activities, monitoring and evaluation for learning	Gaps between theory and practice in relation to the seven principles Terminological ambiguity and Babylonian confusion
II	Purpose: Understand the aspects that might facilitate or hinder the success of capacity development projects RQ1: To what extent are the eight principles (elements in paper II) dealt with in capacity development projects between 2006 and 2013? RQ2: What development, if any, can be noted in terms of how the principles are dealt with between 2006 and 2013? RQ3: Were additional challenges or opportunities experienced or identified by the project managers running these projects?	Descriptive Seven qualitative semi-structured interviews with project managers Project documentation analysis of nine capacity development projects Table 2 is used to review the projects and provides a description of the main characteristics of each principle and selected questions.	Eight principles (elements in paper II) are reflected to various degrees in the project documentation: Terminology, local context, partnership, ownership, capacity assessment, roles and responsibilities, mix of activities and methods, monitoring and evaluation for learning A positive trend after 2010	A mixed picture of the use of the eight principles and gaps between theory and practice in relation to the eight principles Terminological confusion
III	Purpose: Understand the reasons behind the poor results of capacity development RQ: Why are there discrepancies between established principles and actual performance with respect to capacity development?	Explanatory 20 qualitative semi-structured interviews with high-level decision makers	Eight principles: Ownership, partnership, contextualisation, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, sustainability Four fundamental challenges: Complexity, uncertainty, dynamic change, ambiguity	A coherent and comprehensive framework of eight principles with challenges Conceptual ambiguity Clashing principles Misguided accountability Temporal discord Quixotic control Mindset lag

Paper	Purpose & RQ	Methods	Results	Main conclusions
				Lack of motivation Power relations and imbalances Expert blind spot
IV	Purpose: Explore the perspectives of internal partners involved in capacity development initiatives to understand their perspectives on challenges and possible solutions RQ: How do internal partners describe the challenges for effective capacity development and solutions to overcome them in Botswana, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zambia?	Explanatory 27 qualitative semi-structured interviews with internal partners	Terminology, project implementation, conditionalities, short-termism, partnership, roles, utilisation, retention	Focus on partnership and sustainability Three requisite types of capacities (technical, processual, contextual) A typology of seven project failures Expert blind spot Flexible and adaptive roles Mutual learning
V	Purpose: Investigate capacity development challenges and opportunities from the viewpoint of progressive governmental donor agencies RQ: What are the challenges and opportunities for capacity development in international development cooperation from progressive governmental donor agencies' viewpoint?	Explanatory 26 qualitative semi-structured interviews with donors	Terminology, flexibility vs control, changing contexts and focus, ownership vs donor priorities, individual vs organisational, donor system constraints	Tensions between principles, political prioroties and power relations Conceptual ambiguity Hard to conceptualise capacity development Changing context Risk aversion

1.2.1 Publications

Appended papers

I. **Hagelsteen, M.**, & Becker, P. (2013) 'Challenging disparities in capacity development for disaster risk reduction', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 3(1): 4–13, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2012.11.001

II. **Hagelsteen, M.**, & Burke, J. (2016) 'Practical aspects of capacity development in the context of disaster risk reduction', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 16: 43–52, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2016.01.010

III. **Hagelsteen, M.**, & Becker P. (2019) 'Systemic problems of capacity development for disaster risk reduction in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 36, 101102, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101102

IV. **Hagelsteen, M.**, Becker P., Abrahamsson (2021) 'Troubling partnerships: Perspectives from the receiving end of capacity development', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 59, 102231, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2021.102231

V. **Hagelsteen, M.**, Gutheil, J., Morales Burkle, M.D.M., Becker, P. (2022) 'Caught between principles and politics: Challenges and opportunities for capacity development from governmental donors' perspectives', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 70, 102785, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2022.102785

Related publications

Hagelsteen, M., & Becker, P. (2012) 'Seven elements for capacity development for disaster risk reduction', in *Proceedings of the 4th International Disaster Risk Conference*, Davos, Switzerland, 26-30/08/2012

Becker, P., Abrahamsson, M., & **Hagelsteen, M.** (2012) 'A collateral damage of international top-down approaches: parallel structures for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the SADC region', in *Proceedings of the 1st Biannual SADiR Conference*, Potchefstromm, South Africa, 10-12/10/2012

Becker, P., Abrahamsson, M., & **Hagelsteen, M.** (2013) 'Parallel structures for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the SADC region', *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Studies* 5(2): 1–5, http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v5i2.68

Hagelsteen, M., & Becker, P. (2014) 'A Great Babylonian Confusion: Terminological ambiguity in capacity development for disaster risk reduction in the international community', in *Proceedings of the 5th International Disaster Risk Conference*, Davos, Switzerland, 24-28/08/2014

Hagelsteen, M., & Becker, P. (2014) 'Forwarding a challenging task: Seven elements for capacity development for disaster risk reduction', *Planet@risk* 2(2): 94–97

Becker, P., & **Hagelsteen, M.** (2016) 'Kapacitetsutveckling för katastrofriskreducering.' In Katastrofriskreducering – Perspektiv, praktik, potential (pp. 265–292), Lund: *Studentlitteratur*

Abrahamsson, M., Becker, P., & **Hagelsteen, M.** (2018). 'Reasons for and effects of parallel structures for DRR and CCA in Southern Africa', in *Proceedings of the 4th Biannual SASDiR Conference*, Durban, South Africa, 17–19/10/2018

Becker, P., **Hagelsteen, M.** & Abrahamsson, M. (2021) 'Too many mice make no lining for their nest' – Reasons and effects of parallel governmental structures for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in Southern Africa', *Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies* 13(1), a1041. https://doi.org/10.4102/jamba.v13i1.1041

2 Conceptual framework

This chapter outlines the three central concepts underlying the work presented in this thesis: **capacity** (divided into **capacity levels** and **capacity types**), **development** and **capacity development**. This step is important not only because different organisations propose different definitions (Becker, 2014, p. 212; Pearson, 2011a, pp. 6,8-9), but also because the interpretation of key terms is ambiguous (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, pp. 298-300; James, 2010, pp. 13-14; Kaplan, 2000, p. 517; Sobeck & Agius, 2007, p. 238).

2.1 Capacity

The Oxford English Dictionary (2023) defines capacity as "*the ability or power to do or understand something*", and gives capability as the closest synonym. However, McEvoy et al. (2016, p. 532) state that, "*De Grauwe (2009) draws an important distinction between competence (as an individual attribute), capability (as an organisational attribute) and capacity (as a combination of competencies and capabilities)*". Hence, capacity, and not capability, is used throughout this thesis. Capacity is defined as **the ability to do something and get things done**.

Another key definition comes from the domain of development aid. The OECD/DAC (2006, p. 12) defines it as "*the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully*". In this definition, ability, meaning being able to do or manage something is a keyword, and capacity is found at three, interrelated **levels**: people, organisations and society. These levels differ in their level of detail (Bolger, 2000; Schulz et al., 2005, pp. 30-50; UNDP, 2009, p. 9), and should be addressed holistically rather than in isolation (Becker, 2023). Furthermore, various interdependent abilities, also referred to as **types** of capacity, are needed to 'manage their affairs successfully'.

2.1.1 Capacity levels

Capacity levels are often divided into the following: the individual level, the organisational level, and the enabling environment (CADRI, 2011, pp. 9-11; UNDP, 2009, p. 11). The enabling environment is also referred to as the societal level (Enemark & Van der Molen, 2008, p. 7; Lusthaus et al., 2000) or the systemic level (McEvoy et al., 2016, pp. 531-532).

The **individual level** refers to an individual's knowledge, skills and competences that enable them to function effectively in an organisation or society (CADRI, 2011, p. 10; UNDP, 2009, p. 11) along with the necessary tools, equipment and other resources (Becker, 2014, pp. 209-211). On this level, capacity can be obtained through education, workshops, (on-the-job) training, learning networks and coaching, for example.

The **organisational level** refers to internal policies, structures, procedures, strategies and frameworks that enable the organisation to achieve its mission, operate efficiently and coordinate individuals who have different capacities in order to achieve a synergetic outcome (CADRI, 2011, p. 10; UNDP, 2009, p. 11). In this context, capacities include leadership, change management, and the ability to budget, define objectives, plan, produce results and evaluate (CADRI, 2011, p. 10).

The **societal level** is a broad notion that encompasses everything that regulates capacity on the other two levels (CADRI, 2011, pp. 9-10; UNDP, 2009, p. 9). It shapes how well individuals and organisations perform, and refers to a society's institutional arrangements, policies, legislation, political climate and power relations, together with cultural and social norms and values (CADRI, 2011, pp. 9-11; UNDP, 2009, p. 11). The societal level encompasses formal and informal institutions ranging from the legislative environment with its rules and regulations to social norms, values and power relations (Becker, 2014, pp. 210-211; Visser, 2010, pp. 47,52-53). In this context, Schulz et al. (2005, pp. 32-33) emphasise the importance of formal and informal institutions that set the stage and standards for how actors can interact and relate to each other in their different contexts. Furthermore, both Bolger (Bolger, 2000, pp. 3-4) and Visser (Visser, 2010, pp. 52-53) identify an intermediary level, the network level, where most sectoral or thematic, and area-based projects interact.

2.1.2 Capacity types

Capacity types are another key concept (UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20). A common classification is the division into technical and functional capacities (CADRI, 2011, p. 11). **Technical capacity** is the capacity to perform the required technical activities associated with a specific sector or field, and relates to explicit knowledge, skills, competence and methodologies (CADRI, 2011, p. 11). An example is the capacity to perform a risk assessment or engage in preparedness planning. Traditionally, technical capacity has been the focus of capacity development, and it is implemented most often (UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20). **Functional capacity** describes the generic organisational and project management capacities and skills that are needed to both drive the project, and the organisation as a whole. In other words, it is the capacity to assess, plan, formulate, implement and evaluate visions, policies and strategies, and manage resources (CADRI, 2011, p. 11; UNDP, 2009, pp. 19-20; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20).

The distinction between these two types is not always clear-cut, and they are closely interconnected. Typically, functional capacities need to be put in place as technical capacities are developed, to enable their intended usage. However, Scott et al. (2015, p. 57) suggest that it can be beneficial to develop technical capacities first (know-how and skills) and then target wider functional capacities, as the functional capacities build on the successful use of technical capacities.

Another, more recent classification is the division into hard and soft capacities. **Hard capacities** are technical and functional, as described above; they are often tangible and easier to conceptualise, identify, measure and assess (Johnson & Thomas, 2007, p. 10; Pearson, 2011a, p. 4; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20). **Soft capacities** concern social, relational, intangible and invisible aspects (Pearson, 2011a, p. 4). They include leadership, learning, self-reflection, conflict resolution, intercultural communication, change management, problem-solving, negotiation and relational skills (Acquaye-Baddoo, 2010, pp. 66-70; Johnson & Thomas, 2007, p. 10; Pearson, 2011a, p. 4; Woodhill, 2010a, pp. 47,50). It should be noted that although Aragón (2010, p. 37) uses the term 'soft' capacities, in this case, it includes what are referred to as functional capacities above.

2.2 Development

Development is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary (2023)as "*the process of developing or being developed*", and it is "*a specified state of growth or advancement*". Thomas (2000, p. 29) takes it a step further, and sees it as a process of change over time leading to progress, improvement or advancement that helps partners to reach a desired state or goal. According to Thomas (2000, p. 23), the simplest definition is given by Chambers (1997), namely 'good change'. It is thus interpreted as positive, and is almost synonymous with 'progress' (Thomas, 2000, p. 23). 'Good', according to Thomas, implies a 'vision' of a desired state or goal, while 'change' is a 'process'.

2.3 Capacity development

Most definitions of capacity development see it as a process**,** rather than an end in itself. Capacity development is associated with an iterative approach that allows for trial and error, rather than being results-oriented, and avoids a linear, closed project planning process (Valters, 2015, p. 8). It is important to remain adaptable and flexible, and be open to changing both the approach and the project at any point (Bolger, 2000, p. 2). Capacity development occurs **over time,** at **different levels**, to achieve a certain **goal or objective**, which needs to be **adapted continuously**. One

common definition, given by the United Nations Development Programme, is that it is "*the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the [capacities][4] to set and achieve their own development objectives over time*" (UNDP, 2009, p. 5).

The above definition uses the words 'obtain', 'strengthen' and 'maintain', which all imply a change process, while strengthen and maintain imply building on **existing capacities**. Capacity development relies on change at all capacity levels, and it must take place over time, as the process is constantly changing. The phrase, 'to set and achieve their own development objectives' reinforces the idea of local ownership and responsibility for both the process and the outcome. However, it is hard to assess whether internal partners "feel a strong sense of ownership" (UNDP, 2009, p. 29) or any sense of ownership at all (Becker & Abrahamsson, 2012, p. 10).

Local ownership means that primary responsibility for capacity development rests with internal partners, and that external partners play a supporting role (OECD, 2005, p. 2). In this context, it is useful to define the scope and meaning of ownership, both in terms of what is being owned, and by whom (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 29). In this thesis, ownership is understood as **creating and owning ideas, strategies, resources and the results of the development process** (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 30; Schulz et al., 2005, pp. 23-26). Lopes (2003, p. 29) explicitly refers to ownership as "the exercise of control and command over development activities". Taking ownership is voluntary, and cannot be imposed by someone else (Anderson & Woodrow, 1998, p. 239; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 22). Capacity development is thus a process that must grow from the inside (Krznaric, 2007, p. 17; OECD/DAC, 2006, p. 11), with the help of external partners. Involving people, through participatory approaches, is essential to establish local ownership and commitment (Anderson & Woodrow, 1998, p. 28; UNDP, 2009, p. 2).

Although capacity development is ultimately a **partnership** between people and organisations, this fundamental point is too-often lost in the rush to develop models and systems, and deliver visible results (Power et al., 2002). Partnership can be defined as "*a process in which two or more organisations or groups [partners] work together to achieve a common goal and do so in such a way that they achieve more effective outcomes than by working separately*" (Thorlby & Hutchinson, n.d., p. 8). According to Ubels et al. (2010, p. 28), capacity development is "*an outcome of multiple actors or stakeholders working together to bring about change*".

A partnership is a relationship between **an internal partner**, who wants to develop its capacity, and **an external partner**, who wants to support the process (Becker, 2014, p. 212; Ubels et al., 2010, p. 6). The idea of mutuality is encapsulated in the principle. **Mutuality** refers to equality, equity, benefits, and dependence, and implies that both partners have rights and obligations with respect to each other

[4] Note that in the UNDP definition, the term 'capabilities' is used.

(Bontenbal, 2013, p. 101; Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 217). Prerequisites for an effective partnership include a tolerance for sharing power**,** and a willingness to adapt activities and routines to enhance performance (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 220). The relationship enables the change and learning process to move forward. 'Enable' is used here in the sense of making possible (De Bonis & Holmes, 2023, p. 59). It emerges from the partnership between the internal partner and the facilitating external partner(s). Unlike internal development, where an actor draws upon its own resources for improvement, capacity development involves an external partner(s), typically with financial backing, and, invariably, their own values, objectives and culture. The role of the external partner is to **shift power** to the internal partner, who leads the process (James, 2010, pp. 14-15). The idea is that the external partner does not try to replicate what they know, or force the internal partner to adopt a specific set of skills and knowledge; rather there is an endogenous process of development that is based on the internal partner's own system, existing capacities and culture (James, 2010, p. 14).

Hence, the UNDP definition of capacity development given above neglects several important aspects and keywords. Notably, the definition does not mention **partnerships**, or express that it is an **endogenous**, **locally- or internally-driven** and **flexible, iterative** or **continuous** process of change, which can be **spontaneous**. There are constant adjustments, and learning is a key aspect. An individual or organisation needs to learn how to do things differently. Learning has been defined as when something is experienced in one situation, and then used in another (Borell, 2013, p. 18). Beyond its acquisition, learning is also the ability to perform tasks or apply knowledge, and gain new perspectives and insights (Elmgren & Henriksson, 2014, p. 22). Learning should be prioritised (via feedback loops) at all stages of a project, which poses the question of what is learned, by whom, and to what end (Valters, 2015, pp. 9-10).

Feedback loops are key, as it is not enough to do things right (single-loop learning), without also questioning assumptions and risks (Guijt, 2010, pp. 281-282). It is also important to understand what is the right thing to do (double-loop learning), which forces assumptions to be explored. Triple-loop learning is the most challenging, as it questions how to know what is the right thing to do. It addresses not only the system, the overall organisational rationale and the context (Guijt, 2010, p. 282), but also our biases, blind spots and hidden beliefs.

In brief, capacity development is defined as **a process**, **based on a partnership, which seeks to develop capacity to achieve a goal**, where capacity is understood as the ability to get things done.

3 Methodology

Practitioners have decades of experience in capacity development. Hence, this thesis is based on qualitative research, notably the assumption that the lived experience constitutes a knowledge base to identify problems, and inform ideas about how to solve them. In the context of the construction of knowledge, there is no single or true reality (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 46). Instead, there are multiple meanings and interpretations (Creswell, 2013, p. 24; Scotland, 2012, p. 12). Knowledge and theory emerge from an exchange between the participant and the interviewer, during qualitative semi-structured interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, pp. 21-63; Creswell, 2013, p. 155; Hennink et al., 2011, p. 19). Knowledge is socially constructed (e.g. Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 61; Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 46; Scotland, 2012), an approach that is also termed 'interpretivism' (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). The interpretivism position emphasises that value-free knowledge is not possible (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 46; Scotland, 2012, p. 12).

The work presented in this thesis is descriptive and explanatory. It is based on two methods: qualitative interviews and a document analysis. New avenues for research emerged during the interviews, which is in line with an exploratory (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 139) and inductive study (Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 42-43). Hence, the path taken was neither straight nor linear, but instead iterative, interrelated and cyclic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 138; Eksell & Thelander, 2014, p. 209; Saldaña, 2015, p. 8). From an empirical perspective, this qualitative study is founded on a comparative analysis of the findings of five articles. Each of the five articles focuses on a particular stakeholder group, and the synthesis presented in this thesis is largely comparative.

This chapter presents the research design, and how data were selected, collected and analysed. It also explores the limitations of the methodology, and the generalisability of the findings. The first section describes how semi-structured interviews were conducted, and the second presents the document analysis. There is a short discussion at the end of each section.

3.1 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

3.1.1 Design and data selection

Data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 115 participants[5] working in the international aid community (papers I–V). These interviews were an opportunity to obtain in-depth information (Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 10, 16; Trost, 2005, p. 7) about capacity development, based on interviewees' experiences and perceptions. Open and exploratory questions made it possible to follow-up on the participant's answer, to probe for additional information, or to confirm details (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, pp. 132-133). It was also possible to repeat or to rephrase questions when needed; this indicated which questions were more difficult to answer (Bernard, 2006, p. 287) and helped the interviewer to verify that they had correctly understood the participant's answer (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 138). All participants had a busy schedule, therefore, the semi-structured format was preferred as it is relatively less time-consuming than completely unstructured interviews (Bernard, 2006, pp. 201-213).

Participants were purposefully selected (Bernard, 2006, pp. 189-194; Blaikie, 2000, p. 205), based on their position, organisational affiliation and experience in capacity development. Experts, program managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donors have the power to influence the international aid system, and they were selected for their specific knowledge (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 113). Specifically, parallel snowballing or chain sampling (Blaikie, 2000, pp. 205-207; Hennink et al., 2011, p. 100) was used, and the initial set of participants was identified from among the author's professional network.

In paper IV, five countries were purposefully selected. Here, the aim was to include countries with different levels of development, operationalised as their current Human Development Index (HDI) (UNDP, 2020). The Seychelles has the highest HDI ranking in Africa, and is just below the 'very high' threshold (rank 67). Botswana is categorised as 'high' (rank 100), and Zambia as 'medium' (rank 146). Tanzania is towards the top of the 'low' ranking (rank 163), while Mozambique is towards the bottom (rank 181), and is the least-developed country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

A demographic analysis of the data revealed that 44 participants were women (38%) and 71 were men (68%); ages ranged from late twenties to early sixties. Both their background and experience in capacity development were diverse. Professional profiles varied and included experts, specialists, advisors, focal points, controllers, project and program managers, senior managers, heads of departments, divisions or

[5] Paper I, 35 experts; paper II, seven program managers; paper III, 20 high-level decision-makers; paper IV, 27 internal partners; paper V, 26 donors.

units, and directors at various governmental and donor agencies, non-governmental organisations, United Nations and regional organisations, the Red Cross and Crescent Movement, the private sector and universities (papers I–V).

Reflection on design and data selection

It was difficult to identify and access all participants, but especially senior decision-makers. Even with a letter of recommendation and name-dropping from other participants, it was not uncommon for 20 emails and phone calls to be required before an interview was confirmed. Several interviews had to be rescheduled due to the participant's other appointments.

3.1.2 Data collection

All interviews were recorded, with the participant's permission, to ensure consistency and accuracy (Bernard, 2006, p. 227) and to allow the interviewer to focus on what was said during the interview. Interviews were conducted in the participant's office, in a café, over the phone, or via Skype and Zoom, depending on the participant's preferences. In total, 59 face-to-face interviews and 56 telephone or Skype and Zoom interviews were conducted between June 2009 and April 2020, each lasting 25–153 minutes, with an average of 64 minutes[6]. In general, they took longer than planned. This was due to the use of open and exploratory questions, which encouraged participants to expand on their answers. All interviews were conducted in English, with the help of a three-part interview guide (Bernard, 2006, p. 210; Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 112-113) to ensure that the wording of questions was consistent. Minor adjustments were made to tailor the questions to the purpose of each of the five articles.

The first part of the interview focused on the participant's professional role, academic background and work experience. These questions were relatively easy to answer and allowed the participant to become comfortable with the situation (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 113). This was followed by a 'grand-tour' question (Leech, 2002, p. 667), which asked the participant to express their views on capacity development. Here, the purpose was to find out how the person defined capacity development, their position on it, and their professional role. The second part of the interview focused on several key questions (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 113), notably principles and success factors with respect to capacity development, and how to overcome associated challenges. The third and last part concluded with a casual conversation about the key issues that had emerged. Here, the interviewer asked the participant if they had anything further to add, and their impressions of the interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 155). At times, the interviewer summarised what had

[6] Average interview time: paper I, 90 minutes; paper II, 40 minutes; paper III, 60 minutes; paper IV, 45 minutes; paper V, 58 minutes. Total interview time: 7353 minutes.

been said to ensure that he or she had understood correctly, and asked if anything was missing. All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Reflection on data collection

It took some time to create a trusting relationship and a relaxed atmosphere during the interviews. However, this is important in order to get interesting data. Often, the most interesting information was given towards the end of the interview, after the last question, when the participant was asked if they had anything more to add. It was even more challenging to build a trusting relationship during phone interviews compared to a face-to-face encounter. A telephone interview does not convey body language, nuances in wording, and how the person expresses themselves. In these cases, the interviewer needed to share their own experience to establish an open and trusting relationship in a very short time (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 20). This was needed to motivate the participant to not only say what they thought was politically correct, but also what he or she really thought about the topic.

3.1.3 Data analysis

Data analysis began during the interview. Notes were taken to document impressions, record themes, and make connections within and between themes (Bernard, 2006, p. 232; Hennink et al., 2011, p. 121; Trost, 2005, p. 54). The transcribed interviews were printed on paper and hand-coded to enable the authors to 'touch the data' (Saldaña, 2015, p. 22). Most of the coding was inductive, and emerged during the analysis. However, a few codes were prefigured (deductive coding) (Eksell & Thelander, 2014, p. 203; Hennink et al., 2011, pp. 206-218). These included the person's position, academic background, work experience, understanding of the concept of capacity development, success factors, challenges and solutions. Each hand-coded interview was then transferred to NVivo®, which helped to organise and sort the data into themes. If needed, the identified themes were adjusted so that the data could be interpreted from different angles and perspectives (data could apply to more than one theme). The interviews were then re-analysed and recoded by the authors from these new perspectives, and refined accordingly (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 138). In general, data saturation emerged after around 15 interviews per study.

Reflection on data analysis

As noted in the literature, transcribing the interviews was time-consuming, tedious and mentally challenging (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 206; Creswell, 2013, p. 173). Nevertheless, there are several advantages. The researcher becomes much more familiar with the material that is produced, which is beneficial for data analysis; they also become more familiar with the interview method, notably its pros and cons (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 207). The initial process of coding and identifying themes was time-consuming, as was re-analysing and re-coding all of

the data to identify new perspectives. Analysing and compiling the results was also challenging as there were multiple connections between the success factors and principles, not to mention the fact that a principle could be both a success factor and a challenge.

3.2 Document analysis

3.2.1 Design and data selection

Paper II reports an analysis of the documentation produced by nine international capacity development projects that were implemented or planned by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) between 2006 and 2013. The MSB was chosen as a case study for several reasons: 1) data availability; 2) its proactive work in capacity development; and 3) its interest in enhancing its capacity development activities. Furthermore, both of the paper's authors had prior experience in working with the MSB on capacity development, which facilitated access to the Agency's data.

In total, 66 documents were analysed, and concerned projects in Armenia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, West Africa (Liberia & Sierra Leone), South-East Europe, Botswana and the Southern African Development Community (SADC, not implemented). Two further projects, in Mozambique and Palestine, were ongoing during the studied period. The reviewed corpus included pre-studies, project proposals, memoranda of understanding or letters of intent, reports to funding organisations and Swedish ministries, evaluations and final reports. The MSB documents every project, which provides a good basis for an analysis. One specific benefit of analysing documentation is that it is preserved, even if the project manager is replaced. The analysis was complemented by seven interviews with the MSBs project managers.

Reflection on design and data selection

Obtaining all of a project's documentation was not always easy. In some cases, there were references to other documents that we could not find, in other cases there were too many documents produced by one project.

3.2.2 Data collection and analysis

Paper II is based on eight principles[7] of capacity development, which emerged from the literature review and 35 interviews with capacity development experts presented in paper I. In brief, they are:

1. Terminology – understand key concepts, and how other partners interpret and understand them.
2. Local context – understand the basic political and institutional, social and cultural, physical and environmental, and economic setting of the initiative, including who its stakeholders are, and their organisational set-up, routines and incentives.
3. Partnership – understand the specific types of collaborative alliances and relations that stakeholders form in order to achieve a specific outcome.
4. Ownership – ensure that capacity development initiatives are needs-driven, and that internal partners are committed to the process.
5. Capacity assessment – distinguish between risks and hazards, and identify current disaster risk reduction capacities in order to determine common, realistic entry points, and provide input to capacity development objectives.
6. Roles and responsibilities – ensure that roles are clearly and equitably distributed between internal and external partners; ensure that internal partners have a leading role and external partners have a supporting role, and that all partners understand this division.
7. A mix of activities and methods – address capacity needs and implement capacity development objectives in a systematic and holistic manner; acknowledge interdependencies between partners, sectors, capacity levels and types.
8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning – ensure the continuous monitoring and timely evaluation of the results of capacity development initiatives and activities, and use these inputs for learning.

To ensure consistency during the review process, the two authors of paper II identified the characteristics of each element, drawing on their own experience and previous research (paper I). In addition, other sources of information were used to characterise the eight principles and develop Table 2, notably the four High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2011), which have progressively focused on the need for common principles for development assistance.

[7] Please note that in the original paper these principles are called elements.

Table 2 describes the main characteristics of each principle, and presents some illustrative questions that were used to review the projects. The eight principles are not arranged in any particular order of priority. Although they are based on a comprehensive review of previous research and practical experience, it cannot be assumed that they reflect all of the challenges and opportunities that may be encountered in capacity development projects. Rather, they were intended to facilitate the document analysis, and help to understand the extent to which each principle was present. Guided by the characteristics and the questions given in Table 2, each document was read and coded independently by each of the authors, who tried to identify if, and how, the principle was reflected in the text (Weber, 1990, p. 29).

Reflection on data collection and analysis

A key challenge was that data could sometimes fit more than one code. When the authors differed regarding the initial coding, and the material was interpreted differently, an agreement was reached through discussion. In some cases, different interpretations were not necessarily opposing, but were seen as mutually enriching (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 238).

Table 2. Characteristics and questions illustrating the eight defining principles of capacity development.

Principle	Characteristics of the principle	Illustrative questions
1. Terminology	- Refers to concepts, definitions and terms, e.g. capacity development, capacity building and specific thematic terminology related to a sector. - Relates to the working language and consistent use of words and terms, e.g. project management.	• Are key concepts and terms clearly defined? • Is there consistency in terminology throughout the project documentation? • Are abbreviations explained?
2. Local context	- Refers to factors (e.g. political, cultural, social and economic norms, the organisational set-up and practices), which shape and influence the way in which capacity and change occur. - Relates to tangible (legislation, institutional mandates and economic indicators) and less visible factors (values, beliefs, customs, motives, power relations). - Recognises that the context is constantly changing, which can lead to unintended outcomes or have unexpected consequences for the project. - Relates to the conditions for engaging in capacity development, and whether they support (or not) change.	• Which contextual factors are referred to in the project documentation, including project risks? • Is there reference to any type of guidance, tools or approaches that are used to understand or assess the context (e.g. systems thinking, theory of change, a SWOT[8] analysis)? • Who are the key actors and what are their relationships, and who has the power, on paper and in reality? • Are the main networks on the ground considered, and how? • Are there other, similar projects that have already been initiated, and what are their effects? • What are the favourable conditions for, and expectations of, engaging in capacity development? • How is readiness to change taken into account? • How will the local context be monitored and acted upon during the project cycle?

[8] SWOT: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat.

Principle	Characteristics of the principle	Illustrative questions
3. Partnership	- Refers to the motives for partnering. - Refers to the purpose and type of partnership. - Relates to the capability of different partners to collaborate effectively and identify an exit strategy. - Relates to how issues of trust, transparency, shared values, risk and mutual benefit are perceived and addressed. - Relates to the distribution and use of power between the partners.	• Are the drivers (motives) for partnering on the part of different actors clear? • Is the purpose of the partnership clear? • Do the partners have a written agreement, and if so, what does it include? • Are the benefits and risks of collaborating articulated in a project risk analysis? • Does someone from within or outside the partnership serve as an intermediary, to help the partners achieve their objectives and minimize obstacles to collaboration? • What are the provisions for building, maintaining, reviewing and evaluating the partnership's impact and collaboration process, e.g., conflict management? • What is the common exit strategy for the project? • Is the external partner present in the country, i.e., is there a sub-office? How will this affect the partnership? • How are the different levels of management involved in the project?
4. Ownership	- Relates to the commitment and active participation of local leaders and actors in the project. - Relates to the use of national processes and systems to design, implement and evaluate the project, e.g., financial control and procurement. - Relates to accountability and the sustainability of capacity outcomes in relation to the internal partner.	• Who initiates and designs the project? • Is there a common understanding between the partners of what ownership means? • What approaches, tools or processes are mentioned to strengthen stakeholder ownership and systems at different stages of the project's cycle? • How does the project align with the internal partner's strategies or with previous similar initiatives? • How might the capacity development effort lead to a dependence on external support?
5. Capacity assessment	- Seeks to answer the questions: Whose capacity? Capacity for what? and how? - Involves the use of tools, methodologies and approaches for capacity assessment and for defining change strategies. - Includes an analysis of desired technical, or hard and soft capacities in relation to existing capacities. - Involves an analysis of the entry points for capacity development, such as institutional, organisational and individual levels, and how they are related to each other. - Is it a task- and process-oriented exercise that requires multi-stakeholder participation?	• What capacity assessment frameworks and activities are referred to in the project? • Is the assessment undertaken jointly, and how? • What other capacity assessments have been undertaken? • What capacities and initiatives already exist, and what are the future requirements? • Does the assessment clarify the type of change that is needed, and the degree of readiness to change? • What are the documented points of entry for capacity development change?
6. Roles and responsibilities	- Relates to role clarity and agreement in relation to who does what, decision-making and accountability. - Refers to the complexity of the relationships between internal and external actors, and power relations. - Calls for a combination of hard and soft skills on the part of both internal and external actors.	• What types of roles can be identified for internal and external partners? • How are the roles divided between internal and external partners, and who has the leading role for what? • How is the accountability of partners described? • Is there a clear project management structure and operating procedures with timetables? • Do the terms of reference consider both technical and softer capacity development elements?

Principle	Characteristics of the principle	Illustrative questions
7. A mix of activities and methods	- Relates to the selection, sequencing and design of project activities at different capacity development levels. - Results in a clear strategy for change to address capacity gaps, leading to the desired end state. - Refers to whether there are provisions that allow for flexibility and adaptability in the project. - Relates to the use of innovative approaches and practices. - Requires matching of activities to resource availability, the timetable and overall purpose of the project.	• Are the activities clearly linked to the overall purpose of the project? • How do the results of the capacity assessment provide information on the mix of activities? What changes are expected to be achieved? • How is the mix of activities and methods described, e.g. short- or long-term, simple or complex, start-up or exit? • Do activities relate appropriately to the identified entry points? • Do activities take into account different capacity levels: individual, organisational and institutional? • How do proposed activities & methods take into account local organisational capacity, and context-specific processes and requirements? • How do activities seek to harmonize with, relate to, and complement other capacity development efforts, and align with the internal partner's strategies? • Does the documentation refer to how the results of capacity development will be sustained?
8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning	- Refers to how targets and capacity results, both soft and hard, are defined and measured, and identifies key milestones and deliverables, based on the findings of the capacity assessment. - Refers to monitoring and evaluation of roles, responsibilities and resources. - Refers to the use of approaches, frameworks and tools to monitor, evaluate, report and disseminate the lessons learnt. - Clarifies reporting procedures and accountability, and ways in which they can be identified and used for future learning.	• What is monitored and evaluated, how, when, how often, and by whom? Is this a joint activity? • Which monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches are described? • Are there dedicated resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning activities? • Is there a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods? • Who is responsible for project reporting—to whom, how often and in what language? • How are the lessons learnt assessed, documented, shared and put into practice?

3.3 Limitations

3.3.1 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

A limitation of this thesis is the inherent subjectivity and personal biases of researchers when collecting, analysing and interpreting this type of data (Flyvbjerg, 2001, pp. 66-67,81-84). I have been involved in capacity development work since 2002. My experience in the field began in 2003 when I was seconded to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan to contribute to capacity development (or capacity building, which was the wording at that time). Since then, I have worked with various government agencies, the European Union, and the United Nations on capacity development. I have run training programs and workshops, and developed methods, tools, manuals, strategies and policies in countries such as

Armenia, Bhutan, Denmark, Estonia, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, South Africa, Sweden and Uganda.

As noted in the introduction to the Methodology, knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore, my own background, experiences, values, norms and assumptions have shaped my understanding and interpretation (Creswell, 2013, p. 25; Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 46). Not everyone will interpret events in the same way as me, or see the same patterns. In fact, there are several interpretations of reality, which can be seen as enriching, according to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 238). For this reason, analysis and coding by more than one author is critical.

There is also the risk of participants sugar-coating their descriptions of ongoing partnership and capacity development projects, as they may want to avoid giving answers that could have a negative impact on those partnerships and projects. The 'interview effect' (Halperin & Heath, 2017, pp. 290,345) captures the idea that a participant's answers are influenced by both the presence of the researcher, and the questions they are asked, and that the respondent gives what they think are desirable answers, rather than sharing their true opinion. In practice, everyone has their own biases and prejudices, and the interview effect, "*the tendency for interviewees to give more 'socially acceptable' answers or answers they think the interviewer wants*" (Halperin & Heath, 2017, p. 290) is widespread. In the present study, this problem was partly mitigated by having an interview guide and asking open questions. This flexibility gave participants space to add anything else they considered important, while the interviewer was able to stand back, listen and not decide whether something was wrong or right. A second countermeasure was to apply dual coding during data analysis and interpretation.

Another issue was that the questions in the interview guide were interlinked. Specifically, a principle could be seen both as a success factor and as a challenge. Furthermore, as the interviews were held in English, only English-speaking people participated. Several participants called or sent emails to colleagues to encourage them to take part in the study, which facilitated the selection process. However, this snowballing method runs the risk of recruiting the same type of people, with the same social networks and information (Bernard, 2006, p. 194; Hennink et al., 2011, p. 101).

3.3.2 Document analysis

During the document analysis it became apparent that some data could apply to more than one principle, for example, the local context and the capacity assessment (paper II). Another difficulty was to interpret the extent to which a principle was (not) addressed in the documentation, either in the form of guidance or as a challenge (paper II). The authors in paper II did not investigate whether projects that referred to more principles were more successful with respect to their

implementation and impact. In practice, it is unclear whether a document analysis would be able to identify the principles of capacity development, since there can be a gap between what is written in the project documentation and actual practice.

3.4 Generalisability and transferability

In all of the reported studies, the number of participants and the selection process limit the generalisability of the findings. I make no claims about transferability and generalisability to all external experts, project managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donor organisations. Instead, the five studies seek to gain a deeper understanding of how the selected participants approach capacity development, and pave the way for a wider analytical generalisation (Blaikie, 2000, pp. 222-223; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, pp. 199,296-297; Eksell & Thelander, 2014, p. 210; Yin, 2003, p. 10). Knowledge obtained in one study can be transferred to other situations with similar contextual and historical factors (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, pp. 66,70), paving the way for wider transferability. This is also why qualitative data were not quantified, as this can lead to a statistical interpretation (Hennink et al., 2011, p. 287). However, it is reasonable to assume that the capacity development experience gained by our 115 participants, from five different perspectives, is unique, trustworthy, reliable and generalisable to similar contexts, ranging from international aid to national, regional and local settings. Although additional interviews could diverge, the overall patterns identified in our sample of 115 participants will likely stay the same. At the least, these collective reports are illustrative of the experience of people working in capacity development, especially as there are surprising convergences in terms of principles, practice and challenges, despite significant differences in participants' backgrounds, context, experience and employer.

4 Results

This chapter presents a summary of the appended papers (see also Table 1).

The term ‘elements’ was used in papers I (seven elements) and paper II (eight elements). The term ‘partnership’ was added in paper II, and the term ‘mix of activities’ changed to a ‘mix of activities and methods’. In paper III, eight ‘principles’ replaced the elements with some adjustments.

4.1 Paper I

Challenging disparities in capacity development for disaster risk reduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate potential gaps between theory and practice. Specifically, it examines differences between how leading professionals approach capacity development, and theoretical guidelines. The research question is as follows: *How do external experts approach capacity development?*

Seven principles[9] are identified in the available theory: (1) terminology; (2) the local context; (3) ownership; (4) capacity assessment; (5) roles and responsibilities; (6) a mix of activities; and (7) monitoring, evaluation and learning.

The analysis of data from 35 qualitative semi-structured interviews reveals both gaps between theory and practice, as well as differences between practitioners, with respect to all seven principles. There is a high degree of **terminological ambiguity** regarding what capacity development means, both in theory and practice. This confusion may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of projects, due to misunderstandings between partners concerning what to do and how to do it. Additionally, the understanding of the **local context** differs, as does its importance for project planning and implementation. Few attempts are made to carry out pre-planning studies to understand the local context. The **funding mechanisms** undermine capacity development, due to a lack of flexibility and pressure to produce results; consequently, there is little time available to understand the local context and ensure local ownership.

[9] Please note that in the original paper these principles are called elements.

Differences in perceptions of what **ownership** actually means, and the importance of local ownership are not always acknowledged. Many projects are primarily driven by donor interests, the external partner is in the driving seat and there is minimal or superficial local involvement. Many of the tools and methodologies used for capacity development, such as the **capacity assessment**, are poorly suited to the context, or are not recognised by partners. Many participants consider that the **primary role** of the external expert is to be a facilitator, advisor or coach. However, there are diverse opinions regarding what these roles entail—ideas range from being a technical service provider, to a facilitator of capacity development processes. Most participants note that demonstrating soft skills, and understanding power relations are critical to success.

Capacity development projects are often **too short term** to accomplish long-term goals. There is a focus on training individuals, rather than a holistic and systematic approach that includes a **mix of activities**. There is a general lack of understanding regarding measures of success, how to **monitor and evaluate** projects, and soft capacities are often neglected. While sharing experience and **lessons learned** is considered important, it is rarely done in practice. There is uncertainty regarding which projects work and which do not, as well as the reasons for their success or failure.

Based on these findings, the first recommendation is to maintain an open, ongoing dialogue among partners concerning the meaning of key concepts. The aim is not necessarily to agree on shared definitions, but to understand the differences between definitions. Second, partners should allocate sufficient time and resources to obtaining a detailed understanding of the local context. They should adopt a holistic approach that includes an appropriate mix of short- and long-term, and soft and hard activities on different levels. Another recommendation is to develop and disseminate better processes, methods and tools. The latter would be used by partners to jointly assess current capacities and needs, set mutually-accepted and understood objectives, and design, implement, monitor and evaluate efficient and sustainable capacity development projects.

4.2 Paper II

Practical aspects of capacity development in the context of disaster risk reduction

The purpose of this study is to increase our understanding of aspects that facilitate or hinder the success of capacity development projects. It addresses the following three research questions: *To what extent are the eight principles*[10] *dealt with in*

[10] Please note that in the original paper these principles are called elements.

capacity development projects between 2006 and 2013? What development, if any, can be noted in terms of how the principles are dealt with between 2006 and 2013? Were additional challenges or opportunities experienced or identified by the project managers running these projects?

Eight principles are identified: (1) terminology; (2) the local context; (3) partnership; (4) ownership; (5) capacity assessment; (6) roles and responsibilities; (7) a mix of activities and methods; and (8) monitoring, evaluation and learning. Table 2 (Chapter 3.2.2) describes the main characteristics of each principle, and presents some illustrative questions. The document analysis was complemented by seven interviews with the MSB's project managers.

The analysis of the corpus of documentation from nine international capacity development projects carried out between 2006–2013 shows a complex and progressive picture regarding the MSB's familiarity with, and use of the eight principles. There is a lack of consensus on how key **terms and concepts** are perceived and expressed, and the former are not clearly defined. Discrepancies in terminology were found in the context of capacity development, capacity building and project management. While there are many references to **contextual factors,** it is unclear what these are, and few are associated with a specific context analysis or set of tools. The notion of a **partnership** is routinely mentioned. Most projects refer to a written partnership agreement. However, while several call for a partnership approach, or partner-driven cooperation, the term is not explained.

The analysis reveals a lack of references to **ownership**, or a strategy for dealing with it. There is no indication of how projects are informed by, or aligned with internal partners' strategies—or any other indication of ownership beyond joint project steering committees or management groups. All nine projects refer to **capacity and needs assessment** exercises prior to, or at the time of the project's inception. However, there are no details regarding these activities, or how their findings inform or modify the project's design, or changed its strategy. **Roles and responsibilities** are not always defined. It is unclear what should be done, by whom, and how, in particular regarding the internal partner. The **mix of activities and methods** mostly consists of the creation of capacity, providing technical training, conducting trainers' courses, developing training materials, guidelines and standard operating procedures, and providing equipment. There are few references to organisational, institutional and legal issues, and it is unclear how softer or more functional capacities that are relevant to the project's purpose will be provided. The analysis identifies a lack of baseline information, together with a failure to use **monitoring** methodologies or **evaluation** processes. There are, on the other hand, references to indicators. However, these primarily address project inputs and activity outputs, rather than measuring changes in circumstances or behaviour.

In addition, the analysis sought to understand whether any changes could be observed during the period studied, in particular, if additional challenges or

opportunities were identified by project managers. A positive observation is that examples of good practice are systematically provided in evaluation reports. The eight principles are reflected, to varying degrees, in the work of MSB, and are increasingly referred to following a workshop on capacity development held in 2010. MSB's project managers find the principles useful in guiding the design and implementation of capacity development projects. Positive changes include internal workshops, the drafting of a capacity development handbook, the identification of a capacity development focal point, a systematic evaluation at the end of each project, an increase in the number of staff trained in capacity development, and the development of a more structured way of working on capacity development. There is also a better understanding of the complexities of trying to integrate capacity development work into the project management process, a recognition of the importance of capacity assessment, together with the need to blend technical and softer aspects of capacity development. Nevertheless, the MSB faces challenges in translating its capacity development guidance into a practical and usable tool. Other challenges include staff turnover, project management constraints, compressed timelines, power relations and funding restrictions.

The paper concludes that partners should undertake joint capacity assessments, and use the eight principles during project design, as this would promote discussions on the desired change, the local context, ownership and the most useful approaches to capacity development. The partners could use the eight principles during project implementation, either as a reminder or as a checklist. The principles can also be used to inform learning and sustainability aspects of capacity development initiatives. However, it should be noted that there may be other principles that are important for capacity development, which are not included in the study. Therefore, the application of the eight principles must be flexible, and take account of the context and the culture, the capacities available, and the overall purpose of the capacity development initiative.

4.3 Paper III

Systemic problems of capacity development for disaster risk reduction in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world

The purpose of this study is to offer a better understanding of the underlying reasons for poor capacity development results. Given that high-level decision-makers have the power to influence the international aid system, understanding their perspective is vital. This study addresses the following research question: *Why are there discrepancies between established principles and actual performance with respect to capacity development?*

The analysis of 20, qualitative semi-structured interviews with high-level decision-makers in the international community indicates the systemic failure of the aid system, and the need for a complete overhaul. Five, interrelated problems emerge: (1) clashing principles; (2) quixotic control; (3) mindset lag; (4) a lack of motivation for change; and (5) power imbalances. The five interrelated problems highlight discrepancies between established capacity development **principles** (ownership, partnership, contextualisation, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability) and the actual **performance** of actors.

Most participants are very familiar with the established principles, although they are commonly criticised for not applying them in practice, and often blamed for poor results. The results presented in this paper highlight that despite a high level of individual competence, there is a more fundamental problem; namely that some principles clash when applied in a complex, uncertain, dynamic and ambiguous world. These **fundamental challenges** are combined with systemic requirements and cognitive biases that support **misaligned accountability** to donors rather than internal partners. The outcome is an intense need for control that is inherently incompatible with all of the other principles. This **quixotic**[11] **need for control** creates a cascade of conditions that permeate the aid chain. Essentially, the cascading conditions cripple actors who are trying to implement capacity development activities, with devastating consequences. While the most effective solution is to shift accountability to internal partners, this shift is hindered by mindset lag, a lack of motivation for change, power imbalances, and conceptual ambiguity.

Understanding and addressing these systemic problems is fundamental to successful capacity development. It is not enough to blame actors for a failure to correctly implement capacity development activities, or to rename the concept (yet again). Instead, it is clear that actors are not internalising the rapid changes that have occurred in recent decades, but are instead maintaining their **traditional perspectives, roles** and **blueprint solutions**. This is particularly true as many actors suffer from the phenomenon known as **expert blind spot**, which limits what is seen in terms of local needs and context. Although the results of this study call for a complete **change of mindset** in the aid industry, there is **a lack of motivation.** As long as the wheels keep turning, there are benefits for powerful actors, and profits for the bureaucracies that control the process. This situation reflects **power imbalances** that are inherent to the system—donors, not internal partners, hold power. Power needs to be redistributed along the aid chain. International organisations must wake up and see that the **world is changing**. Roles and the ways partners interact have to be reconsidered. Actors must accept living with **complexity**

[11] Unrealistic or impractical.

and uncertainty. Control must be replaced by trust, and accountability must be (re)focused on internal partners.

4.4 Paper IV

Troubling partnerships: Perspectives from the receiving end of capacity development

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of internal partners involved in capacity development initiatives. It focuses on selected member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). As capacity development is a process that should be driven by internal partners, it is essential to understand what the challenges and possible solutions are from their perspective, to improve future collaborations. It therefore addresses the following research question: *How do internal partners describe the challenges for effective capacity development, and solutions to overcome them in Botswana, Mozambique, the Seychelles, Tanzania and Zambia?*

A total of 27, qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts, program officers and managers in five countries in the SADC. **Three requisite, interdependent types of capacities** are identified: 1) technical; 2) processual; and 3) contextual, to develop sustainable capacities. While external partners are expected to bring the technical capacity their internal partners need, there is a general lack of contextual capacity. The contextual capacity is needed to adapt capacity development activities to the specific circumstances of internal partners, and, in general, it resides with internal partners. By explicitly acknowledging that both external and internal partners have different, but vital capacities, the two sides can engage in mutual learning. Capacity development requires a willingness to learn from each other, and to unlearn old habits. Although both partners require processual capacity, the study emphasises that external partners must adapt their role—spanning from expert to coach—depending on the context and the needs of their internal partners. The study indicates that all of these **roles** may be needed in different phases of the partnership.

A typology of seven failures is developed. Partners need to avoid making these failures when designing and implementing capacity development projects: (1) external partners do not take the time to understand the local context; (2) external partners develop project proposals on their own; (3) too little time is allocated for project implementation; (4) only *ad hoc* short-term training is provided; (5) only a pilot project is run, and there is no scale-up; (6) the focus is on capacity creation and not utilisation; and (7) there is no focus on capacity retention. The more often these failures occur, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes.

For capacity development to be sustainable, the study emphasises that it is high time to listen to internal partners. It advocates for a more holistic approach that embraces the three requisite types of capacities. There needs to be a shift in the field. Effective and adaptive partnerships require **more credit** to be given to internal partners, explicit opportunities for **mutual learning**, and a more **flexible and adaptive approach** to the respective roles of partners.

4.5 Paper V

Caught between principles and politics: Challenges and opportunities for capacity development from governmental donors' perspectives

The purpose of this study is to investigate capacity development challenges and opportunities from the viewpoint of staff working for progressive governmental donor agencies. Donors hold significant power in shaping the conditions in which capacity development projects develop. Consequently, understanding their perspective is fundamental if future challenges are to be addressed. The study addresses the following research question: *What are the challenges and opportunities for capacity development in international development cooperation from progressive governmental donor agencies' viewpoint?*

Data were obtained from 26 semi-structured interviews with participants from seven donor agencies. Participants included senior managers, project managers, specialists, advisors and controllers. The results show that staff are highly committed to the application of the established principles for effective capacity development. Despite capacity development being recognised as a cornerstone of cooperation, participants describe it as a **complex, broad or empty idea** that is difficult to conceptualise (i.e., an example of **conceptual ambiguity**). A second issue is that staff cannot access capacity development training due to budget constraints.

The results reveal **tensions** between **capacity development principles** and current **political priorities**, power relations, and structural constraints that are inherent to the aid system. The prioritisation of donors' political interests over local needs constrains the application of the principles. Furthermore, this situation cements the common practice of focusing on providing technical training to individuals, regardless of whether it is an efficient way to develop sustainable capacity. Typically, funding is determined by what the donor can, and is willing to provide in their political context, rather than as a function of what is needed on the ground. This situation undermines the ownership principle, and reinforces unequal power structures. Program managers and desk officers are forced to spend more time complying with overwhelming administrative procedures, rather than ensuring the effectiveness of capacity development. **Donors must change their roles** when

dealing with middle-income countries, as the middle-income countries have a very clear idea of what they need, and more resources to do things themselves. In these contexts, donors would benefit from adopting a more active role, such as facilitator, matchmaker or broker of change processes.

Nevertheless, staff have developed a more holistic understanding of how capacity development should be approached. Although **flexibility and adaptability** are considered important principles—recognising changing conditions and the continuous development of local contexts—they are not currently common practice in the international system. Even in the rare cases where donors do provide conditions for flexible, adaptable, and long-term capacity development, external partners are reluctant to work in this way with their internal partners. External partners perceive that their primary responsibility is to meet the approved capacity development objectives, and to manage the allocated funding. They consider that it is simply too much of a risk to lose control. The same **fear of losing control** means that staff stand in the way of flexible, adaptable, long-term capacity development. In practice, donors are accountable to others, further up the aid chain, and their work is tightly constrained by a rigid and burdensome administrative system. This upward accountability results in a quixotic (unrealistic or impractical) need for control that, in combination with insufficient incentives for change, constrains the application of the principles.

Capacity development is perceived to be a **risky business**. Donors and external partners are accountable to other actors further along the aid chain, and this situation drives a widespread aversion to engage in the perceived risks associated with applying the principles in practice. Capacity development requires donors and external partners to let go of control, and allow space for flexible, adaptable and innovative approaches over longer timeframes. This requires explicit **risk-sharing** agreements along the aid chain. All levels of the system must strive to implement the principles, and foster the conditions that enable effective capacity development.

5 Empirical contributions

The results reported in the five papers paint a rich picture of capacity development and its challenges, and highlight many close interlinkages and patterns. Two, overarching themes emerge from the interviews, and they provide the structure for this chapter. The first theme concerns a set of principles (or success factors) regarding how capacity development should be done, and how it is actually done in practice. These principles are: ownership, partnership, contextualisation, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability (Figure 1). Secondly, four fundamental challenges are highlighted that are central to the process and context of capacity development: complexity, uncertainty, dynamic change and ambiguity (Figure 1).

The financial donor system is discussed separately at the end, to take into account its impact on external and internal partners, and capacity development.

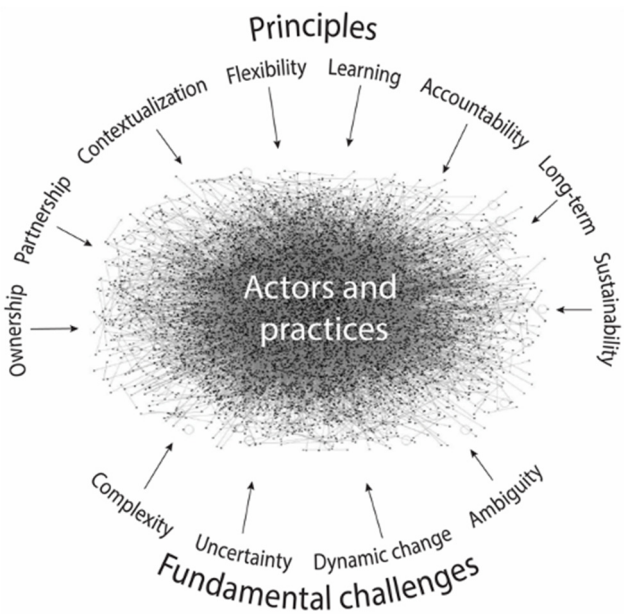

Figure 1. Principles and fundamental challenges for capacity development.

5.1 Principles

5.1.1 Ownership

> "Capacity development has to come from within; it can never be driven from the outside." (paper I)

> "We talk about it in a kind of colonial way sometimes: we say that we are capacity building (…) it's as if we assume that there is nothing, you know? But people on the ground really know their own needs, and we are not yet ready to let them formulate that, and fund that, but instead, together with international civil society organisations, the UN, everybody likes to decide. It's a power relationship. It's still difficult to really give local ownership, because they might decide on [something] completely different." (paper V)

> "We have introduced ideas like ownership, which is so obvious that it should not even require terminology." (paper III)

Participants explicitly state the obvious importance of ownership (papers I–V). Ownership is seen as both a cornerstone for capacity development, and one of the main challenges (papers I–V). Furthermore, they see capacity development as an internal process that cannot be imposed from the outside, but should be locally driven (papers I, III–IV). They identify the conflict between local ownership and the political priorities of external partners and donors as one of the greatest challenges (papers III–V). "*[A] major weakness is that donors keep treating the in-country organisations as though this is the first time that anybody's tried to help them, and they are starting from zero*" (paper V). In many projects, the external partner comes with their own agenda, and has already designed a project proposal (papers I–IV). This point is illustrated by a comment from one participant, who says:

> "I want to assist you in areas one, two, three. The partner will then address issues that will not have an impact on the people because that is not your area of need. Or, at best they do a lot of interviews with a lot of people, and then they come up with a whole project." (paper IV)

Local ownership is an impossibility in a world where external partners and donors set priorities and conditionalities based on their own interests and prerogatives (papers III, V). Participants note, in practice, most projects have been initiated by the external partner:

> "They come in, they do consultancy work for 2–3 months, they do not use existing capacities, they hand over their report, they go home. So, you put it on the shelf" (paper IV).

> "There was a consultant who flew in and drafted a contingency plan, but I was never involved with that. I was not consulted at all. I think that is just an outrage. I did not say anything because it was an international consultant. I did not want to raise a fuss. I let it happen." (paper IV)

Traditionally, projects are donor-funded, and not enough attention has been paid to encouraging the internal partner to fund activities (paper III). "*So, what we do then is that we kind of discard the demands of the poor people because we think that we know better how to provide this in the long run*" (paper V). In order to be able to receive funding, internal partners must organise themselves, and work around donors' perspectives—regardless of whether these perspectives correspond to local needs (paper V). This leads the project to be considered as something that is external, and not the business of the internal partner who is actually responsible (papers I, III).

> "It becomes difficult for us to accept the assistance that is coming because we know this is not our original idea. We want assistance from outside, but it always has some strings attached. Perhaps it comes from when our country was considered a third-world country when assistance would just come, and you see this is not right. So, people are still scared to receive you because of their past experiences." (paper IV)

Participants point out that it takes time to develop local ownership, and that external partners rarely take this into account (paper III). They state that instead, external partners and consultants try to get the work done on time (paper III). "*We know, we have capacity, and we want to develop you*" based on the illusion that there is not much local capacity, and that they can tell people what to do (paper III). One participant notes: this "*paternalism has no place, it's got to stop*" (paper III). External partners "*try to sell somebody something they do not want*" (paper III), and arrive with resources that internal partners cannot say no to. There "*is a mad rush to do projects, the fashionable thing, and we all must have a project on that. You just want it because funding is available*" (paper I). Developing a participatory and transparent approach is a recommended way to promote and ensure local ownership (paper I). Engaging internal partners, and linking people at different levels are considered crucial functions for the external partner. Commitment, a willingness to allocate and provide necessary resources, along with investments in time, money, energy and brains are closely connected with ownership (papers I, III–V).

The **document corpus** lacks analyses of ownership or a strategy regarding it (paper II). There is no indication of how projects are informed by, or aligned with the internal partner's strategies, or any other indication of ownership beyond joint steering committees or management groups (paper II). The analysis indicates that partners develop project proposals and plans jointly. In practice, proposals are developed by the external partner and sent to the internal partner for comments and approval (paper II). The external partner is responsible for project implementation,

including reporting. Budgets are determined, used and managed by the external partner (paper II). The final evaluation of, in particular, earlier projects sometimes refers to difficulties regarding local ownership and commitment (paper II). In later examples, there is a positive trend towards greater recognition of the importance of local ownership as a guiding principle (paper II).

5.1.2 Partnership

> "It has to be a fifty-fifty partnership so there is an equal say on the project: what could be done by the project, what could not be done by the project. If it is not an equal partnership, then one partner has more say than the other. You know, has more power." (paper IV)

> "We should try to create incentive structures for the actors to actually come together, which means trying to formulate carrots and sticks. Actors showing clearly that they can engage in joint programming with other actors should get better funding or bonuses. Actors that do it alone or do not cooperate enough and isolate themselves should get less funding. Maybe they should be named and blamed." (paper III)

Participants note that an equal partnership is essential to make capacity development work (papers II–V). Partnerships are described as a long-term process of building trusting relationships, and allowing them to evolve as change happens (papers III, V). It is important to sit down together and develop a clear understanding of "*what we are capable of doing and what we are not capable of doing. They need to learn from us so that they can assist us*" (paper IV). Participants explain, in different ways, that a balanced partnership means mutual learning; as one person states, "*it is not a donor-recipient kind of partnership; it is a partnership in development*" (paper IV). Finally, one participant highlights the need to understand the motivation and incentives required for people to work together, in partnerships with high levels of mutual accountability and trust (paper III).

Partnership is routinely mentioned in the **corpus of documentation**, and most projects refer to a written partnership agreement (paper II). In projects without a written partnership agreement, a lack of formalisation is noted (paper II). The corpus of documentation does not clearly define the concept of either a partnership or partner-driven collaboration (paper II). There are no references to partnership start-up or exit strategies (paper II). Furthermore, the analysed documents do not refer to intermediaries who could help to facilitate collaboration between partners (paper II). No reference is made to any kind of evaluation of the partnership (paper II).

5.1.2.1 A scarce skill

> "We were trained, and it did not just end there. We still have them coming and seeing how we are implementing what we have learned from them every now and then. We

> still keep in touch with them. They are following up on what we are doing. I think they are open to assist whenever we need assistance" (paper IV).

Participants point out that partnership development is a scarce skill, which can be improved (paper III). A key observation is that the ability to listen and have an open mindset brings partners together (paper III-IV). It supports opportunities to exchange experiences, and come up with suggestions on how to improve (papers III–IV). Being empathetic, respectful, and open to learning improves the chances of success (paper III). One participant, for example, says, "*The capacity for empathy is very much an attitudinal issue, how you speak with people and that you are interested in their experience*". Participants question how well external actors are trained in these attitudes (paper III). One participant notes that when someone external arrives, it brings a new dimension to capacity development (paper IV).

5.1.2.2 The role of the external partner

> "My role is to ensure that we get visible results, maybe not the result that is best for the country, but the result that will be good for our organisation." (paper I)

> "Anybody can pull on a capacity development hat (…) it's something that is seen as kind of 'Well, just task anybody (…) they really have to know… [the technical area] … to do this work, but capacity development… yeah... it's fine, we've done something'." (paper V)

Participants call for more profound changes in mindset concerning both roles and modes of interaction (papers I, III). Examples include recognising the limitations of external partners, working at interfaces, and having the external partner as a coach or facilitator instead of a doer (papers I, III). Roles encompass everything from contributing knowledge and expertise, identifying and understanding needs, making partners aware of their capacities, linking people, and asking questions (paper I). Other roles include telling partners what is best for them to do, and helping them to ensure the effective use of funding (paper I). Participants emphasise that it is essential, at an early stage of a project, to understand and be clear about what is going to be done, what will not be done, and what you expect from the partner (paper I). One participant concludes: "*my aim is to be not needed anymore*" (paper I). Some participants find it difficult to identify their role or approach as an external partner (paper I). In fact, one participant questions whether external partners know how to develop capacities (paper I).

> "Donors have not paid sufficient attention to third parties (…) the ones on the ground. We only talk to the big recipients of our money but (…) we hardly ever meet the third parties, we don't have a dialogue with them, they are not responsible for agreement conditions." (paper V)

> "Basically, we do a bit of matchmaking (…) where we can really make a difference is linking and matching the right people: those with the needs and those with the experience." (paper V)

Participants note that donors could take the role of facilitator, broker or matchmaker to bring different actors together (paper V). They observe that donors can convene actors in partner countries, increasing communication and coordination (paper V).

5.1.2.3 People skills

Participants underline the importance of soft (people) skills (paper I). Their recommendations for capacity development emphasise personal skills and personality traits, rather than technical skills (paper I). However, "*it is a very different thing to move from being able to recognise the problem that offers solutions on an intellectual level, to living those solutions on a behavioural level*", as one participant explains (paper III), and continues: "*It is rewiring your mental pathways, neural connections, it is not an easy thing to do*". There is a suggestion that cognitive science and psychology can teach us how people and organisations change (paper III).

5.1.2.4 The role of the internal partner

> "We learn from what is being brought to us, and at the same time, because we already have existing structures on the ground, we also have to capacitate the person who is coming on how we are working at the level of the government, and how they can fit in." (paper IV)

> "We identify our weakness and then negotiate with our partners. We are working in this field, but we have limitations in this and that area. Please provide us with your expertise and then the partner says if they do have some expertise in this field" (paper IV). Another participant states that

> "We never refuse when someone comes from outside, but we negotiate. Let us analyse the added value of your proposal and redesign the focus to meet what we need." (paper IV)

The role of the internal partner is to coordinate and monitor projects, and to consult with different partners (paper IV). Participants emphasise that the internal partner endeavours to build the capacity of the external partner (paper IV). The external partner should come with an open mind, learn the system and be part of the organisation (paper IV). However, participants note that external partners send staff who lack experience: "*they come with the right qualifications, less experience*", or "*you can read a lot about disasters these days but we need people with experience to help, you know*" (paper IV). Another problem is the power balance between internal and external partners (papers I–V). One participant observes, "*you come*

with resources, and the recipient will not say no when you say you want to help, it is hard to be on the same level" (paper I). Perceptions of roles determine where ownership rests (paper I). The internal partner's role is also to identify the needed capacities, based on what already exists (paper IV).

5.1.2.5 Secondments

Participants highlight the benefit of having the external partner physically present in the country through secondments of two to three years (paper IV). The approach makes it easier to connect with each other, says one participant (paper IV). One person talks about two models, old and new, which have changed how they work with external partners (paper IV):

> "The first model we used to have was that we brought the experts here, so that they were part of our staff. They organised training, they were hands-on, they were here all the time, and while they were here, things were going smoothly. We would have somebody staying here for years, and at the end of three years, you would realise that nothing has happened. The work has been done when the expert was here because the expert was doing the work. In the second model, the project would be run by us in the country, your experts are going to come for a short intensive period of three to four weeks. We are the ones who are dictating what you are coming here for and what area we want you to help us with. They would be able to identify the right person for that area instead of just keeping one person here for three years who may not necessarily know all the areas. So then you get the right person for the right job. After three weeks, they go away." (paper IV)

Although a project management group and a steering committee are an established part of projects, the **documentation analysis** shows that roles and responsibilities are not always defined in terms of what should be done and by whom (paper II). The internal partner is often mentioned in general terms, while the roles and responsibilities of the external partner are more detailed (paper II). The documentation for one project acknowledges that "*the terms of reference for the internal partner falls short of adequately articulating their roles and responsibilities, specifically with reference to their authority regarding decision making and for the financial aspects of the construction element of the project*" (paper II). The roles of external partners are primarily limited to north-south technical assistance, and the provision of skills-based training (paper II). One project refers to the organisation's staff mentoring local trainers (paper II). Apart from this one case, there are no references to other specific roles assigned to external partners (paper II).

5.1.3 Contextualisation

> "They should do what I call an initial assessment to find out what is already in the field. That assessment never happens. Most of the time, they just come and design a project. They may have some funds to implement a project. When they realise that most of the things are already in the field, they try to improvise in the middle of the process." (paper IV)

> "We have been doing assessments for quite a while. We have so many reports on the shelf, but we do not see tangible things happening at the ground level. For example, we were visiting a family for a risk assessment. He or she will tell you that it is the fifth time I see you guys, but nothing has been done." (paper IV)

One of the key considerations for capacity development, mentioned in one way or another by all participants, is understanding the local context (papers I–V). Participants emphasise that the external partner must understand the local context and existing capacities (papers I–V). They highlight that capacity development is context-specific, and that there is a need to understand the current situation before it can be addressed (paper III). As one participant notes, "*the absolute critical starting point is that people have loads of capacities and we should never underestimate them*" (paper III). Both participants and the **documentation** refer to the need for baseline information, and the identification of contextual factors. Examples include understanding the following: the basic setting (political and institutional, social and cultural, physical, environmental, and economic); stakeholders and their relationships; the hierarchical and organisational set-up; routines; and incentives (papers I–II). Participants state that external partners rarely know how to identify these factors (paper III). They also note the lack of a unified approach, a discussion of what these factors mean, and clarity regarding the process (papers I–III). For example, cross-cutting issues such as gender and environment are often mentioned in isolation from the context, and at a later stage (paper II). On the whole, with the exception of SWOT[12] analyses, the documentation does not refer to a specific context analysis, or the use of dedicated tools such as stakeholder mapping and analysis (paper II).

5.1.3.1 An a priori *agenda & knowledge*

Participants state that the external partner arrives with their own knowledge and expertise, and fails to contextualise this to existing circumstances, structures and capacities (paper IV). They observe that external partners rarely give adequate attention to the local context, probably because this would be both expensive, and labour- and time-intensive (papers I, III). Participants note that not enough time or money is spent on preparation, pre-planning and research in order to understand the

[12] SWOT: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat.

local context (paper I, III) and suggest that this is due to time and funding constraints (papers I, IV). However, the result is that fundamental, baseline information is often missing (paper I). There is also a perception that partners want to start up the project as quickly as possible, and not lose time by undertaking the necessary preliminary studies (paper I). Understanding the local context takes time (papers I–IV). Other participants suggest that external partners want to focus on their own priorities, and can be blind to the actual problems (papers III–IV).

5.1.3.2 Expert blind spot

> "We are so concerned with doing a good job, being professional, doing training courses that experts create a blind spot, which is local needs and local context." (paper III)

One participant mentions expert blind spot, which prevents experts from seeing local needs that do not correspond to their own professional interests and priorities. Participants think that the available guidelines and tools are outdated or prescriptive, and that there is a focus on external blueprint solutions that exacerbate the blind spot problem. One participant explains that "*we use standard recipes too much because we are forced to by the way the system is developed*" (paper III). This leads to a poor understanding of the culture and increased time pressure (paper III). One participant suggests that a way forward is to create informal interfaces with the internal partner:

> "So instead of leaving the place, we went back to the office and we sat and had a cup of tea. And during the time we had the cup of tea, some of the most critical information came out that had not been discussed before. Because we were sitting in a kind of culturally acceptable context, we were demonstrating our interest and not just visiting the place and asking the questions we wanted. We were also taking the time for them to speak to us, and that was extremely interesting." (paper III)

5.1.3.3 Capacity assessment

Participants emphasise the importance of conducting either capacity assessments, or preliminary studies before starting capacity development projects. The aim is to understand and identify the current capacities of internal partners, and what their needs are (papers I–II). However, participants note that a key reason for the lack of context analyses and capacity assessments is uncertainty and financing restrictions (papers I–III). A recommendation that is rarely followed is to learn from what others have done, look at what is already out there, and talk to people who know a little about what is going on (papers II, IV).

The **analysis of the documentation** reveals that there is limited information about similar previous or current initiatives (paper II). Participants state that self-assessment is a good starting point—an external partner might help to unpack and analyse what is going on—if asked to do so by the internal partner (paper III).

However, one participant notes that capacity assessments are often done by the country's embassy, rather than directly with the internal partner:

> "Our definition of working demand-driven is to ask the desk officer at the [country] embassy, in the specific country: what are the demands? Not to ask the government, it's too complicated (…) And then that is of course a dilemma, because we have our... priorities." (paper V)

Participants observe that while there are a lot of assessments and planning, few capacity development activities are actually implemented, there is no follow-up, and plans often end up on the shelf (paper IV). One participant explicitly notes that people are tired of repeated assessments, with no tangible result (paper IV).

> "We spent a lot of time planning, there was very little time for implementation, and that had a direct impact on the results of the project. I think that we should do it the other way around. Have less time to plan, more time for implementation." (paper IV)

5.1.4 Flexibility

> "Funding is tricky. For successful capacity development, you need flexibility. At the same time, you have to be able to actually deliver the results." (paper II)

> "There is a real desire for control in the system that makes it very difficult to develop capacity effectively. Control is a big thing. Nobody likes to give up control." (paper III)

> "We want to do capacity building. This is how much money we have". We will train this number of people." (paper IV)

Participants express, in different ways, that capacity development is a flexible process, and that success largely depends on constant adjustments, being agile, and adapting to changing circumstances (papers II–V). You need "*a whole package of adaptivity (...) it never goes the way that you envisaged from the start, it always goes back and forth and up and down*" (paper V). Capacity development is often seen as part of a project management cycle, which does not correspond well with more organic processes (paper III). One participant explicitly states that, "*You have donor rules and regulations, and then you have the implementing agency, the UN agency that comes with their own rules. Eventually, you have two sets of rules and regulations. The frames are already set. We can give you money, but then you have to follow our rules*" (paper IV).

> "Once the project is approved, you cannot add, you cannot remove anything. Projects do not have that flexibility." (paper IV)

> "They default back to log frames or results frameworks, perhaps because they have five other donors that require this, so for them… at the production level, it's just easier to do exactly as the majority is asking for." (paper V)

Participants note that funding comes with conditions, pre-set objectives and outcomes that restrict flexibility (papers I–V). These **cascading conditionalities** are a particularly difficult problem, and this way of micro-managing aid is not a healthy strategy (papers III, V). Some external partners and donors are very strict, and resistant to change (papers III, V). Participants explain that when funding passes from the donor, to the United Nations, to the NGO, each organisation adds its own conditions (papers III–V). By the time the money actually reaches the front line, there is little room for the people engaged in capacity development to respond flexibly to a changing context (papers III, V). Short-term projects and strict frameworks emphasise "*clear and deliverable results*", as this gives an impression of control, and helps politicians to demonstrate quick outcomes (paper V). This external partner and donor control erodes flexibility. Participants acknowledge that even when donors put in place conditions such as long-term agreements and flexible reporting, some external partners remain resistant to change (paper V). One participant suggests that the most effective way forward is to give up control, and let the local population and the local context drive how the money is spent (paper III). Capacity development is not about control, it is about responding to what occurs, and acknowledging that we cannot control everything (paper III).

> "All these systems and rules and regulations and the rigidities, it's a way to try and manage this shifting world, at the same time, since these plans do not match what is actually going on in the world, we do not achieve the results we want." (paper V)

5.1.5 Learning

> "Today, not much happens after projects are finished. You look for what funding is available and move on to the next project." (paper I)

> "Without a compelling and evident case, capacity development becomes a bit abstract and less convincing." (paper III)

Participants emphasise the important connection between capacity development and learning (papers III, V). Capacity development should involve a peer-to-peer learning process, in which both parties are on an equal footing, learn by doing, and from each other (papers III, V). Participants highlight that capacity development relies on mutual learning, and being open to change (papers III, V). However, this "*happens much too little*", according to one participant (paper V). Capacity development is about learning by doing: "*you act, you interact, you learn, then you act again, and you learn again*" (paper III), and should be built into the design of

the programme from day one (paper III). There must be an interest in what the other party has been doing (paper III); one participant notes that, surprisingly often, it is as if this has never happened before (paper III). Finally, one participant explains that successful capacity development depends on the incentives that are put in place to ensure that the knowledge that is developed remains in the institution's memory (paper IV).

5.1.5.1 Feedback & learning loops

> "We have to actually engage in making the system work better, we cannot just sit here and say they should do better." (paper III)

Participants note the need for feedback and learning loops to improve the effectiveness of capacity development. While there is a need to avoid repeating past mistakes, and learn from what happened (papers I, III, IV), this is seldom done (paper I). Interviewees emphasise the importance of documenting both mistakes and what worked, and sharing these experiences (papers I, III, V). However, not only is there no clear benchmark of successful capacity development, but we also do not learn from experience (paper III). One participant states, "*feedback is often missing, we do not have any feedback loops, and we repeat the same mistakes*" (paper IV). There is a wish to see more reporting of adjustments, as this is seen as an opportunity for mutual learning (paper V). There is also a need to tell stories, and discuss 'Rolls Royce' projects, which can be used to illustrate lessons to be learned, and avoid attempts to reinvent the wheel (paper III). One participant highlights that the aid system itself restricts the performance of professionals.

5.1.5.2 Monitoring & evaluation for learning

> "It is the 64-million-dollar question." (paper I)

> "We get evaluated on how much we deliver." (paper I)

Participants find it difficult to give a clear answer regarding the question of how they monitor and evaluate their work (paper I). They consider that the evaluations that have been done are more-or-less useless, "*it is just reportability to donors*" or "*is it how funds are spent or …?*" (paper I). Participants state that "*this is one of our weak areas*" or "*we are working on it*" (paper I), and note that it is more important to demonstrate quick and visible results to donors than it is to see whether outcomes are sustainable after five years (paper I). While capacity development indicators should be endorsed by all partners, and compared with baseline data, there is a tendency to measure what can be measured (paper I). One participant observes that "*You train so many people, and then you ask, so what?*"

Although a shift towards qualitative indicators is clearly desirable, there is also a need to assess capacity development outcomes based on quantitative measurements (paper V). Projects compete for funding against other types of short-term programming that has clearer outcomes (paper V). The use of concrete, quantifiable outcomes, such as the number of laws approved or the number of training courses provided, can help to ensure continued funding (paper V).

The **document analysis** identifies a lack of baseline information, and a lack of clear references to the use of specific monitoring methodologies or evaluation processes for learning (paper II). The documentation primarily refers to indicators that address project inputs and activity outputs, rather than measurements of changes in circumstances or behaviour (paper II). Most attention is given to the subjects that are covered, or the activities that have been completed. Examples include training activities and workshops, and the drafting, editing and publishing of policies or standard operating procedures (paper II). References to lessons learnt concern the type of equipment to be procured, the composition of equipment, and how to modify training curricula to fit the local context (paper II). The corpus of documentation makes no reference to specific handover, exit and follow-up strategies, or subsequent activities that aim to advance or monitor the sustainability of results, notably with respect to future funding (paper II).

5.1.6 Accountability

> "If someone says, here is 500 000 dollars and within a year you have to show results, you will try to get a square box to go into a round hole." (paper III)

> "We ask: So, do you have systems in place to follow the money? Do you have systems in place to report on results? But we don't ask them: how do you work with capacity development?" (paper V)

The results indicate the importance of accountability (papers I–IV). Participants state that the capacity development agenda is project- and result-focused. Objectives and outcomes are pre-set, and linear sets of activities unfold over a predetermined period of time, until the project ends with little follow-up (papers I–IV). Participants observe that the world has changed, and that there is increasing demand for more donor accountability concerning the decisions that are made, and the money that is spent (papers I–IV). External partners report to the donor, not the government, and they are more accountable to the donor than their internal partner (paper IV). This point is highlighted by participants who state that their day-to-day reality has become more about identifying priority countries, accountability, decisions, and project management, and less about creating a real interface with communities and vulnerable people (paper III). The external partner who is provided with funding

must produce results within a few months or a year, because they are being paid and are expected to perform (papers I–IV).

> "When they come, they have already negotiated the funds with the donors and say: okay, look, we do have a project, we need to implement this and that in that field and for this purpose. We cannot renegotiate or refocus because the terms of reference we presented to the donor state that we will do this and in that direction. We say, okay, let us try. But the things we are going to do, some of them have already been done." (paper IV)

Consequently, the focus shifts to the external partners' ability to account for the funds given to them, while less emphasis is placed on their ability to work with capacity development (paper V). Moreover, participants note that conditions can suddenly change, for example, if international donor organisations modify their rules and policies, or when funding runs out (paper IV). One participant explicitly raises the question of who external partners are accountable to: beneficiaries, internal partners, or donors? (paper III).

5.1.7 The long term

> "Ownership needs time to develop, it may take three to five years, but there is generally not enough time or patience to wait for this to happen." (paper III)

> "It takes 25 thousand glasses of tea, of chai, in [a country] before you can have (…) a very frank discussion with people in the administration." (paper V)

Participants describe capacity development as a long-term process (papers I, III–V). This engagement goes hand-in-hand with the challenge of building trusting relationships and partnerships (paper V). Participants also mention that it takes time to gain the knowledge and knowhow that enables people to run institutions and processes by themselves (paper IV). It is clear that while capacity development is a long-term commitment, enough time is rarely allocated. As one participant observes, "*one needs to understand that there is a value in building slowly and not really getting the applause because it may not be visible until your death so to speak*" (paper III). Another person says:

> "Everything is urgent, but really, most of our work happens in a context where we can actually take a little bit of time to think before we spend the money, and we do not have to rush around to the degree we do (…) this sense of urgency prevents us from really thinking." (paper III)

The point is illustrated by the case of a donor that provides 5-year agreements to external partners. The external partners, in turn, only provides 12-month agreements to internal partners: "*We were actually shocked when we found out that the local*

CSOs[13] *only had 12-month agreements (…) which means that local organisations are (…) losing staff because they don't have any financial security, they can't do long-term planning*" (paper V).

> "We are so impatient, essentially, we expect things to happen in five, ten years that used to take 40 years. Talking about developing capacity in one year is, of course, a contradiction in terms." (paper III).

> "You do a couple of workshops and that is it." (paper III)

Many participants underline that **short time spans** are a fundamental obstacle to capacity development (papers II–IV), and add that partners tend to expect results too quickly (papers II–IV). They explain, with frustration, that "*we like to do things that are done in a year*", while knowing that true capacity development takes much longer (paper III). Partners are rushed for time, and donors set unrealistic deadlines (paper III). Participants state that the short-term allocation of funding, and pressure to demonstrate visible results, fundamentally undermines capacity development (papers III–IV). It is clear that there are "*Too many short-term projects, but they are not responding to a bigger national objective*" (paper IV). Projects should adopt a continuous, long-term perspective, rather than focusing on a few activities or a one-off event (paper I). This situation is exacerbated by the impatience of partners.

5.1.8 Sustainability

> "We need to look at the future and the sustainability of an intervention. What if funding ends, what happens?" (paper IV)

> "It all boils down to having adequate human and financial resources, which will be the most critical demands. The focus should be first to ensure that adequate resources are available for sustainability purposes." (paper IV)

Participants underline the importance of **creation**, **utilisation**, and **retention** to make capacity development sustainable (papers II–IV). However, most activities focus on capacity creation (papers II-IV), and confirmed in the **documentation analysed** (paper II).

5.1.8.1 Capacity creation and utilisation

> "You spend a lot of time in workshops and seminars, you can hardly do your work because you are always capacitated." (paper IV)

[13] Civil Society Organisation.

Once created, capacity needs to be put into practice (papers III–IV). For instance, one person states, "*There is often nothing wrong with the law, but they lack the capacity to implement their own legislation. They probably use some fancy consultant to do the law, but you can support them in the execution*" (paper III). One participant openly questions whether people are able to use the technology and the new knowledge gained through the project; another calls for interventions that will ensure that people can use it (paper IV). Participants note that it is difficult to find sufficient resources and the time to concentrate on practical activities (papers III–IV). Most capacity development projects are an addition to already-full agendas. Although the project might create capacity, the created capacity may be rarely used, and prove difficult to retain over time (paper IV).

5.1.8.2 Capacity retention and local universities

> "We have been building capacity in Africa since independence, and we are still building capacities after 50 years. You know, universities play a very important role in capacity development. On the surface, we bring consultants to come and do a workshop, which is a one-week workshop, and we say we have strengthened capacities. That is independent of the academic system, which is entrusted with the mandates to educate. So, there is a gap there. It does not empower universities who have the mechanisms to sustain capacities." (paper IV)

Participants are addressing the challenges associated with capacity retention (papers III–IV). For instance, "*we have forgotten about the maintenance of the system. If you want to develop the capacity, you have to develop the capacity to make sure this capacity will be kept up to date*" (paper III). In particular, staff turnover is a huge problem (papers II–V): "*getting professionals is one challenge, but then you have to retain them. Retaining them is a big challenge*" (paper IV).

Participants stress the importance of supporting local universities in their institutionalisation and sustainability efforts, rather than running *ad hoc*, short-term training programs or workshops (papers I, III–IV). This is particularly important given the problem of staff turnover, and the poaching of staff by international organisations (papers III–IV). Many trained people disappear: "*international organisations come and hire all the best national staff and very well-functioning local organisations are suddenly stretched*" (paper III). The question is highlighted by one participant, "*how do we create an industry rather than just training a bunch of experts?*" (paper III). One participant underlines that local universities often are bypassed in capacity development.

5.1.8.3 Individual technical training

> "You cannot do it without the speciality, but it needs to rest on at least three legs [subject matter expertise, sound pedagogy and organisational development], and

> when you put 95% of your focus on your subject matter expertise, well, you are doing something different than capacity development." (paper V)

> "It must be an organisation. It can never be individuals. Because our theory of change is that if people mobilise and organise together, they then, together, can change their lives and impact their own living situations." (paper V)

Participants agree that there is a prevailing focus on the transfer of technical capacities to individuals. At the same time, functional and soft capacities are neglected (papers I–V). One person asks, "*Is capacity development about providing technical solutions or technical knowledge, or is it about being able to, from your experience, facilitate a process of change?*" (paper V). Organisational change cannot happen by only focusing on individuals, especially in the absence of appropriate pedagogical methods, organisational development and high-level management (papers I–II, V).

> "The fact is that, in most of the workshops you attend, you just go, sit, listen and then you get up and go. That has no impact." (paper IV).

Participants acknowledge that capacity development is often, by default, thought of as training (papers I–V). One person highlights that "*a one-day or two-day workshop, that is awareness, it is not training*" (paper IV). While training can be good, or at least not negative, it is only one component of capacity development (paper III). A frequent mistake, according to one participant, is that training is often provided in an international language (paper III). Therefore, the organisation is immediately restricted to a cadre of usually quite junior, inexperienced, and mobile staff, who often move on to other jobs.

5.2 Fundamental challenges

5.2.1 Complexity

> "If we really want to develop capacity, it has to be a system, not just one-off training." (paper III)

> "Textbooks, guidelines, tools, of which we have plenty in the Red Cross are based too much on a sort of ideal classroom situation where you can do things in a linear way." (paper III)

Many participants express, in different ways, that capacity development is a systemic, interdependent, emergent, non-linear, self-organising process that unfolds at different levels (paper III). It is vital to see capacity development as a holistic and

chaotic process (paper III), where success largely depends on flexibility and constant adjustments. However, activities are often seen in isolation, and disconnected from the whole (paper III). Success requires many interlinked activities, and a mix of methods, including training (papers I–III).

Capacity levels and types are interdependent and should be integrated, which underlines the need for a holistic approach (papers I–III). However, participants claim that the focus is often on individuals, and their technical capacities (papers I–V). They point out the need for a bigger and better mix of capacity types, including functional and soft capacities (papers I–V). According to one participant, there is a flawed assumption that what is done at the national level will automatically trickle down to the local level. In practice, what might work globally or nationally may not work, or even hamper implementation locally (paper III). Participants observe that the world is not made up of a linear sequence of processes, a point that can be difficult for people to accept (paper III).

5.2.2 Uncertainty

> "How many people in our system are willing to walk into a situation and not control the outcome?" (paper III)

> "Capacity development is not some stupid log frame, plan, and training courses. It is a space where the external and the internal partner's expertise and resources meet. We do not know and cannot predict, control, nor can you plan what emerges when these two perspectives meet on equal terms. That is very uncomfortable for organisations and people who been used… who been in the position of control and certainty." (paper III)

Participants note the need to recognise that capacity development comes with a significant degree of uncertainty and discomfort (paper III). Neither individuals nor organisations like uncertainty, and it can be disturbing to not know how things will end, because the meeting or project is a product of what local people say or do (paper III).

> "Training is certain, it is understandable, you can measure it, and it is thereby less uncomfortable." (paper III)

One participant explains that, at a more fundamental level, bureaucracies do not like to respond to the local context, as this creates significant uncertainty. Several think that this is why organisations do a lot of training (paper III). In a rapidly-changing world, people need to get used to feeling more uncomfortable, more often, and must give up the illusion of being an expert, says one interviewee (paper III).

5.2.3 Dynamic change

> "We need to realise that things are changing, and I would say they are changing rapidly. The development and humanitarian industry needs to adapt to these changes and to change the mindset on what development cooperation is." (paper III)

> "I think in a way we are still, in certain aspects, a bit anchored in modernisation theories which state that there is more knowledge in one place than in the other, there is more technical advancement in one place than in the other, and that is what we can offer." (paper V)

Many previously undeveloped countries have made significant progress, and now have capacities that they did not have 40 years ago (paper III). The context for capacity development is changing, and power is shifting towards developing countries (papers III, V). These middle-income countries are demanding changes to the whole capacity development system (papers III, V). "*Why have Latin-American countries succeeded? Well, I think it is partly because they have not been part of the aid dynamic. They have been left to their own to a larger extent*" (paper III). Participants note that in middle-income countries government budgets have increased, and they now have more power at the international level (paper V). The world has evolved, and we must evolve with it, they say (paper III).

> "We are so capacity developed, we have received years and years of leadership development, now we are top notch [small laugh] in capacity, the only thing we need now is funds to do our work." (paper V)

Participants highlight that external contributions must change, and that international organisations cannot deliver projects in the same way, and to the same extent (paper III). However, bureaucracies are not changing quickly enough, along with the methodologies, concepts, techniques and insights that currently guide capacity development (paper III). The shrinking operational role of international organisations is requiring them to rethink both their position, and their added value (paper III). Asked what external partners would do if they were not needed anymore, one participant answers "*as little as possible*", with a laugh (paper III).

> "They have a clear understanding that there is one specific part of a specific sector that has experience that might be interesting for them, (…) and they are in a position to very clearly specify this and point and say: 'either this or we are not interested'." (paper V)

Middle-income countries have a very clear idea of what they need from donors. They also have the power to make specific requests and set conditions (paper V). This situation is shifting power dynamics, and allowing countries to refuse aid if they feel that it does not meet their needs (paper V).

Core support[14] and direct financing are seen as alternative modalities that help to ensure that internal partners have the resources they need for long-term operations, and the ability to set their own development priorities (paper V). It is seen as a way to respect local capacity, and as an important tool "*to push out power and money to local organisations*" (paper V). The aim of core support, as expressed by participants, is to provide funding directly to local Civil Society Organisations (CSO) to support the execution of their strategic plan (paper V).

5.2.4 Conceptual ambiguity

> "For many people, capacity development is an abstract thing, it is not clear how to do it." (paper I)

> "Lack of capacity is a label that has been slapped on an awful lot of situations where it was not a very accurate description … and it catches a lot of blame for not working." (paper V)

When asked about their personal views of capacity development, participants often become silent, laugh, or say that it is a broad or difficult question (papers I–III, V). The concept is ambiguous (papers I–III, V), and participants do not distinguish between capacity development and similar terms such as capacity building or capacity strengthening (papers I–III, V). A similar situation is found in the corpus of project **documentation** (paper II).

> "It's a buzz word within development, everybody talks about it, but it is hard to reach a common understanding." (paper V)

Capacity development is described as an abused phrase, or as a complex, broad or even empty concept (papers I–III, V). It is seen as a "*catchword for almost everything*", or as a vague term that is "*over-used by most people who have no clue what it means*" (paper III). There is also a certain level of fatigue (paper V). One participant explicitly acknowledges the importance of terminology, "*terminology is one of the basics that you should define before you decide on activities*" (paper II). Participants underline the importance of knowing how a cooperation partner defines various resources and responsibilities, because the same word can mean many different things, depending on the person's background and mandate (paper II).

[14] Core support (also called core funding) is defined as "*flexible and substantial funding over several years for: 1) results focused programme implementation as defined by the CSO [Civil Society Organisation]; 2) institutional support (general costs of running the organisation); 3) continuous institutional development/capacity building*" (Karlstedt et al., 2015, p. 12).

5.3 The donor system

> "We need to change our systems… because the system is (…) forcing you to really appraise certain things, and (…) if you ignore that, you are cheating, you are not doing your job as a civil servant." (paper V)

> "A lot of colleagues still believe they have to follow all these rules exactly, and if they don't they will be a failed public servant." (paper V)

Participants elaborate on various constraints inherent in the donor system (paper V). They note discrepancies in increases between the administrative budget and the development cooperation budget (paper V). There is increasing pressure to spend the whole budget by the end of each financial year, which brings new risks: "*It can become dangerous to push money out the door in December, you know that there are extreme corruption risks, so it can have very severe consequences [for internal partners]*" (paper V).

> "You know, there are people with ideas and so forth, but you simply don't have the time to look into new methods or ways of working, simply because your plate is full." (paper V).

Participants describe that the way the donor system is currently structured can impede innovative approaches to capacity development (paper V). Some initiatives have introduced a pre-implementation phase to build trust and identify problems (papers II, V). However, each initial phase is assessed as an individual project, which becomes an administrative burden for staff (paper V). Participants report that the administration system adds to their already-busy agenda, especially for program managers and desk officers working in embassies (paper V). Although they recognise the need for transparency in project management, participants believe that the system's requirements are oftentimes burdensome (paper V).

6 Discussion

Three main themes emerge from the results: 1) describing the challenges in capacity development; 2) explaining the challenges in capacity development; and 3) addressing the challenges in capacity development. These themes not only highlight discrepancies between the eight principles and actual performance, but also provide a deeper understanding of the underlying reasons for the poor results of capacity development. Four fundamental challenges are identified, based on an extensive evaluation of the empirical material. Other challenges are described and explained, and potential ways to address them are proposed. According to Ackoff (1962, pp. 30-31), a challenge or a problem requires at least one person or partner to believe that there is a problem, and when there is a desire to achieve a result, in a specific context, that has a positive value. If there is no desire to achieve a result, there can be no problem (Ackoff, 1962, p. 30). This discussion thus focuses on the challenges associated with the three themes, and is structured accordingly.

Finally, a scoping study was conducted. Here, the aim was to compare and contrast the synthesis of the results of the five studies, and their discussion, with the existing scientific literature. The scoping study provides a structured and transparent overview of the (rather limited) capacity development literature (Appendix 1). It is apparent that current capacity development research is very similar to historical data and findings, despite some studies being written 40 years ago. As Soal (2010, p. 133) notes, "*What was a 'hard' point then, remains true today*".

6.1 Describing the challenges in capacity development

The first theme concerns the challenges in contemporary capacity development. Here, it is interesting to note that external experts, project managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donor organisations all have similar thoughts, and that their perspectives are aligned (papers I–V).

6.1.1 Conceptual ambiguity

Although capacity development is recognised as a cornerstone of development cooperation, it remains **difficult to conceptualise** (papers I–V), as recognised in the

literature (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, pp. 298-300; James, 2010, pp. 13-14; Kaplan, 2000, p. 517; Sobeck & Agius, 2007, p. 238). The results show that, in general, the terms capacity development, capacity building, and capacity strengthening are used interchangeably. Capacity development, in particular, is seen as a broad, meaningless and unclear concept (papers I–III, V), which leads to terminological and conceptual ambiguity. Inconsistent terminology makes it difficult for people to share their understanding of key concepts, and to know if they are talking about the same thing. The results suggest that some practitioners are uncomfortable using the term capacity development (paper V). This finding is consistent with the available literature, which argues that capacity development is often misused, and sometimes perceived simply as a buzzword (Eade, 2007, pp. 630-631; Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, pp. 298-300; Ubels et al., 2010, p. 1). The latter observation is also highlighted in papers I and V. Consequently, partners find it difficult to develop a shared understanding of the purpose of capacity development initiatives, build trusting relationships, and ensure local ownership.

Given that it is a very broad concept, people working in different disciplines give different answers when asked what capacity development is (papers I, III, V). When concepts are poorly defined (and may have been translated into the local language), people are less inclined to ensure that they are speaking about the same thing (papers I–II), see also James & Hailey (2009, p. 11). This creates confusion both within and between partners (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, p. 299; Månsson et al., 2015). As highlighted elsewhere (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, p. 299), it is reasonable to assume that different partners may or may not have the same understanding of capacity development and other key concepts (papers I-III). So, one cannot assume that there is a shared concept or understanding of what the terms mean and involve (papers I–III). How capacity development is understood has an impact on the selected activities and methods, how they are designed and implemented, and how the partnership is perceived and organised (paper II).

To summarise, the high level of terminological and conceptual ambiguity is likely to cause confusion and misunderstanding between people and partner organisations, and hinder sustainable change.

6.1.2 Gaps between theory and practice

The results show that all participants are very aware of both the eight principles, and the conditions for effective capacity development, and there appears to be a strong shared commitment to apply these principles, despite the identified challenges (papers I–V). That said, there are clear gaps between theory and practice (papers I–IV), as many of the principles identified in the literature are overlooked in practice. At the same time, the principles are often seen as challenges, which might explain the difficulty of applying them in real-life situations. In the absence of any guidance, there is a tendency to approach capacity development based on one's own rules and

experience (paper II). The results underline that there are several challenges to implementing sustainable capacity development projects (papers I–V).

One identified gap is **local ownership** (papers I-V). The ownership is seen in both the scientific literature and policy as a cornerstone of capacity development (Keijzer et al., 2018; OECD, 2005, p. 2; Ubels et al., 2010, p. 6). The idea is that internal partners assume a leading role, external partners assume a supporting role, and that all partners understand this division (papers I–V). However, ownership is a huge challenge, as there are different notions of what ownership implies (Buffardi, 2013, p. 979; Venner, 2015, p. 91); in practice, ownership often rests with the external partner. This is clearly visible in the results (papers I–V), and is confirmed by the literature (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 63; Godfrey et al., 2002, p. 365; Keijzer, 2013, p. 8; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 29; Schulz et al., 2005, p. 63; Scott & Few, 2016, p. 149).

Although **equal partnerships** are essential to build trust and achieve common objectives (papers II–IV), this is another identified gap. Partnerships are supposed to be a two-way, not a one-way process (paper IV). Yet, in practice, partnerships are influenced by power imbalances, and the division of roles and responsibilities may be vague and understood differently by different partners (papers I–IV). Capacity development is **context-specific**, and there is a need to understand the current situation before it can be addressed (papers I–V). This observation is hardly surprising, given that alignment and context-specificity are repeatedly emphasised in high-level fora (OECD, 2005, 2008, 2011). While it is clear from the results that it is important to understand the local context and existing capacities (papers I–V), the local context and local knowledge are often ignored or not recognised in practice (Girgis, 2007, p. 361); instead, parallel systems are created (papers I, V), as noted by Twigg (2004, p. 289). Woodhill (2010b, p. 34) suggests that a failure to understand the context can lead to unproven assumptions and inappropriate interventions, and this observation is confirmed by the results (papers I, V).

Successful capacity development largely depends on **flexibility** and constant adjustments to changing circumstances (papers II–V), as stated in the literature (Bolger, 2000, p. 2; Scott & Few, 2016, p. 149). At the present time, the international system lacks flexibility, due to the risk of losing control and the need to remain accountable to others further up the aid chain (papers III–V). Capacity development is largely about feedback loops, and **learning from experience** to avoid future mistakes (papers I, III, V), as reported in the literature (Armitage et al., 2008; Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010, pp. 3,6; Klinsky & Sagar, 2022, p. 553; Pettit, 2010, p. 28; Susskind & Kim, 2022, p. 597; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 4). Capacity development can be framed as an opportunity for mutual learning (papers IV–V), as others have suggested (Clarke & Oswald, 2010; Jones & Blunt, 1999, p. 399), meaning that both internal and external partners learn from each other. However, learning is rarely the focus (papers I, III–V) and, surprisingly often, it is as if it has

never happened before (paper III), an observation that is acknowledged in the literature (Pearson, 2011c, pp. 13-14).

Adams and Carwardine (1991, p. 114) make a valid point when they state that "*[h]uman beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so*". The problem is exacerbated when monitoring and evaluation become tools for demonstrating accountability to donors. Success is measured by predefined, visible deliverables, rather than reflecting on what was learned and the actual impact of the project (papers I, III–IV); again, this is in line with the literature (Guijt, 2010, pp. 277-290; Simister & Smith, 2010, pp. 7,24; Soal, 2010, p. 131). Learning can help the internal partner to both maintain capacities and inform future projects. As external partners have traditionally held more power, a learning culture has failed to develop regarding monitoring and evaluation (Becker, 2014, p. 238). The results indicate the importance of holding the internal partner **accountable** (papers I–IV), as suggested by others (Baser & Morgan, 2008, p. 69; OECD, 2005, p. 6). However, the results also demonstrate that, in reality, external partners are more accountable to their donor than to their internal partner (papers I–IV), which is another common theme in the literature on capacity development (De Weijer & McCandless, 2015, p. 85; Seddiky et al., 2020, pp. 2,8).

The results make it clear that capacity development requires a **long-term** commitment (papers I, III–V), as stated in the literature (Baser & Morgan, 2008, p. 120; CADRI, 2011, p. 14). However, in practice, timeframes are limited (papers I–V), as confirmed in the literature (Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013, p. 320), as the system requires short-term feedback and quick results (papers I–IV). Furthermore, **sustainability** is a key principle, as it is pointless to invest resources in something that will immediately wither away (papers I–V). It is important to note that sustainability is mainly the result of the successful application of the other principles, as indicated elsewhere (Becker, 2023). However, the results suggest that intervention timeframes are often too short to establish any form of institutional memory (papers I–V). Furthermore, high staff turnover means that it is difficult to retain capacity, and exacerbates the problem of institutional memory (papers II–V), as highlighted by Riet and Van Niekerk (2012, p. 11). Finally, while there is an extensive focus on creating capacity, there is no evidence of a focus on supporting the internal partner in using and retaining the developed capacity (papers II–IV).

To summarise, the results highlight clear gaps between theory and practice, along with several challenges related to the eight principles (which are also identified in the literature). Thus, even if the eight principles are followed, there is no guarantee that capacity development will be successful, because of the challenges. It is reasonable to assume that these challenges will have a negative impact on the effectiveness of capacity development, especially when the eight principles are overlooked.

6.1.3 Seven types of project failure

In practice, the gaps between theory and practice manifest in seven types of failure. These types were compiled into a framework (Figure 2) (paper IV). They can be combined in numerous ways, and each way undermines the effectiveness of capacity development. Failures occur when the principles are not followed; they are both practical and operational, and differ from the four overarching challenges.

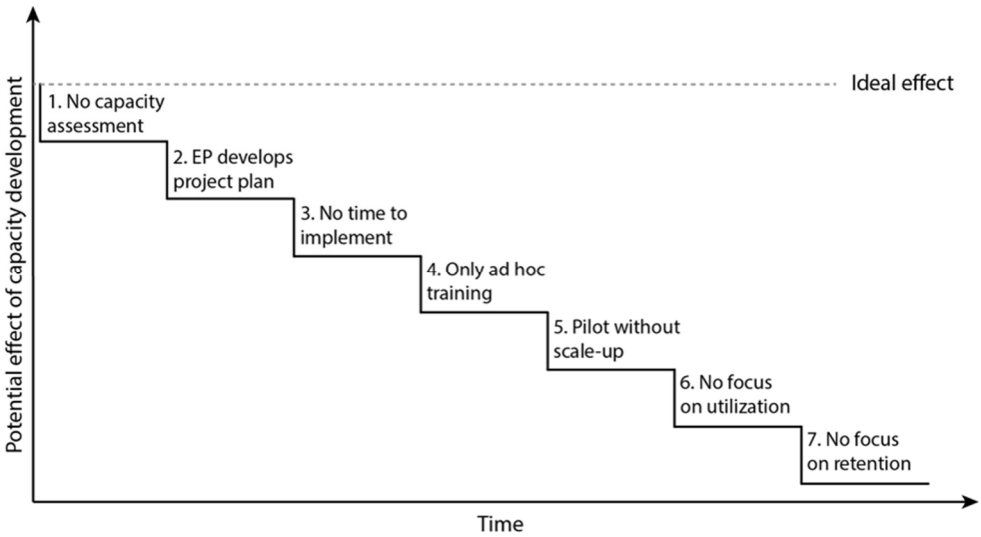

Figure 2. The seven types of project failure.

6.1.3.1 Type 1 failure – no capacity assessment

Capacity assessment is vital for the external partner to be able to understand the local context and existing capacities, and to start to build trust with potential partners (papers I–IV), as confirmed by the literature (OECD/DAC, 2006, p. 8). In practice, many initiatives are undertaken without a proper capacity assessment (Scott et al., 2015, pp. 57-58). The results demonstrate that the internal partner needs to facilitate this process, by sharing their contextual capacity (paper IV). It has been suggested that this early demonstration of mutual engagement builds trust between prospective partners (Kaplan, 2000, p. 525; McWha, 2011, p. 37; UNDP, 2008, p. 22). However, in practice, short timeframes make this a difficult task (papers I, III). Lacking time, resources and funding (papers I–III), the external partner often skips this vital first step, and thus runs the risk of misaligning the project's activities with existing local capacities (paper I).

6.1.3.2 Type 2 failure – the external partner develops the project plan

Even when external partners do perform a capacity assessment, the results show that they often bring with them their own agenda, conditions, project proposal and timeframes, which are not contextualised or aligned to circumstances on the ground (papers II–V). There is a belief that it is possible to transfer solutions from elsewhere, rather than considering the local context as a point of departure (paper I), as suggested by others (Schulz et al., 2005, p. 12). That approach results in ownership resting with the external partner (paper I), as noted by Twigg (2004, p. 124). The project then becomes external and donor-driven, rather than demand-driven.

Moreover, the results indicate that, in many cases, funding requirements demand visible results within a short timeframe (papers I–V). This generates an intense need for control, erodes flexibility, and directs accountability towards donors rather than the internal partner (papers III–V). Projects that are designed and managed by an external partner who follows a formal procedure are, in other words, counterproductive, since the internal partner lacks control and ends up being dependent (paper IV), as confirmed by Anderson et al. (2012, pp. 21, 67, 79-81). Furthermore, the results indicate that the internal partner's efforts to become more independent are hindered when the external partner follows a static model, and adopts blueprint solutions (papers I, III, V), as recognised in the literature (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 25; Gasper, 2000, p. 21; Schulz et al., 2005, p. 7). A recurring challenge that the capacity development community must overcome is related to how initiatives are identified, designed and implemented (paper IV). If this problem is not addressed, projects will continue to fail or terminate prematurely, with disappointment and growing mistrust on both sides.

6.1.3.3 Type 3 failure – no time for implementation

In contrast to the first type of failure, the results clearly indicate frustration among internal partners regarding the number of assessments that are conducted and the range of plans that are developed, but not followed-up (papers IV–V). This situation occurs regardless of the time invested in capacity assessment and project design processes (paper IV). James (2010, p. 17) also highlights that there is a focus on planning, rather than funding the implementation. At best, there will be a plan of action, but then funding stops (James, 2010, p. 17). Moreover, the results show that financial conditions are, at times, suddenly changed by the international donor organisation, or funding is delayed, all of which leaves little time for implementation, and means that the most important part of the project is rushed (paper IV).

The results confirm that many capacity development initiatives are short term (papers I–V), as suggested by others (cf. Scott et al., 2015, p. 56). Assessment and planning take up most of the project's time and budget (paper IV). In many situations, funding is only secured for the first phase, and it is often the case that no

additional funding is allocated for implementation (paper IV), see also James (2010, p. 17). The findings indicate that this problem could stem from the fact that the results of the capacity assessment are not in line with partners' expectations and expertise, or from the fact that implementation is considered more difficult than assessing and planning (paper IV). The results suggest that there is an 'assessment dilemma'; either too much time is spent on assessments, with no time or funding given to implementation, or no assessments are conducted at all (paper IV).

6.1.3.4 Type 4 failure – only ad hoc *short-term training*

The results underline that most capacity development projects focus overwhelmingly on short-term technical training (papers I–V), in other words, one- or two-day, or maybe up to one-week workshops, as reported elsewhere (Lipson & Warren, 2006, p. 6). In fact, the results show that capacity development is often, by default, thought of as training (papers I–V), thus corroborating Pearson's (2011c, pp. 16-19) claim from more than a decade ago. The findings suggest that these short-term training programs are *ad hoc* and have limited impact (papers I–V). However, capacity development requires a long-term perspective, and cannot be limited to a few activities. Moreover, the effects of short-term training are not sustainable, as participants change jobs, or may not have been the right people to be trained in the first place (paper IV). Another problem is that training programs are not institutionalised, and not connected to other capacity levels, as changes at one capacity level often require changes at other levels (papers I–III). The results also demonstrate that training programs are not integrated into academic systems in the studied countries. This is a missed opportunity to both facilitate sustainability and strengthen the capacities of local universities (papers I, IV). At the same time, it is not clear from the results whether the external partner has the processual capacity and pedagogical know-how to conduct effective training (papers IV–V).

6.1.3.5 Type 5 failure – no scale up after the pilot study

The results indicate that many projects that do implement activities other than training are pilot projects, but there is no scale-up or follow-up (paper IV). While pilot projects are often designed to pave the way for grand plans for expansion into selected districts or communities, donors habitually only finance this modest start before pulling out (paper IV). Donor pull-out is sometimes built into the project's design, leaving the internal partner with unrealistic, or low-priority financial commitments when external support ends (paper IV).

6.1.3.6 Type 6 failure – no focus on utilisation

Parallel to the problem of a lack of scale-up discussed above, the results demonstrate an almost exclusive focus on creating capacity—e.g., the development of skills, or the establishment of procedures, policies and regulations—and no focus on supporting the internal partner in utilising and implementing the developed capacity

(papers II–IV), as confirmed by the literature (James, 2010, pp. 16-17; Johnson & Thomas, 2007, pp. 15,21). Capacity creation must be distinguished from capacity utilisation (papers II–IV). Thus, it is not evident whether individuals and organisations can utilise their new capacity, which is the ultimate purpose of capacity development. Armstrong (2013, pp. 211-213, 221) points out that capacity development is learning by doing, and gaining wisdom through practice. Vallejo et al. (2016, p. 4) take the idea further, and refer to the "*70:20:10*" rule. According to the rule, only 10% of learning is acquired through training, 20% is acquired through coaching and mentoring, and 70% is acquired via doing.

The results suggest that this problem is exacerbated by the internal partner's demanding agenda, small units, a lack of technical expertise, different priorities, and limited and competing resources (papers III–IV). Another problem is chronic underfunding (Godfrey et al., 2002, pp. 355,357). In addition, many projects run simultaneously, and little effort is made to align or harmonise them (paper IV). This means that the internal partner is always engaged, and capacitated, in capacity development activities, with no time to reflect on, and apply the skills or integrate processes and procedures within the organisation (paper IV), as observed by others (cf. Bolger, 2000, p. 5).

6.1.3.7 Type 7 failure – no focus on retention

The almost-exclusive focus on capacity creation also leads to the third requisite part of capacity development being neglected: capacity retention (papers II–IV). The results clearly show that staff turnover is a massive challenge for all partners (papers II–V), as identified in other studies (e.g. Godfrey et al., 2002, p. 357; Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012; Scott et al., 2015, pp. 48-50). However, capacity retention is not only a question of managing staff turnover, it also requires regular amendments to policies, structures, processes, procedures, regulations and laws (Pearson, 2011a, p. 3), a point that does not seem to be explicitly considered in capacity development (papers II–IV). Capacities are not, in other words, static, and retaining them is as important as creating and utilising them (paper IV), as noted by others (Scott et al., 2015, p. 44). If this does not happen, any developed capacities cannot be considered sustainable.

Moreover, the results indicate that capacity creation can undermine capacity retention. This can happen when staff working for the internal partner on capacity development change position, or are hired by an international employer (paper IV). This problem is exacerbated by a lack of job security, as staff are not guaranteed a permanent position when the project ends (papers IV–V). Having to replace staff on a regular basis is one reason for a loss of institutional memory, which is, as noted above, a serious challenge (papers III–IV). Furthermore, there is little focus on how to use and retain newly-acquired or enhanced skills, knowledge and procedures (paper II). The ability to utilise and retain is intrinsic to the longer-term success of capacity development. It is most often the case that when the time for capacity

utilisation and retention comes, the work is finalised, the external partner leaves (paper IV), and the project is forgotten (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 2).

To summarise, a typology of seven failures is presented. These failures should be avoided when designing and implementing capacity development projects. The more these failures occur, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a better understanding of the archetypical failures that undermine the sustainability of capacity development will be helpful for members of the community.

6.2 Explaining the challenges in capacity development

The second theme concerns potential explanations for, and reasons why contemporary challenges exist.

6.2.1 Babylonian confusion

One reason behind the **conceptual ambiguity** described above is **Babylonian confusion** (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b, pp. 298-300; Thywissen, 2006). It can be difficult to understand the concept of capacity development, and the results demonstrate that actors find their own, diverse meanings (papers I–III, V). This lack of consensus and an agreed-upon language is referred to as Babylonian confusion (papers I, III).

One potential reason for this phenomenon is that many of the available definitions are academic, complicated and over-elaborated (paper I). Moreover, definitions are used differently by researchers and practitioners (paper I), as noted by Twigg (2004, p. 12), and are often adapted to fit an organisation's mandate and goals (paper I). The results show that participants relate to and interpret the terminology differently, depending on their background, former experience and the organisation they work for (paper I). Another potential reason is the limitation of language itself (papers I–II), since there are often no direct equivalents in different languages. Becker (2014, p. 207) indicates that these definitions are rather reinventions. It is also possible that while the terminology, or the language, has changed over time, practice has not kept up, "*we are just repackaging things*" or "*selling old wine in new bottles*" (paper 1).

Another reason for Babylonian confusion is that the terminology often relies on abstract concepts, which are difficult to translate into objectives and practical activities (paper I), as suggested by others (Eade, 1997, p. 2; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 1). Unfortunately, capacity development can be used as a slogan rather than a meaningful concept, due to a lack of clarity or knowledge (papers I–II) as confirmed by other authors (Lusthaus et al., 1999, p. 9). Conceptual ambiguity has

a detrimental effect, as different partners use their own attributes, apply their own meaning and interpret it, unchallenged, from their own perspective (paper II), see also Morgan (2006, p. 2). Consequently, the concept has expanded to include everything that is desirable—a feel-good concept with a positive political orientation (paper V). Dekker and Hollnagel (2004, p. 82) call these types of concepts 'folk models'; the understanding continually expands, due to the complexity of the concept. Folk models are difficult to falsify, and tend to rely on overgeneralisation (Dekker & Hollnagel, 2004, p. 82). However, without a precise definition, it is unclear to what extent the concept can be operationalised (Brinkerhoff, 2002, pp. 206-217).

The lack of a shared **organisational understanding and definition** of capacity development makes it harder to operationalise it consistently in different projects (paper V), as confirmed by James (2010, p. 17). The situation creates confusion amongst staff, especially recent recruits, regarding the principles and standards that they are expected to uphold (paper V). The results highlight that this challenge is exacerbated by the fact that organisations do not provide training courses in capacity development (paper V). Hence, in practice, effective capacity development is undermined by **terminological and conceptual ambiguity**, and confusion concerning what to do and how to do it (papers I, V). Ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty hamper constructive communication, while communication is fundamental for capacity development (paper III), as noted by others (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014b). The problem is exacerbated by the human tendency to assume that others share similar beliefs and views (projection bias) (Johnson & Levin, 2009, p. 1596), or to expect others to agree with oneself (the false consensus effect) (Ross et al., 1977). Moreover, in situations of ambiguity, complexity and uncertainty, incoming information that contradicts established views causes psychological discomfort. This results in people subconsciously selecting, organising, ignoring or distorting information to match their preferred, existing beliefs, a phenomenon known as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962), and avoiding situations that increase dissonance (Johnson & Levin, 2009, pp. 1596-1597).

To summarise, there is a high degree of terminological and conceptual ambiguity regarding what capacity development means in theory and practice. Such differences in understanding have a negative impact on project effectiveness, due to misunderstandings between partners about what to do and how to do it. Being aware of one's own biases and trying to put them aside when working towards developing capacity with others is crucial. Conceptual ambiguity hampers change, as there are no clear-cut truths, and different perspectives exist simultaneously.

6.2.2 Clashing principles

Another important reason underlying the challenges is that several of the principles governing how capacity development is supposed to work **clash with each other**.

It is clear from the results that there is a tension between the eight principles and the four fundamental challenges (Figure 1, Chapter 5) (paper III). All eight principles are widely discussed in the available scientific literature, though under slightly different names (papers I–IV), a point that others have also noted (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014a; Scott & Few, 2016; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019). However, the results show that the principles are connected and, at times, clash (papers III, V). These clashes are the primary reason for poor long-term results, as partners must prioritise adhering to some principles and not others (paper III). This is at least partly due to an inherent tension between several of the principles, and the upward direction of accountability. The upward accountability remains the dominant model in the aid system, and it prioritises accountability to donors over internal partners or the final beneficiaries[15] of the project (papers I–IV). The latter observation is in line with the literature in the field (De Weijer & McCandless, 2015, p. 85; Seddiky et al., 2020, pp. 2,8).

This **misguided accountability** to donors instead of internal partners clashes with all of the other principles, either directly or indirectly (paper III). Although high-level fora on aid effectiveness stipulate the importance of accountability to internal partners (OECD, 2005, 2008, 2011), the system does not allow this (papers I–IV). The focus is instead on predictability, log frames, deliverables, and reporting back to the donor (papers I–IV). Consequently, **local ownership**, **flexibility** and **sustainability** directly clash with accountability when the external partner does not want to give up control of the funded activities due to the perceived risk that the project will not deliver what is expected (papers III, V). **Learning** also clashes directly with accountability, when monitoring and evaluation emphasise predefined, visible deliverables and not what was learned and the actual impact (papers I, III), as confirmed by Guijt (2010, pp. 277-290).

Simister and Smith (2010, pp. 7,25) argue that **monitoring and evaluation** that is designed to meet one purpose (e.g. learning) is not necessarily well-suited to meet another (e.g. accountability). One could even argue that the two purposes are contradictory and clash. Accountability drives the need to produce results, while learning requires a more flexible, process-oriented approach. There are also indirect clashes between the principles due to dependencies. There is a clash between accountability and **long-term engagement**, due to the long-term's dependence on flexibility and sustainability (papers III, V). Working long-term requires flexibility, and time to adjust and respond to changes and contingencies that are increasingly difficult to anticipate in longer timeframes (paper III).

To summarise, the results show not only that there is tension between the eight principles, but also that several of the principles clash with each other, especially

[15] The term 'beneficiary' is commonly used in relation to international development cooperation to refer to the people or organisations benefitting from the project's results, who can be different from the internal partners who are directly engaged in the project.

with respect to misguided accountability to donors. These clashes make it difficult to apply all of the principles, and undermine capacity development over time.

6.2.3 Risk aversion

Another reason for the challenges is that capacity development is undermined by the **widespread aversion** of donors and external partners to engage in the perceived **risks** associated with applying some of the principles in practice (paper V). This is because they are accountable to other actors along the aid chain (papers I–V). Generally, upward accountability is more important for the external partner, as it may influence the likelihood of future funding (Simister & Smith, 2010, p. 19). The results highlight that external partners see themselves as primarily accountable for achieving the objectives of the funded capacity development project (paper V). External partners also feel responsible for the allocated funding, because they perceive that their internal partners' financial systems are less-established and not as trustworthy (paper V). In short, capacity development is perceived as a **risky business** (paper V). The results indicate that there are insufficient incentives along the aid chain to drive a shift towards flexible approaches (papers III–IV).

However, even when donors do provide **flexible and adaptable conditions**, which is still relatively rare, external partners are reluctant to work in this way with their internal partners (paper V). It is simply considered too much of a risk to hand over control (papers III, V). The same fear of **losing control** keeps donor staff from allowing flexible, adaptable, and long-term capacity development more often, as they too are accountable to others further up the aid chain (papers III–V). This upward accountability results in a **quixotic** (i.e., unrealistic or impractical) need for **control** that, in combination with insufficient incentives for change, constrains the application of the principles (paper V).

Furthermore, the results indicate that the development cooperation **budget** may translate into ineffective and harmful practices, when **funds are pushed out the door** at the end of the financial year (paper V). Consistent with the literature (Greijn & Fowler, 2010, p. 252), when money needs to be spent, there is less focus on the effectiveness and sustainability of the projects it is spent on. This inattentive spending increases risk in capacity development projects, and creates the conditions for a **risky business**, as organisations focus on spending everything in order to maintain their budgets in the coming years (paper V).

Moreover, when it comes to the challenges, there is an inevitable **clash** between **flexibility and adaptability**, and the quixotic need for **control** and upward accountability (papers III–V). This need is reflected in the requirement to have clear and deliverable results to **avoid project risks**, and to demonstrate to politicians and taxpayers in donor countries how the money is spent (papers III, V), as acknowledged by Andrews (2017a, pp. 38-39). For this reason, monitoring and

evaluation of capacity development projects has focused on quantitative short-term outputs, such as the number of people trained or the number of workshops provided (papers I–V). The results suggest that these targets shift the focus from the capacity development process to deliverables (paper V). The number of people trained is often used as a measure of success. However, this approach can be problematic, as it places the focus on outputs, rather than developing actual capacity. As a result, the overall goal of increasing organisational capacity may be overlooked in favour of achieving short-term targets (paper V), as confirmed by Honig (2018).

To summarise, it is clear that the risk aversion of donors and external partners severely constrains the application of the principles. Upward accountability results in an unrealistic need to control risks. Risk aversion cements the overwhelming focus of capacity development on providing short-term technical training to individuals, regardless of whether it is sustainable and efficient. Risk aversion is understandable given external and internal partners' more or less complete dependence on donor funding, increasing competition for resources, and the need to demonstrate visible results.

6.2.4 Simple and complex situations

The results indicate that most actors are overwhelmed with **complexity**. Actors adopt **linear thinking** to simplify things and avoid risks (paper III), as suggested by others (Coetzee et al., 2016, 2018). They often apply familiar **blueprint solutions** that, unfortunately, ignore actual cause and effect relationships (papers I, III, V). Gasper (2000, pp. 21-22) refers to this as **logic-less frames** (where pre-existing plans or logframes are used), while **lack-frames** refer to the situation where important information is left out, or planning tools are used in ways that reify linearity (Davies, 2004, 2005). The result is projects with linear sets of activities that are possible to control, but that rarely generate any real and sustainable impact, since connected issues are obscured and remain unaddressed (paper III), as emphasised by Becker (2009).

This understanding fits well with the Cynefin framework developed by Snowden et al. (2007), which emphasises that complex problems are often addressed with simple solutions. The model presents cause and effect relationships, for example, in simple, complicated and complex situations. **Simple** situations are characterised by a clear causal relationship and best practice. The cause-effect relationship is not obvious in **complicated** situations, and there are multiple right answers and good practices. Finally, in **complex** situations, cause-and-effect relationships are difficult to identify due to non-linear behaviour, interactions and emergence (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Snowden & Boone, 2007; Woodhill, 2010a, p. 54). The multitude of unknown, potentially changing variables creates **uncertainties**. The best approach to complex situations is to be **innovative**, and probe and test different solutions. In

other words, experiential learning and learning by doing, as reported in the literature (Belda et al., 2012, pp. 573-575; Clarke & Oswald, 2010).

This largely ignored complexity generates uncertainty regarding how the project will unfold (paper III). Uncertainty increases exponentially as the timeframe lengthens. The results clearly demonstrate that **actors dislike uncertainty**, and find it uncomfortable (paper III). This result is in line with Boulding (1975, p. 11), who argues that people engaged in planning generally dislike uncertainty, but that decision-makers dislike it even more, and, therefore, usually neglect it. Boulding warns us of the risk of "*illusions of certainty*". Uncomfortable uncertainty is hidden behind pretty, dressed-up plans that can seemingly be controlled. Uncertainty affects the types of activities included in projects, and is the main reason for the **short-termism** and **risk aversion** that hampers capacity development in general (paper III).

6.2.4.1 A technocratic approach

Consistent with a preference for simple, linear solutions and risk aversion, there is evidence of a highly **technocratic approach**[16], with a strong focus on developing individuals' or organisations' technical skills through training (papers I–V), as this is seen as less risky. Another potential reason for **the focus on training** is that projects tend to be easy to set up and conduct, particularly one-off events (papers I–II), "*we have tons and tons of training modules…*" (paper I). One-off events are also easier to evaluate in terms of outputs (papers I–II). This is clear evidence of what Tendler (2002, pp. 2-4) calls "*projectizing and micro-izing*", in which organisations "*produce a stream of bite-sized and discrete projects*", driven by their *modus operandi* "*to organise their work around designing and funding projects*", forgetting or ignoring other aspects that are needed to facilitate real development. Change processes are neither linear nor predictable.

As a consequence, capacity development partners must be ready to assess, reflect on and adapt their strategies, actions, timelines and sometimes even objectives, to be effective. Yet, capacity development engagements are often conceived of as **projects**, with predefined problems and solutions that must be addressed within limited timeframes and budgets, which are under the control of donors (papers I–III). This 'projectised' approach does not provide the flexibility or long-term commitment required to support non-linear change processes, and many capacity development initiatives are doomed to failure (Honadle & Rosengard, 1983).

6.2.4.2 Isomorphic mimicry

The focus on measurable outputs, along with overly technical solutions, supports ongoing **isomorphic mimicry** (paper V). Isomorphic mimicry describes a partner's

[16] Technocrats are individuals with technical training and occupations who perceive that many important societal problems are solvable by applying technology and related applications.

tendency to mimic other partners' successes, and import or duplicate processes, systems and best practices (Andrews et al., 2017b, p. 29; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). While these processes may have been effective elsewhere, they have not necessarily been validated within, or adapted to the local context. As Andrews et al. (2017a, p. 31) observe, "*going through the ritualistic motions of 'trainings' counts as success even if no one's practices actually improve*" and "*passing a labor law is counted as success even if lack of enforcement means it never changes the everyday experiences of workers*". Partners agree to mimic or mirror the original prepositioning model, design and best practice (paper V), with the consequence that although they look capable, they are not (Andrews et al., 2017b, p. 29). Hence, solutions and outcomes end up being **supply-driven** rather than demand-driven. They are less likely to be contextually fit-for-purpose, and tend to take the form of **blueprint solutions**. In other words, a successful project produces short-term outputs with fewer risks, even though it may not, in the long term, contribute to sustainable capacity development (paper V).

6.2.4.3 Expert blind spot

Another reason for the challenges is **expert blind spot**. The expert blind spot often prevents – or at least severely hampers – external partners' understanding of the local context (papers III–V). The term refers to the situation where the specific interests, mindsets and perspectives of the external expert influences what they see, how they describe the problem, and the objectives of the capacity development intervention (paper III). When external partners focus on their own areas of expertise, strategies and priorities, they become blind to the actual problems (papers III–V). This excessive **focus on the person's own technical capacity** and their inability to appreciate the value of local knowledge prevents them understanding the local context. Furthermore, embassies are often tasked with operationalising bilateral strategies and reporting on the capacity needs of the country they are located in. This can be problematic, since embassy staff must follow their donor's strategies and are thus likely to only identify needs that are consistent with these strategies, and their own knowledge and interests (paper V). The expert blind spot problem is exacerbated by outdated or prescriptive guidelines, and **blueprint solutions** (papers I, III, V). This leads to a lack of understanding of existing capacity, and makes it difficult to adapt project plans designed by external experts to the local context. **Ownership** thus rests with single-minded external experts.

To summarise, external partners try to avoid complex and uncertain situations, and come up with simple or linear sets of activities that can be controlled. Blueprint solutions (copy and paste), pre-existing plans and log frames (logic-less frames), and lack-frames where important information is left out are all routinely used. It appears that there is still a strong focus on developing the technical skills of individuals or organisations through training (the technocratic approach), along with a desire to mimic other partners' successes, and import or duplicate processes,

systems and best practices (isomorphic mimicry). Finally, there is an excessive focus on external experts' own technical capacity (expert blind spot).

6.2.5 Mindset lag

It is clear from the results that there is a **mindset lag** between the rapidly changing context of capacity development, and the pace of change in the mindsets of partners (paper III). Mindset lag undermines the effectiveness of capacity development when external partners have not internalised the radical and rapid changes in recent decades, and continue to be guided by **traditional perspectives and roles** (paper III). The results show that the illusion remains that knowledge can be transferred. The idea that there is more knowledge in one place—donor countries and external partners—than in others—internal partner countries—is an interesting finding, and suggests that, in some cases, capacity development remains unilateral (papers III, V). This illusion, together with the prevalence of short-term projects, leads to the assumption of stereotypical roles in the capacity development partnership.

One reason for mindset lag is that the division of **roles and responsibilities** can be vague, and understood differently by different partners (papers I–IV). There is no evidence of a consensus or clarity on the roles that external partners play in capacity development (paper I). The results suggest that one reason for this is that it has not been considered sufficiently by external partners (paper I). Recruitment and training tend to focus on technical skills, rather than discussing roles and approaches (paper I). The results clearly show that external partners maintain traditional perspectives and roles when engaging in capacity development (papers I–IV).

Mindset lag is further complicated by the seemingly ever-increasing rate of **dynamic change** (paper III). This is, unfortunately, largely ignored by actors who have to present detailed plans of all activities in advance, to obtain funding (paper III). The system and its actors are hardwired to see the world as static, and the future as an extrapolation of the past (Meyer, 2006, pp. 161-163), which adds a cognitive dimension to the issue of control (paper III). It is not only **donor accountability** that undermines **flexibility**, but, paradoxically, the level of participation. The more participants in the design process, the more complex and time-consuming the decision-making, and therefore the less flexible the plan becomes when implemented. This is what Gasper (2000, p. 22) calls a **lock-frame**. Partners are locked into the initial plan through a distributed network of control, regardless of what else might happen.

To summarise, there is a mindset lag between the changing, dynamic context of capacity development and the pace of change in the mindsets of partners. This leads to traditional perspectives and roles being maintained, and projects and plans remaining fixed and not updated (lock-frame).

6.2.6 Temporal discord

It is clear from the results that there is a **temporal discord** (paper III), which is another reason for the challenges. Capacity development requires **long-term processes** and engagement, while the system requires **short-term feedback** (papers I, III–V). Short-term outcomes are less of a risk compared to long-term and uncertain effects. Furthermore, there is a wish among political leaders to have quick, visible gains in order to retain their popularity among voters and hopefully be re-elected (paper I). The challenge is, therefore, to overcome the tendency to focus on short-term feedback, and appreciate the value of long-term, uncertain future rewards (Meyer, 2006, p. 154). **Ownership** and **partnership** require trust, which takes time to develop (papers I, III). Similarly, **learning** requires time (papers I, III) and a dedicated space (Soal, 2010, p. 134), due to the lag between assimilation and accommodation of the information (cf. Elmgren & Henriksson, 2014, pp. 24, 40-41). This detrimental temporal discord is exacerbated by its institutionalisation into short-term funding cycles (paper II). Actors voice their frustration that short-term, quick-impact projects such as training and workshops are funded, while the real problems may have less to do with the amount of money than the time available (paper III). Much more can be done with the same amount of money in flexible, long-term, low-intensity interventions than static, short-term, high-intensity projects (paper III).

Contextualisation also requires time (papers I, III). This can be a challenge in the initial period before funding is secured (paper III). It is particularly problematic when the initial scoping study is underfunded and rushed, and not enough time is allowed to facilitate **local ownership**, **mutual learning** and establishing **partnerships**. External partners rarely take time to have the proverbial **cup of tea** with internal partners (papers III, V). While the results indicate that, in general, internal partners aspire to develop their technical capacity, they are also frustrated when external partners provide support that is not adapted to their specific circumstances, needs and aspirations (paper IV). If their views are not taken into consideration, any activities risk being based on what external partners believe is important, rather than reflecting existing capacities and actual needs. This is clearly connected to the fact that external partners lack sufficient contextual capacity (papers I–II, IV), a point that is identified in other studies (Woodhill, 2010b, p. 34).

To summarise, the focus on short-term feedback rather than long-term engagement (temporal discord) permeates the entire capacity development system. It undermines all of the principles for effective implementation, and ignores the importance of taking the time to drink a cup of tea together to build partnerships.

6.2.7 Power relations

Power relations add to **complexity** and are another reason for the challenges. The results indicate that there are inherent **power imbalances** in the system, as donors hold power and internal partners do not (paper III). Power is not only held by the donor agencies that sit at the top of the hierarchy, but also anyone who controls funding and budgets along the aid chain (paper III), as confirmed by others (Aagaard & Eberhard Trykker, 2020, pp. 269,278; Girgis, 2007, p. 354). These powerful donors can oblige actors lower down in the hierarchy to comply with their decisions (papers III, V), which is what Lukes (2005, pp. 16-19) refers to as the **first dimension of power**—power over decision making. In addition, the results show that donors exercise enormous power over what is put on the agenda in the first place (papers III, V). This is what Lukes (2005, pp. 20-25) refers to as the **second dimension of power**—the power to set the agenda. In this context, it encompasses the countries that each donor decides to focus on, the specific issues and sectors they are interested in, and the amounts and timeframes of their funding (paper V). Finally, donors can influence the desires, preferences, and motives of the less-powerful in ways that correspond to their interests, and determine structures and norms for practice (papers III, V). This is referred to as the **third dimension of power** (Lukes, 2005, pp. 25-29). Donors shape the structures, norms and expectations of capacity development through setting priorities and making decisions over time (papers III, V).

The above point is clearly visible in the results. The historical prioritisation of donor interests over local needs has created a dynamic in which both internal and external partners structure their functions around the donor, rather than needs on the ground, in order to obtain funding and keep functioning (paper V), as reported in the literature (Banks et al., 2015, p. 710). The nexus of power dimensions must be understood, and taken into account if capacity development principles are ever to trump politics (papers III, V).

Power stems not only from control over funding. **Induced authority** refers to the situation where the powerful can make the less powerful voluntarily comply when compliance leads to a reward (Wrong, 1980, pp. 44-49). It can also be rooted in the legal and institutional frameworks – codified or not – that determine rules, roles, responsibilities, etc. (cf. Weber, 1947, p. 328), or in **competent authority**, which refers to the specialised knowledge and skills of experts (Wrong, 1980, pp. 52-60). Although new donors are emerging, and expertise is growing in developing countries, the power balance is still heavily weighted in favour of donors and external partners in the global north (paper III). As long as these donors remain unwilling to relinquish some of their power, be it financial, institutional, or competence-based, other actors will have to answer to them (paper III).

Power defines and influences **local ownership**. For example (paper I), "*Ownership was very much with us, the external partner, due to the time schedule; we did a lot*

of things to be able to follow the time schedule". Another example is when the internal partner does not do what is planned or expected, possibly due to a lack of authority or ability, and the external partner reacts by doing the work themselves (paper II). Lopes and Theisohn (2003, pp. 77-78) confirm this behaviour; external partners take over tasks, and justify their actions by the need to get the work done. External partners also tend to bring in capacity from outside, and view their ideas as the best solutions (paper I). This indicates that one of the main reasons for the lack of local ownership is that external partners and consultants propose projects with objectives that are not jointly defined with internal partners (papers I, IV).

The results cast doubt on whether the theoretically important principle of **local ownership** is truly achievable within current structures (paper V). Another reason for this situation is that while the concept of ownership is often used, it is not always clear what it means (papers I–III), as acknowledged elsewhere (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 29; Schulz et al., 2005, p. 23) or how it can be generated (Lucas, 2013, p. 8; Thomas, 2013). For example, there is uncertainty regarding who should draw up project proposals, and who is responsible for monitoring and evaluation (papers I, IV). One potential reason for this uncertainty is that partners have different perspectives regarding what should be evaluated (paper I). Capacity development projects are **set up, planned and owned by the external partner**, which is a key challenge when addressing local ownership.

In addition, it is clear from the results that there are different opinions on how long the external partner should be physically present (paper IV). On the one hand, the results suggest that the external partner should **second staff** on a long-term basis, because this facilitates collaboration, the formation of personal relationships, and capacitates the external partner with respect to the context and existing capacities (paper IV). However, at the same time, there is a risk that the external partner does all the work, and takes over the process, resulting in a lack of ownership and sustainability. The results suggest that external experts should stay for a short, intensive period, rather than having one person stay for many years (paper IV).

To summarise, power imbalances regarding decision-making, agenda-setting and shaping structures, norms and expectations obstruct capacity development, leading to a lack of local ownership. These imbalances are inherent in a system where donors hold power and internal partners do not. Relinquishing control means relinquishing power.

6.2.8 Donor priorities and a lack of motivation to change

Donor priorities and funding mechanisms can undermine capacity development due to a lack of flexibility, pressure to show visible results, and a consequent lack of time to understand the local context and ensure local ownership (papers I, IV). **Donors drive the agenda**. They identify priority countries, funding requirements,

and dictate what can be done with the money, all of which is passed on to each actor in the aid chain (papers III–IV). However, it is important to note that even the biggest donors are accountable to somebody else, normally governments. Governments, in turn, are more or less accountable to taxpayers, fuelling demands for flag waving, visible results in tight timeframes (papers III, V), as confirmed by Watson (2006, pp. vii, 17).

At each step in the aid chain, the funding provider adds conditionalities for the receiver, which aggregate and increasingly restrict the use of the money (papers III–IV). These **cascading conditionalities** end with the actors who are responsible for actually doing the work, and essentially cripple their ability to work towards most of the principles for capacity development, with devastating impacts on effectiveness (papers III–IV). Furthermore, the results clearly suggest that most donors' political priorities undermine the capacity development principles, as the type of donors studied here do not exist in a vacuum—in reality, they are highly politicised, tax-funded organisations (paper V). In the end, what is funded is determined by what the donor can, and is willing to fund in its political context (paper V). While this situation has been reported in previous studies (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 53), it is not necessarily what is needed on the ground, as it undermines the ownership principle and reinforces unequal power structures.

External partners focus on their donor's priority countries. They are resource-driven, use blueprint solutions to meet their predefined objectives, perceive themselves as organised and committed, often do the work themselves, and blame the disinterest of internal partners on local culture, a lack of capacity, corruption, etc. (papers II–III), as confirmed by the literature (Baaz, 2005, p. 2). To a large extent, this is a contemporary version of both the **White Man's Burden**, namely "*to civilize and develop the underdeveloped*", according to Baaz (2005, pp. 36-37), and the **fundamental attribution error**[17]. Close links with prevailing power issues and relations mean that it can have a considerable influence on any type of capacity development project or partnership (Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003, p. 5). This way of working has been ineffective since organised development cooperation began in the 1950s (Smillie, 2001). External partners must realise that the countries they work in are very diverse, and that most places have changed since the 1950s, or even ten years ago (paper III).

The results indicate that there is **no real motivation to change** current practices (paper III). Although there is a clear disconnect between what people say, and what they can do, the wheels keep turning (paper III). Internal partners resist change as

[17] The fundamental attribution error refers to the fact that human beings tend to attribute their own behaviour to situational constraints, while attributing the behaviour of others to their abilities, personalities and intentions (Johnson & Levin, 2009, p. 1597).

power rests with local elites who reap benefits from the current system (paper III), as noted by others (Mansuri & Rao, 2013, pp. 18,39-40).

The same goes for **external partners**. In this case, external partners receive exorbitant contracts and fund huge bureaucracies with profits gained from running the current system (paper III). Traditionally, external partners are deeply engaged doers; they require a lot of time and even more money (paper III). Although the need for such support has been decreasing—at an increasing pace—for many years, as local capacities have improved in governmental agencies, universities, and the private and voluntary sectors, the system is still bent on providing it, even if it would be more productive to adopt a coaching and facilitating role (papers I, III), as suggested by others (Becker, 2014; Preskill & Boyle, 2008, p. 447; Stone Motes & McCartt Hess, 2007, p. 20; Thol et al., 2012). The reason is obvious. Without the intensive involvement of external partners, many international experts would be unemployed, and many international organisations would disappear (papers I, III). Fukuda-Parr et al. (2002, p. 11) argue that no-one is willing to 'rock the boat' because of the risk of being replaced or losing funding. Not only does giving up control, and putting internal partners in the driver's seat have financial and status implications, it is also about **relinquishing power**.

To summarise, current tensions between the capacity development principles should guide the aid system's current donor priorities and funding requirements. The prioritisation of donors' political interests over local needs makes it difficult to apply the above-described principles. Furthermore, capacity development is obstructed by cascading conditionalities and a lack of motivation for change.

6.3 Addressing the challenges in capacity development

The third theme is about addressing the challenges in capacity development. This theme has a more prescriptive focus, and, unlike the first two themes, lacks direct empirical backing. It is more focused on reasoning, and provides somewhat speculative suggestions, without necessarily being able to prove them.

6.3.1 Manage conceptual ambiguity

Effective **communication** is essential when it comes to explaining the concept of capacity development (papers I–III, V), as suggested in the literature (Eade, 2007, p. 2; Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 1; Thywissen, 2006, pp. 10-11). It is therefore important to ensure that messages are unambiguous, clear and accurate, and to clarify and understand different perspectives on capacity development. Working towards clarification, rather than making assumptions is necessary for people to have a shared understanding.

As Kaplan states, "*50 % of the world's problems are caused by people using the same words for different things. The other 50 % are caused by people using different words for the same things*" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 408).

Conceptual ambiguity hampers change as there are no clear-cut truths, and different perspectives exist simultaneously. Such differences in understanding have a negative impact on project effectiveness due to misunderstandings between partners about what to do and how to do it. Conceptual ambiguity can also lead to unclear causes, objectives, actions, roles or effects, making it difficult to determine the best course of action and what decisions to make. Therefore, it is imperative to have clear communication and a clear understanding of all aspects of the project to ensure its success. It is time to operationalise the key terms and concepts, and develop a glossary.

To summarise, effective communication and conceptual clarity are crucial for successful capacity development, as they minimise misunderstandings between partners and reduce ambiguity.

6.3.2 Manage capacities

The results suggest that there are **three requisite types of capacity**; technical, processual, and contextual (Figure 3) (paper IV). **Technical capacity** is the capacity to perform the required technical activities, and is the conventional view (CADRI, 2011, p. 11). **Processual capacity** is the capacity to both manage a project and organisation as a whole, and the ability to facilitate the capacity development process (paper IV). Project management and organisational skills are commonly described as functional capacity (CADRI, 2011; UNDP, 2009, pp. 19-20; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20), while the facilitating aspect is often described as 'soft' capacity (paper IV), and is often overlooked (Pearson, 2011a, p. 4). Soft capacities complement 'harder' technical and functional capacities. Processual capacity includes both the functional and soft capacities. The results clearly demonstrate that facilitating the process is essential (paper IV). The third, crucially important capacity is what is here referred to as contextual capacity (paper IV). **Contextual capacity** is the capacity to understand the local context, existing capacities and needs (paper IV), but it is not an explicit part of other influential frameworks for understanding capacity (e.g. Pearson, 2011a, p. 4; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 20). Internal partners are likely to understand the context better than external partners. They know what will work and what will not (paper IV).

The results indicate that these three capacities interact, and are interdependent, with the result that a lack of one capacity undermines the utility of another (paper IV). This is perhaps most clearly visible in internal partners' frustration when technically-competent external partners cannot support capacity development, due to a poor contextual understanding (paper IV).

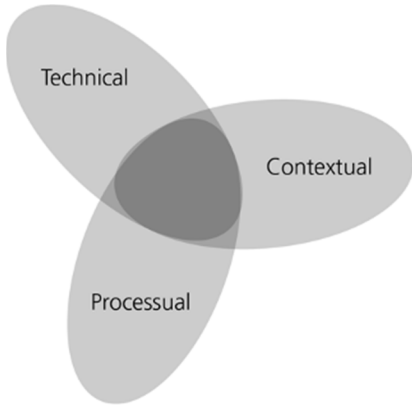

Figure 3. The three requisite capacities.

Highlighting the importance of each of the three capacities, and their interdependence, is crucial for capacity development (paper IV), especially as current practices focus overwhelmingly on the technical skills of individuals (papers I–V), as confirmed by the literature (Acquaye-Baddoo, 2010, p. 68; Scott & Few, 2016, p. 148; Scott et al., 2015, p. 41). Although it has been pointed out that developing technical capacity can exert pressure for, and initiate the development of other capacities (Scott et al., 2015, p. 57), this point is regularly overlooked, potentially resulting in a lack of ownership and sustainability, as well as power imbalances in the partnership (paper IV).

Even if external partners do have the necessary technical and processual capacities to facilitate capacity development processes, they still need to understand and adapt their activities to the local context. **Understanding the local context** is synonymous with understanding existing capacities, and the close relationship with the prerequisite of local ownership cannot be stressed enough (paper I). This is often overlooked in the current discourse, which sees capacity development as something the external partner can deliver (paper I-V); however, in practice, it must be learnt in context over time (Lavergne & Saxby, 2001, pp. 3, 10). The results clearly show that internal partners are the experts, and that external partners must learn from them (paper IV). Therefore, it is time to listen to internal partners (papers III–IV), as others have pointed out (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 15). Framing the issue in terms of contextual capacity makes the potential for mutual learning more explicit (paper IV). Acknowledging external partners' need to develop contextual capacity encourages them to listen to their internal partners, and to question entrenched assumptions about the context they are working in. Such a dialogue demands, in turn, processual capacity.

Contextual capacity is multifaceted. It goes beyond recognising existing capacities (papers I–II, IV), and includes having a thorough understanding of national

priorities and institutions in particular, together with political, social, cultural, economic, physical and environmental factors in general (papers I–II, IV). This observation is confirmed in the literature (Scott & Few, 2016, p. 149). Comprehensive **capacity assessments** are important not only because they make it possible to identify existing capacities, but also because they enhance local ownership, capture traditional cultural perspectives, and help to include local change agents in the project (paper I). It is also important to understand that communities are not homogeneous, but made up of diverse groups with different vulnerabilities, capacities and needs (paper I), as acknowledged elsewhere (Anderson & Woodrow, 1998, p. 17). Diversity extends to who the stakeholders are, and the organisational set-up, routines and incentives (paper II). Flexibility and adaptability are considered important principles for capacity development, along with recognising changing conditions and the continuous development of local contexts (paper V). Without such a contextual understanding, external partners lack the awareness and flexibility that is needed to effectively support capacity development processes in changing contexts (paper IV).

Closely connected to contextual capacity is the capacity to understand the **processes** and **readiness for change** (papers II, IV), a point that is also highlighted by Pearson (2011b, pp. 16-19). Without the ability to understand and facilitate capacity development processes, the technical and contextual capacities of partners make little contribution to the success of the project (paper IV). Even if partners have the technical knowledge necessary for the task at hand, as well as the contextual understanding needed to adapt activities to local circumstances, a lack of capacity to understand **how change happens**, and what is required to facilitate it, is likely to end in a failure to generate any real and sustainable change (paper IV), as confirmed by other authors (Eyben et al., 2008, pp. 201,207). **Processual capacity** refers to the ability to identify how partners perceive change, provide explicit explanations of these changes, and identify discrepancies between perceptions (paper IV). This ability is connected to the well-understood importance of adaptability and flexibility (papers II–V). While this point has been noted by other authors (e.g. Bolger, 2000, pp. 2, 6; Scott & Few, 2016, p. 149; Scott et al., 2015, p. 41; UNDRR & Coppola, 2019, p. 22), phrasing it in terms of processual capacity makes it more explicit. There is a need to understand when the time is right for different types of activities, and to create a **sense of urgency for change** among relevant actors (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 3). The results thus indicate that it is crucial to understand the complexity of the continuously-changing local context, and partners' differing needs at different times, to facilitate change processes (paper IV). Rather than imposing blueprint solutions and focusing overwhelmingly on technical capacities, external partners must develop contextual and processual capacity to identify and match the needs of their internal partners (paper IV).

To summarise, three requisite and interdependent types of capacity—technical, processual, and contextual—are proposed to foster sustainability.

6.3.3 Manage relationships

The results suggest that external partners should change their **mindset** (papers III-IV). External partners need to develop their capacity to **listen and build partnerships**, instead of maintaining the attitude that they can build capacities almost on their own (paper III). For instance, the all-too-common focus on *ad hoc* short-term training needs to be updated. It is time to realise that most developing countries have universities, which have the capacity to institutionalise the needed education (papers III–IV), as identified by other authors (Becker & van Niekerk, 2015). It is time to **rethink capacity development roles**, and how the different partners interact (papers I, III–IV), as suggested by Motes and Hess (2007). The goal should be to rebalance relationships to facilitate **local ownership**, establish fruitful **partnerships**, and support the range of other principles discussed above. The results underline the importance of soft, or **people skills**. When participants are asked to give recommendations for capacity development, they emphasise personal skills and personality—while nobody highlights technical skills (paper I). Many studies indicate that **emotional intelligence** is twice as important as technical knowledge (Goleman, 2004, p. 2). There needs to be an emphasis on the ability to build trust, be patient, facilitate change, be sensitive to the overall agenda, values and intentions (paper I), take the **time to drink tea** (paper III), and develop capacity through friendship (Girgis, 2007, p. 357) – prioritise connection before content.

Capacity exists not only within each partner, but also in the **relationships** between partners (paper IV), an observation that is made by Woodhill (2010b, p. 25). This more relational notion of capacity seems to be largely overlooked in the results (paper IV); this could be due to a general absence of organised ways of talking about experiences (cf. Wenger, 2009, p. 214). All learning starts with a disjuncture between what partners know and their current experience (Jarvis, 2009, pp. 25-30), when they realise that their ingrained understandings and habitual actions are no longer sustainable (Elkjær, 2009, p. 83). The **mutual learning** that is called for in paper IV can only happen through partners **communicating** their experiences (Elkjær, 2009, p. 82) and **social participation** (Wenger, 2009, pp. 210-211).

6.3.3.1 Equal partnerships and mutual learning

It is clear from the results that **equal partnerships** are important, and involve an open dialogue about roles, expectations and values (paper IV). If internal partners are unable to refuse the capacity development that is provided, as highlighted by the results, there is no space for genuine local ownership (paper V). According to Leutner and Müller (in Keijzer, 2013, p. 8), "*[o]wnership is expressed by the ability and possibility of both sides to say 'no' to offers as well as to demands*". Mutuality embraces the spirit of partnership (Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 217). Thus, partnership encompasses **mutual respect**, influence, accountability, learning and trust, and the willingness to achieve mutually agreed objectives (paper IV), as stated elsewhere (Brinkerhoff, 2002, pp. 216-217; Neuhann & Barteit, 2017, p. 10).

There should be a clear, explicit and **mutual** understanding of the values and objectives of the project. Therefore, applying a **co-diagnosis, co-design, co-acting and co-learning** lens can help in recognising that all parties can contribute in different, but equally important ways (paper IV), which is in line with Armstrong (2013, p. 4). When implemented in the context of a more balanced and equal partnership, all parties benefit from mutual learning (paper IV). While it is obvious that individuals who engage in an activity learn something, mutual learning requires both internal and external partners to learn something significant (paper IV). This is especially important because, as acknowledged elsewhere (McMahon, 2010, p. 80), such partnerships are subject to fundamental power asymmetries (papers I, III–IV). Although the latter cannot be resolved, they can at least be reduced by explicitly acknowledging that all partners make an essential contribution. Therefore, **mutual learning** not only relies on internal and external partners acknowledging their respective contributions and **unlearning old habits**, but also them finding time to have an open dialogue about their perspectives on past, present and future partnerships—which may result in both consensus and controversy (paper IV).

Capacity development has great potential to foster **mutual learning** if, and only if, explicit attention is paid to, at least, both technical and contextual **capacities**. External partners generally provide the technical, and internal partners the contextual (paper IV). This is obviously a simplification, as some internal partners have impressive technical capacity, and some external partners have vast experience working and living in the relevant context. However, by making the need for both types of capacities explicit, and highlighting the general distribution of work between the parties, the research paves the way towards a more equal partnership, as emphasised in the literature (Becker, 2014, pp. 207-208; OECD, 2011, pp. 3-4; UNISDR, 2015, p. 25; United Nations, 2015).

In addition, the **partnership** should ensure that **roles** are clearly and evenly distributed. Internal partners should take on **leading roles**, external partners should take on **supporting roles**, and all partners should understand this division (papers I–V). A more productive partnership would consist of internal partners setting their own priorities and identifying their needs, before seeking external assistance (paper IV), as suggested by other authors (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002, p. 12). The partnership relies upon the contextual, processual and technical knowledge of both internal and external partners to foster sustainable learning and change processes (paper IV). The results indicate that middle-income countries have a very clear idea of what they need, and they have sufficient resources to do things themselves, which shifts the balance of power in their favour (papers III, V). In short, the external partner needs to **rethink their role** in the capacity development partnership (papers III–V).

6.3.3.2 Roles and responsibilities

The results suggest that the roles of both internal and external partners should not be fixed (papers I-V). Instead the roles should be **flexible** and **adapted** to the context, existing capacities, the needs of the internal partner, and the abilities of the external partner (paper IV), as argued by Stone Motes and McCartt Hess (2007, p. 117). The results imply that the external partner can adopt a **range of roles**—expert, advisor, teacher, facilitator or coach (Figure 4).

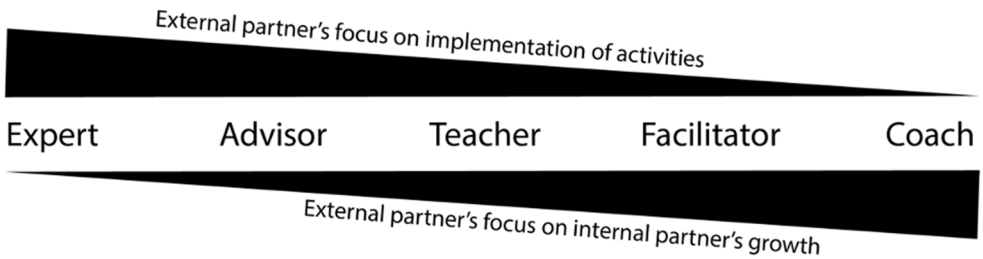

Figure 4. Role and focus of the external partner. Adapted from Champion et al. (2010, p. 61).

Depending on the role that is adopted, the external partner's focus shifts between implementing activities and supporting the growth of the internal partner (Figure 4). The **expert** undertakes the task and solves the problem him or herself. The **advisor** uses their knowledge and experience to help the internal partner to solve a specific problem (Champion et al., 2010, p. 60). Both of these roles give greater weight to technical capacities and the implementation of activities, and less to processual capacities and the internal partner's growth. When the focus shifts to the growth of the internal partner, the external partner takes on the role of **teacher**. Although the teacher can explain the basic principles, and provide the skills required to complete a task or solve a problem, the focus remains somewhat on results and the implementation of activities. The **facilitator** has a neutral, convening role—facilitating brainstorming, planning and meetings (Champion et al., 2010, p. 60). Here, the focus is even more on the process, but the facilitator still holds the pen. When the implementation of activities is put aside, and the focus is completely on the growth of the internal partner, the external partner becomes a **coach**. This role requires more processual capacity than the role of a facilitator or teacher, which, in turn, requires more processual capacity than the role of an advisor or expert. The coach observes and leaves the internal partner to carry out the task and solve the problem, while providing suggestions and feedback, and discussing the pros and cons of different options and actual results (Champion et al., 2010, p. 60). Motes and Hess (2007, p. 20) also suggest that coaching is a useful strategy for capacity development, while Curman (2006, p. 94) notes that a coaching approach is about listening and asking questions. The key point is to develop existing capacities, and

help people to help themselves (paper I). As Whitmore (2003, p. 99) states clearly, "*The question is the answer! To let them answer their own questions*".

The results indicate that **all five roles are important** (paper IV). The roles are needed at different times, in different situations, and for different purposes (paper IV), as suggested by others (cf. Champion et al., 2010, pp. 61-62). The specific roles that are needed at the beginning of the project may not be needed later on, and moving towards roles with a greater focus on the growth of the internal partner could be seen as a proxy for progress (paper IV). This is in line with the work of Bolger (2000, pp. 5-6) and Yachkaschi (2010, p. 201) who both advocate that the role of the external partner should shift from implementer and expert towards a greater emphasis on facilitation, in order to foster collective learning, ownership and empowerment. Roles should therefore be **continuously evolving**, routinely renegotiated, and clearly communicated (papers I–II, IV). As Champion et al. (2010, pp. 62-63) suggest, this would help to meet expectations and ensure that the external partner is not needed anymore (paper I).

Depending on the needs of the internal partner, some roles may require a **physical, in-country presence** for longer time periods, whereas people in other roles, such as facilitator, are only needed temporarily (paper IV). The results also suggest that external experts should stay for a **short, intensive period of time** rather than having one person who stays for years (paper IV). An option would be to rely more on **technical developments** in the future; namely, a transition to **digital** meetings with partners, and distance working (paper IV). In-person training should be replaced by opportunities for e-learning via webinars. The external partner could act as a **sounding board**, and coach remotely. A national consultant would then step up and drive the capacity development process, together with the internal partner (paper IV), as argued by Chadwick (2020). This approach is likely to help decode the local context, and ensure that ownership rests with the internal partner (paper IV).

The results thus suggest that the internal partner should determine what kind of expertise is needed and why, when and for how long (paper IV), a finding that is in line with the localisation agenda (Barbelet, 2018). Moreover, many donors express a desire to take a more active role—facilitators, matchmakers and brokers of change processes—and some donor agencies already see themselves as partners in the projects they fund (paper V). Donors consider that they bring added value at the international level, with regards to the dialogue, and at the national or project level, by using their convening power to bring actors together (paper V).

To summarise, external partners should change their mindset and develop their capacity to listen, communicate, build trust and establish fruitful partnerships. Equal partnerships, social participation, and mutual learning are essential, and require an open dialogue about roles, expectations and values. Roles can no longer be static or fixed, rather they must change depending on the purpose of the partnership and

project. The roles should be flexible and adapted to the context. In some cases, the focus is on the implementation of activities; here, the external partner can take the role of technical expert and support internal partner growth. The internal partner, on the other hand, can take the lead in contextualising knowledge and capacities, and guide the external partner. Often, roles can shift back and forth.

6.3.4 Manage time

Time is a cross-cutting issue in capacity development, and it is integral to all of the principles (papers I–V). A long-term perspective is one of the most important principles for sustainability, while the other principles depend on the project being oriented to the long term. To date, research has not identified any negative effects of a long-term orientation, but enough time is rarely allocated to projects (paper III). According to Ahrenfelt (2001), it takes about two to five years to make reasonably big changes in an organisation, and capacity development projects normally need five to ten years for the benefits to manifest (UNDP, 2002, p. 38; Wing, 2004, p. 157). Others suggest that 15 months is too short for most capacity development activities (Bhatt & Aysan, 2008, p. 4).

Sufficient time should be dedicated to **planning** and articulating the **objectives** of a capacity development initiative. This would ensure that the process is **locally owned** and demand-driven, rather than an initiative with objectives dictated by donors and external partners (paper III), as acknowledged elsewhere (Scott et al., 2014, p. 18; Wing, 2004, p. 157). Therefore, there is a need for longer timeframes, and the explicit inclusion of **context analyses** and the **assessment of existing capacities**. This change could be initiated by **champions**, rather than expecting everyone involved to take ownership (Fisher, 2010, p. 115; Soal, 2010, p. 134). Capacity development is a function of context, culture and existing capacities, and the change process requires a multidimensional, holistic and complex approach. As Woodhill (2010a, p. 53) notes, there is a need to navigate complexity in simple, complicated and complex situations.

Flexibility and **learning** are required in order to respond to changes, and should be integrated into the design of initiatives. More time and freedom, along with a broader scope, would allow partners to take the current situation as a basis for the project's design, and adapt it to the local context (paper III), as confirmed by other authors (Scott et al., 2014, pp. 15,18). Local ownership relies on internal partners being given enough time to get involved, share their experiences, and influence the capacity development process through **penmanship** and **authorship** (Becker, 2014, pp. 229-230,241). External partners should therefore allow time for that well-known **cup of tea** with their internal partners (papers III, V), as mentioned above. Girgis (2007, p. 357) takes this one step further, and points to the value of spending non-professional time together to develop capacity through **friendship**, an allusion to the vital importance of trust between partners (paper II). McWha (2011, p. 36) also

highlights that to gain trust you need to form a friendship. However, the project management cycle does not normally facilitate these vital aspects, and does not even allow enough time to for partners to get to know each other (paper I).

To summarise, although there are no apparent negative effects of a long-term orientation, sufficient time is rarely allowed. Longer timeframes, and the explicit inclusion of the need to allocate time to planning, local ownership, partnership building, learning, context analyses, assessing existing capacities, and drinking tea would pave the way for important change to be initiated and sustained. There is value in allocating sufficient time to be flexible, including champions in the capacity development process, and developing capacity through friendship and mutual collaboration.

6.3.5 Manage control and risk

If donors want to provide internal partners with more flexible conditions, they need to **relinquish control** by including formal, explicit risk-sharing requirements when the partnership is formulated (papers III, V). Soal (2010, p. 132) emphasises the need for a willingness to relinquish control. Mutuality is an essential part of this process. **Mutuality** refers to a partnership in which mutual respect is a key component, according to Brinkerhoff (2002, pp. 217,225). It encompasses mutual benefits and responsibilities, as all partners share the risks, and take credit for their work (Armitage et al., 2008, pp. 86-87; Brinkerhoff, 2002, p. 225; Eade, 2007, pp. 630,636-637). One option, according to the results (paper V), is to provide direct **core support** to internal partners. Although it is argued that this method pushes power, risks and money on to internal partners, it also respects existing capacities, and enables internal partners to determine their own priorities, agendas and change processes. However, the results indicate resistance to this approach, which could be ascribed to donor agencies' and external partners' **fear of losing power and control** (papers III, V).

Furthermore, **donor pull-out** is a long-established challenge in international development cooperation (paper IV), as recognised by Edwards and Hulme (1992). This problem can only be addressed by more long-term, dependable funding from international donors, and closer attention being given to the actual priorities of national governments. Another suggestion is to include internal partners as **co-investors** in their development processes, and to assist them in finding local funding sources (paper V), as suggested by Hodgson (2018, p. 7). A complete overhaul of the aid system is needed if capacity development is to function as the expected instrument for sustainable development. Power needs to be redistributed along the aid chain. International organisations must wake up, and see that the world is changing. Roles, and the ways partners interact have to be reconsidered. Actors must accept that they have to **live with complexity and uncertainty**. Control must be replaced by trust, and accountability must be focused on internal partners.

To summarise, effective capacity development requires donors and external partners to relinquish control, and allow greater flexibility and adaptability over longer timeframes. This requires, in turn, explicit risk-sharing agreements along the aid chain. Mutuality is crucial to the process, and implies that each partner has rights and obligations to the other. The provision of core support, engaging internal partners as co-investors, and increased local funding are some ways that internal partners can secure resources and determine their own development priorities; at the same time, donors and external partners must respect local capacity and ownership.

6.3.6 Manage sustainable change

Sustainability is dependent on local ownership, partnership, the context, flexibility, learning, and a long-term engagement (papers III, V). Misdirected accountability can undermine this (papers I–V). Sustainability also relies on a mix of activities and methods (papers I, II) that are context-sensitive (Pettit, 2010, pp. 25-26). It is clear from the results that the best mix includes activities that address issues at **interdependent levels**, with **short- and long-term** perspectives, and with different **types of capacities** (papers I–II), such as technical, processual and conceptual (paper IV). As already noted, capacity levels and types are interdependent and should be integrated, and there is a need to take a **holistic approach** (papers I–III).

A number of scholars (e.g. Bolger, 2000; Eyben et al., 2008) suggest a **systems perspective** when considering capacity development, as these levels are all part of a greater whole. No matter how the **different levels** are divided, and where capacity resides or does not reside, the most important principle is that they are all systematically interconnected (paper 1). There is a need to create causal chains and **feedback loops** that can identify capacities, or their lack, on all levels. It is hard to find a single root cause, because societal systems are neither simple nor linear. The latter observation implies that engagement, or change at one of the levels will affect the other levels (papers I–III). In other words, individual capacities shape the functioning of capacities at the level of organisations and society. In turn, the societal level provides the underlying power structures that shape the performance and effectiveness of organisational and individual levels (Faccini & Salzano, 2011, p. 15; UNDP, 2009, p. 11). Thus, the success of capacity development efforts relies on an acknowledgement of the **interlinked relationships** between the three aforementioned **capacity levels** (Blagescu & Young, 2006, p. 2) and different **types of capacities**. This is in line with the Ripple model, which proposes that change in different capacity levels spread like ripples in water (Hailey & James, 2003, pp. 11-12). Therefore, a **mix of activities and methods** is important to be able to address change at different capacity levels and types (papers I–II).

It is essential to have a mix of both short- and long-term activities (papers I–II). **Short-term,** visible activities, according to Kotter and Cohen (2002, pp. 127,141), create **early wins** that are important. These early wins encourage people to have

faith in their efforts, and provide positive feedback that the project is on the right track (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, pp. 127,141). This first step should be complemented with **long-term** activities (papers I–III). The importance of a mix of activities and methods for sustainable change becomes particularly clear when considering the almost-universal focus on **capacity creation**. Little attention is paid to capacity utilisation and retention, which are requisites for capacity development to generate sustainable change (papers II–IV). **Capacity utilisation** must be at the core of capacity development, with an explicit focus on how to apply, and durably integrate the acquired knowledge, procedures and policies into daily practices (papers II–IV). The ability to utilise and **retain capacity** is intrinsic to the longer-term success of capacity development, and for any capacity to be institutionalised (paper IV).

If **training** is not supported by activities that allow trainees to use their newly-acquired knowledge and skills, or if there are no opportunities to institutionalise the supply of trainees to meet future demand, it becomes useless (papers I–V). At best, it might meet an immediate demand, often under the guise of building surge capacity, but it can never result in the development of sustainable capacities. As mentioned above, there is a need for a mix of activities and methods at different levels, as no single approach, tool or method will be able to provide the complete solution to all of the internal partner's needs (paper II). **Local universities** have an important role to play. Their pedagogical know-how and experience puts them in a position to facilitate **institutionalisation**, and create the foundations for sustainability (papers III–IV), as pointed out in other studies (Becker & van Niekerk, 2015).

To summarise, sustainability relies on the success of the other principles, and a mix of activities and methods that maintain change over time. Activities need to be at interdependent capacity levels and of different types, include short- and long-term commitments, and have an equal focus on capacity creation, utilisation and retention. Local universities have an important role to play. Their pedagogical know-how and experience puts them in a position to facilitate institutionalisation and form the foundations for sustainability.

7 Conclusion

Capacity development is an integral part of development cooperation in general. In particular, it is an essential element in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the Sendai Framework. While capacity development has been an integral part of global aid policy and frameworks for decades, it has yet to demonstrate a substantial impact on the ground. Hence, this thesis seeks to increase our understanding of **why capacity development is not working as intended**, and **inform the discussion on addressing the challenges**. Two research questions were asked: 1) What are the principles and practices of capacity development? and 2) Why is the current implementation of capacity development not leading to the desired results?

Capacity development is defined as a process, based on a partnership, which seeks to develop capacity to achieve a goal. Data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 115 participants in the international aid community. Participants were selected based on their position, organisational affiliation and experience in capacity development. Experts, program managers, high-level decision-makers, internal partners and donors have the power to influence the international aid system, and they were selected for their specific knowledge.

The analysis identifies several principles for successful capacity development. This thesis makes several conceptual and empirical contributions to structuring, organising and operationalising capacity development. It presents a coherent and comprehensive framework consisting of **eight principles** (ownership, partnership, contextualisation, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability) along with **four fundamental challenges** (complexity, dynamic change, uncertainty and ambiguity) (Figure 1, Chapter 5). Additional capacity development challenges are described in detail, based on a substantial body of empirical material, and potential ways to address these challenges are explored.

Together, the **five studies** identify various challenges that impede the ability of capacity development to bring about notable, sustainable change. There are significant discrepancies not only between the eight principles, but also between **theory and practice**. The proposed **typology of seven project failures** gives an insight into current practice, and may help partners to avoid common mistakes when designing and implementing capacity development projects (Figure 2, Chapter 6.1.3). The more these failures occur, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes. The synthesis presented in this thesis also highlights the

detrimental effect of **terminological and conceptual ambiguity**. This so-called **Babylonian confusion** (Chapter 6.2.1) is likely to be a source of confusion and misunderstanding between both individuals and partner organisations.

The identified challenges are symptomatic of systemic problems in the aid sector. **Clashing principles** result in **accountability** being directed towards donors rather than internal partners (Chapter 6.2.2). There is a clear **need for control**, but successful capacity development requires flexibility. Similarly, the system demands short-term feedback, but capacity development is a long-term process that relies on engagement (i.e., there is **temporal discord**). While there is an obvious need to address such challenges, this synthesis illustrates how efforts are hampered by **outdated ideas** of the world**, mindset lag**, **a lack of motivation for change**, **expert blind spot** and a **technocratic approach**. There are also challenging **power relations**. Many problems arise from **risk aversion**, as complexity and uncertainty create discomfort. In addition, an unrealistic and impractical need for control undermines all of the principles of effective implementation. Relinquishing control means relinquishing power.

An overhaul of the aid system should be considered. To be effective, **power** must be redistributed along the aid chain. Sustainable practices rely on three requisite and interdependent types of capacity—**technical, processual**, and **contextual** (Figure 3, Chapter 6.3.2). **Roles** cannot remain static and fixed; instead, they should be flexible, adapted to the context, and change depending on the purpose of the partnership and the project (Figure 4, Chapter 6.3.3.2). An **equal partnership** and **mutual learning** are essential, as is the ability to listen, have an open mind, share experiences, and come up with suggestions regarding how capacity development can be improved. There is value in **dedicating time** to developing capacity through friendship and collaboration. Extended timeframes that clearly take into account the need for local ownership, partnership building, mutual accountability and learning, context analyses, and the assessment of existing capacities open the door for significant change.

Success requires donors and external partners to **relinquish control**, and embrace **flexibility** and **adaptability** over longer timeframes. This, in turn, requires explicit **risk-sharing agreements** all along the aid chain. **Sustainability** is founded on the successful adoption of the other principles, and a mix of activities and methods at interdependent capacity levels and types. Both short and long-term commitments are needed, along with an equal focus on capacity **creation**, **utilisation** and **retention**. Local universities play an essential role in institutionalisation and sustainable education, and can be more effective than *ad hoc,* short-term training programs or workshops.

The principles need to be taken seriously so that the focus is not only on what the project should achieve, but also on how it is achieved. A change in mindset, attitude

and role allocation is needed. By prioritising differently than today, there are good opportunities to reach the goal of sustainable capacity development.

Although the research presented in the five appended articles has been recognised and implemented in practice, further studies are needed to reinforce the empirical findings. These studies could explore other perspectives, such as governmental agencies, municipalities, the private sector and non-governmental organisations, and would support an even broader analytical generalisation. Finally, there is a need to test, measure and evaluate the proposed principles, recommendations and solutions based on interdisciplinary collaboration, as this would give an insight into how different viewpoints can challenge entrenched ideas.

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Appendix 1: Scoping Study

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

The purpose of a scoping study is to "*examine the extent, range, and nature of research activity, determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review, summarize and disseminate research findings, or identify gaps in the existing literature*" (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 21). Scoping studies are particularly relevant in emerging disciplines such as capacity development, as they are a useful way to explore broader topics in breadth and depth (Levac et al., 2010, pp. 1,5). A scoping study provides a clear conceptual picture of the available literature. Although there are various definitions, there is no universal understanding (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 20; Daudt et al., 2013, p. 2; Levac et al., 2010, pp. 1-2,8), nor is there a specific process to follow (Peterson et al., 2016, p. 13). Daudt et al. (2013, p. 8) put it simply and suggest the following definition: "*to map the literature on a particular topic or research area and to provide an opportunity to identify key concepts; gaps in the research; types and sources of evidence to inform practice, policymaking, and research*". The present paper focuses on mapping the literature, and providing an overview. There is no attempt to determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review or identify gaps in the existing literature.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this scoping study is to describe the methodology, and explore the definitions, principles and challenges of capacity development. The aim is to provide a structured and transparent overview of the scientific literature, and establish a baseline of existing information and knowledge. It was conducted between 27 June 2022 and 8 January 2023.

2 Methodology

The process that is adopted follows the recommendations of Arksey and O'Malley (2005, pp. 22-23) and consists of six steps (**Table 1**). Other authors, such as Levac et al. (2010) and Daudt et al. (2013) provide additional procedural clarification, details and recommendations related to the method.

Table 1: Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) six-step scoping study framework.

Step	Description
Step 1	Identifying the research question
Step 2	Identifying relevant studies/literature
Step 3	Study selection
Step 4	Charting the data - organising, sorting & analysing the selected literature
Step 5	Collating, summarising & reporting the analysis results
Step 6	Consulting stakeholders

The process is not linear. Instead, it is flexible and iterative, and the search strategy and search string need to be refined more than once (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 22; Levac et al., 2010, pp. 4-6). Researchers must remain flexible at each step and, where necessary, repeat steps to ensure that the literature is comprehensively covered (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 22). It is time-consuming (Daudt et al., 2013, pp. 5-6,8). According to Arksey and O'Malley (2005, p. 23), consulting stakeholders (step 6) is optional, whereas Levac et al. (2010, pp. 4,7) emphasise that it is important and necessary. Consultations are omitted in this paper.

2.1 Step 1: Identify the research question

The first step is to identify the research question. The research question should be open, as the aim is to explore the available literature in breadth (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 23; Levac et al., 2010, p. 1) and capture the complexity of the topic. However, as this can lead to an unmanageable number of articles to review, the initial search string may need to be rephrased. Therefore, Levac et al. (2010, p. 3) recommend that a relevant question is both clear and narrow in scope, with a balance between breadth and depth. Hence, the first research question is:

1. *What is known about capacity development for disaster risk reduction in the relevant scientific literature?*

Test searches were conducted to obtain an overview of the existing literature (Beerens & Tehler, 2016, p. 414). Research question 1 generated a limited number of relevant publications, which led to the addition of a more general question (Peterson et al., 2016, pp. 12-13) to extend the coverage of the subject area.

2. *What is known about capacity development in the relevant scientific literature?*

2.2 Step 2: Identify relevant studies/literature

The second step is to identify the relevant literature. An online database was chosen as the data source, and a search strategy was developed from the research question (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 24). This reflects the distinction between 'where to search', and 'how to search' (Beerens & Tehler, 2016, p. 415).

2.2.1.1 Database selection

Scopus (https://www.scopus.com, owned by Elsevier) was selected as the only data source. It is the largest multi-disciplinary database of peer-reviewed literature, and covers a wide range of research fields (Beerens & Tehler, 2016, p. 415). Access was provided through Lund University's subscription. As the focus was limited to peer-reviewed scientific articles published in academic journals, no grey literature was searched. This meant that the only selected document type was 'articles'.

2.2.1.2 Search query identification

The search string was based on a Boolean approach, and titles, keywords and abstracts were searched. A list of synonyms was compiled by consulting thesauruses, and reflecting on the results of the quick test searches carried out in step 1. The following keywords were selected: (1) *capacity development*, (2) *disaster*, and (3) *risk*. As the keyword *capacity development* has synonyms (*capacity building* and *capacity strengthening*) these were systematically combined with Boolean OR and AND criteria. Various combinations of strings were used, and the number of results was noted for each string. No parameters related to publication date were applied, and the language was limited to English.

The following search string was selected for **research question 1**, resulting in **3184 articles on 27 June 2022**:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("capacity development" OR "capacity building" OR "capacity strengthening" AND "disaster" OR "risk")

As noted in step 1, the results generated using this search string were limited. I therefore decided to broaden the search, and exclude the keywords *disaster* and *risk*.

The following search string was selected for **research question 2**, resulting in **24085 articles on 30 June 2022**:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("capacity development" OR "capacity building" OR "capacity strengthening")

Due to the high number of results, the search string for **research question 2** was modified, and the search was limited to the 16 journals listed in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Inclusion criteria. The selected 16 journals.

Journals selected
1. Development In Practice
2. Sustainability Switzerland
3. Plos One
4. Evaluation And Program Planning
5. American Journal Of Evaluation
6. Public Administration And Development
7. World Development
8. Community Development Journal
9. Canadian Journal Of Program Evaluation
10. Journal Of International Development
11. IDS Bulletin
12. Community Development
13. Journal Of Community Practice
14. Evaluation
15. Development Policy Review
16.Canadian Journal Of Development Studies

The following, modified, final search string for **research question 2**, resulted in **1029 articles on 30 June 2022**:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("capacity development" OR "capacity building" OR "capacity strengthening") AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Development In Practice") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Sustainability Switzerland") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Plos One") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Evaluation And Program Planning") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "American Journal Of Evaluation") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Public Administration And Development") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "World Development") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Community Development Journal") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Canadian Journal Of Program Evaluation") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of International Development") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "IDS Bulletin") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Community Development") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Journal Of Community Practice") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Evaluation") OR LIMIT-

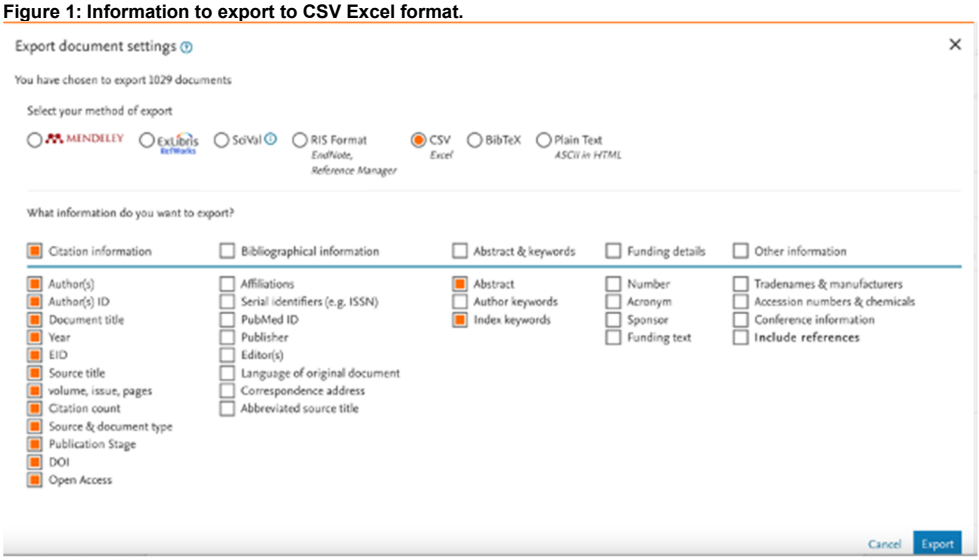
TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Development Policy Review") OR LIMIT-
TO (EXACTSRCTITLE , "Canadian Journal Of Development Studies"))

I assumed that any important articles that had been missed, either due to keywords, the subject area or the journal would be found through a search of the references of the identified articles.

The search string was exported into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet as follows:

1. Save the search string in Scopus, and copy it into your Word document
2. Mark all articles
3. Export to CSV Excel format
4. Information to export: Citation information; Abstract and Index keywords (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1: Information to export to CSV Excel format.



5) Export
6) Download the file
7) Open Microsoft Excel and open your CSV file
8) Delimited (next)
9) Comma (next)
10) General
11) Finish
12) Save in Excel format

2.3 Step 3: Study selection

The third step is study selection, which includes five sub-steps: 1) remove duplicates, 2) read the titles, 3) read the abstracts, 4) read the full text, and 5) search the references. The literature was weighted for relevance with respect to the research questions. The section below describes the exclusion process, and how the literature was narrowed down. The application of the two search strings resulted in **3184 articles for research question 1** and 1029 articles for research question 2.

In the first sub-step, all duplicates were removed as follows:

1) Mark the Title column
2) Format/Conditional Formatting
3) Current Selection
4) "+" add a rule
5) Style "Classic"
6) "Only format unique or duplicate values"
7) Ok
8) Ok
9) Mark worksheet
10) Click on A to Z (arrange data in ascending or descending order)
    a. Custom sort
        i. Column, sort by "Title",
        ii. Sort on, values, "Cell colour"

Respectively, **27** and two duplicates were found for the two search strings, and removed. This resulted in a total of **3157** and 1027 articles. Hence, a further step was needed to limit the results to a reasonable number (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, pp. 25-26). The following inclusion criteria were applied:

- English language
- Full text available online through Lund University
- Peer-reviewed
- Relevant. Articles focus on capacity development, building or strengthening definitions, principles and challenges

In the second sub-step, titles were sorted based on their relevance to the research question, and inclusion and exclusion criteria. In Excel, the column "Titles" was

used to indicate articles to keep (marked with a "0") and delete (marked with a "1"). Articles that do not include the keywords *capacity development*, *building* or *strengthening* in their titles could still be relevant. Therefore, borderline cases were kept for further analysis. This step led to the removal of **3045** and 913 articles, and left **112** and 114 relevant papers.

In the third sub-step, the abstracts of each of the remaining **112** and 114 articles were read and reviewed, which further narrowed down the selection. In Excel, the column "Abstracts" was used to indicate articles to keep (marked with a "0") and delete (marked with a "1"). The analysis of these abstracts led to the removal of **93** and 74 articles, and reduced the numbers to **19** and 40.

In the fourth sub-step, the full article was read and analysed. Here, the focus was on the introduction, results and conclusion, and the process resulted in the selection of **16** (–3) and 30 (−10) articles.

In the fifth and final sub-step, the snowball technique was used to identify other relevant articles via a search of the references. Arksey and O'Malley (2005, p. 24) recommend checking references as a valuable way to discover new literature. Hence, the references in the selected articles were reviewed and analysed to see if they contained any other relevant material; this resulted in the selection of **19** (+3) and 40 (+10) articles.

For research question 1, a ResearchGate search was conducted to identify articles that cited Hagelsteen. An **154** additional articles were reviewed, and **four** were selected **23** (+4). This resulted in a total of **23** and 40 articles, which were included in the overall, in-depth analysis. An overview of the process is presented in **Figures 2 and 3** below. A total of **4201**[1] articles were examined based on the Scopus search, a check of the references of selected articles, and the ResearchGate search, which resulted in **63** full texts being read.

[1] 3157+3+4+1027+10 = 4201 articles

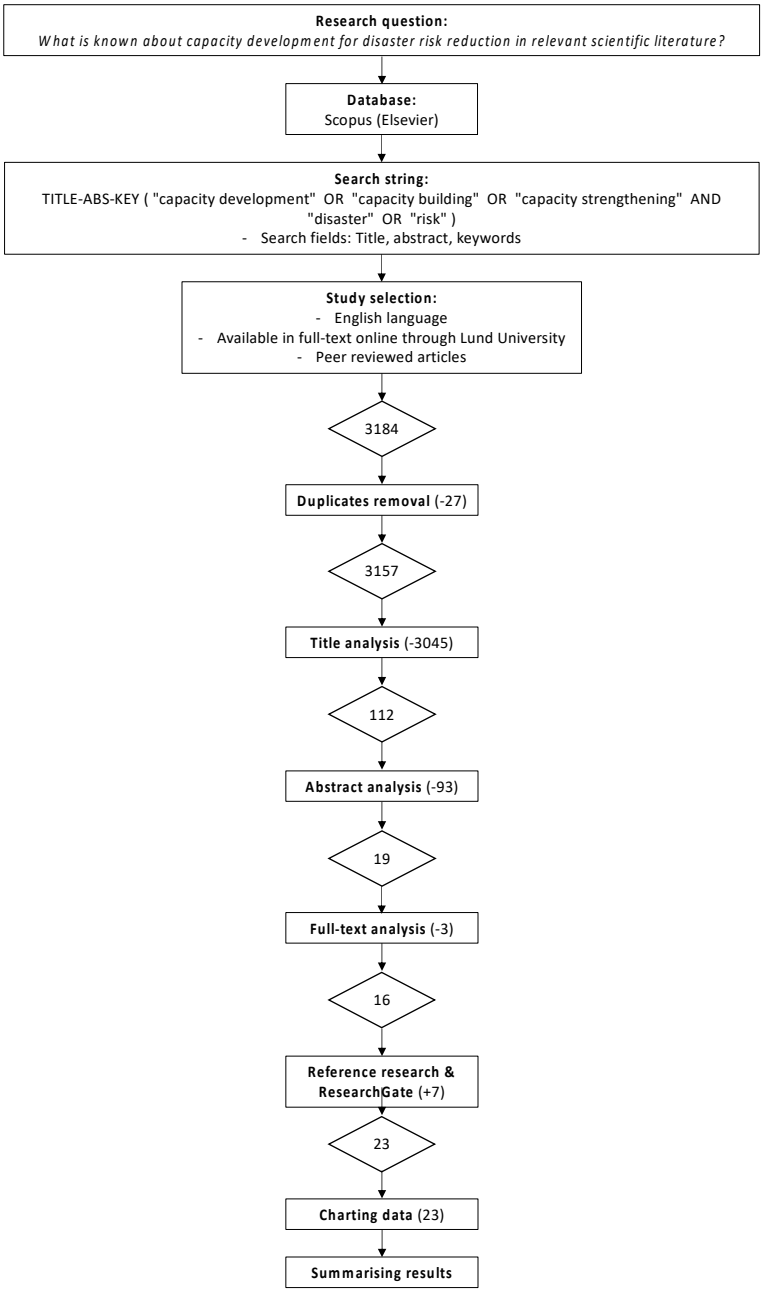


Figure 2: Overview of the scoping study process (Research question 1, search date: 27 June 2022).

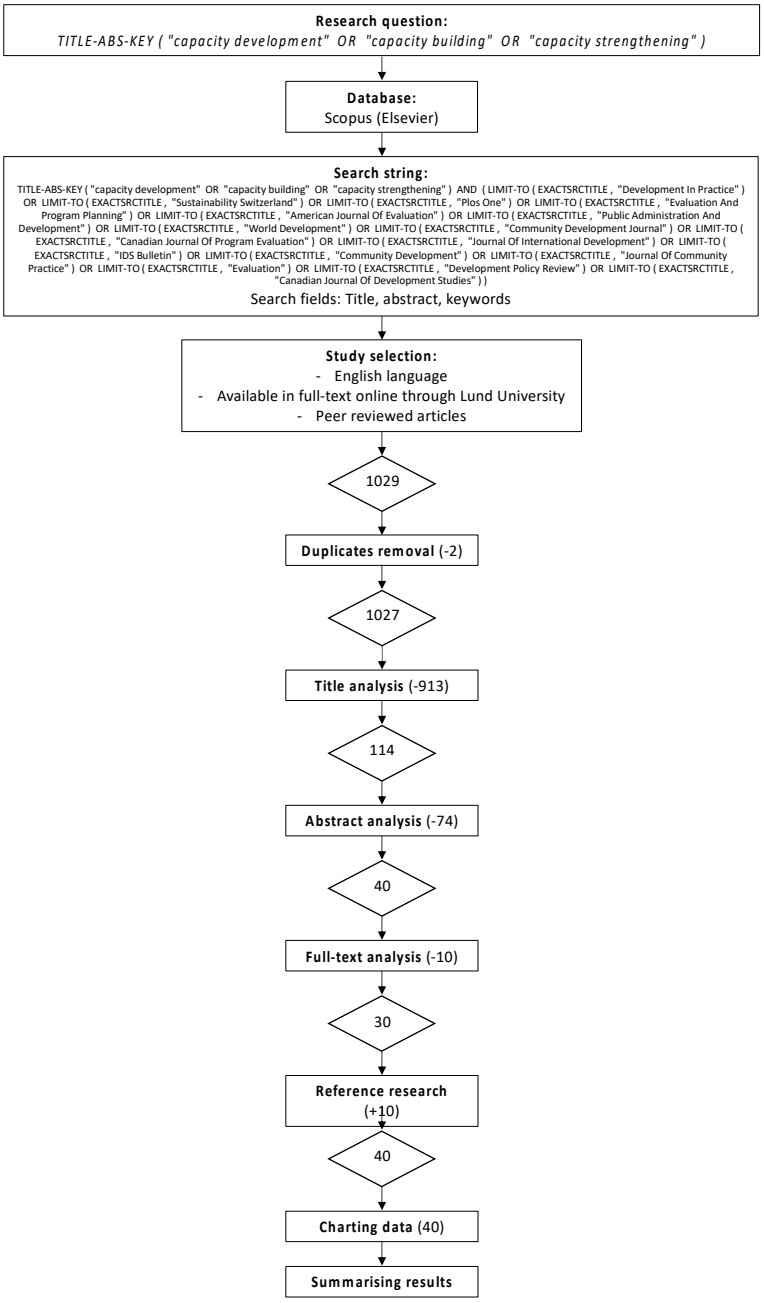


Figure 3: Overview of the scoping study process (Research question 2, search date: 30 June 2022).

2.4 Step 4: Chart the data. Organise, sort and analyse the selected literature

In step 4, the selected **23** and 40 articles were read in full. General and specific information related to the research question was extracted and charted in a Microsoft Excel file. Charting is a technique that aims to synthesise and interpret qualitative data according to key themes (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 26). The analysis was divided into two sub-steps: 1) an overall analysis of broad trends and characteristics; followed by 2) an in-depth analysis focused on developing a conceptual understanding of the definitions, principles and challenges in the field of capacity development. In the context of research question 2, many articles were related to medicine and other sector-specific areas, case studies and evaluations, and did not specifically address the concept, principles and challenges of capacity development.

2.4.1 Overall analysis

The literature was charted according to the year of publication, the journal in which the article was published, and the geographical location of the first author. Here, the aim was to identify broad characteristics and trends, using information provided by Scopus. Graphs and tables were produced in Microsoft Excel and Word, and are presented in the results chapter.

2.4.2 In-depth analysis

A scoping study does not usually seek to analyse the quality of studies published in the literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). However, Daudt et al. (2013, pp. 5-6) strongly recommend assessing quality. Consequently, an in-depth analysis of the **23** and 40 selected articles was carried out, to explore capacity development definitions, principles and challenges. This information provided the foundation for step 5, in which the results were collated, summarised and reported (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 27).

2.5 Step 5: Collate, summarise and report the results

Step 5 concluded the scoping study. Results from the selected **23** and 40 articles were collated, summarised and reported, and are presented in the results chapter.

2.6 Step 6: Consult stakeholders

While step 6, consultation with stakeholders, is highly recommended as a parallel step (Levac et al., 2010, p. 7), time limitations meant that this step was not included.

3 Results

Results are divided into two sections: 1) an overall analysis with descriptive statistics; and 2) an in-depth analysis of capacity development.

3.1 Overall analysis

For the overall analysis, **23** and 40 articles, respectively, were selected and examined to identify trends and characteristics. The articles were classified according to their year of publication, journal, and the country in which the main author was located. The outcomes of the overall analysis are presented in **Tables 3–8** below.

3.1.1 Overall analysis: research question 1

Articles were sorted according to the year in which they appeared in Scopus (**Table 3**). No limitation regarding the year of publication was included in the search string. The earliest article was published in 1994, and the next in 2004 (a 10-year gap). During the following 20-year period (2004–2022), an annual average of one or two articles were published. The exceptions are 2016 and 2022, with four articles.

Table 3: Number of articles as a function of year of publication.

Year of publication RQ1	Number	Literature
2022	**4**	(Hagelsteen et al., 2022; Klinsky & Sagar, 2022; Nautiyal & Klinsky, 2022; Susskind & Kim, 2022)
2021	2	(Cvetković et al., 2021; Hagelsteen et al., 2021)
2020	1	(Kong et al., 2020)
2019	1	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019)
2018	1	(Wentink & Van Niekerk, 2017)
2017	0	
2016	**4**	(Few et al., 2016; Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016; Scott & Few, 2016; Scott et al., 2016)
2015	1	(Becker & van Niekerk, 2015)
2014	1	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014)
2013	1	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013)
2012	2	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2012; Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012)
2011	0	-
2010	0	-

Year of publication RQ1	Number	Literature
2009	1	(Becker, 2009)
2008	1	(Armitage et al., 2008)
2007	1	(Eade, 2007)
2006	0	-
2005	0	-
2004	1	(Wing, 2004)
2003-1994	1	(Picciotto & Weaving, 1994)
Total	**23**	

Articles were categorised based on the journal they were published in. **Table 4** shows that the overwhelming majority (eight) were published in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*. Three were published in *Climate policy* and two in the *Proceedings of the International Disaster and Risk Conference*. All of the remaining journals published one article.

Table 4: Number of articles as a function of the journal.

Journal title RQ1	Number	Literature
International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction	**8**	(Few et al., 2016; Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013, 2019; Hagelsteen et al., 2021; Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016; Hagelsteen et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2020; Scott & Few, 2016)
Climate Policy	3	(Klinsky & Sagar, 2022; Nautiyal & Klinsky, 2022; Susskind & Kim, 2022)
International Disaster and Risk Conference (IDRC)	2	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2012, 2014)
Development in Practice	1	(Eade, 2007)
Jàmbá: Journal of Disaster Risk Studies	1	(Becker, 2009)
Disaster Prevention and Management	1	(Scott et al., 2016)
Finance & Development	1	(Picciotto & Weaving, 1994)
Global Environmental Change	1	(Armitage et al., 2008)
Hazards, Risks and, Disasters in Society	1	(Becker & van Niekerk, 2015)
Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	1	(Wing, 2004)
Environmental Hazards	1	(Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012)
The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa	1	(Wentink & Van Niekerk, 2017)
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	1	(Cvetković et al., 2021)
Total	**23**	

The country in which the main author was located was identified through details provided by Scopus. **Table 5** shows that most authors were located in Sweden (nine articles). This is followed by the United Kingdom and the United States (four each), and South Africa (three). Each of the remaining countries had one article. It is clear from these results that most publishing institutions are in Sweden, the United

Kingdom and the United States. Notably, in the field of capacity development for disaster risk reduction, Hagelsteen and Becker authored nine of the 23 articles.

Table 5: Number of articles as a function of the country in which the main author was located.

Country of the main author's institutional location RQ1	Number	Literature
Sweden	**9**	(Becker, 2009; Becker & van Niekerk, 2015; Hagelsteen & Becker, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2019; Hagelsteen et al., 2021; Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016; Hagelsteen et al., 2022)
United Kingdom	4	(Eade, 2007; Few et al., 2016; Scott & Few, 2016; Scott et al., 2016)
United States	4	(Klinsky & Sagar, 2022; Nautiyal & Klinsky, 2022; Susskind & Kim, 2022; Wing, 2004)
South Africa	3	(Kong et al., 2020; Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012; Wentink & Van Niekerk, 2017)
Canada	1	(Armitage et al., 2008)
Italy	1	(Picciotto & Weaving, 1994)
Serbia	1	(Cvetković et al., 2021)
Total	**23**	

3.1.2 Overall analysis: research question 2

Articles were charted according to the year of publication given in Scopus (**Table 6**). No limitation regarding the year of publication was included in the search string. The earliest article was published in 1983, and the next in 1999. During the following 25-year period (1999–2022), an annual average of one to three articles were published. The exception is 2010, with eleven articles.

Table 6: Number of articles as a function of year of publication.

Year of publication RQ2	Number	Literature
2022	1	(Kacou et al., 2022)
2021	0	
2020	2	(Aagaard & Eberhard Trykker, 2020; Rajeshwari et al., 2020)
2019	0	
2018	0	
2017	0	
2016	2	(McEvoy et al., 2016; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016)
2015	3	(Ensminger et al., 2015; Venner, 2015; Wetterberg et al., 2015)
2014	0	
2013	3	(Bontenbal, 2013; Buffardi, 2013; Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013)
2012	3	(Belda et al., 2012; Smits, 2012; Thol et al., 2012)
2011	1	(McWha, 2011)
2010	**11**	(Aragón, 2010; Aragón & Giles Macedo, 2010; Brinkerhoff, 2010; Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Clarke & Oswald, 2010; Fisher, 2010; James, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Pettit, 2010; Soal, 2010; Woodhill, 2010)
2009	0	
2008	3	(Eyben et al., 2008; Parks, 2008; Preskill & Boyle, 2008)
2007	3	(Girgis, 2007; Johnson & Thomas, 2007; Sobeck & Agius, 2007)
2006	0	
2005	1	(Eyben, 2005)
2004	1	(Johnson et al., 2004)

Year of publication RQ2	Number	Literature
2002	2	(Brinkerhoff, 2002; Godfrey et al., 2002)
2001	0	
2000	1	(Kaplan, 2000)
1999	1	(Jones & Blunt, 1999)
1983	2	(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Honadle & Rosengard, 1983)
Total	**40**	

Articles were categorised based on the journal they were published in. **Table 7** shows that half were published in *IDS Bulletin* and *Development in Practice* (10 and nine, respectively). Seven were published in *Public Administration and Development*, four in *Evaluation and Program Planning*, and three in *World Development*. The remaining journals each published one article.

Table 7: Number of articles as a function of the journal.

Journal title RQ2	Number	Literature
IDS Bulletin	**10**	(Aragón, 2010; Aragón & Giles Macedo, 2010; Clarke & Oswald, 2010; Eyben, 2005; Fisher, 2010; James, 2010; Pearson, 2010; Pettit, 2010; Soal, 2010; Woodhill, 2010)
Development in Practice	**9**	(Buffardi, 2013; Eyben et al., 2008; Girgis, 2007; Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013; Kaplan, 2000; McWha, 2011; Parks, 2008; Thol et al., 2012; Wetterberg et al., 2015)
Public Administration and Development	7	(Bontenbal, 2013; Brinkerhoff, 2010; Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Honadle & Rosengard, 1983; Johnson & Thomas, 2007; Jones & Blunt, 1999; Kacou et al., 2022)
Evaluation and Program Planning	4	(Brinkerhoff, 2002; Ensminger et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2004; Sobeck & Agius, 2007)
World Development	3	(Godfrey et al., 2002; Rajeshwari et al., 2020; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016)
Journal of International Development	1	(Belda et al., 2012)
Development Policy Review	1	(Aagaard & Eberhard Trykker, 2020)
American Journal of Evaluation	1	(Preskill & Boyle, 2008)
The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation	1	(Smits, 2012)
American Sociological Review	1	(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)
International Journal of Managing Projects in Business	1	(McEvoy et al., 2016)
Global Change, Peace & Security	1	(Venner, 2015)
Total	**40**	

The country in which the main author was located was identified using information given in Scopus. **Table 8** shows that the United States is best-represented (14 articles), followed by the United Kingdom (eight articles), Cambodia (four), and Canada and South Africa (two each). Each of the remaining countries presented in Table 8 had one article.

Table 8: Number of articles as a function of the country in wich the main author was located.

Country of the main author's institutional location RQ2	Number	Literature
United States	**14**	(Johnson et al., 2004) (Preskill & Boyle, 2008) (Brinkerhoff, 2010; Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Sobeck & Agius, 2007) (Parks, 2008) (Aragón & Giles Macedo, 2010) (Honadle & Rosengard, 1983) (Ensminger et al., 2015) (Buffardi, 2013) (Aragón, 2010; Brinkerhoff, 2002; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Wetterberg et al., 2015)
United Kingdom	8	(Clarke & Oswald, 2010; Eyben, 2005; Eyben et al., 2008; Fisher, 2010; James, 2010; Johnson & Thomas, 2007; Pettit, 2010; Woodhill, 2010)
Cambodia	4	(Godfrey et al., 2002; McWha, 2011; Pearson, 2010; Thol et al., 2012)
Canada	2	(Kacou et al., 2022; Smits, 2012)
South Africa	2	(Kaplan, 2000; Soal, 2010)
Netherlands	1	(Vallejo & Wehn, 2016)
Australia	1	(Girgis, 2007)
Botswana	1	(Jones & Blunt, 1999)
Oman	1	(Bontenbal, 2013)
Spain	1	(Belda et al., 2012)
Denmark	1	(Aagaard & Eberhard Trykker, 2020)
Netherlands	1	(Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013)
Ireland	1	(McEvoy et al., 2016)
India	1	(Rajeshwari et al., 2020)
Australia	1	(Venner, 2015)
Total	**40**	

3.2 In-depth analysis

3.2.1 In-depth analysis: research question 1

Research question 1. Reflection on the in-depth analysis (**Table 9**)

In total, 24 articles were analysed in depth. The scoping study confirmed a general view that capacity development is just another buzzword in development aid, and that there is no universal definition. It is clear that there is little focus on capacity development for disaster risk reduction, which is in line with the findings of Scott et al. (2014, p. 9). The latter authors only found one peer-reviewed journal article; a multi-country study that analysed capacity development for disaster risk reduction (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013). Regarding the principles and challenges of capacity development, the analysis identified notions such as: terminology, contextual, existing capacities, demand-driven, ownership, partnership, roles and responsibilities, coaching, soft skills, listening, trust building, power, mutual and continuous learning, accountability, flexibility and adaptability, long-term, mix of activities and methods, role of risk, uncertainty, complexity, dynamic change, ambiguity, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability.

Table 9: Overall focus of the literature, research question 1.

Nr	Literature RQ1	Title	Overall focus of the literature
1.	(Susskind & Kim, 2022)	Building local capacity to adapt to climate change	**Capacity development concept, terminology, adaptive capacity, evolution supply-driven, demand-driven, twinning, continuous learning/collective problem-solving approach.** Past efforts to build local capacity have often been unsuccessful. **Three step approach:** (1) contingent financial arrangements; (2) widespread and continuous stakeholder engagement; and (3) experimental problem-solving, learn-by-doing.
2.	(Eade, 2007)	Capacity building: Who builds whose capacity?	**Role, share risks, mutual learning, accountability, flexibility, time, terminology, buzz word, training.** **Role of NGOs**, retaining power, rather than empowering their partners. Tunnel vision and to upward rather than downward or horizontal accountability, transfer of resources is a one-way process. **Sharing responsibilities and risks, mutual learning and accountability, flexibility, time and committing to the long term** rather than to short-term projects can contribute to lasting change (Eade, 2007, pp. 636-637). **Terminology**, the **'buzzword'** status of capacity building, and **training** (Eade, 2007, pp. 631-632). Training may be successful in its own terms, but contribute very little to enabling participants to change their realities (Eade, 2007, p. 633).
3.	(Picciotto & Weaving, 1994)	A new project cycle for the World Bank?	**New project cycle**: **Listening, piloting, demonstrating, mainstreaming.** Centers on the borrower and the beneficiary, not on the requirements of the assistance agency; incorporates participation and capacity development features; provides for explicit, prudent management of risks; and reduces elapsed time and resources spent before initiating action on the ground.
4.	(Armitage et al., 2008)	Adaptive co-management and the paradox of learning	**Five dimensions of learning, the role of risk.** Despite widespread support of learning as a normative goal and process, core concepts, assumptions and approaches to **learning have been applied in vague and sometimes uncritical ways.** **Five dimensions of learning**: (i) definitions of learning; (ii) learning goals and expectations; (iii) mechanisms by which learning takes place; (iv) questions regarding who is involved in the process of learning; and (v) the risks and ethical ambiguities faced by different actors expected to willingly participate in a learning process, whether formal or informal. Experience from global North and South, **the role of risk**, incentives to encourage learning, role of power, learning through partnerships and community of practice, **learn from mistakes**.
5.	(Becker & van Niekerk, 2015)	Developing Sustainable Capacity for Disaster Risk Reduction in Southern Africa	**Capacity development not widely systematised and shared, ad hoc, short term, project focused, universities institutional learning body.** Research and academic institutions are suited to address the policy/practice gap that exists within the DRR domain. Southern African countries must develop their own capacities for DRR, external actors can play important roles in supporting such development. The evidence and knowledge available within the DRR community on how to support the development of capacity **"in practice" is still not widely systematised and shared, although examples do exist"** (CADRI, 2011, pp. 7-8). Capacity development for DRR is predominantly **ad hoc, short term, project focused, and microsized** (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013). It is mostly equated with training of individuals ((Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013). It should be changed from within the region, by building on

Nr	Literature RQ1	Title	Overall focus of the literature
			existing institutions and networks that are driven by Southern African institutions. **Universities, perhaps, are the most stable type of institutions** in Southern Africa, as many of them have outlived regime change, armed conflict, and disasters (Becker & van Niekerk, 2015, p. 71). *Reference to Hagelsteen.*
6.	(Few et al., 2016)	Strengthening capacities for disaster risk management II: Lessons for effective support	**Six principles for effective capacity development**: 1) Flexibility and adaptability, 2) Comprehensive planning, 3) Ownership and partnership, 4) Attention to functional capacity, 5) Integration of actors and scales, 6) Contribution to DRR. Active participation, sustainability, short-term and short contracts, capacity assessment, robust monitoring and evaluation systems and frameworks not in place (Few et al., 2016, pp. 156-157). *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
7.	(Scott & Few, 2016)	Strengthening capacities for disaster risk management I: Insights from existing research and practice	**Terminology, multi-stakeholder, multi-actor, multi-scale, multi-level process, capacity development issues.** Concept of capacity development, **no universal definition** (Scott & Few, 2016, pp. 146-147). Capacity assessment, training, ownership, context, flexibility, adaptability, sustainability, long-term, M&E, staff turnover. *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
8.	(Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016)	Practical aspects of capacity development in the context of disaster risk reduction	**Eight elements (principles):** 1) Terminology, (2) Local context, (3) Partnership, 4) Ownership, (5) Capacity assessment, (6) Roles and responsibilities, (7) Mix of activities & methods, and (8) Monitoring, evaluation and learning. Eight elements are reflected to various degrees. **Table 1 with Element, Characteristics element & Illustrative questions.** Utilisation & retention.
9.	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019)	Systemic problems of capacity development for disaster risk reduction in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world	**Eight principles**: 1) Ownership, 2) Partnership, 3) Contextualization, 4) Flexibility, 5) Learning, 6) Accountability, 7) Long-term, 8) Sustainability. **Four fundamental challenges**: 1) Complexity, 2) Uncertainty, 3) Dynamic change, 4) Ambiguity Terminology, Expert blind spot, Utilisation & retention. **Gap theory & practice, clashing principles**, misguided accountability, temporal discord & take time to drink tea, quixotic control & uncertainty, mindset lag, lack of motivation, power imbalances, cognitive biases DRR & capacity development.
10.	(Kong et al., 2020)	Implementing capacity development for disaster risk reduction as a social learning system	**Knowledge gap**: what works in practice of bottom-up approaches to develop DRR capacity that incorporates local ownership, local knowledge and learning. **Wenger's conceptual framework** for social learning systems to establish a **community of practice.** **Terminology**, **capability trap**. *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
11.	(Hagelsteen et al., 2021)	Troubling partnerships: Perspectives from the receiving end of capacity	**Terminology, project implementation, conditionalities, short-termism, partnership, roles, utilization, retention, focus on partnership & sustainability, expert blind spot.** **Seven types of project failures, flexible & adaptive roles, three requisite types of capacities**, focus technical capacity and less on contextual & process capacity, **lack of mutual learning.**
12.	(Hagelsteen et al., 2022)	Caught between principles and politics: Challenges and	**Terminology, flexibility vs control, changing contexts and focus, ownership vs donor priorities, individual vs organisational, donor system constraints.** **Tensions between the principles and politics, power dimensions**, Capacity development knowledge, Changing context, A risky business vs risk sharing, Expert blind spot!

Nr	Literature RQ1	Title	Overall focus of the literature
		opportunities for capacity development from governmental donors' perspectives	
13.	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2013)	Challenging disparities in capacity development for disaster risk reduction	**Seven elements (principles)**: 1) Terminology, (2) Local context, (3) Ownership, (4) Capacity assessment, (5) Roles and responsibilities, (6) Mix of activities, and (7) Monitoring, evaluation and learning. **Gap theory & practice**, elements not known, terminological ambiguity and a **Babylonian confusion**, focus technical capacities, no communication DRR ≠ capacity development.
14.	(Wing, 2004)	Assessing the Effectiveness of Capacity-Building Initiatives: Seven Issues for the Field	**Seven measuring issues** and their implications for the design, management, and evaluation of capacity-building initiatives. **Time versus goals** (Wing, 2004, p. 157).
15.	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2012)	Seven elements for capacity development for disaster risk reduction	**Theoretical framework with seven elements (principles):** 1) Terminology, (2) Local context, (3) Ownership, (4) Capacity assessment, (5) Roles and responsibilities, (6) Mix of activities, and (7) Monitoring, evaluation and learning.
16.	(Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014)	A great babylonian confusion: Terminological ambiguity in capacity development for disaster risk reduction in the international community	**Terminology, misunderstanding of the key concepts of DRR and capacity development.** **Substantial conceptual ambiguity**, both perception and definition of key concepts. A gap how the concepts are understood and communicated in the project documentation.
	Total	16	

Nr	From reference list RQ1	Title	Overall focus of literature
1.	(Becker, 2009)	Grasping the hydra: The need for a holistic and systematic approach to disaster risk reduction	**Interdependencies, monitoring and evaluation** **Ignoring interdependencies** may: (1) **cause sub-optimisation problems** where the desired outcome is not reached as the factor focused on and/or the **desired outcome are dependent on other factors**, and (2) make it difficult or impossible to monitor and evaluate the actual effects of international development cooperation projects in disaster risk reduction.
2.	(Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012)	Capacity development for participatory disaster risk assessment	**Sustainability**, the most important challenge was the issue of **staff turnover**. The fact that those most consistently involved in the project **were subsequently lost represents a major setback for** capacity development and **institutional memory** (Riet & Van Niekerk, 2012, p. 11). *Reference to Hagelsteen.*
3.	(Scott et al., 2016)	Monitoring and evaluating disaster risk	**Terminology, monitoring and evaluation.** Terminology was frequently criticised for being abstract" or "complex Improving the monitoring and evaluation of DRM capacity development initiatives.

Nr	From reference list RQ1	Title	Overall focus of literature
		management capacity	**Monitoring & evaluation** is generally an area of technical weakness in the initiatives studied, with **poor understanding of terminology**, **little attention to outcomes or impact** and **few independent evaluations**. Over-reliance on training. The need for greater inclusion of participants in M&E processes is identified and one programme from the fieldwork in Mozambique is presented as a case study example. *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
	Total	3	

Nr	From Researchgate RQ1	Title	Overall focus of literature
1.	(Cvetković et al., 2021)	Capacity Development of Local Self-Governments for Disaster Risk Management	Implementation of **strategic, legislative, and institutional frameworks** of local authorities. **Five analytical scopes**: (1) degree of preparedness and legal framework; (2) financial framework; (3) policy aspects; (4) cooperation and partnership; (5) communication. Principles of prevention and proactive action, coordination, cooperation, partnership, and responsibility. Terminology, seven elements. *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
2.	(Klinsky & Sagar, 2022)	The why, what and how of capacity building: some explorations	**Terminology ambiguity, adaptive capacity, development-centered, learning by doing,** reference Susskind. Requires paying careful attention to the **local context**, which is useful for understanding whose capacity needs to be strengthened in what way, as well as how best to do it and by whom. *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
3.	(Nautiyal & Klinsky, 2022)	The knowledge politics of capacity building for climate change at the UNFCCC	**Capacity building is a messy and ambiguous concept** which **eludes attempts to clearly define its underlying goals, processes, actors and outcomes**. Evolution capacity building, **several challenges**, e.g., assumptions, relational capacities, power balances, short-termism. Sokona's (2021) argument '**capacity is not the ability to implement someone else's agenda but the ability to set and pursue your own agenda**'. Without capacity building rooted in place and tied to efforts to self-determine one's own agenda (Sokona, 2021), it is unlikely to be effective. **1) The Developed-Developing Boundary:** North–South dynamics opens debates about culture, decoloniality and geo political relations of **power**. **2) The Local-Global Boundary:** Hulme (2008) argues that standardized and quantified descriptions of climate travel more easily across scales and contexts, and hence gain universal applicability in contrast to culturally grounded representations of climate. **3) Boundaries of Expertise:** A focus on climate change as a purely physical phenomenon leads to a prioritization of disciplines such as the natural sciences and technology over the social sciences and humanities, preventing interdisciplinary and holistic discussions around climate action (Hulme, 2008). *Reference to Hagelsteen*.
4.	(Wentink & Van Niekerk, 2017)	The capacity of personnel in disaster risk management in South African municipalities	It is essential to understand the **relationships and dependencies** between **individuals, communities and organisations** and that a **solution that worked in one location will not necessarily succeed in another location**. Ownership, eight elements. *Reference to Hagelsteen x 3*.

Nr	From Researchgate RQ1	Title	Overall focus of literature
	Total	4	
	Total RQ1	**23**	

3.2.2 In-depth analysis: research question 2

Research question 2. Reflection on the in-depth analysis (**Table 10**)

In total, 40 articles were analysed in depth. The analysis found that there are a number of different definitions of capacity development in the literature, and that the concept is seen as unclear, blurred and imprecise. This ambiguity not only allows different partners to use their own attributes and apply their own meaning to the notion, but also to interpret it, unchallenged, from their own perspective. The situation creates confusion within and between partners, and it can be assumed that different partners do, or do not, have the same understanding of key concepts (Hagelsteen & Becker, 2014, p. 299). Furthermore, in many cases the literature features statements about the concept, and its principles and challenges based on limited evidence, and lacks references to supporting data or research, a point that is highlighted by Venner (2015, p. 94).

The investigation of research question 2 made it clear that there are a number of principles and challenges, some of which overlap with research question 1. Keywords include: terminology, shared understanding, local context, internal partner lacks capacities or existing capacities require strengthening, system blindness, tension autonomy and capacity development, ownership, partnership champions, leadership, shared learning strategies, double and triple learning, roles (change catalyst, artists of the invisible), equality, mutuality, coaching, relationship & friendship work, trust, donor- or supply-driven nature of capacity development, funding, power relations, soft capacities, five capabilities model, non-linearity, emergence, complexity and Cynefine framework, relinquish control, sense-making, isomorphism, change archetypes & strategies, change readiness, sustainability readiness, sustainability (innovation, continuation), institutionalisation (routinisation, long-term viability and integration), flexibility, time & resources.

Table 10: Overall focus of the literature, research question 2.

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
1.	(Johnson et al., 2004)	Building capacity and sustainable prevention innovations: A sustainability planning model	**Sustainability readiness, sustainability (innovation, continuation) vs institutionalization (routinization, long-term viability and integration)**. Capacity-building, actions must be adapted to fit that reality. The extensive literature review found a number of **capacity-building factors** (i.e., **type of structure and formal linkages, presence of champions for an innovation, effective leadership, resources, administrative policies and procedures, and expertise**) that need to be addressed to sustain innovations.

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			The degree of success of the sustainability actions produces an immediate outcome that we refer to as **sustainability readiness** (assessment of sustainability readiness), that is, adequate infrastructure and an innovation that has been confirmed as sustainable. Sustainability as 'the process of ensuring an adaptive prevention system and a sustainable innovation that can be integrated into ongoing operations to benefit diverse stakeholders.' **Two sets of sustainability factors:** 1) capacity of prevention systems to support sustainable innovations. 2) extent to which a particular innovation is sustainable."
2.	(Preskill & Boyle, 2008)	A multidisciplinary model of evaluation capacity building	**Teaching and Learning Strategies, 10 roles.** Bring together knowledge about **evaluation, learning, and change** into one unified framework for planning, implementing, and studying Evaluation capacity building (ECB). **Teaching and Learning Strategies**: **10 roles**. 1. Internship; 2. Written materials; 3. Technology; 4. Meetings; 5. Appreciative inquiry (AI); 6. Communities of practice; 7. Training; 8. Involvement in an evaluation process; 9. Technical assistance, 10. Coaching or mentoring.
3.	(Godfrey et al., 2002)	Technical assistance and capacity development in an aid-dependent economy: The experience of Cambodia	**Technical assistance, ownership, chronic underfunding, post-project funding, low salaries, per diem.** To what extent can external technical assistance develop the capacity of counterparts, whether in government or in local nongovernmental organizations (LNGOs) in an aid-dependent economy? The chronic **underfunding** of government in such an economy, which hinders implementation of projects and threatens **post-project financial sustainability**. Unless donors develop a coherent strategy (rather than competitive, project-related salary supplementation) to deal with this situation, the record of technical assistance in developing capacity will continue to be disappointing, and an escape from aid dependence will be postponed. **CD definition, four interrelated dimensions**, individual not enough, in his classic critique of capacity development via technical assistance, Berg (1993, p. 246) emphasizes the ''**donor- or supply-driven nature of technical [assistance]** which has led to excessive use"**!** ''**Ownership''** is a **subtle concept**, since it is located in the minds of recipients. It is not the same thing as passive acceptance or commitment. As van de Walle and Johnston (1996, p. 54) put it, ''recipient governments can be said to 'own' an aid activity when they believe that it empowers them and serves their interests.'' Berg (1993, p. 246) draws attention to the ''**poor incentives and working conditions in recipient country public sectors**, which lead to **low local staff job motivation and high turnover**, creating a . . .. work environment in which capacity-building and institutional development efforts fail to take hold.'' Because of their low salaries, the crucial middle-level people **must work outside in order to survive**. **Reference**, Berg (1993) Berg, E. J. (1993). Rethinking technical cooperation: reforms for capacity building in Africa.
4.	(Sobeck & Agius, 2007)	Organizational capacity building: Addressing a research and practice gap	**Terminology, capacity and capacity building definition.** There is **little agreement around definitions**. Although organizational capacity building is promoted as a way to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of non-profit the evaluation of these efforts lags behind. Organizational effectiveness is influenced by a **complex interplay of factors**, including **leadership and governance, financial management, technology, program quality and human resources**.
5.	(Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010)	Capacity and capacity	**Terminology, complexity, inter-related, non-linear, emergence, five capabilities.**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
		development: Coping with complexity	"Does CD remain a 'black box', as Whyte (2004) asks? As Morgan (2003, 1) notes, the concept of capacity 'seems to exist somewhere in a nether world between individual training and national development'. Given the breadth and vagueness of the analytic territory, it is not surprising that, as a topic for study and an intervention strategy, **the literature on capacity and CD is voluminous and disparate, and mixes empirical and normative perspectives**. First, **systems consist of nested, inter-related components whose properties influence each other in ways that exhibit varying degrees of predictability**. Second, system outputs are a product of the interactions among the various components, and these **interactions tend to be complex and nonlinear**. Third, systems persist over time through **emergent processes of adaptation, self-organization, and performance**. A definition of capacity: **the evolving combination** of attributes, capabilities, and relationships that enables a system to exist, adapt, and perform. **Five capabilities** include: **1) The capability to commit and engage**. Actors are able to mobilize resources (financial, human, organizational); create space and autonomy for independent action; motivate unwilling or unresponsive partners; plan, decide, and engage collectively to exercise their other capabilities. **2) The capability to carry out technical**, service delivery, and logistical tasks. Actors are able to: produce acceptable levels of performance; generate substantive outputs and outcomes (e.g., health or education services, employment opportunities, justice, and rule of law); sustain production over time; and add value for their clients, beneficiaries, citizens, etc. **3) The capability to relate and attract support**. Actors can: establish and manage linkages, alliances, and/or partnerships with others to leverage resources and actions; build legitimacy in the eyes of key stakeholders; deal effectively with competition, politics, and power differentials. **4) The capability to adapt and self-renew**. Actors are able to: adapt and modify plans and operations based on monitoring of progress and outcomes; proactively anticipate change and new challenges; learn by doing; cope with changing contexts and develop resiliency. **5) The capability to balance diversity and coherence**. Actors can: develop shared short- and long-term strategies and visions; balance control, flexibility, and consistency; integrate and harmonize plans and actions in complex, multi-actor settings; and cope with cycles of stability and change. **First** is the complexity and inter-connectedness of the elements associated with capacity, which means that **reductionist efforts to focus on separate components of capacity are unlikely to provide a sound basis for CD strategies and interventions**. **Second**, capacity is a latent phenomenon; the presence and quality of each of the **capabilities only becomes apparent when actors exercise them to achieve some sort of result**. **Third**, **capacity** and its associated capabilities **emerge as a function of the agency of country actors**. From a policy perspective, a critical question is **whether CD can effectively be planned in advance and supported by outside intervention.** A CD strategy is **incrementalism**. A **CD** strategy **can be characterized as emergence**. Systemic perspectives; The politics of capacity development; Implications for practice.
6.	(Woodhill, 2010)	Capacities for Institutional	**Soft capacities, four capacities for institutional innovation, Cynefine framework.**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
		Innovation: A Complexity Perspective	Changing institutions, be it related to societal norms and values, government policies, market incentives, political systems or organisational processes, **requires the 'soft' capacities of communication, trust building, diplomacy, networking, making sense of messy social situations, political advocacy and leadership**. Process of strengthening relationships that enable innovation and resilience in communities, organisations and societies - '**collective ability for effective relationships**' **Four capacities: 1) navigating complexity** (Cynefine framework), 2) **learning collaboratively** (to tackle many of the world's most pressing problems, various forms of multi-stakeholder engagement and collaborative learning are required) and 3) **engaging politically** (Institutional innovation is not a neutral process. It involves challenging, disturbing and sometimes overthrowing existing dynamics of authority and power), **4) being self-reflective** (Institutional innovation occurs, in complexity terms, as **an emergent property of how all the actors** (people) **in the system** (community, organisation, society) **interact**.) **The Cynefin framework** (Figure 4) identifies **five contexts**: **simple, complicated, complex, chaotic and disorder** (when the context is unclear). This differentiation recognises that not everything we want to achieve in development is complex. However, it also points out that applying approaches that work for simple and complicated situations to complex and chaotic situations will fail. Simple: **Cause and Effect,** repeatable, perceivable and predictable, Sense – **Categorise** – Respond (best practice) Complicated: **Cause and Effect,** detectable but separated over time and space, Sense – **Analyse** – Respond (expert, good practices) Complex: **Cause and Effect,** understandable in retrospect but do not repeat, **Probe** – Sense – Respond (experiential learning). In complex contexts, it is necessary to 'probe' – to experimentally test out a range of interventions to see which ones work or fail – and then use this knowledge for scaling up or replicating (Kurtz and Snowden 2003). Chaotic: **Cause and Effect**, not detectable, **Act** – Sense – Respond (disaster response) Identifying 'best' and 'good' practices is fine for simple and complicated situations.
7.	(Kaplan, 2000)	Capacity building: Shifting the paradigms of practice	**Terminology, lack of capacity, read the developmental phase/situation, soft skills (trust, listen, see), role - artists of the invisible.** Capacity building is now one of the most frequently invoked of current development concepts and yet it **continues to defy a shared definition of what it means in practice**. Friendship, organisational attitude, vision & strategy, organisational culture, acquisition of skills, material resources! **Two paradigm shifts**: 1) from the tangible to the intangible, 2) from static model to developmental reading 1) If you interview organisations that suffer from a **lack of capacity**, you will find that they complain readily about lack of resources, lack of skills, inappropriate structures, an unfavourable history or an impossible context. They place the blame for their circumstances 'out there', on others or on their situation which is beyond their control, and specifically on those visible elements which lie at the bottom of the hierarchy. But as Stephen Covey once said: **'For those who think their problems are "out there", that thinking is the problem'.** Organisational change processes are contradictory, ambiguous, and obtuse. They are long term and not easily observed. 2) It all depends on where a particular organisation is at a particular time, and on what kind of organisation. The radical nature of the paradigm shift we are suggesting here is that **development practitioners are normally trained to deliver interventions-or**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			packages or programmes-rather than to **read the developmental phase at which a particular organisation may be and then to devise a response which may be appropriate to that organisation at that particular time and to nothing else**. The **ability to read a developmental situation** requires a background theory-which few practitioners employ- but it also requires an understanding of development, the ability to observe closely without judgement, sensitivity, empathy, an ability to penetrate to the essence of a situation, to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, the **ability to create an atmosphere of trust** out of which an organisation may yield up the secrets which it will normally hold back (even from itself) in defensive reaction, **the ability really to hear and listen and see**, the ability to resist the short sharp expert response which is usually more gratifying to the practitioner than to the organisation; and then, out of an accurate reading, to bring (or arrange for) the appropriate response, one which may not even be within the ambit of the NGO's normal services. **Roles**: to 'deliver' specific and fixed 'products' or consider ourselves 'artists of the invisible'.
8.	(Vallejo & Wehn, 2016)	Capacity Development Evaluation: The Challenge of the Results Agenda and Measuring Return on Investment in the Global South	**Change, sustainability issues, no continuity, 70 (learning by doing):20 (coaching):10 (lectures) rule.** The study highlights the fact that CD deals with projects that, by their nature (consisting of change processes designed to initiate change in people, organizations, and/or their enabling environment), rely more on non-planned changes than on the pre-defined indicators and results to contribute to livelihood improvements and social transformation. As **money** has become a scarcer input and taxpayers are demanding **clearer value for money explanations**, it is not surprising that debate among development actors is increasingly focusing on project results and rates of return on the amounts invested. Studies exploring the **sustainability patterns after the completion** and withdrawal of CD interventions, resources, and expertise are almost **non-existent**. Experience shows that once the donor and implementers complete the project and leave the country or organization in which the project was implemented, the achieved results are rarely sustained in the medium and long run. As participation in CD projects is an important budget component for both local participants and the local organizations). Therefore, without a budget allocated to follow-up and without proper ownership and integration of the learning goals by the local counterpart, there are **no resources to be allocated to continuity**. **Evolution CD with references! CD definition**, capacity development as the process through which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and societies increase their abilities to: (i) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (ii) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner. ‘‘[We] should be **supporting change, not driving it.** Finding people with good ideas and facilitating their work makes a lot more sense than trying to come up with all ideas ourselves and finding someone else to carry them out. . .’’ (Ohlbaum, Dianan 2015) It is clear that CD is embedded in, and cannot be isolated from, existing social systems (people, organizations, institutional settings, culture, values, politics, and power relations) that stem from historical developments. **Training** requires considerable amounts of finances and resources, which on many occasions are not reflected in its benefits (Blume et al., 2010). Study by **Eichinger and Lombardo (1996) show that most learning takes place during action** (i.e., learning by doing, or on-the-job learning) on the basis of what is called the ‘‘70:20:10 rule’’

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			(Jennings & Wargnier, 2015). 3 The so-called **70:20:10 rule** indicates that only 10% of relevant knowledge and expertise (for professionals) is acquired through formal training and education (e.g., courses and reading), 20% through coaching and mentoring (e.g., from people, mostly the boss), and **70% via on-the-job learning, learning by doing**, and other actual experience-building activities (Eichinger & Lombardo, 1996; Jennings & Wargnier, 2015). It is necessary to use CD modalities **targeting cultural change,** which involve interventions related to fostering team work, responsibility sharing, partnerships, and strategic planning, among others (Levinger, 2015). **Linear versus CAS evolution**. **A lot of good references!**
9.	(Brinkerhoff, 2010)	Developing capacity in fragile states	**Capacity levels and three dimensions**: **1) the amount of time required, 2) the degree of difficulty and 3) complexity and the scope and depth of the change involved.** Capacity development: an **endogenous process** that concerns what goes on in a particular country, apart from whatever donors do. **CD can be targeted at gaps and weaknesses in the following**: **Resources** (who has what); **Skills and knowledge** (who knows what); **Organisation** (who can manage what); **Politics and power** (who can get what); **Incentives** (who wants to do what) - CD needs to recognise which mix of targets needs to be addressed.
10.	(Parks, 2008)	The rise and fall of donor funding for advocacy NGOs: Understanding the impact	**Fluctuations and the volatility of donor funding, shifting priorities, power relations.** NGOs in Asian countries often experience **fluctuations in funding** because of the **constantly shifting priorities** of their international donors. Fluctuating international donor assistance, donor priorities are constantly shifting. **Power relations** between donors and their NGO grantees become increasingly asymmetric. Without alternative funding sources, most NGOs will be forced to change their activities and objectives to suit donor priorities, in an attempt to attract new funding and lose their autonomy from donors. **The volatility of donor funding** is an unfortunate fact.
11.	(Girgis, 2007)	The Capacity-building Paradox: Using friendship to build capacity in the South	**Relationship work, dependent and friendship work, CB is about exercising power, financial power, one party with money and another without it, knowledge and experience power, rarely raise the issue of local knowledge, outsider status power, time, friendship work/time to drink tea, sharing lunch, going out together after lunch. Three instruments in friendship work**: **negotiation, suggestive dialogue**, and **helping. The Capacity-building Paradox! Four problems behind unsuccessful capacity building**. **First**, the overwhelming **influence of financial resources** in the environment in which people are working. **Second**, the existence of financial resources as the primary **source of power** for practitioners undertaking capacity-building work. **Third**, the subsequent ability of practitioners to use **dependent work rather than friendship work** in their attempt to achieve an increase in capacity. **Fourth**, **the lack of recognition of local knowledge**. '**Relationship work**' is central to the functions of practitioners. It consists of both 'dependent work' and 'friendship work', the latter synonymous with capacity building. **Power**: **Capacity building is about the exercise of power**, because the practitioner requires power in order to undertake capacity-building work, which in turn is about change and transformation. Change occurs at individual, community, and organisational levels and is undertaken in order to achieve development. Power is required in order to overcome environmental

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			obstacles, and practitioners cannot do capacity building if they are not invested with power. Northern expatriate technical experts providing support to a Southern organisation – there is an **assumption that the expatriates have more power than their local counterparts**, including the power to make decisions for the local, implementing organisation. The reverse relationship does not happen: an expatriate practitioner from the South does not enter a Northern organisation and adopt a decision-making, operational, or advisory role. This assumption reflects the imbalance of power between North and South. The literature increasingly cites this power imbalance as contributing to the failure of capacity building (Berg 1993) **Financial power/money**: the individual or organisation who has **control of the project budge**t, usually an expatriate practitioner and/or Northern organisation, is perceived by themselves and by those with whom they work as holding the balance of power in decision making. This reinforces the notion of 'us and them' and the practitioner's position as an outsider, as there is **one party with money and another without it**. **Knowledge and experience power**: expatriate technical experts report that, at the time, they assumed that they had more knowledge than their local colleagues, and that this perception gave them power. With experience, most practitioners change this perception and conclude that their source of power is primarily from their association with financial resources. When they describe their own capacity-building work, local **knowledge is rarely acknowledged** or used. There is an important difference between local capacity and local knowledge. **Practitioners identify local capacity**, and many prioritise assessing existing capacity as part of their work. However, when participants discuss capacity building, they **rarely raise the issue of local knowledge**. The outsiders' perception of local knowledge is centred on the practitioners' needs, which are to know what local capacity is present in order to do capacity-building work, rather than what local knowledge exists. **Outsider status power**: The practitioner's status as an outsider is a source of power in his or her work and the relationships that he or she develops. Northern practitioners see themselves as **having more power because of where they come from**. Their outsider status allows them to transcend local norms, enabling them to question assumptions, choose to disregard systems with which their local counterparts have to comply, and do things that local people cannot do. **Time**: Time strongly influences the capacity-building work that practitioners are doing, and is **linked to both financial resources and culture**. Donor agencies usually have strict expenditure guidelines that require money to be spent in a defined period. This influences the duration of a project, the results required, and reports submitted. These influences on timeframes affect the way in which practitioners undertake capacity-building work. **Friendship work/time to drink tea**: Friendship work is the constructive, empowering work that practitioners do in order to build capacity with others. It requires physical presence, time, and a commitment to spending non-professional time together, for example **sharing lunch or going out together after work**. Friendship work is the process of cultural adaptation that the practitioner goes through when working in a new environment. As one participant noted: 'For us as outsiders it also means making **cultural adaptations and if that means sitting around drinking lots of cups of mint tea and then getting to the point of what it is you're going to discuss**, and that's the normal culture, then that's what you've got to do.' The dictionary **definition** of **'friendship'** as 'a relationship between friends . . . the feeling or relationship that friends have' (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 7th edn, 2005) **is not applied here**.

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			Practitioners use **three instruments in friendship work**: **negotiation, suggestive dialogu**e, and **helping**. Sensitivity, creativity, shared understanding commitment. **Dependent work** describes work done to gain an advantage over other people in order to achieve certain outcomes – **corruption, neo-colonialism, lowering expectation**s. **Neo-colonialism is about power and control by the North over others**. Neo-colonialism is rarely used consciously but is an insidious consequence of the contextual elements that influence capacity-building practitioners towards dependent work. For example, if a donor agency requires a specific process (such as a reporting system or project-proposal procedure) to be followed, the practitioner may be forced to impose that process on the counterpart: 'Well, it's the oldest mistake, and we continue to make it, [which] is to impose our values or our ideas or our ways of working.' Given the **contextual elements**, **a lack of experience often results in practitioners using dependent work rather than friendship work**. This ultimately reduces the capacity of their local counterparts and creates personal frustration for the practitioner. **The Capacity-building Paradox!** This study reveals **four problems behind unsuccessful capacity building**. **First**, the overwhelming **influence of financial resources** in the environment in which people are working. **Second**, the existence of financial resources as the primary **source of power** for practitioners undertaking capacity-building work. **Third**, the subsequent ability of practitioners to use **dependent work rather than friendship work** in their attempt to achieve an increase in capacity. **Fourth**, **the lack of recognition of local knowledge**.
12.	(McWha, 2011)	The roles of, and relationships between, expatriates, volunteers, and local development workers	**Trust & Friendship**, the **importance of spending time informally with colleagues,** to make an effort to understand the culture. **Developing trust** in the working relationship, 'As an expatriate working [here] **to get that trust you need to form a friendship'**. Importance of **recognising that everyone is an expert in something**, and that we **all have something to learn from as well as to teach others**. Many cases discussion around developing capacity was closely linked to **relationship building**, a finding which supports previous researching this area (e.g. Eyben 2006; Girgis 2007).
13.	(Jones & Blunt, 1999)	'Twinning' as a method of sustainable institutional capacity building	**Twinning, Terminology, Whose definitions count, Learning, Sustainability, Staff turnover, Mutual learning.** In relation to development co-operation activity, it is reasonable to ask `**whose definitions should count?**', because implicit in the way that terms like institution building tend to be used by development agencies is the assumption that one universal meaning can be attached to them, usually determined by the rich countries. Several major theories of individual learning emphasize that **learning is incomplete without action**, which provides material for re¯ection and review, for conceptualizing reality and for experimenting with changed behaviours. Formal, on-job training courses, In-house training courses, On-job training, Study visits. Probably the most serious threat to long-term institutional sustainability in twinning arrangements is the possibility that individuals **who acquire scarce skills in a project**,`the lifeblood of an e ective state' (World Bank, 1997, p. 92), **will leave the organization when the project is terminated**. Taking context into account. The importance and nature of mutual learning between the organizations needs to be established at the beginning of projects, and meanings need to be discussed and clarifed then, rather than assumed.

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14.	(Clarke & Oswald, 2010)	Introduction: Why reflect collectively on capacities for change	**Learning, mutual learning, action & reflection, donor focus, power, linear, best practice, complexity**, soft capacities, **relationship, time, space and resources.** **Argues against a deficit approach based on linear causal logic and replicable 'best practice'**. Instead, practitioners are encouraged to develop a detailed understanding of the culture and dynamics of specific contexts, to detect energies for positive change and work to connect and facilitate them. **Learning is at the centre** of the approach. **Capacity development is understood as a collective process of learning in action for social change**. Support for capacity development processes demands a critical development practice **that implies mutual learning**, with an **emphasis on reflective and experiential approaches**. The '**capacity development'** concept **implies a promise of gradually building self-reliance, national ownership and sustainability**, yet practice seems to continually fall short of this emancipatory promise. We argue that the debate about capacity development has largely been framed from a donor perspective. Relational approach (Eyben 2008) which **engages with complexity and sees capacity developing in and through relationships**, as exemplified in work on multi-stakeholder processes (Woodhill 2004). **Skills transfer, through training** and expatriate technical assistance, was failing to build sustainable impact, and instead **dependency was being created** (Morgan and Baser 1993: ii; Berg 1993: 244). Morgan (1999: 18) refers to a perspective that has understood capacity building as 'a form of social mobilization with profound morale [sic], ethical, social and political overtones' **with a concern for the causes of lack of capacity, which it roots in inequities and unequal power relationships**. **Linear causal logic and replicable 'best practice' are inappropriate approaches to complex problems**. Capacities have been divided into 'hard' and '**soft'**, the former referring to, for example, the capacity to build infrastructure and manage finances; the latter referring to, for example, **the capacity to manage knowledge or develop organisational procedures** (Horton et al. 2003). Aragón directly relates the need to understand power to the practice of capacity development. He analyses the concept of 'capacity' as a form of social capital, drawing on Bourdieu's theory of power (1977). He argues that if organisations can develop the ability to do this analysis themselves, it can help them understand why capacities are being developed – are they helping to transform or preserve existing power structures? Systemic theories of change (STOC). **Time, space and resources for learning - 'delicious luxury'**. **Practice must engage with complexity, appreciate the importance of specific culture and context, and address the role of power in shaping relationships, understandings and practices**.
15.	(Aragón & Giles Macedo, 2010)	A systemic theories of change' approach for purposeful capacity development	**Key questions, emergence, complexity, 'systemic theories of change' (STOC), assumptions**. **Assumed conditions for change'** (Reeler 2007:2). 'Soft systems' thinking in particular helps to introduce the idea of systems and processes that are meant to be flexible, emergent, iterative and learning-based, in order to offer more relevant responses to complex social change. Questions: **What are you trying to do? What is the complexity of the situation and how might that affect what you propose? Why do you think that it is important to support this change? How do you plan on going about it? How do you plan on going about it? What are the organisational and individual capacities needed to support these theories and practices of change?**

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16.	(Honadle & Rosengard, 1983)	Putting 'projectized' development in perspective	**'Projectized' development assistance, no continuation, blueprint, no flexibility**. The short time frame of projectized assistance often results in temporary infusions of resources but **few benefit flows that continue long after the end of project funding**. **Donor-assisted activities are dominated by the project approach**. Their often **short tenure** reinforces their desire for **quick results**. **The long run is someone else's problem**. **The tendency to over 'blueprint' and to discourage flexibility has led to stifled learning and failure**.
17.	(Johnson & Thomas, 2007)	Individual learning and building organisational capacity for development	**Learning, mismatch result and action, community of practice, mutual engagement, soft/hard capacities, capacity vs capbability** . Argyris and Schön (1996) provide useful insights. They note that individual inquiry into an organisational problem can often lead to the discovery of mismatches between 'expected and actual results of action' (1996, p.16). Another mechanism may be in the formation of what Lave and Wenger have called '**communities of practice**' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; further developed in Wenger, 1998). **Communities of practice are based on the mutual engagement of people in the pursuit of shared enterprises through which repertoires of knowledge and skills are developed**. In development management implies **learning both 'hard' and 'soft' skills**. '**Hard'** skills include the techniques and tools of particular content areas (for example, for **project design and management**) and general tools for analysis and action (such as mapping and modelling). '**Soft'** skills involve learning how to **be reflective and reflexive, how to negotiate with people, how to think differently in given situations**. In practice, the division between hard and soft may not even be appropriate, as **one type of skill may need the other and be modified by it**, and thinking and action might combine different elements in different ways. Constructivist, experiential, 'reflective practitioner' approaches... The distinction between capacity and capability is helpful. **Individuals or organisations may have increased their capacity without necessarily having the capability to implement change**.
18.	(Bontenbal, 2013)	Differences in learning practices and values in north-south city partnerships: Towards a broader understanding of mutuality	**Twinning, partnerships is not mutual between North and South** and that the benefits of **'shared learning'—a rhetoric commonly used in the twinning discourse—are limited**. **Twinning is understood as a form of collaboration between similar institutions,that have similar responsibilities and tasks to execute**. Twinning is thus based on the **principles of parity and similarity**, and such partnerships have taken place between central government bodies, universities, hospitals and other public services (Jones and Blunt, 1999). It was found that whereas personal learning occurred at a comparable scope and scale in both North and South, **professional learning was more explicitly experienced in the South than in the North**. **Learning in North–south partnerships occurs through both difference and similarity, each of them generating different forms of learning and knowledge**. Difference and alienation that emerges from encounters through North–south partnerships trigger reflective learning (**experiential knowledge**), the dominant form of learning in the North, whereas a certain degree of similarity and knowledge parity is needed to transfer codified or explicit knowledge for technical learning, the dominant form of learning in the South. learning is unintentional—**it is not a prime objective for engaging in North–south partnerships for partner cities in the North**.

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19.	(Pettit, 2010)	Multiple faces of power and learning	**Power, learning, capacity - emergent combination.** **Complexity of power makes it difficult to know which concepts to use, or how to develop capacities to put them into practice**. The **multiple faces of power require multiple faces of learning**. **Capacities and need to be supported through adaptive, context-sensitive and applied methods**, not imparted in abstract or instrumental ways. Yet there is **no one agreed model or theory**: **power is an 'essentially contested' concept** (Lukes 1974, 2005) and the **word is used in fundamentally different ways**. Yet, **how we understand power has a direct bearing on the choices we make about 'empowering' ourselves and others**, and on our strategies for challenging power relations. **Many organisations lack a shared understanding of power or social change, or a common language with which to communicate, strategise and act**. This is a source of confusion for which an intellectual grasp of the concepts alone will not suffice. **There remains a tendency to see power as actors dominating other actors, and to miss the socialised norms that affect all actors, as well as the positive forms of power that can be mobilised to effect change**. The classic work of Lukes (1974, 2005) distinguishes **three 'dimensions' or 'faces' of power**, from **observable domination, to behind-the-scenes agenda-setting, to subtle manipulation of public opinion**. Rowlands (1997) and VeneKlasen and Miller (2002), in their work on power in gender relations and feminist organising, **identify the three vital expressions of 'power to' (the capacity to act), 'power with' (collective action), and 'power within' (dignity and self-esteem)** – all of which come to play in cultivating awareness and becoming 'empowered' to resist norms or to define alternatives. Foucault, for example, has been hugely influential in theorising power as something beyond a 'tool' of coercion, and even beyond the structures in which actors operate. His reminder that '**power is everywhere', diffused and embodied in discourse**, knowledge and 'regimes of truth' is a compelling explanation of social inequalities (Foucault 1991; Rabinow 1991). But for some, it leaves little room for agency. Hayward (1998, 2000), following Foucault, questions the idea of power as an instrument used by some to limit the freedom of others; instead **we are all moulded into our identities by 'social boundaries that, together, define the fields of action for all actors** (1998: 12). Bourdieu's views of power help to explain this process of internalisation: **power is cultural and symbolic, constantly recreated through the interplay of agency and structure**. This happens through what he calls '**habitus'** or the learned norms and dispositions that shape our behaviour (Bourdieu 1980, 1984). The multiple faces of learning '…not only are experiences the key building blocks of learning, but **action is an intrinsic part of the learning cycle; this implies learning by doing as well as a practical understanding of the world.' (Dewey 1997/1938: 35).** **Deep learning is 'constructivist' and can lead to profound shifts in a learner's perspective and ways of thinking, but only if the content and approach are relevant to the person's 'intrinsic interest and a sense of ownership'** (Ramsden 1992: 65). **Experiential learning (rooted in American pragmatism) relies on the principle of 'learning cycles' in which the learner moves from experience, to reflection, to abstract conceptualisation, to action, and the cycle repeats itself (e.g. Kolb 1984).** This has been picked up strongly in management science and professional training, e.g. in the work of Argyris and Schön (1974), Schön (1983) and Senge (1990), with concepts such as **'double-' and 'triple-loop' learning** in which deeper levels of reflection lead from mere corrective experimentation to a more undamental questioning of values and purpose – and to perspective change.

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			An understanding of capacity must also go beyond the instrumental, the technical and the functional and encompass the human, the emotional, the political, the cultural and the psychological. We can see these aspects of capacity at work in some of the cases. Some organizations lacked technical mastery in certain key areas such as financial management or project management. But they displayed enormous reserves of capacity in the form of collective resilience, social energy, courage, loyalty and ingenuity. These qualities enabled them to persevere and improve over time. (Morgan 2006: 18). Baser and Morgan (2008: 3) define **capacity as 'that emergent combination of individual competencies, collective capabilities, assets and relationships that enables a human system to create value'.**
20.	(Ensminger et al., 2015)	Case study of an evaluation coaching model: Exploring the role of the evaluator	**Two forms of coaching — results coaching and developmental coaching strategies and five types of coaching** Almost all of the studies (92%) reported an individual-level outcome for ECB with the most frequent being changes in behaviour and skills (80%), knowledge (50%), and attitudes (36%). Examples of knowledge and behavioural outcomes involved understanding and doing logic models, evaluation plans, and steps of carrying out an evaluation. Seventy-seven percent of the studies also reported organizational-level outcomes, such as processes, policies, and practices (72%), leadership (13%), organizational culture (28%), mainstreaming evaluation (54%), and resources (46%). This study demonstrated that the individual outcomes of attitudes and behaviours were more frequent when ECB strategies also addressed organizational outcomes. two main types: personal-development and goal-oriented coaching. **Personal- development coaching emphasized the therapeutic role of the coach to foster the personal and emotional growth and selfawareness of the coachee**, while **goal-oriented coaching emphasized a solutions-oriented role of the coach to foster self-regulation through action plan development to achieve specific goals**. **Five types of coaching: Knowledge coaching, Skills coaching, Results coaching, Development coaching.**
21.	(Buffardi, 2013)	Configuring 'country ownership': patterns of donor-recipient relations	**Country ownership**, **problem identification, resource administration, programme design, implementation, and governance**. **Four types of local actors, three donor-recipient relationship patterns emerge: 'doctor knows best', 'empowered patient', and 'it takes a village'**, each with specific conditions but overall underrepresentation of recipient country actors, suggesting that their involvement could take place more often than currently occurs. There is currently **no common definition** or standard measure of the concept **of country ownership**. **Table 1: Definitions and indicators of country ownership in a development context (p. 980)**. **Donors involved four types of local actors**: central government, regional governments, NGOs, and civil society organisations. **Doctor knows best**, the first model represents the absence of recipient country ownership and characterises the traditional relationship between donors and recipient governments. In the doctor knows best approach, donor agencies related to the government as a beneficiary, with central and regional governments themselves the recipients of health interventions. In practice, the doctor knows best model was the most common of the three ownership onfigurations and was recognised as the most flexible. **Empowered patient**, in the second pattern of donor-recipient relations, the government took the lead, assuming ownership over all aspects of the development programme from problem identification and resource administration to programme design, implementation, and governance.

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			It takes a village, in the final pattern, responsibility for different aspects of the development programme was divided, and in some cases shared, among the donor, government, NGOs and civil society associations. Unlike the empowered patient model, the government was among but not the primary actor. In the it takes a village model, a multi-sector coalition of representatives from the government, NGOs, and civil society associations was responsible for programme design and governance. **Compared to the other two relationship patterns**, the donor was the least involved here. This model was the most complex of the three relationship patterns because of its involvement of different sets of local actors in multiple capacities.
22.	(Belda et al., 2012)	Rethinking capacity development for critical development practice. Inquiry into a postgraduate programme.	Several **capacities for** a critical development practice, which are **navigating complexity, understanding and engaging with power, and the capacity for continuous learning and adaptation**. **Figure 1. Process of capacity development for emancipatory social change** **These capacities emerge constantly as a result of a continuous and endogenous (internal) process, which takes place in individuals and groups** (Fowler, 2007; Kaplan, 2010, Ubels et al., 2010). These processes are driven by **1) comprehensive learning experiences (experiential, emotional, and intellectual experiences); 2) by constant questioning, redefinition, and 3) development of values and visions of social change, and by relationships**. We consider these as the three 'drivers' of capacity development (Clarke and Oswald, 2010). These processes can be promoted and supported **exogenously (external)** through a variety of different methods (Clarke and Oswald, 2010; Ubels et al., 2010), such as critical reflection and experiential learning methods, depending on the context and on individuals and groups (Figure 1)."
23.	(Wetterberg et al., 2015)	From compliant to capable: balanced capacity development for local organisations	**Conceptual model (figure 1): factors influencing effectiveness of technical assistance delivered through local organisations where ECDPM five capabilities model is embedded. Lack of domestic funding resulting in perverse incentives, work from project to project,** "**briefcase NGOs",** rather **than focus on developing organisations.** We employ the ECDPM model, which conceptualises capacity as endogenous and focuses attention on internal organisational endowments and processes and on their connections to their surrounding environments (Baser and Morgan 2008). The model takes a **systems perspective**, recognising that organisations are **rooted in specific contexts that influence their capacity**, in terms both of constraints and limitations, and of opportunities and synergies. Organisation–environment interactions occur over time and are dynamic, multi-faceted, and complex. Organisations constantly evolve and are reconstituted and changed by their own actions, and though interactions with their environments (Aldrich 2007). This systems perspective is incorporated in our **analytic framework, summarised in Figure 1.** The framework extends beyond research on public–private partnerships that has often focused on either the skills, resources, and roles of the individual organisations involved (Banks and Hulme, 2012), or just on the partnership itself (Probandari et al. 2011). It recognises that local organisations' **capacity to deliver technical support** to Indonesian district governments **depends on more than their own abilities and resources**. Also influencing performance are the combined contributions of all of the partners, including in this case what Kinerja provides; the operating features of the partnership itself; and surrounding institutional, geographic, and social factors. We **embed the ECDPM five capabilities model within these systems elements in our framework**. On the left-hand side of the figure, the precursors to performance encompass **pre-existing**

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			organisational capacity and **how the organisation is set up** (e.g. structures and processes). Along the bottom of the figure are **external factors that constitute the operating context for the local organisations** (Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, and Rapp 2010). The external factors include, for example, **local political constraints, distributions of power and authority, resource availability, and the legal and administrative framework**. T**heir influence is felt prior to any capacity development intervention**, as well as during the period of performance, extending through to outcomes, as indicated by the horizontal bar. The final posited outcomes, on the right-hand side of the figure, include **the local governments' increased capacity to deliver services; effective implementation of the service delivery enhancements to increase front-line service availability, quality, and access; and improvements in civil society–state relations that reinforce the legitimacy of public–private partnerships**. Using the five core capabilities (Baser & Morgan 2008). **Lack of domestic funding** from government and the private sector, thus **resulting in perverse incentives** for "**briefcase NGOs" that work from project to project** rather **than focus on developing organisations** with enduring capacity beyond their founders (Antlöv, Brinkerhoff, and Rapp 2010).
24.	(Fisher, 2010)	Between pragmatism and idealism: Implementing a systemic approach to capacity development	**Power relations North-South, terminology, complexity, champions, capacity**. The CD concept as based on neo-colonial attitudes to development in which **knowledge is assumed to lie in the North or as a means of introducing Northern models to the South**. **Neo-colonial**: the use of economic, political, cultural, or other pressures to control or influence other countries. Neocolonialism can be described as the subtle propagation of socio-economic and political activity by former colonial rulers aimed at reinforcing capitalism, neo-liberal globalization, and cultural subjugation of their former colonies. CD as a **development fad or simply meaningless jargon**, while others saw it as a front for **generating money for essentially unsuccessful activities**. A challenge of undertaking capacity development activities that are based on a systemic but unarticulated understanding of capacity is that the **activities may not appear to be capacity development activities to either those participating in them or funding them**. **It is complex when people want it to be simple; outcomes are difficult to predict when people want certainty; change is long term when people want quick results; it implies change in whole systems rather than plugging gaps in parts and so challenges the powerful**. Pragmatic approaches include working strategically within norms and frameworks that stakeholders do understand, identifying and **working with champions** rather than getting ownership from all involved, generating quick wins while also pursuing longer-term change objectives and identifying windows for change. Need to challenge outdated ideas and understandings about capacity development in order that the term and the action it inspires can play a truly useful role in achieving positive development outcomes. The **key elements of the understanding of capacity development** that emerged: **- Capacity is**: 'The ability of people,organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully…'. Capacity development is a process whereby **capacity is positively enhanced**, it is also an expression of a desired outcome. Capacity development interventions, often called capacity building, are activities, programmes or inputs which are aimed at changing the state of capacity for an organisation, person, network, society or context;

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			needless to say these activities do not always result in capacity development. **- Capacity exists at different interrelated levels**: individual; organisational; network or sector; and enabling environment – interventions need to be mindful of the connections between them; for example, increases in capacity at an individual level can decrease capacity at an organisational or even societal level – brain drain is a good example of this. **- Capacity is made up of a set of related capabilities**, the skills of an individual to deliver on a set of tasks is only part of a much broader picture and will only be effective if related capabilities of the system, of which the individual is a part, enable them to be. **- Effective capacity development** is most likely to result from a range of interventions at different levels that happen over a **long period of time**. The most familiar type of capacity development intervention is training, which is likely to play a part in any capacity development programme. - **Every person, organisation and system has capacity**; it is not something that is generated or increased only through external intervention. Capacity can increase or decrease in response to many factors. Capacity development interventions can deliberately or inadvertently decrease capacity as well as help to increase it.
25.	(James, 2010)	Vices and virtues in capacity development by international NGOs	**Reasons for CD failure**, **acknowledge and manage our self-interest, terminology, different meaning, complex, shifts in power, change, uncertain, open-systems, context, principles, donor priorities, CD practice contradicts what we know, meeting Northern needs, power relations, lack shared organisational definitions of capacity development, shared understanding of capacity development is necessary both within each organisation, and also between the different stakeholders, no implementation of change, nothing planned or provided for the change process itself, overwhelmed agenda, disburse large sums** of money quickly **prevents an incremental approach, seven deadly sins in capacity development, accountability-oriented systems not capacity development-oriented systems, trying to work ourselves out of a job**' **seems to have gone out of fashion, organisational virtues in capacity development.** **Vices**: immorality, wrongdoing, shortcoming, flaw, weakness. **Virtues**: goodness, morality, Changing aid context and from a lack of resources and skills. CD is driven by **self-interest** than by knowledge of what works. Combine knowledge with virtues of humility, patience and a genuine commitment to others. To narrow the gap between what we know and what we do, requires us to acknowledge and manage our self-interests. **Terminology**: Capacity development, or capacity building as some prefer, has suffered from the lack of a tight, internationally-accepted definition. It is a nebulous (unclear, fuzzy, blurry, ambiguous, vague) concept – broad, contested, ambiguous, and imprecise. This **causes confusion within and between agencies**. The **elasticity** allows different stakeholders to **ascribe their own meaning** to capacity development and interpret it, unchallenged, from their own perspective. **Capacity development**: - is a **complex**, human process based on values, emotions, and beliefs; - is an internal **process** (**endogenous – 'formed from within'**) that involves the main actor taking responsibility for the process of **change**; - involves shifts in **power** and identity;

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			- involves changes in relationship between elements of **open-systems**; - is **uncertain** and unpredictable; - is powerfully influenced by the culture and the changing **context**. **Principles**: • **is a human, client-centred approach that:** 1. is people-centred and engages with values 2. ensures client responsibility for change 3. addresses issues of power and relationship. • **has a locally appropriate and sustainable delivery process that:** 4. involves a variety of techniques 5. explicitly adapts to the particular context and culture 6. uses and develops skilled local capacity building providers. • **is well planned and managed which:** 7. pursues a carefully planned and 'situational' strategy 8. focuses on implementation of the change process 9. has developmental resourcing 10.systematically assesses and learns from experience. **While the language may vary, the underlying principles are similar**. There is an unusual consensus between a wide diversity of stakeholders about what works in capacity development. The issue then is not about knowledge. We know what to do in capacity development. **The question is whether we put into practice what we know**. The evidence suggests that many capacity development programmes are **not client-centred** in that they do not ensure that the client is taking responsibility for change. This is often because **donors are tempted to impose their own analysis and try and control the content and process of the intervention too tightly**. **Capacity development practice contradicts what we know**, because donors have continued to set the agenda for capacity development. Over half of the major priorities for Southern capacity development clearly are aimed primarily at **meeting Northern needs** for: - **project design** and implementation; - **monitoring and evaluation** systems development and use; - impact assessment; - **accountability**; - **financial transparency**, systems and management. Power relationships have a profound influence on capacity development. While many INGOs acknowledge this (Beauclerk 2007; Wrigley 2006), the evidence from the evaluations points to the relatively **low priority INGOs give to such (power) issues in a capacity development process**. Only a minority demonstrated any understanding of capacity development as a **two-way process of learning** and change. **Training** and technical assistance are still the most frequently used methods. By relying on **rigid planning frameworks** they may have oversimplified capacity development to a purely logical, mechanical process. The timeframes used are based on artificial project cycle deadlines, not what pace of change is possible. Much capacity development avoids (or merely pays lip-service to) sensitive or contentious areas such as cultural values and beliefs, including spirituality and faith. The evaluations indicate that INGO support to capacity development is still ad hoc and disconnected. There is limited oversight or integration of activities into a cohesive or strategic whole. They often **fail** to provide developmental funding to resource the **implementation of change and rarely undertake systematic monitoring and evaluation** of capacity development work.

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			INGOs **lack shared organisational definitions of capacity development**. Rather, they admit to 'scattered reference in diverse documents and policy papers' (Lipson and Warren 2006). Although capacity development is often cited as a key strategic goal, only 18 per cent of 2006 survey respondents had any policy or strategy on how they would go about this (far less than in the 1998 survey). **Shared understanding of capacity development is necessary both within each organisation, and also between the different stakeholders**. **There is little evidence of stakeholders taking sufficient time to reach joint definitions of terms before initiating a capacity development programme**. The performance of INGOs in supporting the **implementation of change is mixed**. There are some positive examples of INGOs investing in follow-through. In other cases, the evidence indicates that **donors are more interested in supporting needs analysis and capacity development planning events** rather **than resourcing the implementation of change**. It is often only the planning of the job that gets funded. There is often **nothing planned or provided for the change process itself.** But the real work of change, which only takes place back in the organisation, has not yet begun. The local organisations **were overwhelmed by the number of trainings and workshops and did not have the time to implement changes in their organisations**. Some were so involved with **responding to the demands** of the INGO for grant management requirements, the capacity-building workshops, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and regular networking meetings that they felt they had effectively become employees of the INGO. An evaluation five years later found that while good practice principles of **flexibility** and ownership are highlighted in capacity development policy documents, grant management systems require **rigid specified results** before starting (**Bergstrom 2005**). Over the last few years, donors have taken a more **state-centred approach to development**. This means that resources which were **previously directly channelled to local civil society are now meant to go through national and local governments first**. The need for the aid system to **disburse large sums** of money quickly **prevents an incremental approach** to capacity development. **Good quality providers**: - recognise and respond sensitively to the influences of culture and context; - develop client-ownership of the process to focus on their motive for change; - take a people-centred approach to change, work with the personal and manage tensions creatively; - see and work with the inter-relationships between elements; - sensitively and courageously understand and challenge power dynamics; - have the competence to use a variety of methods, including the more experiential; - balance structure and flexibility; - communicate in a culturally sensitive and creative way. **Seven deadly sins in capacity development (box 2, p. 19).** **Good practice capacity development may say one thing, but good practice fund-raising may say the opposite** (p. 20). **Which voice shouts loudest? Who gets listened to?** Today, capacity development practice tends to suffer when pitted against fundraising opportunities. **Donors develop accountability-oriented systems, not capacity development-oriented systems (p. 20)**. When there is a conflict between the two, accountability is prioritised above ensuring capacity development impact.

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			The international NGO refrain of '**trying to work ourselves out of a job**' seems to have gone **out of fashion**. Growth, survival and self-interest have come to the fore. In Malawi for example, there are probably **three times as many INGO staff than local CSO staff** – and we wonder why there are capacity issues in local CSOs. INGOs are consuming the best of limited local capacity. **Box 3 Organisational virtues in capacity development (p. 21), humility, compassion, patience, determination, generosity, self-control, honesty.** If **vices are at the heart of the problem, perhaps virtues, their antithesis**, should be at the core of the solution. Virtues are by no means a new concept. Aristotle described virtue as 'the state which makes a man good and which makes him do his work well (quoted by Caza 2002: 10).
26.	(Aagaard & Eberhard Trykker, 2020)	The road to partnerships in practice: Practical wisdom as an alternative to managerialism in NGO partnerships	**Partnership, no universal definition, power asymmetry, iron cage, complex responsive processes vs Aristotelian concept of 'practical wisdom'** (**phronesis**), **sense-making, enactment - when we act, we make sense, and through our actions we create our surroundings, which simultaneously limit us and make things possible, organizing themes of the partnership (a marriage, change as planning, the implementing partner, capacity development is based on gaps, the SNGO is not capable).** Visible **power relations and values differences between donors and recipients**. The idea of **partnerships** in development originated in the **1970s (**Fowler, 1998, p. 140, 2000, p. 1). Partnerships became a buzzword in the aid community, and in 2005, the idea of partnerships was canonized in the idealistic rhetoric of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. A literature review on partnerships in development shows that the **complexity** approach has yet to be thoroughly explored empirically. We link the complexity approach to the **Aristotelian concept of 'practical wisdom**', which has attracted renewed interest in organizational management (Küpers & Pauleen, 2015; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2011). There **is no universal definition** of 'partnership' in the development literature, but the term usually refers to inter-organizational relations "beyond the usual contractual and hierarchical agreements" that are characterized by reciprocity, shared objectives, mutuality and dialogue (Contu & Girei, 2014, pp. 206, 215). The concept of partnership is linked to the notions of 'ownership' and 'capacity development'. The issue of **power asymmetry** between development partners is a recurrent theme in the literature (Brinkerhoff & Brinkerhoff, 2004; Fowler, 1998, p. 144, 2000, p. 3; Lister, 2000; Morse & Mcnamara, 2012), and probably the most criticized. This power asymmetry is generally attributed to the fact that **Northern NGOs are usually in control of the finances while Southern NGOs lack financing**. There still is a need for alternative practical guidelines that development actors can use to open up the '**iron cage**' of managerialism. Standing on the shoulders of the pragmatic tradition, our approach involves **two dimensions: first, complex responsive processes; and second, the Aristotelian concept of 'practical wisdom'.** It places relations between actors, and what those relations contain in praxis, at the centre of the analysis. **Organizations are not defined as systems with fixed boundaries, but rather as continuous interactions**—or **complex responsive processes**—among people. Seen from this perspective, organizations are patterns of interaction over which no-one has full control (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006, p. 331; Stacey, 2007, p. 298).

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			The focus on concrete relations brings praxis to the forefront in complex responsive processes. That is why we link complex responsive processes to the Aristotelian idea of knowledge as **practical wisdom** (**phronesis**), which is "[…] that intellectual activity most relevant to praxis. It focuses on what is variable, on that which cannot be encapsulated by universal rules, on specific cases" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 372). **Practical wisdom takes account of contextual circumstances, including the distribution of power**. **Sense-making** is a social process that also **depends on our identity**. Thus, depending on how we see ourselves, our perception of the world around us changes, reflecting back on how we see ourselves. Weick (1995, p. 133) emphasizes that sense-making is about magnifying smaller cues drawn from a whole. The cues that are selected, and how they are interpreted, depend on the person and the context. **Sense-making may be understood as a kind of filtering process whereby beliefs, values and norms serve to simplify reality and draw our attention towards certain aspects rather than others** (Weick, 1995, p. 133). Theories about action, as well as assumptions and traditions, influence our sense-making. A central concept in Weick's theory is that of **enactment**. When **we act, we make sense, and through our actions we create our surroundings**, **which simultaneously limit us and make things possible** (Weick, 1995, p. 31). The **organizing themes of the partnership** (table 2, p. 275): a **marriage, change as planning, the implementing partner, capacity development is based on gaps, the SNGO is not capable**. "… someone coming in from the outside you have to know, you have to be very humble, because we don't understand a thing about what is going on in the country. And that is why it is an equal relationship, because we need each other. They need us for technical and planning matters. And that is where we can build capacity. But we need them to give us knowledge, so that we can give them as much as we can in the best way possible. So it's about mutuality, equality and respect" (p. 275). The representative paints a picture of **NNGO actors as outsiders who do not understand the context**, which makes the partners appear far more equal than they really are when looking, for instance, at the reporting lines and financial control. "…after four years that we've done an amazing job. But how can I measure it? That I think is difficult" (p. 276) According to the SNGO respondent, when delegates try to implement projects themselves, this results in bad relations and conflicts in the partner. **CD is based on gaps (p. 278)**: The SNGO's focus on its own weaknesses overshadows its potential strengths, impeding a praxis-based approach to capacity development. This **dependence** on the partners is underlined by the way in which the latter are depicted as actors who come in from the outside, set the agenda and steer the organization, as yet another respondent explained: "The driving force has been the partners and their interests.
27.	(Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013)	Using the Five Capabilities (5C) model: Making a virtue of necessity	**5 C model (Five Capabilities model), dialogue with partners, leadership, legitimacy, accountability, staff motivation.** **Five core capabilities together forming the capacity of an organisation developed by ECDPM** (Baser & Morgan 2008). 1) Commit and act 2) Achieve development results 3) Relate 4) Adapt and self-renew 5) Achieve coherence. The greatest value of the assessment for the IMPACT Alliance lies in its use for **dialogue with partners**. The assessments at partner level provide a good basis for further discussions between the IMPACT Alliance and its partners. The holistic nature of the 5C model ensures that all relevant issues are considered and provides opportunities to discuss often difficult areas like **leadership, legitimacy, accountability,**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			staff motivation, etc. In many cases there was **not enough time** to encourage or facilitate a **participatory process**. In some cases, the **5C tool was discussed and used by the management team of the partner organisation only.**
28	(Soal, 2010)	The more things change, the more they stay the same?	**Terminology, a conceptual framework, organisational attitude, organisational structure, acquisition of skills context, letting go and relinquish control, what was a 'hard' point then remains true today, flexibility and openness, learning only happens with dedicated space and best done when there is experience to learn from; and experience is constantly changing and accumulating, so learning should be continuous too, champion, develop our capacity by exercising it and left un-exercised**, **that capacity immediately begins to wither.** Allan Kaplan wrote an article distinguishing training from organisational capacity, arguing for a more nuanced and grounded view of capacity, one that linked it to an organisation's (or collective's) ability to think and act together (Kaplan 1993). **A summarised account of the 1995 article (from Kaplan 2007) is offered below**. Donor agencies, international and indigenous NGOs, and many governments in developing countries recognise the importance of capacity building for development. Yet even while they claim to be practising it, their **concepts and practice often remain confused and vague**. The greatest area of agreement appears to be that we do not really know what capacity building is (**Kaplan 2007**). **Elements of organisational capacity (p. 130-)**: A **conceptual framework** (a set of concepts which allows the organisation to make sense of the world around it, e.g. "theory of change" to locate itself within that world, and to make decisions in relation to it. The organisation which does not have a competent working understanding of its world can be said to be incapacitated, regardless of how many other skills and competencies it may have) **Organisational attitude** (it has to shift from 'playing the victim' to exerting some control, to believing in its own capacity to affect its circumstances) **Organisational structure** (once organisational aims and strategy are clear it becomes possible to structure the organisation in such a way that roles and functions are clearly defined and differentiated; lines of communication and accountability untangled, and decision-making procedures transparent and functional. Or, 'form follows function' – if one tries to do this the other way around the organisation becomes incapacitated) **Acquisition of skills** (Development cannot be viewed simplistically; these phases overlap. Yet what emerges clearly from our research is that there is a sequence, a hierarchy, an order. Unless organisational capacity has been developed sufficiently to harness training and acquisition of new skills, training courses do not 'take', and skills do not adhere. The organisation which does not know where it is going and why; which has a poorly developed sense of responsibility for itself; and which is inadequately structured, cannot make use of training courses and skills acquisition) **Material resources** (an organisation needs material resources: finances, equipment, office space, and so on. Without an appropriate level of these, the organisation will always remain, in an important sense, incapacitated). **Organisations repeat phases at different stages of their drive towards capacity**. **Inputs must be determined by context**, and their efficacy is further dependent on the competence of the intervening agency. There is **no straight line between input and output, between cause and effect**. Output is the result of a multiple range of factors and, even more to the point, it is naive to imagine that any organisation is ever finally capacitated.

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			Short-term responses will not satisfy long-term requirements. It is necessary that the organization constantly engages in **critical self-reflection, learning** and strategising. **Letting go**… A willingness to **relinquish control**, to let go, is necessary if the capacity builder is to be open to the client organisation changing. If donors cannot respond to what is needed with considered **flexibility and openness**, then they should avoid the straw allegiance to the concept of capacity building, and even development itself, for it can only be regarded as posturing. **What strikes me, on re-reading this article, is how familiar and contemporary it is, despite it having been written 15 years ago**. **What was a 'hard' point then** (Kaplan 2007), **remains true today** – this 'theory of change' is antithetical to the view that sees development as delivery on objectives, rather than as a process over time. **It is antithetical / opposing or conflicting to the view that sees change in terms of simple causal relationships between actions, rather than complex mutually reinforcing relationships among people and systems**. All of the words that are thrown at this debate (including mine here) serve to confuse things further. It becomes abstract, 'academic', ideological, whereas in fact it is intensely practical, the material consequences of which we all live with every day. The point is that **learning only happens with dedicated space**. **Learning is best done** when **there is experience to learn from**; and **experience is constantly changing** and accumulating, so **learning should be continuous too** – a steady presence that keeps pace conceptually with the ongoing emergence of that same practice. A **champion** is needed. **Responsibility** for ensuring that learning happens cannot be delegated to people who do not have **the authority to make it happen**. An approach; a **clear way of working with learning.** The primary value is on learning from experience, collectively. This means rendering that experience **transparent**. **In order to work consciously**, deliberately on one's capacity, there has to be an intention, **a commitment to doing just that**. In order to preserve space, hold a rhythm, champion a process, develop an approach and maintain collegiality, there has to be an understanding that this is a worthwhile thing to do, an attitude of commitment to pursuing it and only then a form and method that best supports it. Behind the form and method lies conscious intent and action. That **combination of conceptual framework and 'attitude'** described in the article above is present in CDRA's identity today. Put another way, we **develop our capacity by exercising it**. **Left un-exercised**, that capacity immediately begins to wither/**fade**/disappear. Our capacity develops in a collective or relational context. **Without organisational life**, there is little 'capacity' to develop. Thereafter, f**orm, method, tool, and skill come into play**, but it is strictly speaking, **in that order**. Without purpose (without politics), without leadership and without organisation, no amount of the other develops capacity.
29.	(Thol et al., 2012)	Learning for capacity development: A holistic approach to sustained organisational change	**Organisational development definition, role - change catalyst, three stages 1) Building understanding, commitment and ownership 2) Providing opportunities to build specific skills and competencies 3) Establishing a learning culture by providing opportunities for reflection and course correction. Leadership necessary for change to happen, organisational readiness, clear learning objectives, coaching, diverse intervention team.** **Organisational development** (OD) practitioners have long advocated for interventions that increase an organisation's effectiveness and viability. Bennis (1969: 2) describes OD as "**a complex educational strategy intended to change the beliefs, attitudes, values and structure of an organisation so that it can**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			better adapt to new challenges and the dizzying rate of change itself". The **role** of an external consultant is thus to be a **change catalyst,** helping an organisation define and solve its own problems. Three stages: **Stage 1 Building understanding, commitment and ownership**: this initial phase contributes to increasing an organisation's awareness and understanding of its own capacity needs as well as of the processes needed for sustained change. 1. Organisational management (legal basis and governance; values; culture; strategic planning; leadership, management and decision-making; staff capacity and people management; administration; finance) 2. Project management (project cycle management; reporting and documentation; monitoring and evaluation; learning and adaptation; gender mainstreaming) 3. Strategic relationships (strategic relationships and advocacy; resource development). **Stage 2 Providing opportunities to build specific skills and competencies**: Organisational management activities can include budget planning and monitoring; fund monitoring; boards and governance; internal communications; leadership and management; monitoring and evaluation; problem-solving; project design; report writing; roles and responsibilities of management teams; strategic planning; and values. **Stage 3 Establishing a learning culture by providing opportunities for reflection and course correction:** various techniques to support the development of an organizational learning culture. These include learning forums (plenary sessions) to encourage peer learning; the use of an Action-Reflection-Learning-Planning (ARLP) tool (Taylor et al. 1999); on-site visits; and follow-up and monitoring activities. **Lessons learnt:** 1. Commitment of the whole organisation, especially the **leadership, is necessary for change to** happen 2. **Organisational readiness** is the primary indicator of future success, and **leadership determines readiness**. If the **director does not champion the change process, staff members will quickly lose any motivation to action**. If leadership and senior management support the promotion of learning and its integration into everyday work practices, change can be sustained over time. Capacity development needs to take place at multiple levels in an organization. 3. **Engaging with resistance** is critical to success 4. Setting and reviewing **clear learning objectives** and indicators enhances the learning process 5. Facilitation and **coaching are highly effective methods to support learning and change** 6. A holistic approach to capacity development requires a **diverse intervention team**. Requires a specialised (external) intervention team with diverse skills and knowledge. Diagnosing the problem and Managing relationships.
30.	(Smits, 2012)	Evaluation-capacity building: The three sides of the coin	**Roles and** three metaphors, abilities of an effective evaluator: **playdough, spider, Buddha** **The first** is an ability to be like **playdough**—to mould to external requirements. **The second** is an ability to be like a **spider**—to build webs or networks based on an understanding of the global context of the intervention. **The third** is an ability to be like **Buddha**—to cultivate a Zen-like attitude during stormy times. **The first** is an ability to be **like playdough, able to adapt (mould) to external requirements**. **The second** is an ability to be like a **spider, able to build webs or networks** based on an understanding of the global nature of the intervention at stake. **The**

Nr	Literature RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			third is an ability to be like **Buddha, able to keep a calm, open, and reflexive mind**. The **positive** aspect of being like **playdough** is that you eventually gain more **respect**. You are seen as an evaluator who is **willing to understand and adapt to the given field or intervention**. The **disadvantage** of being like playdough? You may **melt in the process**! A **spider** constructs **filaments between the levels of its web, extending the existing network outward, making hubs, and creating and reinforcing connections**. Spider knitting nets between actors and stakeholders—between the beneficiaries and the providers, managers and fundraisers, clarifying links, and restoring broken links in the web. The **disadvantage** of being a spider? **To the extent that you favour certain connections and networks over others**, you may end up promoting **favouritism**, creating privileged connections, and fashioning unbalanced networks. The **Buddha**: well-intentioned, **trusted, balanced in judgement**, inspiring, Zen-like, speaking only clear and helpful words.
	Total	30	

Nr	From reference list RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
1.	(Eyben et al., 2008)	Thinking about change for development practice: a case study from Oxfam GB	**Change archetypes framework (eight archetypes) and strategies, complexity (unpredictable, interrelational emergence, a sense of not being in control), power, change questions, no change due to our sense of identity, our job, or our family tie, reflect on what change feels like for others whom we are urging to change.** **The Ladder**: Change is achieved by allowing people to resolve immediate needs and gradually accumulate resources and voice. **Enlightened Elites**: Change is achieved by shifting the hearts and minds of people in power, either through self-interest or threat, leading them to make institutions and policies more responsive. **People in the Streets**: Change is achieved by building enough political pressure from below to ensure that institutions uphold their obligations and distribute power more equitably. **A Good Example**: Change is achieved by showing that 'it can be done'. Localised success creates belief and provides safety for individuals, institutions, and countries to follow suit. **Shock to the System**: Change is achieved when power structures can't cope, due to sudden collapse or natural disasters. Weakness of elites is revealed, and new institutions and/or leaderships emerge. **Follow the Leader**: Change originates from individuals who, through example and personality, inspire others to change their behaviour. Change is infectious, exponential. **The Power of Belief**: Change comes through widespread consciousness-raising that profoundly shifts how people understand their rights and the basics of human dignity. Values are at the core of social change. **Good Old-Fashioned Democracy**: Change comes through formal democratic processes (political parties, elections) and/or direct exercise of democratic processes through communitybased participation (town councils, neighbourhood committees). The '**shock to the system'** archetype **considers that change results from unpredictable rather than purposefully planned events**. It contains the germs of an entirely different way of thinking about change, namely **complexity or chaos theory**. **Change is emergent**. New **interrelational processes are constantly being generated**, which in turn may affect and change those already existing. Small 'butterfly' actions may have a major impact, and big ones may have very little impact.

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			One **problem** with most of the **archetypes, if applied rigidly, is that they reflect linear causeand-effect thinking** and may encourage focusing on some specific approaches to programme delivery, to the detriment of building crucial underlying capacities that Oxfam GB needs in order to function effectively in creating desired changes in a complex, ever-changing world. **Complexity theory encourages a sense of not being in control** and leads to a focus on the quality of relationships. It lets us understand power as fluid and relational, embedded in relationships and behaviours, rather than static and 'positional' (attached to formal roles) or ultimately based on force – '**power over**'. **Society changes as a result of the unintended consequences of aggregate actions by many individuals**. Power is conceptually absent from this theory, because it is assumed that all individuals have equal capacity to make rational choices. 'power' is seen as an unequally distributed resource: some countries, organisations, and people have more power to do things than others – 'purchasing power', for example. - What are we **trying to change**, and what needs to change? - What **change strategies** are or would be most effective? - What are **constraints** to the change? - What is our **role and added value** in achieving this change? - What are **others' roles** in achieving this change? - What **kinds of partnership** would be most effective in achieving the change? Tony Klouda (2004) suggests that most of us **do not have the freedom to act upon a fundamentally changed view of the way we understand the world, because it would threaten our sense of identity, our job, or our family ties**. He argues that if we cannot, without extreme discomfort, take action despite a new consciousness, then it may be **more comfortable not to change** the way we think about the world and our place in it. Thinking about how any one of us may resist the introduction of new ideas because of the threat to our sense of identity is an **opportunity to reflect on what change feels like for others whom we are urging to change.**
2.	(McEvoy et al., 2016)	Capacity development through international projects-a complex adaptative systems perspective	**RBM/LFA, about how that aid is given and managed, capacity progression (technical assistance – capacity building – capacity development), capacity (emergent combination), competence / capability / capacity (as a combination of competencies and capabilities), "capacity" for generic use, complexity, context, capacity progression, levels of capacity development (macro, meso).** **Dominant paradigm** the rational-analytic model of project planning, management and evaluation. This is reflected in the widespread adoption by donor agencies of **results-based management** (RBM), side by side with conventionally used tools for monitoring and evaluation (including logical framework analysis ("**logframe**"), **logic model and results frameworks**). Recognising that the development process is multi-dimensional, and having regard to the **five aid effectiveness principles** (ownership, alignment, harmonisation, management for results and mutual accountability), it becomes clear that achieving sustainable development is not only about the volume of aid given, but also **about how that aid is given and managed** (Kharas et al., 2011). Baser and Morgan (2008) understand **capacity to be: The emergent combination** of individual competencies, collective capabilities, assets and relationships that enables a human system to create value (p. 3). Capacity development may refer to both process and outcomes – i.e. the efforts to improve individual capabilities and organisational performance and/or the results of those efforts in terms of capacities developed.

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			De Grauwe (2009) draws an important distinction between **competence (as an individual attribute), capability (as an organisational attribute) and capacity (as a combination of competencies and capabilities)**. **Reserving the term "capacity" for generic use** De Grauwe's rationale is that "the specific skill of an individual officer or the collective capability of an (entire) department can only be considered capacity when they are part of a creative and collaborative process" (p. 48). **Attribute**: Context, vision, strategy, culture, strucure, skills, material resources (table 1). Mintzberg (1994) has written about the **distinction between planned and emergent strategies**. **Context:** Fowler (1996) reminds us that human development results from a complex **mix of non-linear processes** that are largely determined by non-project factors present in the wider environment. Adaptation to the constant flux of its non-linear interactions within an **ever-changing context** is key to organisational effectiveness. **Context embraces not just the macro-level conditions** of living such as political stability, governance and human rights, but also the "**meso-level" institutiona**l incentives, the economic, political and regulatory context and the resources available to the southern partner. **Matrix, logframe, comprises two dimensions and a number of cells**: vertical and horizontal. 1) A **vertical** logic as a hierarchy of objectives - activities deliver outputs, which contribute to outcomes, which contribute to the overall goal; and 2) a **horizontal** logic showing how progress against each objective can be assessed through "objectively verifiable indicators", the means of verification (data sources) and the external factors (assumptions and risks) which might impinge on or interfere with implementation. **Context**: A CAS is typically "**open**", that is at least partially contingent on factors in the everchanging external societal environment and economic and political context.
3.	(Aragón, 2010)	A Case for Surfacing Theories of Change for Purposeful Organisational Capacity Development	**Hard and soft capacities, complexity, emergence (capacity and CD), context, system blindness**. '**Capacity** is [the] potential to perform' (Horton, Alexaki, Bennett-Lartey et al. 2003: 18). It has been divided into '**hard' capacities** such as 'infrastructure, technology, [and] finances (Horton et al. 2003: 23), and '**soft' capacities**, such as the '…human and organisational capacities, or social capital of the organisation, including such things as management knowledge and skills, … organisational systems and procedures, … and procedures for planning and evaluation' (Horton et al. 2003: 163). The '**soft' capacities have been divided even further**, between those which appear to be more 'tangible' and 'intangible'. The former refers to the **systems and processes** mentioned above. The latter refers to **capacities which highlight the importance of an organisation having the 'ability to function as a resilient, strategic and autonomous entity'** (Kaplan 1999: 20), as well as having the capabilities to commit and engage, adapt and self renew, relate and attract, and balance diversity and coherence (Baser and Morgan 2008; Morgan, P. 2006). Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines one aspect of **capacity** from the perspective of power: '**the facility or power to produce, perform, or deploy**'. **Capacity is an emergent property** that evolves partly through the pushes and pulls of **contextual factors** including global economic trends, national governance, the legacy of regional history and many others. '**System blindness'** of people everywhere, '**who see only parts of these systems at work and then make judgments about the whole**;… see the present, but not the evolution or history of events

Nr	From reference list RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			that got things to the present;… misunderstand the nature of the relationships that shape system behaviour. **Capacity development** – 'that **emergent combination** of individual competencies, collective capabilities, assets and relationships that enables a human system to create value' (Baser and Morgan 2008: 3) – is itself non-linear and emergent.
4.	(Brinkerhoff, 2002)	Assessing and improving partnership relationships and outcomes: a proposed framework	**Partnership definition, mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability, and transparency. Key words table 1 pp. 221-223: sharing power (tolerance for sharing power), willingess, flexibility, partnership champios, trust, senior management support, clear goals, mutality and equality, equality in decion making, resource exchange, accountability, transparency, partner representation and participation in partnership activities, mutual respect, organization idnetity within the partnership, ability to meet expectations.** Summary of proposed assessment targets and methods, table 1. **Partnership is a dynamic relationship** among diverse actors, based on mutually agreed objectives, pursued through a shared understanding of the most rational division of labor based on the respective comparative advantages of each partner. Partnership **encompasses mutual influence**, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates **mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability, and transparenc**y. **Check box 3, p. 225: Degree of partnership - mutuality.**
5.	(DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)	The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields	**Iron cage, three isomorphic processes-coercive, mimetic, and normative.** The concept that best captures the **process of homogenization is isomorphism**. In Hawley's (1968) description, **isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions – similar to Bandwagon (social challenge).**
6.	(Kacou et al., 2022)	Fifty years of capacity building: Taking stock and moving research forward	**Terminology, capacity building and capacity development concept and definitions for capacity, capacity development, capacity building, institution building, institutional development.** Kuhn (1970) argued that **new paradigms emerge to provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners when past or existing paradigms come to exhaustion**. Capacity building and its related concepts have followed this pattern, though the passage from institution building to institutional development to capacity building/development **has not really been revolutionary, but more incremental**.
7.	(Rajeshwari et al., 2020)	Negotiating autonomy in capacity development: Addressing the inherent tension	**Assumption – lack of capacity or require strengthening, autonomy, tension autonomy and CD, gender.** **Capacity development assumes either that the participant lacks certain capacities** (Girgis, 2007; Hall, 1992) **or that the participant's existing capacities require strengthening**. These programs also often fail to ''see" and build on already-existing capacities in communities whose capacities they seek to develop. Often, they are also not driven by capacity needs identified by those whose capacities get strengthened. Conventionally, **autonomy** is understood as a characteristic of **an individual or an organization that can act to shape their own circumstances** (Nussbaum, 2000; Sen, 1975). There is therefore a **tension between capacity development and autonomy**. We suggest that power is intrinsic to capacity development because of both the different contexts in which CSOs and participants operate and the tension between the roles of capacity giver and receiver.

Nr	From reference list RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			Approaching capacity development in this way makes it possible to build on existing participatory approaches that view capacity development as occurring through relationships and informal processes. A feminist capacity development program taking a participatory approach can respect the differences in contexts between the participants and the capacity developers."
8.	(Venner, 2015)	The concept of 'capacity' in development assistance: new paradigm or more of the same?	**Terminology, ownership, statements without evidence or reference to any supporting data or research.** **Examines the history and different uses of the concept of capacity** in development assistance literature, tracing its origins and rise in popularity. Despite the volumes of material produced by donors **there does not appear to be agreement on what is meant by capacity and what it means to develop capacity**. The **implied definitions vary significantly from donor to donor and from report to report and range in scope from a relatively narrow focus on organizational reform and process improvement, to expansive ideas of political and social transformation**. '**Ownership'** is itself a **notoriously difficult concept to define**. In this case it means that developing country governments should lead the capacity building process by setting out their capacity development objectives in a national development plan and donors should only support capacity development activities where there is such evidence of national commitment. Almost all the **activities traditionally included in programmes** of economic development can be **subsumed under the umbrella of capacity development**. At an operational level, therefore despite claims to the contrary, the methods of capacity development do not appear to be substantially different from previous technical cooperation programmes. The **capacity development literature makes much of the contrast between the 'old' idea of technical cooperation and the 'new paradigm' of capacity development**, **claims made about the shortcomings** of the old model compared to the new one **are rarely supported by data**. A World Bank report on capacity development in Africa, for example, asserts that 'Before 1990 the main focus of capacity development was aimed at **resolving short term technical constraints to project implementation** and had **limited results on developing capacity'**, **without reference to any supporting data or research**. Fukuda-Parr and colleagues, and Morgan make similar sweeping claims with little evidence. **The term is now used so widely and imprecisely in so many contexts that its usefulness is questionable**.
9.	(Eyben, 2005)	Donors' Learning Difficulties: Results, Relationships and Responsibilities	**Double loop learning, accountability to end user or donor, muddling through.** When regressive or **resistance learning occurs among the recipients, the donor is discouraged from transformative or "double loop learning"** – that is, learning that leads to fundamentally new ways of looking at the issue in question (Pasteur 2004). This is because it reinforces **donor claims that they know what the problem is and have the solution to it**. Thus, **they make only single-loop adjustments to their practice**. They are only learning in relation to how they have previously defined the problem rather than being open to learning through acting in a state of admitted ignorance (Lindblom 1990). I have argued that **when an organisation uses its power to avoid accountability to its end-users, it has no interest in double-loop learning**. Recognise the paradox and improvise "**Muddling through**" is sometimes the best way of making progress. **Gather honest feedback**. This may not be easy, particularly in aid-dependent countries (O'Dwyer 2005). Nevertheless, it is remarkable

Nr	From reference list RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			how resistant donor governments are to even try to establish regular social audits as a routine **360 degree-type process with their different stakeholders**."
10.	(Pearson, 2010)	Pushing at a Half-open Door	**Leaning inquiry process, change readiness, change questions, competition between time, resources for learning and meetings, donor reporting.** Identify learning as an essential component of their approach to capacity development. Something that I have learned in my 15 years of working in Cambodia is that **readiness is an important factor in determining the success or failure of any venture**. **Check figure 1: The FLASC Learning Inquiry Process**. **Change questions:** **A. About my specific inquiry and my role and purpose within it**: 1) What is the specific change process from which I want to learn? 2) What questions will I hope to answer in my inquiry? 3) Why am I undertaking this learning inquiry, and who am I in this context and process? 4) Who are the key individual or organisational actors involved, their roles and relationships? 5) What are the main contextual opportunities/challenges/obstacles to the specific process? 6) What choices are being made by key actors, when developing strategies for action? B**. About my assumptions (revisited frequently during all phases of the inquiry):** 1) Have I put the right person or people at the centre of the learning process? 2) Have I properly explored any cultural differences about learning in this situation? 3) How have my surprises and confirmations shed new light on my assumptions? 4) Does anything need to be 'unlearned'? If so, how can the unlearning happen? 5) What is the space for change? What is impeding people from acting even though learning has taken place? **C. About the level/s of facilitation at which I am working, am I:** 1) Directly facilitating a social change process? 2) Facilitating learning of those engaged in that process? 3) Facilitating learning about my own role as a facilitator? 4) Facilitating learning about the learning process as a whole? 5) Sharing learning between different contexts to facilitate wider learning? **D. About concepts and methods:** 1) What conceptual understanding and frameworks will guide and underpin my work, as facilitator? As learner? 2) What specific methods will I use to pursue my inquiry? 3) What kinds of evidence will I look for? **E. About the background context for my inquiry:** 1) What is the broader context of social change within which my specific process sits? 2) How do I understand social change to take place within this broader context? 3) What systemic relationships and interactions link my specific change process to the broader context? 4) How are choices that actors make within this context constrained and/or enabled by issues of power and structure? 5) How can facilitation provoke, influence or enhance helpful forces and overcome blocking forces? **F. On sharing with others beyond the immediate learning process:**

Nr	From reference list RQ2	Title	Overall focus of literature
			1) Can I imagine ways in which some of the knowledge constructed in this context might be useful in other change processes? 2) How can I make it possible for relevant others to learn from my experience? The first is the importance of holding both the model and the process lightly and not having a rigid agenda of results that you expect others to produce. '**We have to learn how to learn'**. **Time and energy for learning** processes dissipate in the face of other demands such as **meetings, donor reporting and so on**. Regrettably, this situation seems likely to continue until all actors at all levels of the development system start to understand that learning has to be integral to all that we do, not simply a luxurious add-on."
	Total	10	
	In total RQ2	**40**	

4 Limitations

A common limitation of scoping studies is that they are broad in nature, and identify a large number of articles. This can make it difficult to decide whether breadth is more important than depth (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 30). However, as the searches and results make it clear that the relevant literature is limited, the focus is more on depth. Another limitation of the methodology is that it does not analyse the quality of studies in any formal sense, and therefore cannot be used to determine whether particular articles provide robust or generalisable findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, pp. 20,22,27; Levac et al., 2010, p. 1). The articles that are identified in the scoping study are not, in any way, assessed with respect to the quality of their findings, nor are the findings weighted with respect to their importance. Levac et al. (2010, p. 8) note that it is unclear whether the lack of a quality assessment affects the relevance of scoping study results. While this was not the purpose of the scoping study, it may be relevant for future research. These limitations are general to the method.

Another limitation is the lack of completeness. The search string is determined by the time, resources and scope of the researcher(s). In other words, it provides a snapshot. The results are inherently dependent on the choice of database(s), and the framing of the search string. In this study, only one database was used, and only 1.5% of the corpus of articles was selected for further examination. This was a consequence of both time limitations, and inclusion and exclusion criteria. Choosing more than one database, or defining broader selection criteria could have identified a more diverse selection of articles.

Terminological ambiguity in the capacity development field means that articles that use other keywords may have been overlooked. Furthermore, articles that are considered relevant are based on the researcher's background, perception and knowledge of the topic, and it is possible to miss relevant material. Therefore, titles and abstracts were checked twice. If either was considered borderline, the article was included in the next step of the analysis. Another way to ensure completeness is to include at least two researchers in the process, or use a multidisciplinary team, as recommended by Levac et al. (2010, p. 5) and Daudt et al. (2013, p. 8).

The publication language was limited to English. Thus, it is possible that some relevant literature was missed. Other limitations relate to the fact that the selected articles were written for different purposes, and focus on different aspects of capacity development. While a scoping study should be transparent, some aspects are left for the researcher(s) to interpret.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to describe the scoping study methodology, and present the process used to answer the two research questions. It also explores the definitions, principles and challenges found in the field of capacity development. A total of **4201 articles** were examined, based on a Scopus search, a check of references, and a ResearchGate search. This resulted in **63 full-text reads** (**23** and 40, respectively**)**. The study reveals that the number of scientific articles on capacity development is rather limited. An important finding is that there is terminological and conceptual ambiguity concerning the concept of capacity development. There is also a gap between theory and practice—many of the principles that facilitate the capacity development process identified in the literature are overlooked in practice. At the same time, these principles are often seen as challenges, which might explain the difficulties in applying them in real life. What becomes very obvious when reading these articles is how familiar, present and relevant the problems are, despite some studies being written 40 years ago. As Soal (2010, p. 133) notes, "*What was a 'hard' point then, remains true today*".

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Challenging disparities in capacity development for disaster risk reduction

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ABSTRACT

Although capacity development has been identified as the means to substantially reduce global disaster losses, it is a challenge for external partners to facilitate the development of sustainable capacities for disaster risk reduction in disaster-prone countries. The purpose of this study is to investigate potential gaps between how leading professionals approach such capacity development and guidelines found in available theory. The analysis of data from thirty-five qualitative semi-structured interviews reveals that there are gaps between theory and practise, as well as between the practitioners, in all seven elements identified in available theory. There is ambiguity regarding terminology, different views about the meaning of local context, ownership and capacity assessment, as well as contradicting opinions of the role and responsibilities of external partners. Focus is on training individuals, while other requisites are often ignored, and there is a general lack of understanding of what results to assess and how to monitor and evaluate projects.

1. Introduction

Statistics indicate an increasing number of disasters caused by natural hazards in the world [1], and the international community is realising the need to increase global efforts to reduce disaster losses. The majority of these losses occur in the developing world, causing a major threat to sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals [2–4]. The final document of the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, only a month after the Indian Ocean tsunami, specifies a roadmap for how to substantially reduce disaster losses by laying down three strategic goals and focusing efforts on five priority areas for action [5]. This Hyogo Framework for Action also specifies capacity development within the five priority areas as the tool for meeting the goals [5]. It mentions the word capacity in relation to development, building, or strengthening more than 25 times [5], but never specifies or explains how to develop capacities for disaster risk reduction.

The contemporary key word of capacity development is "ownership" [6], which implies that primary responsibility and ownership rest with internal partners,[1] while external partners[2] have supporting roles [5,7]. However, in practise the division of roles and responsibilities may often be vague and understood differently by different partners. There is for instance a tendency of external partners to have a "right answer" or know better approach to capacity development which is not tailored to fit the needs of the targeted organisation or country [8]. External partners are often recruited for short periods, do

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[1] An internal partner is a partner belonging to the organisation attempting to develop its own capacity.

[2] An external partner is a partner belonging to an organisation attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organisation.

the work themselves, and leave before any institutional memory can be created. There is also an inclination to ignore established systems, strategies and capacities, thus creating parallel structures [3], and projects usually decline soon after external expertise is withdrawn [9]. Capacity development projects for disaster risk reduction focus frequently on training individuals without paying enough attention to organisational issues, structures, and how such organisations interact with each other [8,10]. With staff turnover, the little capacity that may be developed is lost.

There seems to be gaps between guidelines given by available theory and how capacity development for disaster risk reduction is done in practise. The purpose of this study is to investigate these gaps in order to inform recommendations how to close them and thus improve the effectiveness and sustainability of future capacity development for disaster risk reduction projects. The study intends to meet that purpose by answering the following research question: How do external experts approach capacity development for disaster risk reduction?

2. Theoretical background

There is no consensus among stakeholders as how to define capacity development or disaster risk reduction [11]. Hence, the same terms are defined in different ways by different organisations, resulting in a detrimental "Babelonian Confusion" of *terminology* [12]. Capacity development is here defined as "the process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time" [13]. The two terms *capacity development* and *capacity building* are sometimes used interchangeably, while others describe them as different. For instance, the "building metaphor suggests a process starting with a plain surface and involving the step-by-step erection of a new structure, based on a preconceived design" [8]. This implies that capacity is something that is built by outsiders from a clean slate [14], and do not consider existing structures and plans. Capacity development, on the other hand, is something that must grow from inside and be based on existing capacities [14]. Although the term capacity development will be used in this study, it must be open to whatever term the informants choose to use, knowing that the connotation for them may be the same. Disaster risk reduction is defined as the process to "minimise vulnerabilities and disaster risk to avoid (prevention) or to limit (mitigation and preparedness) the adverse impacts of hazards" [15].

To design a project for capacity development for disaster risk reduction, it is important to first analyse and understand the *local context* [8], including general political, social, cultural, economic, physical and environmental factors [15,16]. One needs to consider not only the facts that people live in hazardous locations, but why they live there [17]. It is also important to understand that communities are not homogeneous, but made up by diverse groups with different vulnerabilities, capacities and needs [4,18]. There are in other words no "one-size-fits-all" solutions that can be used everywhere and in all situations [6,14], and it is also essential to understand the relationships and dependencies between individuals or organisations [14].

One of the cornerstones for capacity development is *ownership*, which means that the primary responsibility and ownership for capacity development rests with internal partners and that external partners have supportive roles [5,7]. Although there is a broad consensus that lack of ownership is an important reason for the failure in many projects, there is a lack of consensus on what ownership means. This is further complicated by concepts changing meaning over time [6].

Ownership is here referred to as creating and owning ideas and strategies, development processes, resources and the result of the development process [14]. Taking ownership is something that is voluntary and cannot be imposed by someone else [6,18]. Capacity development is thus a process that must grow from the inside [8,19], with or without the help of external partners. Involving people through participatory approaches is essential for establishing ownership and commitment [18,20]. In addition, the engagement of strong and knowledgeable leaders is important in order to recognise and allocate needed resources such as time, funds, equipment and personnel [21].

In order for capacity development for disaster risk reduction to be effective, the purpose must be clear. It is therefore necessary to focus on the analysis of risks the internal partners are facing and the analysis of capacities, which are currently available to manage them. This is in general capacity development literature often referred to as *capacity assessment* [22,23] and has the purpose to identify what capacities already exist and what additional capacities may be needed [6]. It has also been suggested that a capacity assessment consist of asking basic questions, e.g. why capacitate, capacity for whom and what [23], and then address more specific questions regarding DRR. However, it is important to be mindful of that changes may cause resistance, and even create tensions amongst groups in society [24].

When working in partnership, clear and mutually agreed *roles and responsibilities* for all partners are necessary. External partners can take on different roles, ranging from providing technical services to facilitating the capacity development process. Which role is to be taken should depend on what the internal partner needs and what the external partner is able to provide [21]. However, whatever type of support provided, it should never undermine local ownership [6], always be based on existing capacities, and be aligned with national disaster risk reduction processes [10]. This is closely related to power relations, which heavily influence any international development cooperation [25]. The role of the external partner should be to create awareness, motivate and engage people, resulting in the internal partner taking responsibility and ownership of the process [26]. Mannervik [27] concludes that "a person who does not have access to information cannot take responsibility. A person who has information cannot resist from taking responsibility".

Capacity development entails addressing challenges on various levels, i.e. legal and institutional frameworks,

systems of organisations, organisations, and human and material resources [28], which may be presented under other headings [14,29]. This requires implementing a *mix of activities* [23], since changes at one capacity level often require changes at other levels too [10,30]. For example, it has been shown that educating people is not sufficient if the organisation is not able to utilise their acquired skills [14,31].

Some literature refers to this as a "systems approach" or "systemic", which highlights the need to understand the connexions between challenges [32], as well as between capacity development activities on the various levels [8,10]. The idea behind such systems approach is in other words "to look at the whole first, in relation to its parts" [10]. External partners must thus support the internal partner in a coordinated and transparent way to avoid duplication and gaps (harmonisation), and be guided by the internal partner and base their support on that partner's development strategies, institutions and procedures (alignment) [7].

Although developing capacities takes time and should be integrated into development policies and planning [5], capacity development for disaster risk reduction should mix long-term with short-term activities that provide early wins and promote further investments [33]. Regardless of timeframe, exit strategies should be developed [3], connecting the project to existing development plans [34].

The purpose of *monitoring and evaluation* is to measure the progress and the results, determining whether the project has caused any actual change towards the overall objective, continuously (monitoring) or periodically at predetermined points in time (evaluation) [35]. Monitoring and evaluation is about measuring the quality of the project, the process itself, and the relations among partners in the process [35]. However, evaluations at the end of a project have often short-term perspectives which usually miss to assess long-term impact [3], resulting from projects being directed by budgetary time cycles or annual budgets. Another problem with evaluations is that they often assess output, not impact [3], e.g. counting how many people have taken part in a training. To be able to monitor and evaluate impact, baseline data and indicators are needed to measure its progress [3]. Twigg [3] recommends participatory monitoring and evaluation processes that are owned by local partners. This is consistent with the principle of ownership and important to facilitate *learning* from what worked or not in the project.

The theoretical background for this study entails in short seven key elements for capacity development for disaster risk reduction: (1) terminology; (2) local context; (3) ownership; (4) capacity assessment; (5) roles and responsibilities; (6) mix of activities; and (7) monitoring, evaluation and learning. These elements are mentioned frequently in available literature, and are therefore considered as theoretically important, with terminology as the initial exception . Terminology was not identified as an element to consider until the first interviews were carried out. The great variety of interpretations of the concepts of capacity development and disaster risk reduction among the informants spurred further literature review. Although the seven elements are related to each other in different ways, the ambition of this study is not to interlink them specifically, but rather to focus on the characteristics of each element. The interrelations between the elements are however also important and deserve further research.

3. Methodology

To answer the research question, how do external experts approach capacity development for disaster risk reduction, qualitative semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 35 international professionals, with different backgrounds and involved in different ways as external partners in capacity development activities. The data were then compared and contrasted between informants and with the theoretical background presented above. The choice of qualitative interviews gave the possibility to get in-depth information [36], while semi-structured interviews were relatively less time-consuming than unstructured interviews [37], which was vital as the informants had busy schedules. Advantages of this type of interviews, over more structured questionnaires, are the possibilities to repeat or to rephrase questions when needed and that it is easier to get a feeling for which questions are difficult to answer [37].

The selection process of the informants was divided into two parts: (1) the selection of which organisations to approach, and (2) the selection of individuals within those organisations. Since the researchers previously have been working for MSB, and have maintained strong links to the organisation, it was interesting and convenient to include MSB and its close partner organisations in the study. The informants were then selected, focusing on MSB projects managers and field staff involved in ongoing capacity development projects for DRR, as well as DRR or capacity development advisors of Sida, Swedish Red Cross, IFRC, UNDP, UNISDR and OCHA. After each interview, snowballing was used to identify further informants. The selection of informants was influenced by their organisational affiliation, experience in disaster risk reduction and/or capacity development, age, gender, and location. It was in other words a purposeful selection [37,38]. An attempt was also made to include informants from different parts of the world and to get as diverse range of experiences as possible. 37 percent of the informants were women and 63 percent were men, ages ranging from late twenties to early sixties. Their work experiences were from governmental agencies, NGO's, different UN organisations, the Red Cross Movement and universities.

Thirteen face-to-face interviews and twenty-two telephone interviews were conducted, taking on average 1.5 h each. All the interviews were conducted in English with the help of an interview guide [37]. The interview guide was consolidated, but not pre-tested before the interviews started. After two interviews an additional question was added to the interview guide. The two persons that already had been interviewed were contacted again to answer the additional question.

The interviews were divided into four parts. The first stage focused on establishing the informant's background and their overall understanding of disaster risk reduction

and capacity development. The second stage focused on success factors and challenges related to capacity development for disaster risk reduction, while the third stage focused on project related issues (their role and responsibility, the working process, problems and recommendations, what and how to measure results). Finally, the fourth stage focused on a casual conversation rounding up the interview. The questions of the interview guide are presented in Table 1 below. It is important to note that the seven elements were never specifically mentioned during the interviews, although the third stage of the interviews was influenced by some of them in an attempt to make sure that they were covered in each interview. The interviews were recorded to ensure nothing was missed [37], and complemented by scratch notes focusing on documenting the impression, how much probing was needed, and if the informants seemed to be nervous or vague when answering the questions [36,37].

The data from the interviews were grouped under different themes and analysed [36,38] in three steps. First, the transcriptions from the recordings were transferred and structured into a matrix, where the answers from the interviews could be compared. Second, all answers to a question were then analysed to identify keywords and themes. Third, the data were compared and analysed in relation to the seven elements. Both qualitative and quantitative data were recognised.

The main limitation of this study, in addition to the inherent subjectivity of the researchers when collecting, analysing and interpreting this type of data, is that only external partners and how they approach and understand capacity development for DRR is studied. The study focuses only on capacity development for DRR in relation to disasters caused by natural hazards, not by conflicts. There is also a risk of informants sugar-coating their descriptions of ongoing capacity development projects, as they may want to avoid answers that could have a negative impact on the project and partnership. Moreover, the limited number of informants, as well as how they were selected, poses limitations on how the findings can be generalised. For instance, snowballing risks getting the same type of people and information [37]. However, the study does not claim to be statistically generalisable for all external partners, but focuses on generating a deeper understanding of how the selected external partners approach capacity development for DRR, which open up possibilities for wider analytical generalisation [38,39].

4. Discussing the empirical findings

The empirical findings from the interviews are presented and discussed in relation to the seven areas, which were identified in the theoretical background.

4.1. Terminology

It is clear among the informants that there is ambiguity regarding how to define disaster risk reduction and capacity development. This is expressed in the sense that the informants defined it vaguely or in broad terms, and avoiding the question. Some thought it was a tricky question or explained that the terms are just "buzz

Table 1
Interview guide.

Stage 1	1. What is your background?
	2. What is your position?
	3. What is your current work?
	4. What is disaster risk reduction for you?
	5. What is capacity development for you?
	6. Are you involved in a capacity development project for disaster risk reduction at the moment?
	a. Yes—describe it. What is your role?/No—latest project, describe it.
Stage 2	7. According to your opinion what are the three most important factors to capacity development for disaster risk reduction to make it sustainable?
	a. *Probing*; can you tell more about this? What do you mean? For example, how do you ensure ownership rests locally? Could you give specific examples?
	8. Are there other factors according to your opinion that is important as well?
	9. What is the main challenge in capacity development?
	a. Are there more challenges?
	b. How can you deal with the challenge?
Half time	10. After 40 min approximately, the informant was asked how they felt about the interview and if they had any questions.
Stage 3	11. How do you look upon your role?
	12. How do you look upon your responsibility?
	13. How do you interact to achieve stated objectives?
	14. What results do you assess?
	15. How do you assess results and learning?
	16. When capacity development projects within disaster risk reduction do not work or do not come out successfully, what is the reason?
	17. What do you think works best in capacity development for disaster risk reduction at the moment?
	18. You have a person in front of you. He or she is going to support an organisation to develop capacities for disaster risk reduction. What recommendation/s would you give to her/him before leaving?
Stage 4	19. Exit strategy, showing appreciation, and asking how the informant experienced the interview.

words" and "meaningless terms and intellectual constructions". Some informants relate disaster risk reduction back to the Hyogo Framework for Action as being theoretical, with no actions or not being operational. One third of the informants confirm that there is a confusion regarding disaster risk reduction and what it means in practise.

Regarding capacity development one informant says, "for many people capacity development is like an abstract thing, it is not clear how to do it". One third of the informants say that capacity development means to develop something further that already is in place. The other informants did not give a detailed explanation of what capacity development means to them. According to several informants capacity development should be seen as activities at different levels. However, more than half of the informants highlight that capacity development is only seen as training of individuals. Nearly half of the informants use the term capacity building instead of capacity development, with seemingly equivalent meaning.

The discussion on whether to call it capacity building or capacity development adds on to the confusion what capacity development really means. One reason for this Babylonian confusion could be that many of the available definitions are academic, complicated and over-elaborated, used differently by researchers and practitioners [3] and often adopted to fit an organisation's mandate and goal. Hence, depending on background, former experience and what organisations people belong to, the informants relate to and interpret terminology differently. Another reason can be the limitations of our own language. There are no direct translations between languages, which is confirmed by one informant. It is also possible that the terminology has changed over time, but not really the practise; "we are just repackaging things" or "selling old wine in new bottles" according to two informants. Terminology often also relies upon abstract concepts, which are difficult to translate into objectives and practical activities [6,31]. Unfortunately, capacity development may often even be used as a slogan rather than a meaningful concept to improve understanding of the process due to the lack of clarity or knowledge [40].

4.2. Local context

By far the most significant consideration to capacity development for disaster risk reduction mentioned in one way or another by all informants is to understand the local context. The importance of understanding the baseline information is emphasised, such as risk profile, structures and relationships, social, cultural, economical and political context. However, there is neither a unified approach to what understanding the local context means, nor clarity in the process of how to do that. Some informants stress the risk and the hazard profile, other emphasis culture and religion, or the political, social and economic situation, or a combination of these factors. Some informants understand local context as the institutional set-up, organisation, values, needs, problems, and identify which stakeholders should be involved. It is acknowledged by one third of the informants that not enough time and funds are spent on preparation, preplanning and research to understand the local context, resulting in the foundation and baseline information often being missing.

One of the main contributors to this problem today is the available set of funding mechanisms, which was emphasised by more than half of the informants. There may also be a wish to start up the project as quickly as possible and not take the time for the necessary studies. Understanding the local context takes time and capacity development projects for disaster risk reduction are often short term due to the fact that disaster risk reduction is regularly under humanitarian funding. These projects are normally 15–24 months, which is a short period of time if the intention is to understand the context and to change institutional arrangements, attitudes and behaviour. It seems in other words more important that funds are spent within a specific time period compared to ensuring the quality of the project [6].

However, it is not right to only blame funding mechanisms for the failure of understanding the local context. It is up to the involved partners to make this a priority, which is not always done. There seems to be few incentives for anybody to criticise the funding system, as nobody is willing to "rock the boat" because of their own risk of being replaced, losing their jobs or funding [41]. Another reason for not sufficiently analysing the local context can be the lack of methods/tools and uncertainty in how to interpret or understand the results. If the external partners do not understand the context they are working in, the project is likely to be based on mere assumptions and not on the actual situation, increasing the risk of parallel structures being created and standard blueprints being used [3,14]. These often include a lack of local ownership, unclear objectives and the risk of not understanding what capacities exist and what capacities need to be further developed.

4.3. Ownership

More than half of the informants think local ownership is one of the corner stones for capacity development for disaster risk reduction. At the same time, lack of ownership is also considered as one of the main challenges according to one third of the informants, which were the same informants that had acknowledged the importance of it. According to the informants, ownership means that the local partner should be in charge of the development, be committed, and be in the driving seat of the process of improving their own capacity. One informant says "capacity development has to come from within; it can never be driven from the outside". Nevertheless, nearly half of the informants do not discuss ownership at all.

Having a participatory and transparent approach is recommended by one fifth to promote and ensure local ownership. To engage internal key actors and link people at different levels are considered as crucial functions for the external partner, according to nearly half of the informants. Closely connected with ownership is the commitment and willingness to allocate resources, investing in time, money, energy and brains according

to two thirds of the informants. Four informants think that ownership can be generated if there is good support from leadership and noted it is important to identify champions.[3]

External partners want to do a lot of projects and want to be involved. One informant expresses, "there is a mad rush to do projects, the fashionable thing, and we all must have a project on that. You just want it because funding is available". Branding is important for external organisations, which means being involved and seen in many projects will generate even more funding and projects. In this rush "we fail to align our efforts with those of the country", said one informant. There is also a tendency among external partners to bring in capacity from outside, generally viewing their ideas to be the best solutions. This indicates that one of the main reasons for lack of local ownership is that supporting organisations and external partners and consultants propose projects with objectives that are not defined together with the internal partners. There is a belief that it is possible to transfer solutions from outside rather than consider the local context as a starting point [14]. That kind of approach results in ownership resting with the external partner [3]. The projects become donor driven rather than demand driven.

Another reason for lack of ownership is that ownership is often used as a concept but it is not always clear what it means [6,14] or how it can be generated. For example, there is uncertainty in who should draw up the project proposals, and monitor and evaluate projects. One informant says; "ownership was very much with us, the external partner, due to the time schedule, we did a lot of things to be able to follow the time schedule". Lopes and Theisohn [6] confirm this behaviour, in which external partners take over tasks justifying it with an attitude of getting the work done. A more productive relationship would have the internal partners first set their own priorities and needs, and then seek external assistance [41].

4.4. Capacity assessment

More than one third of the informants state that it is important to understand and identify the current capacities for DRR of internal partners and what their needs are in relation to capacity development. This is also considered a main challenge. A few informants explicitly say that we should develop and strengthen existing capacities. Other informants do not bring up the issue. One of the challenges for understanding capacities and needs are that "we do not have the same goals or we have different objectives" and the aims do not correspond to the needs according to more than a third of the informants. This challenge is the cause of the failure of many capacity development projects, as external partners misunderstand their internal partners' capacity needs [43]. The capacity assessment should thus be an interactive process between the involved partners.

Sometimes external partners rush into a project and do not take the time to understand what the risks are, to identify what the needs are, what capacities already are in place, and thereby set the appropriate objectives. One fifth of the informants mention available capacity assessment tools, but that these tools are not generally tailored for capacity development for disaster risk reduction. Only a few informants specifically mention the importance of doing a capacity assessment. The reason for this could be that capacity assessment tools are not known by many people, and it is adapted specifically for disaster risk reduction by even fewer. Other informants may consider capacity assessment as important, but do not explicitly call it that.

4.5. Roles and responsibilities

More than half of the external experts see their role as facilitators, advisors or coaches. Others have difficulties answering what role or what kind of approach they have as an external partner. Their roles can be everything from contributing with knowledge and expertise, identifying and understanding needs, making partners aware of their capacities, linking people, asking questions, etc. Other informants take on different roles telling partners what is best for them to do, helping partners to ensure effective use of funding, etc. One informant says "my role is to ensure to get visible results, maybe not the result that is best for the country, but the result that will be good for our organisation". Two informants say their role is not a decision making role, but dwell on how to present suggestions that could influence how things proceed. Five informants emphasise that it is essential in an early stage of a project to understand and be clear about what you are going to do, not to do, and what you expect from the partner. One informant says: "my aim is not to be needed anymore".

A problem that was brought up by one fifth is the power balance between the internal and external partner. One informant says, "you come with resources, and the recipient will not say no when you say you want to help, it is hard to be on the same level". Lusthaus et al. [40] confirm this while stating that unequal power relations are a common feature in capacity development projects. Ideally there should be equal roles between the cooperating partners.

There does not seem to be a consensus or clarity on the roles that external partners can effectively play for capacity development for disaster risk reduction. In fact, one informant questioned whether external partners know how to develop capacitates for disaster risk reduction or not. One explanation can be that this is not something that has been considered sufficiently by external partners. Recruitment and training tend to focus on technical skills rather than discussing what kind of role and approach one should have. According to two informants there is a tendency that disaster risk reduction people have a humanitarian response mindset, to be a service provider, rather than a capacity development mindset. The reason

[3] Champion: "Influential person interested in disaster risk reduction, who is willing to take action to make disaster risk reduction a public priority" [42].

for this push towards becoming a service provider rather than a capacity developer may be linked to the project management cycle and the funding mechanisms.

The perceptions of roles determine where ownership rests. A few informants suggest a coaching approach to be appropriate for capacity development, but what that means is not always clear. Hess and Motes [21] suggest coaching as a useful strategy for capacity development, and Curman [44] explain that a coaching approach is about listening and asking questions. It is about developing existing capacities and to help them help themselves. "The question is the answer! To let them answer their own questions" [26].

More than half of the informants underline the importance of soft skills, and when informants give recommendations for capacity development for disaster risk reduction they emphasise personal skills and personality while nobody highlights technical skills for disaster risk reduction. There are many studies that indicate emotional intelligence being twice as important as technical knowledge [45]. Emphasis is placed on the abilities to build trust, have patience, facilitate change, and to be sensitive to the overall agenda, values and intentions. However, the project management cycle does not normally facilitate these vital aspects, not even to take the time to get to know the partners.

4.6. Mix of activities

One third of the informants acknowledged that capacity development entails a mix of activities, which address issues at different levels, with short and long-term perspectives, and with different types of "soft and hard" activities. The other informants were not as specific what the activities should look like. However, more than half of the informants say that capacity development for disaster risk reduction is not only about training individuals, or a one-time event. Several informants say that projects should have a continuous long-term perspective, not just a few activities. On the other hand, the most common answer among the informants about what works best in capacity development for disaster risk reduction is training and education. However, a problem with the training provided by the international community is that it is not aligned with the teaching and learning institutions in the country, says one informant.

A few informants say that focus is often on the individual level and less on organisation and other levels. Another informant confirms that what UNDP refers to as the enabling environment is quite a fuzzy concept. Only three informants mention that these levels are interdependent, and should be integrated, and there is a need to have a holistic and a system approach. Another recognised problem with disaster risk reduction activities, according to one fifth of the informants, is that disaster risk reduction activities have been treated in isolation and have not been integrated within other sectors, e.g. health, water and sanitation.

Training seems to be a common activity or the solution when dealing with capacity development for disaster risk reduction. A problem with training activities is when these are not institutionalised [32] and not connected to other capacity levels, as changes at one capacity level often require changes at other levels too [10]. According to a few informants, there has been a tendency to focus on Hyogo Framework for Action's priority five, the preparedness.

One reason why there is a focus on training could be that training is rather easy to set up and conduct, which is in line with what one informant expresses "we have tons and tons of training modules available in DRR at the global level". This indicates a clear case of what Tendler [46] calls "projectizing and micro-izing", in which organisations "produce a stream of bite-sized and discrete projects", driven by their modus operani "to organise their work around designing and funding projects", forgetting or ignoring other aspects needed to facilitate real development. According to McEntire [47], another reason why disaster risk reduction activities are rather short term is a wish among political leaders to have quick visible solutions and gains in order to keep their political status to the public and hopefully be re-elected for the next mandate period. Another reason is that capacity development projects for disaster risk reduction are under humanitarian funding and these projects are usually short-term. According to Ahrenfelt [48], it takes about two to five years to make reasonable big changes in an organisation, which also most disaster risk reduction activities require. UNDP [49] takes it even further and suggests that capacity development projects need five- to 10 years. It is broad consensus that 15 months is too short to be able to conduct most disaster risk reduction activities [50].

However, it is important to have a mix of both short and long term activities. The short term and visible activities, according to Kotter and Cohen [51], create early wins that are important. The early wins provide faith in the effort, and positive feedback that the project is going on, and is on the right track [51].

4.7. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

One third of the informants has difficulties giving a clear answer on monitoring, evaluation and learning, or think it was a difficult question. One informant says "it is the 64 million dollar question". The evaluations that are done today are rather useless according to one informant; it is just "reportability" to donors. The most common thing to assess is the number of people trained. This is confirmed by more than one third of the informants. Several informants express that "this is one of our weak areas" or "we are working on it". Though, nearly half of the informants say indicators are important in order to measure the impact. The other half of informants does not mention indicators during the interview. One third says that these indicators should be endorsed by all involved stakeholders and compared with the baseline data. According to one fifth of the informants there are no good indicators today for capacity development for disaster risk reduction, we go for things we can measure. Four informants mention the dilemma that it is difficult to measure

long-term outcomes of disaster risk reduction activities, as you do not have a disaster to measure it against.

There is not a unified answer who should monitor and evaluate projects and results, everybody from the internal partner, external partner, or jointly, to someone outside the project. One fourth highlights the importance of sharing experience and lessons learnt, and unfortunately this is seldom done. One informant says "I was disappointed with the Davos workshop August 2008. I have worked in DRR since the 80s, I was in Yokohama in 1994, and in Davos we were concluding exactly the same things. Oh my goodness, we really did not make a lot of progress".

It seems that there are no clear procedures or resources for monitoring and evaluation of actions taken. Hess and Motes [21] conclude that the most challenging area in capacity development is to allocate time and resources to reflect on services provided and on the partnership. It is more important to show quick and visible results to the donor, than it is to see whether it is sustainable after five years. A reason for this according to one informant is that "we get evaluated on how much we deliver". One informant says that we tend to forget to ask; "You have trained so many people, and then to ask, so what?".

In order to determine what indicators to use, it is essential to be clear about what is meant by disaster risk reduction, and from that determine what the acceptable level of risk is. This is frequently not done. The acceptable level of risk should be the benchmark for disaster risk reduction activities and therefore determine what the most appropriate indicators will look like. The systems today are not interested in answering why a project worked or failed according to one informant. Hess and Motes [21] confirm that sometimes there is a lack of interest in the evaluation process from funders, which can result in lack of motivation in allocating resources and time to monitor and evaluate projects properly. One informant says: "today, not much is happening after the projects are finished, you look for what funding is available and move on to the next project". People do not have money and time for reflecting. In the very end it is needed to ask why has capacity been or not been developed and have the activities been able to reduce risk and why.

There are different opinions regarding who should monitor and evaluate the results. Hess and Motes [21] confirm, due to lack of clarity, that there are misunderstandings regarding who should be responsible and who should monitor and evaluate the project. The reason why answers are not unified could be that they had different perspectives on what should be evaluated. One informant expresses that it depends on what the purpose and expectation of the evaluation is; is it how funds are spent or …? As an external partner it is important not to build a result framework and processes around own initiatives, confirms one informant.

Several informants highlight the importance of identifying and sharing lessons learnt, which is seldom done. It can be a sensitive issue sharing lessons learnt from projects that fail, which may be a reason why this is not done. Even if done, far too often there is no transfer of lessons learnt to the next project and there are no incentives for doing it, explains one informant. These may be the reasons why there are so few shared success stories about disaster risk reduction, which is a pity. Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine seem right when stating that "[h]uman beings, who are almost unique in having the ability to learn from the experience of others, are also remarkable for their apparent disinclination to do so" [52].

5. Conclusion

So, how do external experts approach capacity development for disaster risk reduction? Although it obviously is a question too complicated to fully answer after only involving 35 international professionals, the study reveals that there are gaps between theory and practise in relation to the seven elements. These gaps need closing to facilitate real and sustainable results in the future. While the informants are aware of many shortcomings and success factors for contemporary capacity development for disaster risk reduction, the results of the study indicate substantial discrepancies both among the informants, as well as between their practices and the available guidelines in theory.

First of all, there is a high degree of ***terminological*** ambiguity regarding what disaster risk reduction and capacity development mean in theory and practise. Such differences in understanding may have a negative impact on the effectiveness of projects due to misunderstandings between partners concerning what to do and how to do it. There are also different notions of understanding the ***local context*** and its importance for project planning and implementation. Often there are not enough studies and pre-planning done to understand the local context. Funding mechanisms can, in fact, undermine capacity development due to lack of flexibility, pressure to show visible results and thus the lack of time to understand the local context and ensure local ownership.

There are different perceptions among the informants regarding what ***ownership*** actually means and the importance of local ownership is not always acknowledged. Many projects are still considered being driven primarily by donor interests, with the external partner in the driving seat and minimal or superficial local involvement. The tools and methodologies for capacity development, such as ***capacity assessment***, are generally not adapted to the context of disaster risk reduction and are often not recognised by people within the disaster risk reduction community. A major reason for this is that the disaster risk reduction community is absent from the capacity development dialogue in the development community. There is a rather common understanding among informants that the primary ***role*** of the external expert is to be a facilitator, advisor or coach. However, there are diverse opinions regarding what that exactly means, ranging from being a technical service provider to being the facilitator of capacity development processes. Having soft skills and understanding power relations is essential to succeed according to most informants.

Capacity development projects are often too short in duration due to the fact that disaster risk reduction is still

primarily seen as a humanitarian issue and not as a development issue. Focus is on training individuals, mainly in preparedness for response or risk assessment and awareness raising, and not on having a holistic and systematic approach with a ***mix of activities***. There is limited understanding of how to proceed from risk assessment to actually reduce disaster risks.

There seems to be a lack of procedures for what results to assess and how to monitor and evaluate projects. Indicators are considered important to be able to measure impact, but it is generally perceived that there are not many good indicators today, and softer issues are often missing. There are also different opinions about who should ***monitor and evaluate*** projects. Sharing experience and ***lessons learned*** are considered important, but not commonly done. There is in other words uncertainty regarding what projects work and which do not, as well as the reasons for the success or failure.

There is an emerging understanding on what capacity development means and how to do it, but this work is taking place in the development sector. There are many skilled individuals within capacity development and within disaster risk reduction, but currently there is no coherent system or effort to bring these two sets of skilled people together. There is a need to bridge the two disciplines, capacity development and disaster risk reduction, which would strengthen each discipline and lead to more effective and sustainable projects in the future. It is therefore recommended to have an open and continuous dialogue among partners concerning the meaning of key concepts, not necessarily to agree on common definitions, but for understanding the differences between how all partners define them. It is also recommended to have mixed teams, with capacity development and disaster risk reduction competencies, as well as both internal and external partners, bringing different knowledge to the table. The partners should allocate sufficient time and resources for facilitating a detailed understanding of the local context, and should adopt a holistic approach with an adequate mix with short and long term, as well as soft and hard activities, focused at different levels. It is in other words recommended to develop and disseminate better processes, methods and tools to be used by the partners to jointly assess current disaster risk reduction capacities and capacity development needs, set mutually accepted and understood objectives and design, implement, monitor and evaluate efficient and sustainable capacity development projects.

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Paper II

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Practical aspects of capacity development in the context of disaster risk reduction

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ABSTRACT

Capacity development for disaster risk reduction (DRR) has been identified as one of the main ways of substantially reducing disaster losses. In previous research, several elements have been identified that are important in capacity development for DRR. For this study, documentation from nine international capacity development projects for DRR has been analysed. The projects were undertaken by a Swedish civil governmental agency, during the period 2007–2013. The documentation analysis was complemented with seven interviews with the organisation's project managers. The purpose was to understand to what extent the previously identified elements are reflected and dealt with in DRR projects conducted by the organisation. The analysis further sought to understand whether any developments can be observed during the period studied, and if additional challenges or opportunities were identified by the professionals running these projects.

The findings show a complex and progressive picture regarding the organisation's familiarity with and use of the elements from 2010 and onwards. The elements are noted to be useful in guiding the design and implementation of capacity development projects for DRR. Positive developments can also be noted on the part of the organisation e.g. a more structured way of working with capacity development and conducting capacity assessments. The organisation, however, faced challenges translating its capacity development guidance into a practical tool. Other noted challenges included staff turnover, project management limitations and funding restrictions.

1. Introduction

The three World Conferences on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), held in Yokohama [18], Kobe [50] and Sendai [52], Japan, identified capacity development for DRR as one of the primary means of substantially reducing disaster losses. Many organisations are involved in supporting capacity development for DRR, both bilaterally and multilaterally, for example, governmental agencies and donors, United Nations agencies, regional governmental bodies, INGOs, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. While the importance of capacity development has been increasingly recognised, recent studies show that there are challenges impeding its implementation [3,6,12,14,15,42,49]. In particular, specific approaches, frameworks or guidance in capacity development may be lacking [8,21,23,35] and there is lack of academic research on capacity development for DRR [40]. Further, knowledge about capacity development, what it involves and what works in practice is still an emerging practice. Project management frameworks, such as results-based management or the logical framework approach, are routinely used for DRR projects, yet they do not include guidance on capacity development. Thus, one recurring challenge facing the DRR community is related to how capacity development initiatives are identified, designed and implemented. For example, many DRR initiatives are undertaken without a proper capacity assessment [15,20]. In the absence of guidance, there is a tendency to undertake capacity development for DRR according to one's own rules and experience. This limits the ability of the DRR community at large to build a common body of knowledge on how to do capacity development for DRR.

There are many factors and issues that influence capacity development for DRR. In previous research a number of challenges and opportunities were identified from scientific literature and 35 interviews with capacity development and DRR experts [15]. Seven elements emerged from this study as being important to capacity development for DRR, namely: terminology, local context,

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ownership, capacity assessment, roles and responsibilities, mix (variety) of activities and methods, and monitoring, evaluation and learning [15]. The degree of application of these elements was investigated in 2010 by reviewing three projects carried out by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) [16]. MSB is a Swedish civil governmental humanitarian and development aid organisation engaged in DRR, targeting mainly regional and national governmental organisations. MSB is an implementing organisation and receives its funding mainly from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). In 2010, a workshop was also organised by the MSB to exchange experiences in capacity development for DRR. From that workshop the need for an eighth element on partnership was identified.

Against this background, the purpose of the study is to increase our understanding of the aspects that might facilitate or hinder the success of capacity development projects. The study investigated if, and how, the elements for capacity development previously identified in the scientific literature and by experts in capacity development and DRR are dealt with in real DRR projects. Hence, the questions addressed were:

- To what extent are the elements previously identified dealt with in DRR projects conducted by MSB from 2006 to 2013?
- What development, if any, can be noted in terms of how the elements are dealt with between 2006 and 2013?
- Were additional challenges or opportunities experienced or identified by the professionals running these projects?

The three central concepts of this study are capacity, capacity development and DRR, for which there are various definitions. In this paper capacity is defined as, “the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully” [33, p.12]. Capacity development is understood as, “a locally driven change process through which individuals, organisations and institutions obtain, strengthen, maintain and adapt their capacities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time and learn from their efforts”, adapted from the World Bank Institute and United Nations Development Programme [35, p.3, 48, p.5]. DRR is defined as, “the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events” [51, p.10-11]. The aim of developing capacity for DRR is to achieve outcomes and foster change that helps society to be resilient to risks from natural hazards.

2. Method

The study utilises two methods for data collection: project documentation and semi-structured interviews with project managers. Content analysis was used to review the documentation of 9 international MSB capacity development projects for DRR, planned or implemented between 2007 and 2013. After the analysis of the documentation, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven mangers running the projects to obtain more detailed insights into their capacity development for DRR work. MSB was chosen for the case study because of (1) the data availability (2) its pro-active work in capacity development for DRR (3) its own interest to enhance its capacity development work for DRR. Both authors had prior experience working with MSB on capacity development for DRR, which increased the potential for accessibility to MSB's data.

2.1. Content analysis of project documentation

In total, 66 documents were included in the analysis of the projects in Armenia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, West Africa (Liberia and Sierra Leone), South-East Europe, Botswana and the Southern African Development Community, SADC (not implemented). Two further projects, in Mozambique and Palestine, were ongoing during the period studied. The documentation reviewed included: pre-studies, project proposals, memoranda of understanding or letters of intent, reports to funding organisations and Swedish ministries, evaluations and final reports. MSB documents every project, providing a good basis for analysis. The reason for analysing project documentation is that it is preserved even if the project manager is replaced. This study builds on the eight elements that emerged from a previous literature review and from 35 interviews with capacity development and DRR experts [15]. In brief, the eight elements for capacity development for disaster risk reduction are:

1. Terminology – understand key concepts as well as how other partners interpret and understand them.
2. Local context – understand the basic political and institutional, social and cultural, physical and environmental, and economic setting of the initiative, including who are its stakeholders and their organisational set-up, routines and incentives.
3. Partnership – understand the specific types of collaborative alliances and relations that stakeholders form in order to achieve a specific outcome.
4. Ownership – ensure the capacity development initiatives are needs driven and internal partners have commitment to the capacity development process.
5. Capacity assessment – understand risks from hazards and the current capacities available for DRR in order to determine common and realistic entry points and provide input to the capacity development objectives.
6. Roles and responsibilities – ensure roles are clearly and evenly distributed between internal and external partners, ensure internal partners assume leading roles and external partners assume supporting roles, and that all partners understand this division.
7. Mix (variety) of activities and methods – address capacity needs and implement capacity development objectives in a systematic and holistic manner, acknowledge interdependencies between partners, sectors, capacity levels and types
8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning – ensure continuous monitoring and timely evaluation of the actual results of capacity development initiatives and their activities, and use these inputs for learning.

To ensure consistency in the review process, the two authors identified characteristics of each element, drawing on their own experience and previous research [15,16]. In addition, sources of information used to characterise the eight elements to develop Table 1, included the four High Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness [29–32], which have progressively focused on the need for common principles for development assistance. Table 1 provides a description of the main characteristics of each element, and selected questions that were used to review the projects. The elements are not arranged in any particular order of priority. Although the elements are based on a comprehensive review of previous research and practical experience, it can not be assumed that they reflect all challenges and opportunities that may be encountered in capacity development projects for DRR. The elements are intended to facilitate the analysis of the project documentation and understand the extent to which the different elements are reflected. Guided by the characteristics and questions

Table 1
Characteristics and questions illustrating the eight defining elements of capacity development for DRR.

Element	Characteristics of the element	Illustrative questions
1. Terminology	• Refers to the concepts, definitions and terms, e.g. capacity development, capacity building and specific thematic terminology related to DRR. • Relates to the working language and consistent use of words and terms, e.g. project management.	• Are key concepts and terms clearly defined? • Is there consistency in terminology throughout the project documentation? • Are abbreviations explained?
2. Local context	• Refers to factors, e.g. political, cultural, social and economic norms, organisational set-up and practices, that shape and influence the way in which capacity and change occur. • Relates to tangible factors (legislation, institutional mandates and economic indicators), as well as less visible factors (values, beliefs, customs, motives, power relations). • Recognises that context is constantly changing which can have unintended outcomes or consequences for the project. • Relates to the conditions for engaging in capacity development and whether they are favourable or not for change.	• Which contextual factors are referred to in the project documentation, including the disaster risk profile? • Is there reference to any type of guidance, tools or approaches that are used to understand or assess context –e.g. systems thinking, theory of change, SWOT[a] analysis? • Who are the key actors and what are their relationships, and who has the power, on paper and in reality? • Are the main networks on the ground considered and how? • Are there any other or similar projects on-going or that have already been initiated, and what are the effects of these projects? • What are the favourable conditions for, and expectations of, engaging in capacity development? • How is the readiness to change taken into account? • How will the local context be monitored and acted upon during the project cycle?
3. Partnership	• Refers to the motives for partnering. • Refers to the purpose and type of partnership. • Relates to the capability of different partners to collaborate effectively and identify an exit strategy. • Relates to how issues of trust, transparency, shared values, risk and mutual benefit are perceived and addressed. • Relates to the distribution and use of power between the partners.	• Are the drivers (motives) for partnering on the part of different actors clear? • Is the purpose of the partnership clear? • Do the partners have a written agreement, and if so, what does it include? • Are the benefits and risks of collaborating articulated in a project risk analysis? • Does someone from within or outside the partnership serve as an intermediary, to help the partners achieve their objectives and minimise obstacles to collaboration? • What are the provisions for building, maintaining, reviewing and evaluating the partnership's impact and collaboration process, e.g. conflict management? • What is the common exit strategy for the project? • Is the external partner present in the country, i.e. a sub-office? How will this affect the partnership? • How are the different levels of management involved in the project?
4. Ownership	• Relates to the commitment and active participation of local leaders and actors in the project. • Relates to the use of national processes and systems to design, implement and evaluate the project, e.g. financial control and procurement. • Relates to accountability and sustainability of capacity outcomes in relation to the internal partner.	• Who initiates and designs the project? • Is there a common understanding between the partners of what ownership means? • What approaches, tools or processes are mentioned to strengthen stakeholder ownership and systems at different stages of the project cycle? • How does the project align with the internal partner's strategies or with previous similar initiatives? • How might the capacity development effort lead to a dependence on external support?
5. Capacity Assessment	• Seeks to answer the questions: Whose capacity? Capacity for What? and How? • Involves the use of tools, methodologies and approaches for capacity assessment and for defining change strategies. • Includes an analysis of desired technical or hard (DRR) and soft capacities in relation to existing capacities. • Involves an analysis of the entry points for capacity development, such as institutional, organisational and individual level, and how they are related to each other. • Is a task- and process-oriented exercise requiring multi-stakeholder participation	• What capacity assessment frameworks and activities are referred to in the project? • Is the assessment undertaken jointly, and how? • What other capacity assessments have been undertaken? • What capacities and initiatives already exist, and what are the future requirements? • Does the assessment clarify the type of change that is needed, and what is the degree of readiness to change? • What are the documented points of entry for capacity development and DRR change?
6. Roles and responsibilities	• Relates to role clarity and agreement in relation to who does what, decision making and accountability. • Refers to the complexity of the relationships between external and local actors, and power relations. • Calls for a combination of hard and soft skills on the part of both internal and external actors.	• What types of roles can be identified for the internal and external partners? • How are the roles divided between internal and external partners, and who has the leading role for what? • How is the accountability of the partners described? • Is there a clear project management structure and operating procedures with timetables? • Do the term of reference consider both technical and softer capacity development elements?
7. Mix (variety) of activities and methods	• Relates to the selection, sequencing and design of project activities at different capacity development levels. • Results in a clear strategy for change to address capacity gaps leading to the desired end state. • Refers to whether there are provisions that allow for flexibility	• Are the activities clearly linked to the overall purpose of the project? • How do the results of the capacity assessment provide information on the mix of activities? What changes are expected to be achieved?

Table 1 (*continued*)

Element	Characteristics of the element	Illustrative questions
	and adaptability in the project. • Relates to the use of innovative approaches and practices. • Requires matching of activities to resource availability, timetable and overall purpose of the project.	• How are the mix of activities and methods described, e.g. short- or long-term, simple or complex, start-up or exit? • Do the activities relate appropriately to the identified entry points? • Do the activities take into account different capacity levels: individual, organisational and institutional? • How do proposed activities & methods take into account local organisational capacity and context-specific processes and requirements? • How do activities seek to harmonise with, relate to, and complement other capacity development efforts, and align with the internal partner's strategies? • Does the documentation refer to how the results of capacity development will be sustained?
8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning	• Refers to how DRR targets and capacity results, both soft and hard, are defined and measured, and identifies the key milestones and deliverables based on the findings of the capacity assessment. • Refers to monitoring and evaluation of roles, responsibilities and resources. • Refers to the use of approaches, frameworks and tools to monitor, evaluate, report and disseminate the lessons learnt. • Clarifies reporting procedures and accountability, and ways in which it can be identified and used for future learning.	• What is monitored and evaluated, how, when, how often, and by whom? Is this a joint activity? • Which monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches are described? • Are there dedicated resources for monitoring, evaluation and learning activities? • Is there are a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods? • Who is responsible for project reporting-to whom, how often and in what language? • How are the lessons learnt assessed, documented, shared and put into practice?

[a] SWOT: Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat.

in Table 1, the documentation was read and coded independently by each of the authors, seeking if and how the elements are reflected in the text [53]. When the initial coding between the authors differed, agreement was reached through discussion in order to avoid bias.

2.2. Interviews with project managers

In addition to the documentation analysis, seven semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with MSB project managers. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain more detailed insights into the projects, to interpret aspects of the project documentation, to determine if and how the elements have influenced the projects. The interviews also sought to capture the project managers' perceptions of additional challenges or opportunities experienced or identified in projects. Project managers were also asked how MSB's activities in capacity development for DRR have evolved over the last years. The interviews did not focus specifically on the content of the 9 selected capacity development projects for DRR. The choice of qualitative interviews gave the possibility to get in-depth information [46]. Semi-structured interviews were relatively less time-consuming than unstructured interviews [4]. The advantages of this type of interview over questionnaires are the possibilities to repeat or to rephrase questions when needed and it is easier to get a feeling for which questions are difficult to answer [4].

A purposeful selection [4,5] was made of all project managers who had a lead role in one or several of the nine international capacity development projects for DRR. The two women and five men had been working for MSB for five to 10 years. Two face-to-face interviews and five Skype or telephone interviews were conducted between February and April 2014, taking on average 40 min each. All interviews were conducted in English with the help of an interview guide [4] which included the key questions: (1) When designing a capacity development project for DRR what type of guidance do you have or do you use? (2) Do you use MSB's draft handbook for capacity development for DRR in your work when designing projects? Some of the elements are mentioned in the handbook, how are they used as guidance? (3) What other challenges or opportunities have you experienced in capacity development for DRR? (4) Have there been any changes in MSB's procedures in capacity development for DRR? What kind of changes? The interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy [4], and additional notes were made documenting other impressions, for example, how much probing was needed, and whether the informants were vague when responding [4,46]. The data from the interviews was grouped under the different key questions and analysed [5,46].

3. Findings

This section contains a summary of how the eight elements were reflected and notable changes in the documentation, as guided by the questions presented in Table 1. A summary of the interview results with the project managers is also given covering the elements, other challenges and opportunities and perceived changes.

3.1. Terminology

There was a lack of consensus on how key terms and concepts were perceived and expressed in the documentation, i.e. disaster and capacity development terminology. In five projects there was a mixed use of capacity development and capacity building. Additionally, there were discrepancies in the use of project management terminology in that terms were not defined or not used consistently, e.g. project purpose and project objective, or programme versus project. There was no glossary of terms nor definitions of key concepts in any of the documentation analysed. One document makes note of the lack of a glossary of terms for the various DRR/disaster management and capacity development/capacity building concepts and that references to these terms was not consistent across the projects. Further, terminologies used by

external experts involved in the project's training also varied, which created confusions for the training participants. One project manager acknowledged the importance of terminology, "Terminology is one of the basics that you should define before you decide on activities. You need to know how your cooperation partner defines various resources and responsibilities because the very same word can mean many different things, depending on your background and your mandate". That said, after 2010, capacity development was more consistently referenced in the documentation.

3.2. Local context

The documentation referred to many contextual factors – political, cultural, security, hierarchical, lack of transparency, etc., but there was a lack of specific discussion on what they meant. For example, cross cutting issues such as gender and environment were often mentioned but in isolation from the context and later on in the activities. On the whole, with the exception of SWOT analysis of project context, the documentation did not normally refer to any specific context analysis or use of tools e.g. stakeholder analysis. In addition, there was limited information about similar previous or current initiatives. During the period reviewed, most of the countries concerned were in the process of changing their national disaster management policies, arrangements and procedures. For one project the documentation refers to the fact that the rescue system was undergoing a change from being a military concern to being a special fire and rescue service. It was not clear whether these types of changes influenced the projects positively or negatively. We were not able to discern any evident positive trend in this element.

3.3. Partnership

Partnership was routinely mentioned in the documentation, and most projects referred to a written partnership agreement. In three projects, the MSB had a sub-office in the country with full-time staff, to ensure close collaboration. In projects without written agreements a certain lack of formalization of the partnership was noted by those working in the project. One document refers to the lack of partnership agreement between the main partners that participated in the project. The lack of formalisation of the collaboration meant that expectations and lines of responsibility on the part of different actors were not set out. The document notes that a partner agreement would have ensured that opportunities were not missed and that commitments were clearly delineated. Several projects called for a partnership approach or partner-driven cooperation, but the term was not explained. There were no references to partnership start-up or exit strategies. Furthermore, the documents did not refer to particular actors that might have an intermediary role in helping to facilitate the collaboration between the partners. No reference was made to any kind of evaluation of the partnership, and it is thus difficult to draw any conclusions regarding the benefits or limitations of working in partnership.

3.4. Ownership

The documentation lacked any reference to the analysis of ownership or strategy for dealing with ownership in the projects. For example, there was no indication of how the projects were informed by or aligned with internal partner's strategies, nor any other indication of ownership beyond joint project steering committees or management groups. Documentation indicated that the partners developed project proposals and plans jointly. However, in practice it was stated that the project proposals were developed by the external partner and sent to the internal partner for comments and approval. The external partner was responsible for project implementation, including reporting. Budgets were determined, used and managed by the external partner. Final evaluations sometimes referred to difficulties regarding local ownership and commitments, particularly in the earlier projects. It was noted in one document "The main challenge was having an external agency leading the project. Hence, the ownership of certain strategic issues fell between project partners, giving rise to a number of structural and reporting challenges". However, in later examples, there was a positive trend towards greater recognition of the importance of local ownership as a guiding principle.

3.5. Capacity assessment

Regarding capacity assessment, the documentation for all 9 projects referred to needs assessment exercises prior to or at the project's inception. These exercises took the form of scoping studies, logical framework approach workshops, and United Nations assessment missions. However, the documentation did not provide details on the specific capacity dimension of these activities, or how the findings informed or modified the project design or change strategy for the project. Thus, it is difficult to determine why the outlined capacity of the project was required, or how the project could build upon existing capacity. There was a positive trend after 2010 towards conducting preliminary studies on a regular basis, which the MSB identifies as capacity assessment, to identify existing capacity and current limitations in the disaster risk management system.

3.6. Roles and responsibilities

There were some examples of external partner's roles and responsibilities being outlined. Two projects referred specifically to the various partners, including their roles, capacities and the added value they provide. These same projects included specific references to project management arrangements, local roles and leadership, which is good practice. Although a project management group and a steering committee had been established in other projects, the roles and responsibilities were not always defined in terms of what should be done and by whom, particularly the internal partner's role. The internal partner was often mentioned in general terms, while the roles and responsibilities of the external partner were more detailed. Challenges concerning the clarification of roles and execution of different tasks by external and internal partners were also identified in the project documentation. The documentation for one project notes "the terms of reference for the internal partner falls short of adequately articulating their roles and responsibilities, specifically with reference to their authority regarding decision making and for the financial aspects of the construction element of the project".

The types of roles of external partners were primarily north–south technical-assistance oriented, and the provision of skills-based training for DRR. One project referred to MSB personnel working in a mentoring role with local trainers. Otherwise, there were no references to other specific roles assigned to external partners such as advising, coaching, etc. No particular trends or changes in role definition were noted in the project documentation between 2006 and 2013.

3.7. Mix of activities and methods

In general, the purpose of each project was well defined. However, some were deemed to be too ambitious in relation to their expected duration, which was also mentioned in project evaluations. The suggested project activities and the sequence of

events were not always clear. There were no specific references to capacity development or theory of change strategies for the suggested activities. It was difficult to determine the extent to which activities were made to align with the strategies and priorities of the internal partner or harmonize with other stakeholders. There were examples where the purpose of the project appeared to be based on initial assumptions about existing capacity. Later revision of the purpose and activities of the project was required, as the initial assumptions did not take all the organisational, institutional and legal issues into account. The documentation for four projects that were based on international standards did not specify what is required for adaptation to national contexts.

Project activities mostly consisted of technical training, conducting trainers' courses, developing training materials, standard operating procedures and providing equipment. For example, in three project proposals, 20 pages each without the annexes, the word "training" is mentioned 86, 97 and 130 times. The documentation did not always refer to organisational, institutional and legal issues. Nor did the documentation specify what activities the projects should undertake to provide more softer or functional capacities relevant to the project's purpose. One project manager noted, "we are often quite strong in terms of the implementation of technical capacities but weaker at strengthening the more organisational or inner aspects which is often necessary for having a capacity sit in the organisation". Furthermore, the documents made no reference to any specific exit strategy or subsequent activities to advance or monitor the sustainability of the results. However, a positive trend was evident in the greater variety of activities beyond the provision of training and equipment. More attention was devoted to supporting access to networks, disaster management policy development, enhancing cooperation between different entities and fostering the exchange of knowledge and expertise in terms of human resources and the integration of cross cutting issues.

3.8. Monitoring, evaluation and learning

There was a lack of baseline information in the projects studied, and there were no clear references to the use of any particular monitoring methodologies or evaluation processes. One project did refer to a workshop to establish a monitoring and evaluation system using the "Ripple Model" as an example of a participatory monitoring methodology. However, this workshop took place at the later stage of the project, so it remains unclear how the methodology was applied. The documentation referred to indicators that primarily addressed project inputs and activity outputs, rather than measuring changes in circumstances or behaviour. Greater attention was placed on the subjects covered or the activities accomplished, such as training activities and workshops, standard operational procedures or the drafting, editing and publishing of policies, etc. There were, however, a few examples of impact indicators designed to measure the increase in service provision or changes in DRR abilities. Consequently, outcomes and indicators were not defined or monitored systematically, nor were they used in progress reporting, except in final reports.

MSB's internal reporting and final reports focus on the organisation's own purposes and its obligations to meet funding organisation requirements. While final evaluations were conducted for most projects, it is unclear if an analysis of the elements was a component of the terms of reference. In most cases, independent project evaluations were provided, written in English. These include the lessons learnt, which are summarised and discussed among the project managers to improve their own approaches and methods concerning capacity development projects. A positive trend was seen in terms of examples of good practice being systematically extracted from evaluation reports. For example, reference is made to the application of lessons learnt from one project to another with respect to the type of equipment to be procured, the composition of equipment and how to modify training curricula to fit the local context. The final reports lacked specific references to hand-over, exit and follow-up strategies including consideration of future funding for sustainability.

3.9. Project managers' interviews

The results of the interviews with seven project managers revealed that they believed there had been improvements over the past five years in the way in which the MSB approaches capacity development projects for DRR. One manager said, "We had a workshop in 2010 about capacity development for DRR where the elements were included, and that was sort of when it all got started". Two other managers commented on designing and drafting the capacity development handbook with its elements. Six of the project managers believed they were now better at defining realistic goals and objectives, through the use of a more robust project planning process, and were thus able to work in a more structured way. For example, one manager said, "there is now more focus on results, whereas previously the emphasis was on activities". Another said "We have a more solid project planning process, better understanding of how you design a goal, what should be the objectives, how you set realistic results and indicators and how we are going to evaluate something. Before it was a bit ad-hoc, now we start from scratch". Another change cited by five managers was the importance of conducting capacity assessments or preliminary studies before starting capacity development projects. This included a shift away from relying on United Nations assessment reports to the use of the MSB/Lund University capacity assessment approach as the basis for designing a capacity development project: "We have been getting better with collecting the baseline and to get the local organisation to look at the actual needs and capacity and to ask us what they want, not we telling them".

The interviews revealed a mixed picture about the general availability of guidance for capacity development for DRR, and familiarity with, or use of, the eight elements. Five of the seven respondents indicated that they had not used any particular guidance, but relied on their own personal previous experience or that of colleagues. Reasons cited included time and work pressures. Also, prior to 2010, MSB did not have any specific capacity development guidance. Four project managers mentioned that they were aware of the draft handbook as an important "tailor made" reference for project managers at MSB designing capacity development projects for DRR. All seven project managers stated that they found the elements in the draft handbook relevant and useful. However, six of them needed to be reminded of them during the interview. Further, one project manager said, "Turning the handbook with its elements into a practical tool that people use routinely will be a serious challenge." The existence of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) guidance documents was noted, but it was perceived as being overly academic and too complex to be useful to an inexperienced capacity development project manager, or those less familiar with UNDP's approach. Other managers commented that they were familiar with guidance issued by Sida regarding, for instance, the logical framework approach and results-based management. All the project managers thought the elements were a good reminder or a useful checklist for project design and implementation to ensure that all the important aspects were covered. One project manager said, "The elements help you design a good project".

Two managers noted the inter-relationship and interdependence between the elements, and the fact that they played roles of varying importance in different parts of the project

management cycle. However, a number of other challenges were also identified related to staff turnover for the internal and external partner, the need for more concrete guidance on capacity development, how to build trust based partnerships, and issues related to having to deal with several projects at the same time and pressed timelines. Funding modalities also pose challenges. Four of the seven project managers said there were financing restrictions for context analysis and capacity assessments, the revision of projects and post-project evaluations, also referred to as follow-up studies. Another manager noted, "Funding is tricky. For successful capacity development you need flexibility. At the same time you have to be able to actually deliver the results".

4. Discussion

The discussion covers the following aspects: the elements, what notable changes can be observed, other challenges identified in the projects and finally the limitations of the study.

4.1. The elements

With regards to terminology, this study indicates that the terms capacity, capacity development, capacity building and partnership are not clearly defined. When concepts are not properly defined, including translation into the local language, people may not be inclined to probe to ensure they are speaking about the same thing, see also James and Hailey [21]. Therefore, one cannot assume that there is a shared concept or understanding of what the terms mean and involve. This is an important finding since terminological confusion can cause serious misunderstandings in capacity development projects [17]. The way in which capacity development is perceived will have an impact on the activities and methods chosen, how they are designed and implemented, and how the partnership is perceived and organised. Therefore, it is crucial to define what capacity development means and the terms that will be used in the assessment, design and implementation of capacity development for DRR initiatives, as has been found in other studies [10, 21, 24, 44]

Local context analysis and capacity assessment are closely related. Often it is an iterative and emergent process with a need to have a structured approach including the use of different tools to undertake these analyses. Local context analysis and capacity assessment, also referred to in the documentation as preliminary studies, SWOT analysis and inception studies, were carried out in three of the nine projects analysed. Yet, the lack of references to conducting such studies can be seen as a cause for concern, see also Hagelsteen and Becker [15]. Capacity assessments can serve many useful purposes. They can help partners better understand local contexts and culture, identify the capacities available as well as gaps, assess readiness to change, and identify the key stakeholders and their relationships. Additionally, assessments can help identify prior or ongoing initiatives similar to that proposed. The absence of such capacity assessments may result in a lack of appreciation of how different contextual factors and stakeholders may affect the change that the capacity development initiative seeks to bring about [25]. As noted from the interviews, there may not be sufficient incentives or resources to conduct capacity assessments or context analysis, due to project time frames and donor pressure to demonstrate short-term results.

In relation to partnership, ownership, roles and responsibilities, the analysis of the documentation illustrates that modifications were sometimes made during the course of the project. In some cases, this could have reflected MSB's aim to be flexible and to respond to emerging changes and to be perceived as a committed and responsive partner. However, the flexibility could also be a consequence of the fact that the internal partner was not doing what they were expected to do, possibly due to a lack of ownership, authority or ability. When the partnership is first initiated, the partners may want to believe that they are in agreement on how to proceed. However, when the activities are to be implemented it may become clear that they do not have a common understanding of what should be done by whom and how. According to one project manager, this may be due to a lack of knowledge or skills, or a reluctance to reveal shortcomings due to the risk of losing face. In one of the project evaluation reports it was noted that the MSB responded to the partner's lack of willingness or ability to carry out their part of an agreement [34]. No explanation was given for the lack of interest or action on the part of the internal partner. When problems arose they were solved by the MSB, and activities were adapted accordingly, even if it meant that the original goals and plans had to be modified. It is not uncommon for external partners to modify or change the process when matters do not proceed according to plan, or in the absence of clear demands of needs or ownership by the internal partners [22]. This behaviour on the part of the external partner in order to "get the job done" may have a negative impact of the sustainability of the project, as well as the partnership itself, see also Lopes [24]. Reasons for this behaviour, also confirmed by the interviews, are project time frame limitations and pressure to deliver visible results [15,38]. This can impose a significant constraint if the partners feel more accountable to a donor than to each other and the intended project outcome.

Another related difficulty may be to how the external partner deals with the partnership. There are examples in the literature of the external partner perceiving itself to be "open, trustworthy, organised, and committed", whereas the internal partner is perceived as being "unreliable, uncommitted and disorganised" [1] Therefore, external partners may determine that to be able to write something positive in the project report, it is probably better to "do it yourself" [1]. This is closely linked to prevailing power issues and relations, which can have a considerable influence on any type of development project [7]. In successful partnerships, all parties must be active and involved in accomplishing activities together, not just the external partner, and to be accountable to one another. Regardless of the roles of the partners, decisions must be based on a mutual understanding of the capacities and needs of the internal partner and on the abilities of the external partner [28]. As mentioned in one project evaluation, the internal partner should ideally perform the bulk of the work [34], as they know their context and capacities best. However, the lack of ownership by internal partners in capacity development is one of the main reasons for the failure of many initiatives [24–26, 43].

Concerning mix of activities, in the documentation studied most activities focused on the creation or enhancement of capacity, including the development of knowledge and skills of individuals, the establishment of structures, standard operating procedures, guidelines and legislation. Training was a common activity in all the documentation and, for that matter, in many capacity development projects [23]. In fact, training is often used synonymously with capacity development [15,37]. Training may be preferred as it is relatively easy to plan and implement; particularly one-off events, which are also easier to evaluate in terms of activity outputs, although the longer-term outcomes or impact are more difficult to assess. Many capacity development initiatives focus on the provision of one-off technical training events for individuals, without paying adequate attention to other aspects of capacity that are related to organisational and institutional processes [19,33,47]. Such efforts may not extend to the provision of support for the utilisation or retention of the newly acquired or enhanced skills, knowledge and procedures. In fact, research has

shown that training and the acquisition of skills are not sufficient if the organisation is unable to use the acquired skills or provide an environment conducive to doing so [9,37,39,45]. Additionally, some types of capacity development activities may be more complex or long-term in nature, e.g. an organisational change process or a national strategy development exercise, so they will require a broad mix of methods and approaches [15,37]. As noted, the analysis of the documentation indicates there is a relationship between the way in which capacity development is perceived, and the capacity development efforts that are chosen and implemented.

With such a wide interpretation of capacity development, organisations may be more likely to select a mix of activities that suit their own needs or areas of technical expertise [27], rather than understanding and responding to the existing demands. Furthermore, there may be a tendency to overlook or diminish the "softer aspects" of the capacity development process, i.e. accomplishing the objectives of developing the necessary capacity, while ensuring that there is local ownership, self-reflection and learning from experience throughout the project. Thus, there is a need for a mix of activities and methods at different levels as no single approach, tool or method will be able to provide the complete solution to all the needs.

With respect to monitoring, evaluation and learning there were no clear references to the use of any particular methodologies or approaches for monitoring how capacity has changed, which is noted to be a common challenge [2,15,41]. Further, the analysis indicated that no follow-up studies were undertaken within three years of project completion. This may be due to lack of interest or lack of funding, which was mentioned during the interviews. Follow-up studies can be beneficial for all the organisations involved, as they identify knowledge valuable for future projects. In fact, there is a need to reflect on, and learn from, experience in order to improve and change future working methods [21]. Failure to do this may lead to the risk of continuing to use familiar methods by force of habit, rather than using experience to develop and improve practices [36].

4.2. Notable changes

The 2010 workshop seemed to be the turning point for MSB, after which a positive trend was seen regarding the use of the elements in capacity development for DRR, as part of a broader effort to learn from previous experience and to systematise capacity development. These efforts included internal workshops, the development of the capacity development handbook, assigning a focal point in internal capacity development, and evaluation at the end of each project and increasing the number of staff on the roster that are trained in DRR and capacity development. One project manager said, "we want to enhance and develop our way of thinking and working with capacity development as a method and have a common structured approach, where the handbook, the elements and supporting documents are part of the process". A change process of this nature requires a long-term perspective, clear change outcomes and organisational support. We believe there is a relationship between the MSB's efforts to improve its approach to capacity development and the increase in awareness of, and the use of, these elements in its work. In the future, greater attention should be given to the specific ways in which these elements can support and enhance capacity development for DRR as a change process.

4.3. Additional challenges and opportunities

The findings presented a mixed picture with respect to how the elements were dealt with in the documentation and from the interviews with the project managers. There could be several reasons for this, namely: the elements are not yet sufficiently well known, the importance of the elements and their use as guidance have not been adequately assessed or communicated, their implementation is difficult, or that other elements are considered to be more important. Converting the handbook and the elements into a practical working method that MSB staff are aware of and would use routinely takes time and effort. This is further complicated by high staff turnover, which contributes to difficulties in establishing an organisation with an institutionalised learning system, if such a learning system is not already in place. This suggests that multiple approaches, incentives and tools are needed to promote more systematic practices in capacity development for DRR within organisations and for learning from practice. Furthermore, when assessing how the eight elements can be applied as guidance, a range of other challenges must also be taken into account. These challenges include frameworks and processes for project design and change management, financing requirements, power relations between partners and, most importantly, the overall context in which capacity development is to be carried out.

4.4. Limitations of the study

When analysing the documentation, sometimes data could apply to more than one element e.g. local context and capacity assessment. Another difficulty was the interpretation of the extent to which an element was or was not addressed in the documentation; in the form of guidance or a challenge. We did not seek to investigate whether projects that referred to more elements were more successful in their implementation and impact. Analysing projects and case studies has been the subject of some criticism [11,54]. One criticism is the potential for personal bias [11], which was partly reduced in this study by double coding. Another concern associated with case studies is the limited possibility for transferability [5,11,54]. Knowledge obtained through one case study may be transferred to other situations where the contextual and historical factors are similar [13], paving the way for wider transferability. There is no reason to assume that the experience in capacity development for DRR gained by the Swedish MSB, a civil governmental agency, is unique. On the contrary, it may be indicative of other external partners' experience in capacity development. Further, the disaster risk reduction community could benefit from being more engaged in the dialogue about capacity development in the broader development community.

5. Conclusions

Designing and implementing capacity development initiatives is becoming acknowledged as a complex and emerging process. There are many organisations involved in developing capacities for DRR. Organisations need some kind of capacity development guidance that is readily accessible and suited to the organisation's project management practices. Organisations must also identify the best way of promoting and using the guidance to ensure the success of their efforts in capacity development. The findings of this study indicate that the eight elements are reflected to various degrees in the documentation and that they are increasingly referred to after the capacity development workshop in 2010. A number of positive developments can be identified in relation to MSB having a more structured way of working. This includes a greater appreciation of the complexity of trying to integrate its work in capacity development for DRR with its project management process, the recognition of the importance of capacity

assessment and the need to blend the technical and softer aspects of capacity development. The results of the interviews reveal a mixed picture in terms of how project managers use these elements and guidance in capacity development for DRR. MSB recognises the elements and they have the handbook but the process of turning that into a practical and usable tool will take time and effort. In addition, other challenges were identified related to staff turnover, the need for more concrete capacity development guidance, power relations, project design frameworks, pressed timelines and funding restrictions.

In relation to the broader DRR community, if the partners undertake capacity assessments together, and use these eight elements during project design, this can foster discussions on issues relating to the desired change, the local context, ownership and the most useful approaches for capacity development. The partners could also use the eight elements during the implementation of a project as a reminder or checklist, or to review specific elements. They can also be used to inform the learning and sustainability aspects of capacity development for DRR initiatives. As noted, there may be other elements that are important for capacity development for DRR that have not been included in the study. Thus, the application of the eight elements must be flexible, depending on the context and culture, the capacities available, and the overall purpose of the capacity development initiative. More research is required on the use of these elements in capacity development for DRR. This would provide a better understanding of how they work in different organisational and geographic contexts, how they can be used as guidance and how the elements specifically enhance the success of a capacity development for DRR initiative.

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Paper III

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Systemic problems of capacity development for disaster risk reduction in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world

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ABSTRACT

The international community has been engaged in capacity development for decades, sometimes under different names or with a slightly different focus. So far, these efforts have failed to bring significant and sustainable change. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 specifies capacity development as the means to reduce disaster losses substantially. The purpose of this paper is to offer a better understanding of the reasons behind the poor results with capacity development for disaster risk reduction (DRR). Twenty qualitative semi-structured interviews with high-level decision makers in the international community indicate systemic failure that requires a complete overhaul of the aid system. When analysing the discrepancies between principles for capacity development (ownership, partnership, contextualization, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability) and the actual performance of actors operating in a complex, dynamic, uncertain, and ambiguous world, five interrelated problems emerge: (1) Clashing principles; (2) Quixotic control; (3) Mindset lag; (4) Lack of motivation for change; and (5) Power imbalances. Understanding and addressing these systemic problems is fundamental to the success of capacity development. It is not enough to blame the actors who implement capacity development activities for DRR, nor to merely rename it, yet again, after another few years of continuous frustration.

1. Introduction

Capacity development is a critical aspect in international development cooperation. It has been emphasized at a number of global conferences and in high-level fora over the years [1–3] and has been highlighted in the current Agenda 2030 for sustainable development [4]. Although the term *capacity development* belongs to the 21st century [5], a more or less identical agenda was proposed in the 1990s using the term *capacity building* [6]. Most of its fundamental elements can be traced back to the start of organized international development cooperation in the 1950s [7]. The international community has, in other words, been engaged in capacity development for decades, using different names and with slightly different focuses [5], i.e. institution building [8], institutional development [9], capacity strengthening [10], and capacity building [6]. There are well-established principles for how to implement capacity development, such as ownership, partnership, alignment, and harmonization [1–3]. Yet, capacity development has generally not been successful and effective in practice [11,12,13].

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is an integral part of Agenda 2030, which also acknowledges the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 [4]. There are also several frameworks arguing for the importance of integrating DRR into response, recovery and development, such as Build Back Better [14] and Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development [15,16]. Capacity development is explicitly mentioned in the Sendai framework as the means to substantially reduce disaster losses [17], as in the previous global frameworks for DRR [18,19]. These global frameworks have been increasingly successful in attracting support for DRR at the global, regional and national levels, but have had less success in encouraging change at local levels [20,21,22]. Moreover, capacity development for DRR has so far struggled to bring significant and sustainable change [21,23,24].

Scott and colleagues [25,26] point out a lack of scientific research on capacity development for DRR. Several influential books and policy reports identify challenges for capacity development in general [11,12,27], but these generally have little empirical backing or fail to recognize the reasons behind the challenges. In the DRR community, there is a lack of uptake of well-established concepts and principles for how to think about and practice capacity development [28]. Most of the

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Table 1
Interview guide.

Part 1	1. What is your position?
	2. What is your background?
	3. What is your view on capacity development? *a. Probing*: Can you say more about this? What do you mean?
Part 2	4. What are the challenges for effective capacity development? *a. Probing*: Why is it like this? What do you mean?
	5. What should we do to overcome these challenges?
Part 3	6. Summary of key issues. Anything else to add? Showing appreciation and asking how the participant experienced the interview.

thinking has been outside the DRR community in arenas where DRR has not been part of the dialogue [29]. Recent scientific studies show substantial discrepancies between established principles (or elements) and actual performance with respect to capacity development for DRR, e.g. ownership, partnership, local context and capacity assessment, mix of activities and methods, monitoring, evaluation and learning [28–30]. However, these studies do not propose any explanations for why these discrepancies exist. Understanding the reasons for these discrepancies is important when attempting to identify key challenges that undermine the effectiveness of capacity development for DRR and in general, regardless if following all principles would automatically lead to successful capacity development or not.

The purpose of this paper is to offer an understanding of the reasons behind the poor results of capacity development for DRR by exploring these results from the perspective of high-level decision makers in the international community. Acknowledging the decades of experience of these key professionals, this paper is based on the assumption that many of the problems are known and that there are informed ideas about how to solve them. The research took the form of an inductive descriptive study by means of qualitative interviews to inform a systemic critique of contemporary capacity development for DRR. To meet this purpose, the study intends to answer the following research question:

- Why are there discrepancies between established principles and actual performance with respect to capacity development for DRR?

2. Methodology

In an effort to answer the research question, data were collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 20 high-level decision makers in the international community. The selection of qualitative interviews gave the opportunity to obtain in-depth information [31,32] about capacity development for DRR based on the interview participants' experiences and perceptions. Open and explorative types of questions made it possible to follow up on the participant's answer, to probe for additional information or to confirm information [33]. Qualitative interviews also make it possible to repeat or to rephrase questions when needed, making it easier to get a sense of what questions are more difficult to answer [34] and to verify that the interviewer has understood the meaning of the participant's answers correctly [33]. Due to the participants' busy schedules, semi-structured interviews were preferable since they are relatively less time-consuming than completely unstructured interviews [34].

Participants were specifically selected for their position, organizational affiliation and experience in capacity development and/or DRR. High-level decision makers have the ability to influence the international aid system due to their positions and were selected for their specific knowledge and experience [33] by means of purposeful selection [34,35]. The participants were selected through several processes of parallel snowballing or chain sampling [31,35] that initially started with four participants identified from the authors' professional networks, i.e. United Nations, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and a donor organization. Snowballing was an effective way to reach high-level decision makers otherwise difficult be to reach. In total, 26 high-level international decision makers were contacted, of which 20 responded. Five of the participants were women and 15 were men, their ages ranging from their forties to sixties. The participants had diverse backgrounds with experience in capacity development and/or DRR. They had the following profiles: United Nations Special Representatives, directors of United Nations, head of ECHO and top-level management of other regional organizations, high-level managers at international donors and development banks, presidents or directors at various parts of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, large international NGOs, and private sector.

The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission to ensure consistency and accuracy [34] and to allow the interviewer to focus on the participant during the interview. Twelve face-to-face interviews and eight telephone interviews were conducted between May 2012 and January 2015, each between 39 and 74 min in duration. All the interviews were conducted in English with the help of an interview guide [31,34] in three parts (Table 1). The first two questions focused on establishing the participant's position, academic background and work experience. These questions were relatively easy to answer and allowed the participant to become comfortable with the interview situation [31]. This was followed with a grand-tour question [36], asking about the participant's view on capacity development for DRR. The purpose was to find out how the participants understand capacity development, their respective positions and their roles in capacity development. The second part focused on challenges with respect to capacity development for DRR and how to overcome them. The last part concluded the interview with a casual conversation about the key issues from the interview. The interviewer asked the participants if they had anything further to add and about their impressions of the interview [33]. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The analysis started during the interview, with field notes documenting impressions, themes and making connections within and between themes [31,32,34]. The transcribed interviews were hand-coded on paper to enable the authors to "touch the data" [37]. Most of the coding was inductive and emerged during the analysis process. However, a few codes were prefigured before the analysis started, i.e. deductive coding [31,38]. This included position, academic background, work experience, general understanding of capacity development, challenges and solutions. The hand-coded interview was then transferred to NVivo®, which assisted in organizing and sorting data. Codes were adjusted where needed, since data could be interpreted from different angles and perspectives, and data could apply to more than one code. The 20 interviews were therefore reanalysed and recoded by the authors from new perspectives and refined accordingly [33], resulting in two overarching themes with principles and actual performance on one hand, and fundamental challenges on the other. Information saturation was achieved after 15 interviews.

3. Results

The results of the study paint a rich picture of capacity development for DRR and its challenges, with many closely interlinked and patterned parts. However, two overarching themes emerged from the interviews, and they provide the structure of this section. The first theme is the tension between a set of principles for how capacity development for DRR should be done and the actual performance of how capacity development for DRR is done. These principles include ownership,

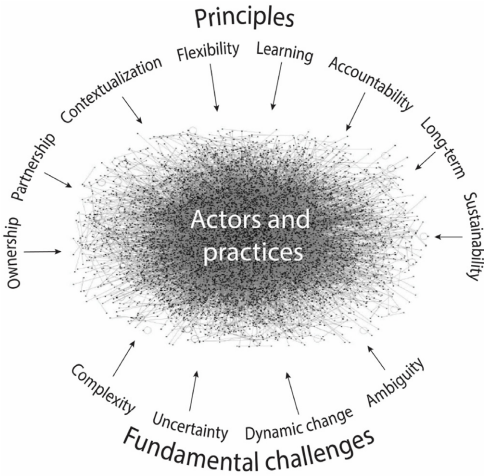

Fig. 1. Principles and fundamental challenges for capacity development.

partnership, contextualization, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability (Fig. 1). Secondly, the participants highlighted four fundamental challenges that are intrinsic parts of the process and context of capacity development for DRR, i.e. complexity, uncertainty, dynamic change, and ambiguity (Fig. 1). As described in the following sections, it is in the tension between these principles and fundamental challenges that actors involved in capacity development must perform and work (Fig. 1).

3.1. Principles vs performance

3.1.1. Ownership

Almost two thirds of the participants explicitly stated the importance and even obviousness of ownership. They see capacity development as an internal process that cannot be imposed from the outside, but should be locally driven. For example: "This is not rocket science and literature, research and experiences have been recording this before", or "we have introduced ideas like ownership, which is so obvious that it should not even require terminology". However, the participant who made the latter remark continued by stating that local ownership is an impossibility in a world where donor governments set their priorities and conditionalities based on their own interests and prerogatives. Moreover, because projects have traditionally been donor-funded, not enough attention has been paid to getting the internal partner to fund activities. This leads the project to be considered as something external and not the business of the internal partners actually responsible, said one informant.

Several participants pointed out that it takes time to develop local ownership, which external partners[1] rarely allocate. One participant commented: "Ownership needs time to develop, it may take three to five years, but there is generally not time or patience to wait for this to happen". Eight participants stated that external partners and consultants instead do the work to get it done in time. This is, according to several of the participants, based on a problematic attitude that "we know, we have capacity and we want to develop you" and on the illusion there is not much local capacity and that they can tell people what to do. Participants pointed out that external partners cannot build capacity on their own and that this "paternalism has no place, it's got to stop". External partners "try to sell something to somebody that they do not want", coming in with resources that the internal partners[2] cannot say no to.

Thirteen participants mentioned the need to have inside leadership and champions, and to keep advocating for capacity development for DRR to ensure political will, ownership, resources, attraction and commitment in this area. This investment in good leadership and good governance takes a long time, said one participant. Ultimately, it comes down to the decision makers to allocate the necessary time and resources, according to three participants. One participant suggested a lack of national political will as the primary reason why capacity development projects for DRR are not successful. There are also too many other important things to which to allocate time and resources, so when countries prioritize among the five most important things to do in a given year, DRR comes out at the bottom. Three participants pleaded for an internal desire to develop capacity, a commitment to implement, and ability to use the tools and skills in a way that is independent from the external partner. There must be political momentum to build not only for today, but also for the day after tomorrow, otherwise it is just lip service.

3.1.2. Partnership

Twelve participants addressed the need for partnerships. This is nothing new, according to one participant, but it is a key outcome of the Rio + 20 conference and the Busan Aid Effectiveness Agenda. One participant suggested that capacity development initiatives have been successful when such relationships have been long-standing and allowed to evolve as change happens. Another participant mentioned the ability to work at interfaces between organizations and outside professional sectors as a difference between success and failure. It is a mindset, according to three participants, while two participants pointed out partnership development as a scarce skill that can be developed. Three quarters of the participants declared the ability to listen and bring stakeholders together as a critical skill for external partners. Being empathic, respectful, and open to learn improve the chances of success. One participant for example said: "The capacity for empathy is very much an attitudinal issue, how you speak with people and that you are interested in their experience". In addition to listening, two participants also highlighted the ability to facilitate a collective expression of experience, even using the term "social engineering" to explain its importance for sustainable capacity development. The participants questioned the extent to which external actors are trained in these attitudes. Eight participants called for more profound changes in mindset concerning roles and modes of interaction by for instance recognizing the limitations of international organizations, working at interfaces, and having the external partner as a coach instead of a doer. However, "it is a very different thing to move from being able to recognize the problem that offers solutions on an intellectual level, to living those solutions on a behaviour level", as one participant explained. The same participant continued: "It is rewiring your mental pathways, neural connections, it is not an easy thing to do", suggesting that we should learn from cognitive science and psychology about how people and organizations change.

One participant pointed out that we have to understand the motivation and incentives needed for people to work together in partnerships with high levels of mutual accountability and trust. Another participant explained the challenge, as individuals and organizations are driven by different motivations and are sometimes in competition, either consciously or unconsciously. One participant suggested the following way forward:

[1] An external partner is a partner that belongs to an organization that is attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organization.

[2] An internal partner is a partner that belongs to an organization that wants to develop its own capacity.

"We should try to create incentive structures for the actors to actually come together, which means trying to formulate carrots and sticks. Actors showing clearly that they can engage in joint programming with other actors should get better funding or bonuses. Actors that do it alone or do not cooperate enough and isolate themselves should get less funding. Maybe they should be named and blamed".

3.1.3. Contextualization

Fourteen participants highlighted that capacity development is context-specific and that there is a need to understand the current situation before it would be possible to address it. This is hardly surprising, considering that alignment and context-specificity is highlighted in high-level fora of aid effectiveness. One participant said, "the absolute critical starting point is that people have loads of capacities and we should never underestimate them". Two participants stated that self-assessment is a good starting point, while three participants suggested that an external partner might be helpful to unpack and analyse what is going on, if requested by the internal partners. However, several participants declared that external partners rarely give adequate attention to the local context because it is expensive and labour and time intensive. They also stated that external partners rarely know how to identify and understand it.

One participant mentioned the "expert's blind spot", which prevents experts from really seeing the local needs apart from their own professional interests and priorities: "we are so concerned with doing a good job, being professional, do training courses that experts create a blind spot, which is local needs and local context". Moreover, several participants thought that the available guidelines and tools are outdated or prescriptive, focusing on external blueprint solutions that further promote the blind spot. One participant explained that, "we use standard recipes too much because we are forced to by the way the system is developed". This is further explained by another participant who pointed to the uncertainty about final funding for the project as a key reason for poor fundamental capacity assessment. This leads to little understanding of culture and a lot of time pressure. One participant suggested a way forward by creating informal interfaces with the internal partner:

"So instead of leaving the place we went back to the office and we sat and we had a cup of tea. And during the time we had the cup of tea, some of the most critical information came that were not discussed before. Because we are sitting in a kind of culturally acceptable context, we are demonstrating our interest but just not visited the place and asking the questions we want. We are also taking the time for you to speak to us and that was extremely interesting".

3.1.4. Flexibility

Thirteen participants expressed in different ways that capacity development is a flexible, systemic, interdependent, emergent and non-linear self-organizing process. One participant stated that it is important to see capacity development as a holistic and more chaotic process, where success largely depends on flexibility and constant adjustments. Another participant highlighted the ability to anticipate what is happening, to be agile, and to adapt to changing circumstances. However, six participants explained that funding come with conditions that restrict flexibility. Three participants added that this makes people anxious and unwilling to think or do anything outside the original plan. The participants described some donors as very strict and resistant to change, and one participant explained that, "there is a real desire for control in the system that makes it very difficult to develop capacity effectively. Control is a big thing, nobody likes to give up control". When money passes from donor to UN to NGO, each organization adds its own conditions to the funding, said the participant. Thus, by the time the money actually reaches the front line, there is little room for the people engaged in capacity development to respond to changes and context flexibly. These "cascading conditionalities" are a really big problem, according to another participant, but it is hard for donor bureaucracies to relinquish control, to cut their conditions, and to allow their resources to be used in ways that are defined by local people. This way of micro-managing aid is not a healthy strategy, according to several participants. However, one participant pointed out that there are relatively new donor countries that do not want to be old fashioned and state conditions for aid as Western donors have done.

The most effective way forward, according to one participant, is to give up control and let the local population and the local context drive how money is spent. Capacity development is not about control, it is about responding to what occurs and to realize we cannot control things. Yet, "how many people in our system are willing to walk into a situation and not control the outcome?", said the participant. Another participant advised that actors should try to bring together different efforts for capacity development without trying to control them, but just try to understand them.

3.1.5. Learning

Eleven participants emphasized the importance of learning and feedback loops for more effective capacity development and avoiding future mistakes. The participants highlighted that capacity development is about mutual learning and being open to change. Three participants stated that capacity development is about learning by doing: "you act, you interact, you learn, then you act again, and you learn again". Another participant even defined capacity development as "having the time, mandate and capacity to focus and to develop those capacities through learning, analysis and practice". Therefore, learning should be taken seriously. It should be built into the design of the programme from day one. There should be an interest in what others have been doing, one participant said. This participant added that, surprisingly often, we do this as if it has never happened before.

Seven participants mentioned that there is a need to analyse what really worked, what did not work, and to document mistakes. One participant said, "without the compelling and evident case, capacity development for DRR becomes a bit abstract and less convincing". Two participants suggested that there is a need to tell stories or to have Rolls Royce projects that you can point to, learn lessons from, and bring to the consciousness of people so that they do not reinvent the wheel. Three participants feel that there is no clear benchmark for what constitutes successful capacity development and we do not learn from our experience. Another participant focused more on how the aid system restricts the performance of professionals, stating that "we have to actually engage in making the system work better and we cannot just sit here and say they should do better".

3.1.6. Accountability

The results indicate important issues of accountability. Nine participants stated that the capacity development agenda is project- and result-focused, with linear sets of activities over a predetermined period of time until the end of the project without much follow-up. Capacity development is often managed in project management cycles, which do not correspond well with the more organic processes described above, according to one participant. Many participants mentioned too short time spans as a fundamental obstacle for capacity development. They added that involved actors tend to expect results in too tight timeframes. Actors are rushed for time and donors set deadlines far too close, according to one participant. Several participants argued that this short-termism in terms of allocated funding and pressures to demonstrate visible results fundamentally undermines capacity development. One participant said, "Here is 500 000 dollars and within a year you have to show results and you will try to get a square box going to a round hole". Another participant said:

"Capacity development is not some stupid log frame, plan, and training courses. It is a space where the external and internal partner's expertise

and resources meet. We do not know and cannot predict, control, nor can you plan what emerges when those two perspectives meet on equal terms. That is very uncomfortable for organizations and people who been used… who been in the position of control and certainty."

According to one participant, the world has changed and there is an increasing demand for more accountability to the donor concerning the decisions made and the money spent. This was echoed by three participants who described that many people feel that their day-to-day reality has become more about priority countries, accountability, decisions, and project management, and less about a real interface with communities and vulnerable people. The external partner often comes with the funding and must produce results within a few months or a year because they are paid and expected to perform. This shifts the focus to themselves, according to two participants. One participant even explicitly raised the question about who external partners are accountable to; beneficiaries, internal partners, or donors?

3.1.7. Long-term

All but two participants stated explicitly that capacity development is a long-term commitment, but enough time is rarely allocated. Two participants explained with frustration that, "we like to do things that are done in a year", or "you do a couple of workshops and that is it", all the while knowing that true capacity development takes much longer. One participant stated that "one needs to understand that there is a value in building slowly and really not getting the applause because it may not be visible until your death so to say". This is particularly problematic, according to one participant, when the timeframes of key decision makers often only stretch to the next election. This is further exacerbated by staff turnover and the impatience of international actors, who according to one participant "are so impatient, essentially we expect things to happen in five, ten years that used to take 40 years. Talking about developing capacity in one year is of course a contradiction in terms". This rush is not only based on the short-termism of the funding system, but also on the self-image of professionals:

"Everything is urgent, but really, most of our work is a context where we can actually take a little bit of time to think before we spend the money and we do not have to rush around to the degree we do. It is psychological, for individual humanitarian aid workers and DRR specialists, there is this kind of feeling we have to move quickly. This sense of urgency that prevent us for really thinking".

Seven participants stated the ongoing struggle around the world to mobilize resources for long-term DRR investments. Twelve participants pointed out the divide between humanitarian and development aid as a particular challenge for capacity development for DRR. Although a development issue, such capacity development is mainly done by humanitarian actors. One participant explained that all the "building bridges, closing the gap from humanitarian to development, all this, everyone has been talking for decades about this but not very much is actually happening". Although the participants mentioned a positive change in recent years, most of the funding for DRR still come from the humanitarian side with short-term perspectives. "It is stuck, it is lost in the middle, it is not emergency response and not really recovery, it is something else. It is a little wishy, washy thing, you know. It is very small, miniscule and not really as sexy as or important as it should be".

3.1.8. Sustainability

Eight participants stated the need not only for capacity creation, but also for utilization and retention to make capacity development sustainable. What is needed to facilitate the utilization of capacity in practice, once created, are often neglected, according to one participant. For instance: "It is often nothing wrong with the law, but they lack the capacity to implement their own legislation. They probably use some fancy consultant to do the law, but you can support them in the execution". Three participants explicitly mentioned the need to take into account issues with retention. For instance, "we have forgotten to think about the maintenance of the system. If you want to develop the capacity you have to develop the capacity to make sure this capacity will be kept up to date". Three participants suggested that this could be done by involving local universities and another suggested institutionalizing relevant education instead of ad hoc and short-term training or workshops. This is particularly important with staff turnover and uptake of staff in international organizations. Many trained people disappear in this way: "international organizations come and hire all the best national staff and very well-functioning local organizations would suddenly be stretched". The question is, according to one participant, "how do we create an industry rather than just training a bunch of experts"? One frequent mistake, according to one participant, is that training is often is done in an international language. Therefore, the organization is immediately restricted to a cadre of usually quite junior, inexperienced, and mobile staff, who often move on to other jobs. Seven participants acknowledged that capacity development is often by default thought of as training. Five participants mentioned that training is good, or not negative, but that it is only one component of capacity development. Capacity development goes beyond external partners providing training.

3.2. Fundamental challenges

3.2.1. Complexity

Most participants acknowledged that capacity development is about simultaneous self-organization at different levels, e.g. the individual and organizational level. However, activities are often treated in isolation and not connected to the whole, said one participant. Another participant exemplifies this by saying: "If we really want to develop capacity, it has to be a system, not just one-off training". The participant continued by explaining that training is not bad, just not sufficient on its own. Successful capacity development requires many interlinked activities, of which training is one. Two participants suggested that a key problem with capacity development is not only that the activities are not linked to each other, but also that they are not supporting each other. Several participants claimed that the focus is often on individuals and the technical capacities. They pointed out the need for the more functional and soft capacities as well. One participant explained that, "malfunctioning organizations are deskilling. You know, you come in smart, energetic, talented, full of energy into an organizational set up. It will kill you. Either you leave or you adapt if you want to survive". Moreover, there is an assumption that what is done at the national level will automatically trickle down to the local level. This is a flaw according to one participant, what might work globally or nationally may not work or even hamper implementation locally. Three participants explicitly mentioned that the world is not linear, with processes taking place sequentially, which sometimes is difficult for people to accept. "Textbooks, guidelines, tools, of which we have plentiful in the Red Cross are too much based on a sort of ideal classroom situation where you can do things in a linear way", said one informant.

3.2.2. Uncertainty

Neither individuals nor organizations like uncertainty, and it is frightening to have uncertain outcomes or not to know how things will end because the meeting or project is a product of what the local people are saying or doing, said two participants. More relevant to the DRR sector, several participants blamed a common trade-off between certain costs, reducing the risk and uncertain consequences of disasters that may never happen. One participant explained:

"Why would you invest for disaster that might happen in 100 years when you will be dead? People hate to think about this. There is a reluctance and people will say that tackling those risk would be too expensive and maybe they will not happen in the next 1000 years, so why bother"?

On a more fundamental level, bureaucracies do not like to respond

to the local context, since it results in a lot of uncertainty, said one informant. Two participants explained that this is why organizations do a lot of training. "Training is certain, it is understandable, you can measure it and thereby less uncomfortable". In the face of a rapidly changing world, one participant suggested that people should get used to feeling more uncomfortable more often, and need to give up the delusion of being experts. The participant summarized by stating that we need to realize that capacity development involves a lot of uncertainty and a lot of discomfort.

3.2.3. Dynamic change

The context for capacity development is changing and power is shifting in favour of developing countries, according to nine participants. One of the participants explained that it is most misleading that we keep operating as if international assistance is the key to development while this is no longer the case, if it ever was. Many countries have developed significantly and they now have capacities that they did not have 40 years ago. They are now middle-income countries, which demand changes to the whole system for capacity development. Nine participants pointed out that many countries in the world now have sufficient resources to do everything themselves: "Vietnam for example, they have declared they want to finish all these aid relationships". One participant declared that it is an illusion that there is not much capacity within developing countries, pointing out cases with great capacity in DRR. One participant even questioned aid altogether: "Why have Latin-American countries succeeded? Well, I think it is partly because they have not been part of aid dynamic. They have been left to their own to a larger extent".

The participants highlighted that external contributions have to change and international organizations cannot deliver projects in the same way and to the same extent. The world has evolved and we need to evolve with it, according to one of them. The shrinking operational role of international organizations in many places is requiring them to rethink what their role and added value is, said another. On a question on what external partners could do if we do not need doers anymore, one participant answered "as little as possible", with a laugh. Other participants pointed out the need to think beyond the traditional set of actors, shifting the focus to national and regional partners, and recognizing the limitations of international organizations. One participant summarized the challenge as follows:

> *"We do need to realize that things are changing and I would say they are changing rapidly. The development industry and humanitarian industry needs to adapt to these changes and to change the mindset on what development cooperation is".*

However, one participant pointed out that the aid bureaucracy does not change quickly enough and that the methodologies, concepts, techniques and insights that guide capacity development have not changed enough, questioning the effectiveness of the dialogue on aid effectiveness:

> *"There is no pressure on them to change … and there is no explicit statement that they should actually be at the cutting edge. You can ask yourself what happens after if you go to an aid effectiveness meeting in Busan for example. The message was very clear there. Do the heads of DFID, Sida, USAID go back and tell the people we have to rethink how we do what we do …".*

3.2.4. Ambiguity

A quarter of the participants suggested that there is a much ambiguity around the concept of capacity development and that it has become an "abused phrase" and "catchword for almost everything". It has become a sort of "umbrella panacea", according to one participant, while another participant stated that "we do not know how to do it". Another participant explained that it is a vague term that is "over-used by most people who have no clue what it means", regardless of whether it is an internal or external partner. Furthermore, the participants mentioned that the words and meaning have changed over time and with different development paradigms. Being a very broad term, there are different answers to the questions of what it is, especially from people from different disciplines. According to one participant, "if you talk to a development person you get one answer and if you talk to a humanitarian person you get another. There is a need to have these two cultures to meet in some way". Finally, one participant questioned whether it matters what we call it: technical assistance, capacity building, capacity development or capacity strengthening.

4. Discussion

When analysing the results in pursuit of a better understanding of the reasons behind the poor results of capacity development for DRR, five main themes emerged with respect to the discrepancies between established principles and actual performance. These structured the discussion and included: 1) clashing principles; 2) quixotic control; 3) mindset lag; 4) lack of motivation for change; and 5) power imbalances.

4.1. Clashing principles

All eight principles for capacity development identified in the results are well known in the available scientific literature, though under slightly different names [28–30]. However, the results of this study show that they are connected and, at times, clash; most pertinently in relation to misguided accountability and a temporal discord, which are further discussed below. These clashes constitute the primary reason for the poor results of capacity development for DRR, as the actors must prioritize to adhere to some principles and not others.

4.1.1. Misguided accountability

There is misguided *accountability* to donors instead of beneficiaries[3] that is clashing with all the other principles, either directly or indirectly. Although high-level fora on aid effectiveness stipulate the importance of *accountability* to the beneficiaries, the system does not allow this. The focus is instead on predictability, log frames, deliverables, and reporting back to the donor [29]. Consequently, *ownership* and *flexibility* clash directly with such *accountability* when the external partner does not want to give up control of the funded activities due to the perceived increased risk of the project not delivering what is expected. *Learning* clashes directly with this *accountability* too when the emphasis of monitoring and evaluation is on predefined visible deliverables and not on what was learned and the actual impact, as acknowledged elsewhere [39]. There are also indirect clashes between principles due to dependencies. For instance, there is a clash between *accountability* and *long-term* engagement due to the latter's dependence on *flexibility*. Working *long-term* requires *flexibility* to adjust and respond to changes and contingencies that become increasingly difficult to anticipate the longer the timeframe.

The misguided *accountability* to donors also indirectly undermines *sustainability* through the latter's dependence on local *ownership*, *contextualization*, *long-term* engagement, and *learning*. However, *sustainability* is not only about these other principles as such, but also the type of activities included in capacity development interventions. This becomes particularly clear when considering the almost universal focus on capacity creation, while little attention is given to capacity utilization and retention, which are also requisites for capacity development to generate sustainable change [28]. Training without any activities to allow the trainees to use their newly acquired knowledge and skills or

[3] The term beneficiary is commonly used in relation to international development cooperation to refer to the people or organizations benefitting from the project results, which can be different from the internal partners engaged directly in it.

opportunities to institutionalize the supply of trainees to meet future demands, is simply useless in terms of capacity development. It could at best serve to meet some urgent demands, often under the guise of building surge capacity, but never develop any sustainable capacities. It is clear that this misguided *accountability* generates an intense need for control that undermines all principles for capacity development.

4.1.2. Temporal discord

There is also a temporal discord where capacity development requires *long-term* processes and engagement, while the system requires short-term feedback. *Ownership* and *partnership* require trust that take time to develop. *Learning* requires time, because of the lag between assimilation and accommodation of information [40]. This detrimental structure of temporal discord is further exacerbated by its institutionalization into short-term funding cycles, which are particularly common for DRR, with most funding coming from humanitarian instead of development assistance [28]. This leads to actors voicing frustration with a lack of funding to do more than short-term quick-impact projects like training and workshops, while the issue may have less to do with the amount of money than the time available. Much more can be done with the same amount of money in flexible long-term low-intensity interventions, rather than static, short-term and high-intensity projects. *Contextualization* also requires time, which is particularly challenging in the initial period when funding is uncertain. *Contextualization* is also undermined by the expert blind spot where the specific interests, mindsets and perspectives of the involved external experts influence what they see, how they describe the problem, and the objectives of the capacity development intervention [41]. This is particularly problematic when the initial scoping is underfunded and rushed, not enough time is allowed to facilitate local *ownership* and working *partnerships*, and when there is little *flexibility* to adjust the initial plans that are largely designed by these disconnected and single-minded external experts.

4.2. Quixotic control

The unrealistic and impractical need for control that permeates the entire system for capacity development undermines all principles for its effective implementation. Donors drive the agenda with priority countries and funding requirements passed on to each actor in the aid chain and dictate what can be done with the money. However, it is important to note that even the biggest donors are accountable to somebody else, normally governments, which in turn are more or less accountable to the taxpayers, fuelling demands for flag waving and showing visible results within tight timeframes. For each step along the aid chain, the provider of the funding adds conditionalities for the receiver, which aggregate and increasingly restrict the use of the money. These cascading conditionalities finally reach the actors responsible for actually doing the work, essentially crippling their ability to work towards most of the principles for capacity development, with devastating effects on effectiveness.

There might be several reasons for this quixotic control. First and foremost, the world is *complex, dynamic, uncertain, and ambiguous* [5,42,43,44]. The results refer to these fundamental challenges that create the ultimate framework within which all actors in capacity development must exist. It appears, however, that most actors are overwhelmed with *complexity* and they adopt linear thinking to simplify things [45,46]. This is often done by applying familiar blueprint solutions that unfortunately ignore actual cause and effect relationships, what Gasper [47] refers to as logic-less frames or lack-frames, or using planning tools in ways that reify linearity [48,49]. The result is projects with sets of activities that are possible to control, but that rarely generate any real and sustainable impact, since other connected issues are obscured and unaddressed [50]. This is further complicated by the seemingly ever-increasing rate of *dynamic change*, which is unfortunately also largely ignored by actors having to present detailed plans of all activities from the start to get funding. The system and its actors are hardwired to see the world as static and the future as an extrapolation of the past [51], adding cognitive aspects to the issue of control. Moreover, the overall trajectory of contemporary global changes unfortunately seems to increase disaster risk, disqualifying all options of doing nothing.

It is not only *accountability* to the donor that undermines *flexibility* here, but paradoxically enough, also the level of participation. The more people there are who participate in the design process, the more complex and time-consuming the decision making, and therefore the less flexible the plan becomes when implemented. This is what Gasper [47] calls “lock-frame”, which fixes the involved actors on the initial plan through a distributed network of control, regardless of what happens around them.

The largely ignored *complexity* and *dynamic change* generate *uncertainty* in terms of what will really happen throughout the course of a capacity development project: Will it be funded? What unforeseen events may impact it? What are others doing around us? What is the staff turnover? This *uncertainty* increases exponentially with increased timeframe. The results point out explicitly that actors simply dislike *uncertainty* and experience it as uncomfortable. This is in line with Boulding [52], who argues that people engaged in planning generally dislike uncertainty, but that decision makers dislike it even more, therefore, usually neglecting it. He warns us of the risk of instead producing “illusions of certainty” that conceal uncomfortable uncertainty behind pretty dressed up plans that can seemingly be controlled. This not only affects the types of activities included in capacity development projects, but is also the main reason for the short-termism that hampers capacity development in general.

There is hope on the horizon in the Doing Development Differently dialogue [53], but this movement is still marginal and not influential enough to change the system. However, as long as the focus is on maintaining control and ignoring uncertainty, there is no chance for capacity development to be effective. What is needed is a complete change of mindset among all actors.

4.3. Mindset lag

It is clear from the results that there is a lag between the rapidly changing context of capacity development and the pace of change in the mindsets of the actors involved. This mindset lag undermines the effectiveness of capacity development, since most external partners still continue to work as they have done. They focus on priority countries, are resource-driven, pushing for their predefined objectives with blueprint solutions, and doing the work themselves, blaming the disinterest of internal partners on culture, lack of capacity, corruption, etc. Largely a contemporary version of White Man's Burden [54]. Although this way of working has not been effective from the start of organized development cooperation in the 1950s [7], external partners must realize that the countries they work in are very diverse and very few places are still like they were in the 1950s, or even ten years ago.

The results suggest that external partners must change their mindset and develop their capacity to listen and develop partnerships, instead of maintaining the attitude that they can build capacities almost on their own. For instance, instead of the all too common ad hoc short-term training that many external partners keep focusing on, it is time to realize that many developing countries have universities with the capacity to institutionalize the needed DRR education [55]. It is time to rethink the roles involved in capacity development and how the different partners interact, as also suggested by Motes & Hess [56] and Hagelsteen and Becker [29]. The goal should be to rebalance relationships to facilitate local *ownership*, fruitful *partnership*, and a range of other principles for the capacity development discussed above. However, this is particularly challenging with respect to capacity development for DRR, since such initiatives are often initiated in the aftermath of a particular disaster, with relationships already being forged under

humanitarian circumstances. If not as between victims and heroes, at least as between those without sufficient capacity and the well-funded and equipped experts who come to help. These unbalanced relationships tend to persist, as the technical DRR experts traditionally have a background as humanitarian workers and the projects are managed in a similar rushed and performance-oriented manner. This is partly because the experts are usually funded by humanitarian funding, but it is also because the external partners rarely take time to have that proverbial "cup of tea" with the internal partners. Girgis takes this one step further and points to the value of spending non-professional time together to develop capacity through friendship [57], alluding to the vital importance of trust between partners in capacity development [5]. Instead, most capacity development initiatives focus on technical aspects, less on functional aspects, and not at all on the softer aspects [28] necessary for *ownership*, *partnership*, and other principles. This is difficult to address, since capacity development projects are not monitored and evaluated against criteria for such aspects. It effectively steers the focus away from what is needed the most for actual capacity development instead of mere technical assistance.

Although this study focuses on systemic problems, it is interesting to also note potential cognitive challenges impeding these essential changes in mindset. The fundamental challenge of *ambiguity* hampers change as there are no clear-cut truths and different perspectives exist simultaneously, making it difficult to determine what choice is best to make. For example, there is confusion about the meaning of key concepts, which has led to misunderstandings between partners [58]. This in turn has a negative impact on the effectiveness of capacity development for DRR [59]. This Babylonian confusion [59] hampers constructive communication that is fundamental for *learning*. The problem is further exacerbated by the human tendency to assume that others share similar beliefs (projection bias) [60], or to expect others to agree with oneself (false consensus effect) [61]. Moreover, in situations of *uncertainty* and *ambiguity*, incoming information that contradicts established views causes psychological discomfort. This results in human beings subconsciously selecting, organizing, or distorting the information to match their preferred and existing beliefs (cognitive dissonance) [62] and avoiding situations that increase such dissonance [60]. The more entrenched people's preferences, ideas, policies or ideologies are, the more liable to these cognitive challenges they become. Overcoming these challenges to completely change the mindset of the entire aid industry is difficult and demands motivation.

4.4. Lack of motivation for change

In addition to the lack of motivation for capacity development and for DRR in general [51], the results also indicate no real motivation to change the current ineffective practices. There is a clear disconnect between what people say and what they can do, but there are no incentives to change, as the wheels keep turning anyway. Internal partners may be resistant to change as power rests with local elites who reap benefits from the current system [63]. The same goes for external partners, who get exorbitant contracts and status, and for their organizations, which fund immense bureaucracies with the profit from running the current system. External partners are traditionally heavily engaged doers, requiring much time and even more money. Although the need for such support has been dwindling at an increasing pace for years as local capacities have improved in governmental agencies, universities, and the private and voluntary sectors, the system is still bent on providing it, even if more coaching and facilitating roles would be much more productive [5,29,56]. The reason is obvious. Without the intensive engagement of external partners, many international experts would be unemployed and many international organizations would wither. Moreover, giving up control and leaving the driver's seat to internal partners not only have potential financial and status implications, it is also about relinquishing power.

4.5. Power imbalances

There are inherent power imbalances in the system as donors have the power and not the internal partners. Not only do the actual donor agencies at the top of the hierarchy have power, but anybody controlling funding along the aid chain. These powerful actors are capable of forcing their will onto the actors below, which is what [64] refers to as the first dimension of power. In addition, they also have the ability to set the agenda for what can be talked about and addressed, which is the second dimension of power [64]. Finally, they can also influence the very desires, preferences, and motives of the less powerful to suit their interests, referred to as the third dimension of power [64]. However, the power in the system of capacity development stems not only from control over funding, i.e. induced authority when the powerful can make the less powerful obey voluntarily if that would lead to some reward [65]. It can also be rooted in the legal and institutional frameworks – codified or not – that determine rules, roles, responsibilities, etc. [66], or in the in the recognition of specialized knowledge and skills of experts, i.e. competent authority [65]. Although new donors are emerging and expertise is growing in developing countries, the power balance is still heavily distorted in favour of donors and external partners in the global north. As long as these donors remain unwilling to relinquish some of that power, be it financial, institutional, or competence-based, the other actors would always be answering to them primarily.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to offer an understanding of the reasons behind the poor results of capacity development for disaster risk reduction (DRR) by exploring these results from the perspective of high-level decision makers in the international community. The research suggests systemic problems in the aid system as the underlying explanation for the discrepancies between established principles and actual performance during capacity development for DRR. Most actors know these principles well, although they are commonly criticized for not applying the principles in practice and blamed for the poor outcomes. However, the results of this study show that the problem has little to do with the competence of individuals, as they generally do whatever they can to work according to the principles. The fundamental problem is instead that some principles clash when applied in a complex, uncertain, dynamic, and ambiguous world. These fundamental challenges, combined with systemic requirements and cognitive biases, generate an intense need for control that is inherently incompatible with all principles. This quixotic control prompts cascading conditionalities that permeate the aid chain, essentially crippling the ability of the actors to actually implement activities to work towards the principles for capacity development, with devastating consequences for effectiveness. The obvious solution is to refocus accountability towards beneficiaries, but such a shift is obstructed by mindset lag, lack of motivation for change and power imbalances.

The actors are not internalizing the radical and rapid changes in recent decades, but are instead maintaining their traditional perspectives, roles and blueprint solutions. This is particularly true since actors are susceptible to an "expert blind spot", which limits what is seen in terms of local needs and context. Although the results call for a complete change of mindset and roles within the entire aid industry, there is lack of motivation for any change as long as the wheels keep turning, generating benefits for powerful actors and profits for the bureaucracies in control. This boils down to inherent power imbalances in the system, where donors and external partners have the power, not the internal partners. Relinquishing control means relinquishing power, which is an indispensable but intricate change that has to occur for capacity development to be effective.

For capacity development to be the expected instrument to substantially reduce disaster losses, a complete overhaul of the aid system

is needed. It is not enough to blame the actors implementing capacity development activities for DRR, nor to merely rename the concept again after a few more years of continuous frustration. The principles for capacity development are well known: ownership, partnership, contextualization, flexibility, learning, accountability, long-term, and sustainability. They need to be taken seriously, but have not yet been successfully translated into practice. The main clashes must be resolved for that to happen, assuming that capacity development is the actual primary goal of the system. Capacity needs to be seen as an emergent property that can only be developed through a flexible, adaptive and locally driven process of change and learning, based on how the context and existing capacities evolve. However, the aid system must be fundamentally rebooted to allow for that, rather than maintaining the focus on the misguided accountability upwards along the aid chain. International organizations must wake up and see that the world is changing rapidly, while power needs to be redistributed downwards along the aid chain. Actors must accept that they have to live with complexity and uncertainty. Activities cannot continue to focus more or less exclusively on capacity creation, and then not only on ad hoc training, but must also include capacity utilization and retention. Roles and the ways partners interact have to be reconsidered, and local universities need to be included in this process.

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Paper IV

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Troubling partnerships: Perspectives from the receiving end of capacity development

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to complement the overwhelming focus on external partners in existing studies of capacity development for disaster risk reduction (DRR) or climate change adaptation (CCA), by exploring the perspectives of internal partners on challenges and possible solutions. 27 qualitative semi-structured interviews with experts, program officers and managers in five countries in the Southern African Development Community region were conducted. Three requisite and interdependent types of capacities—technical, processual, and contextual—in order to develop sustainability are suggested from the result. A typology of seven failures for partners to avoid when designing and implementing capacity development projects for DRR or CCA in the future are presented. The more of these failures occur, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes. For capacity development to be sustainable, more credit to internal partners, explicit opportunities for mutual learning and adaptive roles of external partners spanning from expert to coach need to be considered.

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the perspectives of internal partners involved in capacity development initiatives for disaster risk reduction (DRR) or climate change adaptation (CCA) in selected member states of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to understand their perspectives on challenges and possible solutions. Disasters are not evenly distributed in the world. Developing countries are disproportionately affected in terms of death and destruction [1]. Capacity development for DRR and CCA has therefore been pointed out in global policy frameworks for decades as an important process to substantially reduce disaster losses [2–4]; p. 23; [5]. These successive global frameworks have been increasingly successful in attracting support for DRR and CCA at the global, regional and national levels, but have yet to demonstrate substantial impact on the ground [6,7]; pp. 2–4 [8]; pp. 12–16; [9].

Studies identify various challenges impeding capacity development for DRR and CCA to bring notable and sustainable change [10]; pp. 7–8 [11–15]; pp. 39–60 [8]; 2019, pp. 12–16). They indicate detrimental terminological ambiguity [16,17] and significant discrepancies between the principles for capacity development found in theory and global policy, and how capacity development for DRR is implemented in practice [11,13,14]. Similar findings have been reported for capacity development in general [18]. Hagelsteen and Becker [13] explain the inadequate implementation and results as inevitable symptoms of distinct systemic problems of the entire aid system; where clashing principles result in accountability being misguided towards donors instead of beneficiaries, in an intense need for control when successful capacity development requires flexibility, and in a temporal discord where the system demands short-term feedback while capacity development requires long-term processes and engagement. Previous research has identified a need to address such problems [18], but Hagelsteen and Becker [13] show how that is hampered by outdated ideas of the world, lack of motivation for change, and power imbalances.

Although these studies provide valuable contributions to the understanding and improvement of capacity development for DRR and CCA, they have so far mainly focused empirically on external partners belonging to organizations attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organization (e.g. Refs. [11,14] and not to the same degree on internal partners belonging to the organizations aspiring to develop its own capacity with external support (see [18]; for a notable exception). Considering that capacity development is a process that should be driven by internal partners (cf. [19]; pp. 3–5 [3]; pp. 4–5), there is a need to start listening to them [18]; p. 15 [13]; pp. 7–8) to

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understand what the challenges and possible solutions are from their perspective to improve capacity development for DRR and CCA. Internal partners may vary significantly in capacity, size, management style, values, composition of and experience of staff, acceptance by the community, and access to resources. In this study the focus is on dedicated national agencies and committees aspiring to develop their capacities for DRR and or CCA.

Southern Africa is a complex and dynamic region. Although the 16 member states[1] of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) span countries from low to very high human development [20], it is the region receiving most international aid per capita when excluding humanitarian assistance [21]. It is also a region of varying and increasing disaster risk, as well as of often insufficient capacities for DRR and CCA [22]. The region has thus attracted numerous internationally supported initiatives of capacity development for DRR and CCA [23], making it an important context to study. This study intends, in other words, to contribute to fill a gap in the capacity development literature with empirical research on internal partners perspectives on capacity development challenges and possible solutions. To meet its purpose, the study intends to answer the following research question:

- How do internal partners describe the challenges for effective capacity development for DRR or CCA and solutions to overcome them in Botswana, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zambia?

2. Methodology

To answer the research question, data were collected through 27 qualitative semi-structured interviews with decision-makers and experts involved in different ways as internal partners in capacity development initiatives in five countries in the SADC region. The five countries were purposefully selected to include countries with different levels of development, operationalized as their current Human Development Index (HDI) [20]. Seychelles has the highest HDI in Africa and sits just below the border to very high human development (rank 67). Botswana is categorized as having high human development (rank 100) and Zambia as having medium human development (rank 146). Tanzania is among the top of the countries categorized as having low human development (rank 163), while Mozambique is among the bottom of the countries in that category (rank 181) and the least developed country in the SADC region. Qualitative interviews provided the opportunity to attain in-depth information based on the interview participants' experiences and perceptions [24]; pp. 10, 16 [25]; p. 7), and to follow up, probe, or confirm information [26]; pp. 132–133). Semi-structured interviews were preferable, since they are relatively less time-consuming than completely unstructured interviews [27]; pp. 201–213).

Participants were purposefully selected [27]; p. 189) for their position, organizational affiliation, and involvement in capacity development and DRR or CCA in Botswana, Mozambique, Seychelles, Tanzania and Zambia. The selection was initiated based on a few already identified informants from the authors' professional networks, and snowballing was used to identify further informants [24]; p. 100). In total, six were interviewed in Botswana, six in Mozambique, six in Seychelles, five in Tanzania and four in Zambia, ages ranging from late twenties to early sixties. Six of the participants were women and 21 were men, mirroring the male dominance of these policy areas in the studied countries. The participants had diverse backgrounds with the following profiles: directors, deputy directors, head of departments, divisions or units, program officers, national coordinators, focal points, advisors or experts in DRR and CCA at various governmental organizations and committees e.g. national disaster management offices, climate change secretariat, meteorological services, departments of risk and disaster management, meteorology, forestry and energy. Several participants had experience from working with the United Nations.

The interviews were conducted between January and May 2014, taking on average 45 min each. The interviews were conducted by one researcher in Mozambique, Seychelles, and Tanzania, and by two researchers in Botswana and Zambia. All the interviews were conducted in English with the help of an interview guide [27]; p. 210 [24]; p. 112) in three parts (Table 1).

The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission to ensure consistency and accuracy [27]; p. 227) and transcribed in verbatim. Field notes were taken during the interviews to document impressions and make connections within and between themes [24]; p. 121 [25]; p. 54). The transcribed interviews were hand-coded on paper to enable the authors to "touch the data" [28]; pp. 21–22). A few codes were prefigured before the analysis started, i.e. deductive coding [29]; p. 203 [24]; pp. 206–218). This included position, academic background, work experience, general understanding of capacity development, their role in capacity development, challenges and solutions. Other codes emerged during the analysis process, i.e. inductive coding. The hand-coded interview was then transferred to NVivo 12®, which assisted in organizing and sorting data. Codes were adjusted after discussion between the authors during the analysis process, since data could be interpreted from different angles and perspectives.

The limited number of informants and the selection process poses limitations on how the results can be generalized. However, the study did not claim to be statistically generalizable. Instead, it focused on creating a deeper understanding of the selected participants perspective on capacity development, which open up possibilities for analytical generalization and transferability to other situations [30]; pp. 22–223 [26]; pp. 199, 296–297 [29]; p. 210 [31]; p. 10). Knowledge developed in this study should, in other words, not be generalized "through abstraction and loss of history and context", but may be transferred to other situations through "conscious reflection on similarities and differences between contextual features and historical factors" [32]; p. 70). This is particularly feasible within the SADC region, as the five cases are selected across the full width of African development. This is also linked to the reason for not quantifying qualitative data, as the data may be interpreted statistically and quantitatively rather than in an analytical and qualitative way [24]; p. 287). There is no reason to assume that the experiences of capacity development from the 27 participants is unique. On the contrary, it may be indicative of other internal partners' experiences in capacity development; especially since the results indicate surprising alignment, regardless of the vast differences in context.

3. Result

Interesting patterns emerge from the interviews with internal partners about their experience of externally supported capacity development initiatives for DRR. It is interesting to note that the participants' perceptions from the five countries are aligned and no differences between the countries are possible to distinguish, regardless of the vast differences in context: Seychelles laying on the border of very high human development and Mozambique being one of the least developed countries. The findings are clustered in seven themes; project implementation, conditionalities, short-termism, partnership, roles, utilization and retention.

3.1. Project implementation

Eight participants from four of the five countries addressed the issue of lack of actual implementation in the projects. Several participants mentioned that there are a lot of assessments and planning, but little implementation of actual capacity development activities, no follow up, and the plans often end up on the shelf. One participant said:

[1] Angola, Botswana, Comoros, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Table 1
Interview guide.

Part 1	1. What is your position? 2. What is your background? 3. What is your view on externally supported capacity development? *a. Probing*: Can you say more about this? What do you mean? 4. What is your role in capacity development initiatives?
Part 2	5. What are the challenges for effective capacity development? *a. Probing*: Why is it like this? What do you mean? 6. What should we do to overcome these challenges?
Part 3	7. Summary of key issues. Anything else to add? Showing appreciation and asking how the participant experienced the interview.

"We spent a lot of time during the planning and it was very little time to implement that had a direct impact on the results of the project. I think we should do the other way around. Have less time to plan, longer implementation".

Another participant stated that external partners are given money to do assessment instead of practical projects:

"We have been doing assessment for quite a while. We have so many reports in the shelf but we do not see tangible things happening at the ground. For example, we were visiting a family for a risk assessment. He or she will tell you that it is the fifth time I see you guys, but nothing has been done".

This is not the right approach or focus according to several participants. One participant mentioned explicitly that people are tired of repeated assessments with no tangible result.

The few projects that include some implementation of actual activities are exclusively limited to pilot projects, as one participant explained: *"They go for a pilot project and never exercise how to scale up those initiatives"*. Another participant mentioned that donors are funding a pilot project in two districts and then they pull out. Scaling up may therefore be problematic if the government is not committed, according to one participant. This is further complicated by financial constraints from the donor, according to two participants, where funding is finished before the project is completed or funds for implementation are received in a late stage, which gives little time for implementation and the project is rushed.

3.2. Conditionalities

Thirteen participants, from all five countries, expressed concerns regarding project conditionalities, no flexibility and changing conditions. Most projects come with conditions; funds for a specific target and with pre-set objectives and outcomes, according to the participants. The external partner arrives and dictates that *"we want to do capacity building for the national disaster management office. This is how much money we have. We will train this number of people"*. Another participant explained that "*under their program they are not allowed to* fund *projects under this but there are a lot of* funds *for that. So, we have to adapt to what they suggest*". These external conditionalities obviously cause frustration, here exemplified by two participants:

"When they come, they have already negotiated the funds with the donors and say: okay, look we do have a project, we need to implement this and that in that field and for this purpose. We cannot renegotiate or refocus because the terms of reference we presented to the donor states to do this and in that direction. We say, okay, let us try. But the things we are going to do, some of them have already been done".

"It becomes difficult for us to accept the assistance that is coming, because we know that this is not our original idea. We want assistance from outside but it always has some strings attached to that. Perhaps it comes from when our country was considered a third world country, when assistance will just come, and you see that this is not right. So, people are still scared to receive you, because of past experiences".

These conditionalities cascade throughout the chain of involved organizations, where

"you have donor rules and regulations, and then you have the implementing agency, the UN agency that comes with their sort of rules. Eventually, you have two set of rules and regulations. The frames are already set. We can give you money but then you have to use our rules".

This external control leads, according to four participants, to erosion of flexibility in the projects: "*Once the project is approved, you cannot add, you cannot remove anything. Projects do not have that flexibility*". The external partners report to the donor and not to the government, being more accountable to the donor than to the internal partner, said one participant. Later on, conditions are often suddenly changed, according to four participants, when international donor organizations change their rules and policies or when funding is finished.

3.3. Short-termism

Capacity development projects for DRR and CCA are often too short, according to seven participants from all five countries. "*Many interventions come in the form of a project and that project has a starting and end time*", said one participant. Another participant stated that there are "*too many short-term projects but they are not responding to a bigger national objective*". Further on, one participant highlighted that "*a one-day or two-day workshops, that is an awareness, it is not a training*". "*The fact, in most of the workshops you attend, you just go, sit, listen and then you get up and go. That has no impact*", explained one participant. One participant stated that it is a long-term process to transfer knowledge and knowhow that leads to people being able to run institutions and processes by themselves. Another participant proposed that "*for a project to be sustainable and to have any impact, I think it is minimum of three years*".

3.4. Partnership

An equal partnership is essential to make capacity development work according to eleven participants from four countries. The ability to listen and having an open mindset, as well as exchanging experiences and come with suggestions how to improve the work, were highlighted as key by six participants. However, one participant raised the issue of the external partner changing project managers all the time, slowing down progress as trust needs to be rebuilt every time. One participant emphasized:

"*It has to be a fifty-fifty partnership so there is an equal say on the project: what could be done by the project, what could not be done by the project. If not an equal partnership, then one partner has a more say than the other. You know, has more power*".

It is important to sit down together so there is a clear understanding "*what we are capable of doing and what we are not capable of doing. They need to learn from us so that they can assist us*", said one participant. Four participants explained in different ways that a balanced partnership means mutual learning from each other, and one participant stated that *"it is not a donor-recipient kind of partnership; it is a partnership in development"*. However, another participant nuanced the description somewhat when stating that "*we propose and if it fits with in what they can do, they adopt and then we push together*".

In many projects the external partner comes with their own agenda and has already designed a project proposal, according to fifteen participants from the five countries. One of them explained that the external partner most often comes and says: "*I want to assist you in areas one, two, three. The partner will then address issues that will not have an impact on the people, because that it is not your area of need*". Or at best "*they do a lot of interviews with a lot of people and then they come up with a whole project*",

according to another participant. Actually, most of the projects have been initiated by the external partner, concluded one participant: "*They come in, they do consultancy work for 2*–3 months*, they do not use existing capacities, they give their report, they go home. So, you put it on the shelf*". Another participant described a similar experience:

> *"There was a consultant who flew in and drafted a contingency plan but I was never involved with that. I was not consulted, at all. I think that is just an outrage. I did not say anything because it was an international consultant. I did not want to raise a fuss. I let it happen".*

3.5. Roles

According to nine participants from all five countries, the role of the internal partner is to identify the needs in order to develop capacity from what exists already. In the words of one participant; "*we identify our weakness and then negotiate with our partners. We are working in this field but we have limitations in this and that area. Please provide us with your expertise and then the partner says if they do have some expertise in this field*". Another participant stated that "*we never refuse when someone comes from outside, but we negotiate. Let us analyse the added value of your proposal and to redesign the focus into what we need*". The role of the internal partner is also to coordinate and monitor projects and to consult between different partners, seven participants said. A huge challenge is to avoid duplications, according to three participants. "*I think consultation between agencies is very important so that we do not duplicate what others are doing to not waste time and resources*", said one participant.

Two participants emphasized that the internal partner endeavours to also build the capacity of the external partner. One of them said:

> "W*e learn from what is being brought on to us, and at the same time, because we already have existing structures on the ground, we also have to capacitate the person who is coming on how we are working at the government and how they can fit in*".

The external partner should thus come with an open mind, learn the system and be part of the organization, according to eight participants from all five countries. However, four participants from four countries mentioned the problem with external partners sending staff that do not have sufficient experience. For instance; "*they come with the right qualifications, less experience", or* "*you can read a lot about disasters these days but we need people with experience to help, you know*".

Seventeen participants emphasized the importance that the external partner must understand the local context and existing capacities. A rarely followed recommendation from the participants is to know the environment you will operate in by learning what other people have done, look for what exists, and talk to people who know a little bit about what is going on:

> *"They should do what I call an initial assessment to find out what is already in the field. That assessment never happens. Most of the time, they just come and design a project. They may have some funds to implement a project. When they realise that most of the things are already in the field, they try to improvise in the middle of the process".*

Instead, the external partner comes with their own knowledge and expertise without contextualizing it to the specific circumstances, existing structures and capacities, according to several participants. Two participants proposed time constraints as a possible explanation, and one of them described a situation with an external partner coming in late September and saying:

> *"Let us do this in December and we need to implement from A to C period of time. For us it is quite difficult, because no one here is available for you at that time. In our country, we never conduct a project between October and March because this is the emergency period. We need to work with the partner from April to September or October, this is the suitable time in our case".*

Another explanation from the participants is that external partners want to focus on their own priorities and are sometimes blind to the actual problems. One participant described that external partners tend to focus on things that the majority of southern Africa is experiencing, which is not always what the internal partners need. For example, once an external partner wanted to focus on drought, but no partnership agreement was signed because droughts were not a problem there.

Four participants from three countries highlighted the benefit of the external partner to be physically present in the country through secondments for two to three years. That way it is easier to connect with each other, said one participant. Another participant talked about two models for secondment and that they had changed the way they work with external partners:

> *"The model we used to have was that we brought the experts here, so they were part of our staff. They organized trainings, they did hands on, they were here all the time and while they were here things were going smoothly. We would have somebody staying here for years and at the end of three years you would realise nothing has happened. The work has been done when the expert was here because the expert was doing the work. The second model, the project would be run by us in the country, your experts are going to come for a short intensive period of three to four weeks. We are the ones who are dictating what you are coming here for, what area we want you to help us with. They would be able to identify the right person for that area instead of just keeping one person here for three years who may not necessarily know all the areas. So, that you get the right person for the right job. After three weeks they go away".*

One participant said when someone comes from the outside, it brings a new dimension of capacity development:

> *"We got trained, and it did not just end there. We still have them coming and seeing how we are implementing what we have learned from them, every now and then. We are still keeping in touch with them, they are following up on what we are doing. I think they are open to assist whenever we need assistance".*

There is also a wish and expectation among internal partners to travel internationally for training, meetings and study tours; not only for learning, but also for personal experience, status and financial benefits. In the words of one participant:

> *"When we start the partnership there is also a thinking on the receiving countries that people would be travelling to the country of the partnership, to learn, to get some benefits. Benefits of education and other stuff […] Let me give an example, with [external partner]. […] Here we may think that we will now have an opportunity of going to Sweden, learn from Sweden maybe from the institutions, do the benchmarking and other stuff, right? And if our expectations are not met, we become disappointed. That is why I am saying it is wrong. It is a wrong thinking".*

3.6. Utilization

Sixteen participants from all five countries addressed challenges of capacity utilization. One participant openly questioned whether people are able to utilize the technology and their new knowledge gained through the project and another called for some kind of intervention to make sure people are able make use of it. Capacity may be created in a project, but rarely utilized within the scope of the project and difficult to retain over time.

One important challenge according to the participants is the small size of the involved organizational units and the limited time available of their staff. "*We had very few people to work with them. Only one, in fact, to be specific*", said one participant. Three participants described the

difficulty to find time to sit down, concentrate, and work on actual activities. Particularly when there are ongoing capacity development projects adding to already full agendas; "*you spend a lot of time in workshops and seminars so you can hardly do your work because you are always capacitated*".

3.7. Retention

Nineteen participants from all five countries addressed the challenges with capacity retention. Staff turnover is a huge problem according to eight participants from all five countries; "*getting professionals is one challenge, but then you have to retain them. Retaining them is a lot of challenge*", according to one participant. Other participants explained that "*the incentives are not there and obviously people want to move*" and that there is a tendency to rely one or two persons within the government sector. Once these people have developed their capacities, they move out, get an international job and you cannot stop them. The small number of people involved was also pointed out by one participant as particularly problematic in relation to the expansion of mandate that has happened over the years, but has not been matched with increased capacity.

> *"It all boils down to having the adequate resources in terms of human resources, financial resources, and that will be the most critical demands. The focus should be first* to *ensure that adequate resources are available for sustainability purposes"*.

There is a need for projects with results that can be sustained after the external support has ended to avoid dependency and ensuring that the internal partner is not going back to where they were before, according to several participants. One of them explained that "*we need to look at the future and the sustainability of an intervention. What if* funding *ends, what happens?*". Another participant suggested that all partners should contribute with a share of the resources, at least a ten-percentage commitment; "*if you have contributed with something in one way or another you make sure that you are committed*". However, two participants addressed the challenge with competing priorities and that they do not have a budget for DRR:

> "*There are a lot of issues that compete with DRR that seem to be having the upper hand such as poverty, HIV, unemployment. They compete for space for money with disaster issues*".

They explained that it is very difficult for the politicians to invest in something that they do not know, something they have never seen.

Four participants from four countries pointed out the need of feedback and learning loops to avoid mistakes are repeated and to see things that have happened and learn from the past. However, one participant stated that "*feedback is often missing, and we do not have any feedback loops and we repeat the same mistakes*". Another participant explained that successful capacity development depends on what kind of incentives there are to secure that the knowledge developed is actually left in an institutional memory.

Five participants from three countries emphasized the importance of their universities in capacity development for DRR and CCA. One of them stressed the importance of universities for institutionalization and sustainability, explaining that without a university teaching meteorology, risk, DRR or CCA, "*we need to send people overseas to obtain training. If you lose personnel, then it takes three to four years to train another person and most of the students that go abroad to study never come back*". However, another participant explained how local universities often are bypassed in capacity development:

> *"We have been building capacity in Africa since the independence and we are still building capacities after 50 years. You know universities play a very important role in capacity development. On the surfaces we bring the consultants to come and do a workshop, which is one-week workshop and we say we have strengthened the capacities. That is independent of the academic system that is entrusted with the mandates to educate. So, there is a gap in there. It does not empower the universities who have the mechanism to sustain the capacities in a particular field dealing with DRR, climate change, risks and all that"*.

4. Discussion

Four important aspects emerged from the interviews: (1) Three requisite types of capacities, (2) Lack of mutual learning, (3) Flexible and adaptive roles, and (4) Seven types of project failures.

4.1. Three requisite types of capacities

The results suggest three requisite types of capacities; technical, processual, and contextual (Fig. 1). Technical capacity is the capacity to perform the required technical activities, which is a rather conventional view [10]; p. 11). For instance, capacity for performing a risk assessment or preparedness planning. Processual capacity is here the capacity to both drive the project and organization as a whole, commonly referred to as functional capacity, and to facilitate capacity development processes. The more functional part of processual capacity is commonly described as organizational and project management skills, e.g. capacity to assess, plan, formulate, implement and evaluate visions, policies and strategies and manage resources [10,33]; pp. 19–20; [8]; p. 20). The latter facilitating part of processual capacity, on the other hand, is often overlooked and comprise what Pearson (2011a, p. 4) refers to as "soft capacities", which are more social, relational, intangible and invisible, and are complementing the "harder" technical- and functional capacities. Soft capacities include aspects as leadership, learning, self-reflection, conflict resolution, intercultural communication, change management, problem solving, negotiation and relational skills [34]; pp. 66–70 [14]; p. 50 [35]; p. 4).[2] It is clearly demonstrated by the results that facilitating the process is essential. However, in addition to technical- and processual capacity, the results also suggest the crucial importance of what is here referred to as contextual capacity. Contextual capacity is the capacity to understand the local context and the existing capacities and needs, which is not explicitly part of other influential frameworks for understanding capacity (e.g. Ref. [35]; p. 4 [8]; p. 20). The results indicate that these three overall types of capacities interact and are interdependent of each other, resulting in the lack of one capacity undermining the utility of another. Perhaps most clearly visible in internal partners' frustration of technically competent external partners not being able to support capacity development due to deficient contextual understanding.

Highlighting the importance of each of the three capacities and their interdependence are crucial for capacity development. Especially since conventional current practices focus overwhelmingly on technical skills of individuals [34]; p. 68 [11]; p. 6 [14]; pp. 48–49 [15]; p. 41 [36]; p. 148). Although it has been pointed out that developing technical capacity can exert pressure for and initiate development of other capacities [15]; p. 57), they are regularly overlooked, which may result in lack of ownership and sustainability, as well as power imbalances in the partnership. This is evident in the results of this study.

The results clearly demonstrate that internal partners expect external partners to have sufficient technical capacity; voicing outright irritation when that is not the case. While the study indicates that internal partners generally aspire to develop their technical capacity, they also express frustration when external partners provide support that is not adapted to their specific circumstances, needs and aspirations. If their views are not taken into consideration, any activities risk being based on what

[2] Note that Aragón ([60], p. 37) also use the term "soft capacities", but with a different meaning that also includes what is referred to as functional capacities above.

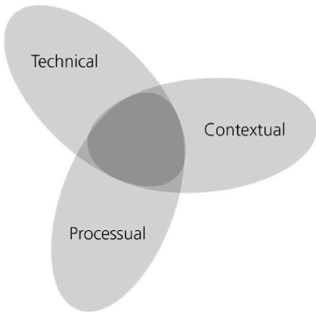

Fig. 1. Three requisite capacities.

external partners believe are important instead of reflecting existing capacities and actual needs. This is unmistakably connected to external partners lacking sufficient contextual capacity, which is also identified in other studies (e.g. Ref. [11]; pp. 8–9 [14]; p. 49 [37]; p. 34).

Contextual capacity is multifaceted and includes not only recognizing the already existing capacities, but also a thorough understanding of national priorities and institutions, and of political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors in general [11]; pp. 5, 8 [36]; p. 149). Without such contextual understanding, external partners lack the awareness and flexibility needed to effectively support capacity development processes in changing contexts.

Closely connected to contextual capacity is the capacity to understand the processes and readiness for change [38]; pp. 16–19). Such processual capacity is less explicitly mentioned in the empirical material, but a lack thereof among both internal and external partners is alluded to several times in the results. For instance, in the narratives of perpetual assessments and insufficient implementation, disconnected external actors, and excessive focus on training. These results suggest that without capacity to understand and facilitate capacity development processes, the technical and contextual capacities of the partners matter little for the success of capacity development. Regardless of having the technical knowledge necessary for the task at hand, as well as the contextual understanding necessary to adapt the activities to the local circumstances, if the partnership lacks the capacity to also understand how change happens and what is required in each moment to facilitate it, it is unlikely to generate any real and sustainable change. This is connected to the commonly pointed out importance of adaptability and flexibility (e.g. Ref. [39]; pp. 2, 6 [13]; pp. 4, 6–7 [15]; p. 41 [36]; p. 149 [8]; p. 22), but phrasing it in terms of processual capacity makes it more explicit.

Processual capacity entails ability to identify how the partners perceive change, and identify discrepancies between their perceptions. There is a need to understand when the time is right for different types of activities and to create a sense of urgency for change among relevant actors [40]; p. 3). The results thus indicate that it is crucial to understand the complexity of the continuously changing local context and what the partners need in each moment to facilitate the processes of change. Rather than imposing blueprint solutions, focusing overwhelmingly on technical capacities, external partners must also develop contextual capacity and have requisite processual capacity to identify and match the need of the internal partners. It is in the acknowledgement of the importance and interdependence of the different requisite types of capacities that the lack of mutual learning can be addressed.

4.2. Lack of mutual learning

Capacity development has been phrased as an opportunity for mutual learning so often that it has become a truism without actually being particularly common to any significant degree. It is obvious that individuals engaging in whatever activities always learn something, but for the learning to be considered mutual requires both internal and external partners to learn something significant for them. That is regrettably not happening too often in capacity development [41]; pp. 13–14), and the results suggest a convincing explanation for this unfortunate shortcoming.

The results demonstrate an overwhelming focus on developing technical capacities, which the internal partners are expected to need and aspire, and the external partners are expected to have and deliver as a fundamental basis of their contribution. Although there may obviously be technical details that even the most proficient external partner can learn from supporting internal partners, the sheer imbalance in technical capacity at the outset undermines any notion of mutual learning by default. It is interesting to note in the results that this imbalance is rather often altered by organizations sending either underqualified staff to engage as external partners, without the technical capacities that internal partners expect them to contribute with, or unexperienced junior staff with textbook knowledge but without sufficient experience and maturity. While this caters for mutual learning on individual level, it is not what the internal partners need and is unlikely to contribute to capacity development. Hence, their explicit irritation. However, other studies suggest that internal partners also regularly send either junior staff to engage in capacity development activities, often because of language issues or more experienced staff being too busy [13]; p. 5), or sending the wrong staff if participation is rewarded with status or lucrative per diems as alluded to in the results. Thus, both partners end up investing in the technical capacities of individuals who may not be in a position to foster change on organizational level. Regardless of which, the almost exclusive focus on technical capacities hampers the notion of mutual learning in capacity development. For mutual learning to occur, explicit attention must also be placed on the other requisite types of capacities.

Provided that external partners have the necessary technical capacities, as well as the processual capacities to facilitate capacity development processes, they still need to understand and adapt their activities to the local context. This is often overlooked in the current discourse of seeing capacity development as something the external partner can deliver, while it must in fact be learnt in context over time [42]; pp. 3, 10). The results clearly demonstrate that internal partners are the experts here, and that external partners must learn from them. Others have pointed out that it is time to listen to internal partners [18]; p. 15 [13]; pp. 7–8), but phrasing it in terms of contextual capacity make the potential for mutual learning more explicit. Acknowledging external partners' need for developing contextual capacity encourages them to listen to their internal partners and to question entrenched assumptions about the context they are working in. Such dialogue demands in turn processual capacity.

Capacity development has great potential to entail mutual learning if, and only if, explicit attention is placed at least on both technical and contextual capacities, with external partners generally providing the former and learning the latter, and internal partners providing the latter and learning the former. This is obviously a simplification, with some internal partners having impressive technical capacity, and some external partners having vast experience from working and living in the relevant context. However, by making the need for both types of capacities explicit, and pointing out the general distribution of each among the partners, this study illuminates a way towards a more equal partnership emphasized by the participants and in various literature [43]; pp. 207–208 [44]; pp. 3–4 [4]; p. 25; [45].

Armstrong [46]; p. 4) calls for reframing current practices of capacity development into an approach of "co-diagnosing, co-designing, co-acting and co-learning". By unambiguously affirming that both internal- and external partners contribute with different but equally important parts, the ideas become more feasible to follow in practice. Especially since such partnerships are subject to fundamental power asymmetries

between internal- and external partners [11]; p. 9; 2019, p. 8 [47]; p. 80), which cannot be resolved but at least reduced by explicitly acknowledging all partners' essential contributions. The mutual learning called for in the results can then only happen through communicating experience between partners [48]; p. 82) and social participation [49]; pp. 210–211). This means that capacity do not only exist within each partner, but also in the relationships between them [37]; p. 25). This more relational notion of capacity seems to be largely overlooked in the results, which could perhaps be explained by a general absence of organized ways of talking about experiences (cf. [49]; p. 214). All learning starts with a disjuncture between what partners know and their current experience [50]; pp. 25–30), in which they realise that their ingrained understandings and habitual actions are no longer sustainable [48]; p. 83). For mutual learning to materialize between internal- and external partners, they must therefore not only acknowledge their respective contributions and unlearn old habits, but find time for open dialogue about their perspectives on the past, present, and future partnership, which, if comparing the results with studies of external partners' views (e.g. Refs. [11,14], is expected to result in both concord and controversy.

4.3. Flexible and adaptive roles

It is clear from the results that external partners are still maintaining traditional perspectives and roles when engaging in capacity development, which is in line with other studies [11]; pp. 9–11; 2019, pp. 4–8 [14]; p. 47). However, the results suggest that the roles of both internal and external partners should not be fixed, but instead flexible and adapted to the context, existing capacities, and to the needs of the internal partner and the abilities of the external partner, which also Stone Motes and McCartt Hess argue [51]; p. 117). The results imply a range of roles that the external partner can take; i.e. expert, advisor, teacher, facilitator and coach (Fig. 2).

Depending on the role, the focus of the external partner is distributed differently between implementing activities and supporting the growth of the internal partner (Fig. 2). The expert undertakes the task and solves the problem oneself, and the adviser helps the internal partner to solve a specified problem with the adviser's knowledge and experience [52]; p. 60). Both roles have a focus on technical capacities and the implementation of activities and less focus on processual capacities and the internal partner's growth. When increasing the focus on the growth of the internal partner, the external partner takes on the role of a teacher who explains basic principles and skills required to conduct a general task and solve a problem, but is still somewhat focused on the results and implementation of activities. When the external partner takes on the neutral convening role of the facilitator—facilitating brainstorms, planning and meetings [52]; p. 60)—the focus is even more on the process, but a facilitator is still holding the pen. When dropping the focus on implementation of activities entirely and fully focusing on the growth of the internal partner, the external partner becomes a coach. This role requires more processual capacity than the role of a facilitator or teacher, which in turn requires more processual capacity than the roles of advisor or expert. The coach observes and lets the internal partner conduct the task and solve the problems, while providing suggestions and feedback and discussing the pros and cons with different options and the actual results [52]; p. 60).

The results indicate that all five roles are important and needed at different times, in different situations and for different purposes (cf. [52]; pp. 61–62). Specific roles needed in the beginning of the project may not be needed later on in the project, and moving towards roles with more focus on the growth of the internal partner could be seen as a proxy indicator for project progression. This is in line with Bolger (2000, pp. 5–6) and Yachkaschi [53]; p. 201) advocating that the role of the external partner should change from being an implementer and expert towards greater emphasis on facilitation to foster collective learning, ownership and empowerment. The roles should therefore be continuously evolving, routinely renegotiated, and clearly communicated [52]; pp. 62–63 [11]; pp. 8–9 [14]; pp. 44–45,47) in order to meet expectations and for the external partner "not to be needed anymore" [11]; p. 9).

Based on the need of the internal partner, some roles may require a physical presence during longer time periods where other roles such as a facilitator is only needed temporarily. However, it is clear from the result that there are different opinions whether the external partner should have longer physical presence or not. On one hand, the results suggest that the external partner should second staff over time because it facilitates collaboration, forming personal relationships, and capacitating the external partner about the context and existing capacities. However, with secondments there is a risk that the external partner is doing the work and taking over the process, resulting in lack of ownership and sustainability issues when the project is completed. The results also suggest that external experts should come for a short intensive period of time rather than having one person staying for years and who may not know all the areas of interest. An option would be to rely more on technical developments in the future. Thus, a transition to digital meetings with partners and working from a distance without having to travel. Instead of training with physical presence, increase and expand the opportunities for e-learning via webinars. The role of the external partner would then act as a sounding board and coach from distance and let a national consultant step up and drive the capacity development process together with the internal partner [54]. This will probably help decode the context and ensure that ownership rest with the internal partner. The results thus suggest that the internal partner should determine what kind of expertise is needed and why, when and for how long time, which is in line with the localization agenda [55].

4.4. Seven types of project failures

It is apparent from the results that there are several challenges when implementing capacity development projects in order to ensure sustainability over time. Seven different types of failures were identified and compiled in one framework (Fig. 3). The failures can be combined in numerous ways and each of them undermines the effectiveness of capacity development. This results in failing results and premature project closure, with disappointments and growing mistrust among partners.

4.4.1. Type 1 failure: No capacity assessment

Clearly visible in the results, capacity assessment is vital for the

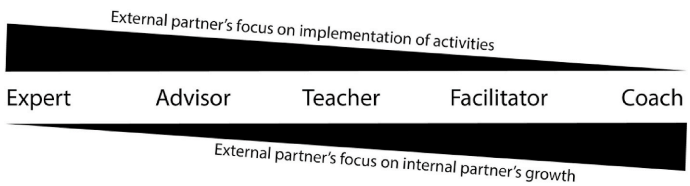

Fig. 2. Role and focus of the external partner (adapted from Ref. [52]:61).

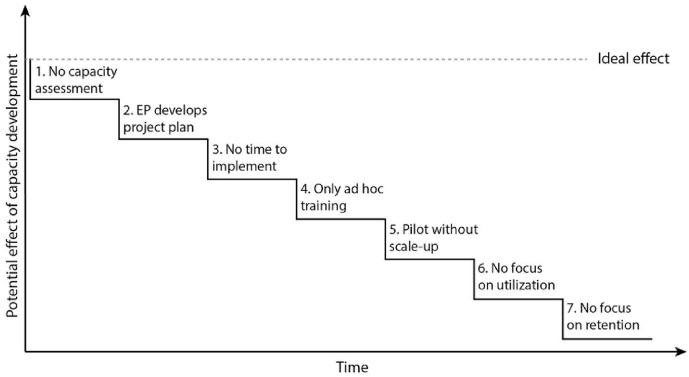

Fig. 3. Seven types of project failures.

external partner to be able to understand the local context and the existing capacities, and to start building relations with potential stakeholders. The results demonstrate that the internal partner needs to facilitate this process, with their contextual capacity. Such mutual engagement from the start has been suggested to facilitate trust between prospective partners [56]; p. 22). However, building a sufficient understanding of the local context and existing capacities appears to be a difficult task given the common short time-restrictions [11]; p. 8), also confirmed in the results. In line with other studies, due to lack of time, resources and funding, the external partner often skips this vital first step and thus runs the risk of misaligning the activities with the existing local capacities [11]; pp. 8–9). Another explanation could be that external partners focus on their own areas of expertise and priorities, and are therefore blind to the actual problems. Such "expert blind spot" has been identified in other studies, and refers to excessive focus on external experts' own technical capacity and their low ability to appreciate the value of local knowledge [13]; p. 4), which consequently prevent them from understanding the local context.

4.4.2. Type 2 failure: External partner develops project plan

Even when external partners perform a capacity assessment, the results show that they often come with their own agenda, conditions, predefined project proposal and fixed project frames, without contextualizing it to the actual circumstances. The results indicate that this could partly be explained by many external partners coming with specifically allocated funding that demand results within a short timeframe, which has also been suggested in other studies [13]; p. 5). This generates an intense need for control, erosion of flexibility and a misguided accountability towards the donors instead of the internal partner [13]; pp. 6–7), also confirmed by the results. Projects designed and managed by the external partner in a proceduralized manner are, in other words, counterproductive since the internal partner lacks control and ends up in dependency [18]; pp. 21, 67, 79–81). Further, the results indicate that the strive towards independence and self-efficacy by the internal partner is hindered by the external partner operating with a static model and blueprint solutions of what they believe are needed.

4.4.3. Type 3 failure: No time to implement

The results clearly indicate a frustration regarding the number of assessments conducted and plans developed, with no substantial activities implemented afterwards. This was regardless of the time invested in capacity assessment and project design processes. The results show that financial conditions are at times suddenly changed by the international donor organizations, or the funds for implementation often received late, which leaves little time for implementation and the most important part of the project is rushed. Many DRR projects are short-term [15]; p. 56), where assessment and planning take up most of the project time and budget. Funding is then often only secured for the first phase, and no additional funding is allocated for project implementation. Further reasons could be that the result of the capacity assessment was not in line with the partners' expectations and expertise, or the fact that the project implementation is considered more difficult than assessing and planning. Looking at the data, it appears to exist an assessment dilemma, in which there is either too much focus and time spent on assessments, with no time to implement actual activities, or no assessments done at all.

4.4.4. Type 4 failure: Only ad hoc short-term training

It is apparent from the results that many capacity development projects focus overwhelmingly on short-term technical trainings activities, i.e. one- or two-day, or maybe up to one-week workshops, also acknowledged in other studies [13]; p. 5 [14]; pp. 48–49 [57]; p. 6). In fact, capacity development is often by default thought of as training [11]; p. 10; 2019, p. 5 [14]; p. 49 [41]; pp. 16, 19). According to the participants, these short-term trainings have limited impact and are delivered in an ad hoc manner. This means that the little impact they may have is not sustainable, as the participants change jobs or may, as discussed above, not be the right person to be trained in the first place. The results also demonstrate how these trainings are separated from the academic systems in the studied countries, which is a missed opportunity both to facilitate sustainability and to further strengthen the universities in the country. It is also not clear from the result if the external partner has the processual capacity and pedagogical knowhow to conduct effective training. Local universities have an important role to play with their pedagogical knowhow, and in their position to facilitate institutionalization and sustainability of DRR education, which have been pointed out in other studies [13,22]; p. 5).

4.4.5. Type 5 failure: Pilot without scale up

According to the results, many projects that include the implementation of actual activities other than training are just pilot projects, without the expected scale up and follow up. While they are often designed with grand plans for expansion after starting in a couple of selected districts or communities, donors habitually finance only this modest start and then pull out. This is sometimes built into the project design, demanding economic commitments from the internal partners that are unrealistic or simply not prioritized when the external support ends. This is a long-established challenge in international development cooperation [58] that can only be addressed by more long-term or dependable funding from international donors and closer attention to the actual priorities of national governments.

4.4.6. Type 6 failure: No focus on utilization

Parallel to the problem of lack of scale-up just discussed, the results demonstrate virtually exclusive focus on creating capacity—e.g. development of skills, establishment of procedures, policies and regulations—and no focus on supporting the internal partner in utilizing the developed capacity. This is referred to as capacity creation and capacity utilization, and this skewed focus towards the former has been identified in other studies [13]; pp. 5–6, 9 [14]; p. 49). Thus, it is not evident whether individuals and organizations can utilize their new capacity, which is the actual purpose of capacity development. Armstrong (2013, pp. 213, 221) even points out that capacity development *is* learning by doing. According to the result, this problem is further exacerbated by the internal partner's full agendas, small units, lack of technical expertise, different priorities, limited and competing resources. Many projects are going on at the same time without sufficient alignment and harmonization. This means that the internal partner is always capacitated and does not have time to sit down, reflect and apply the skills or integrate processes and procedures within the organization (cf. [39]; p. 5). The utilization of the created capacities should be at the core of capacity development, explicitly focusing on how to apply and durably integrate the acquired knowledge, procedures and policies into the daily practices [14]; pp. 49–50).

4.4.7. Type 7 failure: No focus on retention

Finally, the almost exclusive focus on capacity creation is also causing neglect of the third requisite part of capacity development; capacity retention. The results clearly show that staff turnover is a huge challenge for all partners, also identified in other studies (e.g. Ref. [13]; p. 5 [14]; p. 49 [15]; pp. 48–50; [59]. Capacities are not static and retaining capacities is as important as creating and utilizing them [13]; pp. 5–6, 9 [15]; p. 44). Otherwise, any developed capacities would not be sustainable. However, the results indicate that capacity creation actually undermine capacity retention, when many of the internal partners' staff engaging the most in capacity development have a tendency to change position or get an international job. This problem is further exacerbated by lack of job security, where staff are not guaranteed permanent positions after the project is over. Having to replace staff on a regular basis causes loss of institutional memory. The results indicate that this problem must be seriously addressed, which is also pointed out in other studies [13]; p. 4). This is also relevant for capacity development in itself, since it is a long-term endeavour whilst the time-scales of interventions are often too short to establish any institutional memory [11]; pp. 4–5), or not considered according to the results. However, capacity retention is not only about managing staff turnover, but also about the regular adaptation of policies, structures, processes, procedures, regulations and laws [35]; p. 3), which seems not to be explicitly considered in capacity development.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to complement the overwhelming focus on external partners in existing studies of capacity development, by exploring the perspectives of internal partners on challenges and possible solutions within a developmental context such as the Southern Africa Development Community. The study suggests three requisite and interdependent types of capacities—technical, processual, and contextual—in order to develop sustainable capacities. While external partners are expected to have and contribute with the technical capacity the internal partners need, they generally lack sufficient contextual capacity to adapt the capacity development activities to the circumstances of the internal partners. This contextual capacity resides generally with internal partners. It is by explicitly acknowledging that both external- and internal partners possess vital parts that the other partner needs that mutual learning can be facilitated. Capacity development requires, in other words, a willingness to learn from each other and to unlearn old habits. Both sides require processual capacity, but the study emphasizes particular demands for external partners to be able to adapt the role they take—spanning from expert to coach—depending on the changing needs of the internal partners. The study indicates, in other words, that all roles may be needed in different phases of the partnership. However, external partners who lack sufficient processual capacity to continuously increase the focus on supporting the growth of the internal partners are incapable of meeting their needs over time.

The study suggests seven archetypical failures that undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of capacity development for DRR or CCA; (1) the external partners do not take the time to understand the local context, (2) the external partners develop the project proposals on their own, (3) too little time for project implementation, (4) only ad hoc short-term trainings, (5) only pilot project and no scale-up, (6) only focus on capacity creation and not on capacity utilization, and (7) no focus on capacity retention. The more of these failures the partners do, the less effective and sustainable capacity development becomes.

Altogether, the study demonstrates that it is high time to listen to the internal partners. This paper aspires to offer a more holistic approach to capacity, embracing the three requisite types of capacities, which points out a path towards a shift in the field, with more credit to internal partners, explicit opportunities for mutual learning, and more adaptive roles of external partners, which are all important for more effective and adaptive partnerships. The study also offers a typology of failures for partners to avoid when designing and implementing capacity development for DRR or CCA in the future.

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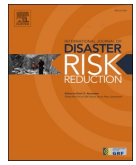

Caught between principles and politics: Challenges and opportunities for capacity development from governmental donors' perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Capacity development —an integral part of development cooperation in general and for disaster risk reduction (DRR) in particular—has had limited success so far. This article investigates capacity development challenges and opportunities from the viewpoint of the staff of progressive governmental donor agencies. Data were obtained from 26 semi-structured interviews with informants from seven donor agencies. The results show that donor staff are highly committed to the application of established principles for effective capacity development. However, despite capacity development being recognized as a cornerstone of development cooperation and crucial for DRR, it is described as a complex, broad or empty concept. The results reveal tensions between the principles for capacity development and current political priorities, power relations, and structural constraints of the aid system. Capacity development is undermined by the widespread aversion of donors and external partners to engage in the perceived risks associated with applying the principles in practice since they are accountable to other actors along the aid chain. Capacity development requires donors and external partners to let go of control and allow flexibility, adaptability and innovative approaches over longer time frames. This requires explicit risk-sharing agreements along the aid chain. Efforts are necessary at all levels of the system to realize the principles and conditions that enable effective capacity development for DRR.

1. Introduction

Capacity development has been closely linked to development cooperation ever since it emerged in the 1960s [1]; p. 5), and the understanding of what it entails and necessitates to be effective has greatly evolved since then [2]; pp. 530–531). Capacity development is crucial for disaster risk reduction (DRR) and is explicitly emphasized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030) and the wider Agenda 2030 [3,4]. Although capacity development definitions vary, it is generally accepted that capacity development constitutes an endogenous change process that operates at several levels—e.g. individual, organizational and systemic [2]; p. 531 [5]; p. 52)—in which external partners[1] play supporting roles [6]; p. 6). In this paper capacity development is understood

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[1] An external partner is a partner that belongs to an organization that is attempting to support the development of the capacity of another organization.

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as, "a locally driven change process through which individuals, organizations and institutions obtain, strengthen, maintain and adapt their capacities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time and learn from their efforts" [7]; p. 44). However, despite years of capacity development efforts, by the beginning of the millennium, research pointed out unsatisfactory results [8,9]; p. 11). Although this has attracted intense international attention—epitomized by the Paris Declaration on Aid-Effectiveness [10] and the subsequent High-Level Forums [4,11,12] attempting to address its challenges—scepticism about the effectiveness of capacity development remains [2,13,14]; p. 533; [15].

A number of key principles have been suggested as a way forward for capacity development [14]; p. 1 [16]; p. 7), but recent studies identify challenges in translating them into practice [17]; p. 22; [7,14,18,19]. This has at least partly to do with an inherent tension between several of these principles and the upward direction of accountability that is still dominating the aid system [14]; pp. 6–7), which prioritizes accountability to donors over internal partners[2] or final beneficiaries of the capacity development project [20]; p. 85 [21]; pp. 2, 8). External partners arrive regularly in-country with preconceived priorities and blueprint solutions that fit their own and their donors' agendas [22]; p. 25 [14]; pp. 7–8 [19]; pp. 3, 8 [15]; p. 149). Such supply-driven transplantation of best practice can obstruct the space for novelty and local experimentation, constraining or even undermining existing capacity [23]; pp. 1, 21; 2017, pp. 27, 32, 42) and local ownership [22]; p. 63 [24]; p. 8). The towering presence of donors continues throughout most capacity development projects, with rigid project plans and standardized templates for reporting that undermine possibilities to adapt to changing circumstances and limit honesty, reflection, and learning [22]; pp. 72, 80). In addition, many NGOs are extremely dependent on external funding, which pressures them to prioritize donors' interests over internal partners' interests [21]; pp. 2, 8). Moreover, duplication and growing complexity and frequency in donor reporting requirements absorb considerable time and resources needed for project implementation [25]; p. 4). The literature on capacity development mostly focuses on external experts, project managers [7, 18], middle to high level managers [14], and to internal partners [19,22]. Moreover, several studies attribute a substantial part of these challenges for capacity development to the donors funding it, yet none of them attempts to explain why the challenges persist from the perspectives of the donors themselves (cf [7,14,18,19,22].

The purpose of this article is to contribute to closing that gap in knowledge by investigating current capacity development challenges and opportunities from the viewpoint of progressive governmental donor agencies. Given the significant power that donors hold in shaping the conditions in which capacity development projects develop [26]; pp. 18–19), understanding their perspective is fundamental if the challenges to effective capacity are to be addressed. The research took the form of an inductive descriptive study by means of qualitative interviews to address the views of progressive governmental donor agencies. To meet this purpose, the article intends to answer the following research question:

- What are the challenges and opportunities for capacity development in international development cooperation from progressive governmental donor agencies' viewpoint?

2. Methodology

Data were collected through 26 qualitative semi-structured interviews with a range of donor agency staff to elicit different perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to balance between covering the needed themes in the time the informants had available and allowing enough flexibility to probe into interesting topics that might come up during the conversation [27]; pp. 132–133). The informants were mainly selected from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), (Sweden: 17), which has a long tradition of capacity development [28]; p. 11). It is also regularly referred to as one of the most progressive governmental donor agencies [29]; p. 17). Sida is thus selected using the logic of the extreme case [30]; pp. 40–41). However, to broaden the potential for analytical generalizations, informants were also selected from other like-minded progressive donors—i.e. Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), (Norway: two), Danish International Development Agency (Danida), (Denmark: two), and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands (Netherlands: one) [29]; p. 17)—and from other large governmental donor agencies of varying progressiveness—i.e. Global Affairs Canada (Canada: one), Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), (Switzerland: one), and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), (USA: two). Regardless, the results of this article mostly reflect the viewpoint of one donor agency (Sida). More detailed research on other governmental donor agencies' viewpoints and of large multilateral organizations that act as donors would provide added knowledge in the challenges and opportunities for capacity development that exist within the system.

The informants were selected through a combination of purposive sampling—in which informants were chosen based on their knowledge and experience—and snowball sampling—in which informants were asked to identify other suitable informants [31]; pp. 189–194). The sampling started from five informants already known to the authors and stopped when reaching data saturation after 20 interviews, at which point additional data ceased to produce any substantial new insights [32]; p. 26). This resulted in 26 informants after concluding the remaining scheduled interviews. The informants included three senior managers (SM1, SM2, SM3), seven project managers (PM1, PM2 … PM7), one project manager and specialist (PS1), six specialists (S1, S2 ⋯ S6), one senior specialist (SS1), three advisors (A1, A2, A3), four senior advisors (SA1, SA2, SA3, SA4) and one controller (C1).

The interviews were conducted between January and April 2020. The shortest interview lasted 25 min and the longest one lasted 2 h and 33 min, with an average of 58 min. The interviews were recorded to ensure consistency and accuracy and to allow the interviewer to focus on the informant during the interview. Five informants were interviewed face-to-face and the remaining 21 through Skype for Business, phone, or Zoom. All interviews were conducted in English with the help of an interview guide [31]; p. 210) in three

[2] An internal partner is a partner that belongs to an organization that wants to develop its own capacity.

parts (Table 1).

The data analysis began immediately through the precoding of significant moments or quotes in fieldnotes and analytic memos [33]; pp. 32–44). After each interview, the audio files were transcribed in verbatim and subjected to a first cycle of coding [33]; p. 45). Some of the codes were predefined based on the research question and interview guide (e.g., position, background, capacity development view, etc), following established guidelines for descriptive coding [33]; p. 70). Then a second cycle of coding began, eliciting themes that described donor agencies' viewpoint on opportunities and challenges for capacity development, following established guidelines for elaborative coding [33]; p. 168). During the first step of the second coding cycle, the authors coded separately to allow for individual creativity. Further on, the codes were discussed and brought together into the themes that structure the results chapter of this article. Both coding rounds were performed with the assistance of the software NVIVO 12.

The selection process and limited number of informants present limitations on how the results can be generalized. Yet, the study did not aim for statistical generalization, but focused on generating understanding from the informants that provides possibilities for analytical generalization and transferability to other situations [34]; pp. 222–223 [27]; pp. 199, 296–297 [35]; p. 210 [30]; p. 10). Knowledge developed in this study could, therefore, not be generalized "through abstraction and loss of history and context", but can be transferred to other situations through "conscious reflection on similarities and differences between contextual features and historical factors" [36]; p. 70). This is feasible as the governmental donor agencies are selected for varying progressiveness from seven countries and there is no reason to assume that the experiences of selected informants are unique. On the contrary, patterns may be indicative of other donors' experiences in capacity development; especially since the results show alignment, regardless of organisational belonging.

3. Result

Given that capacity development is the topic of this article, it seems important to note that when asked about their view on capacity development, informants were often silent, started answering with a laugh or commented that it was a broad or difficult question. 18 informants do not distinguish between capacity development and other terms—e.g. capacity building, competence development, institutional development—and only three are explicit about any differences. Regardless of which, there is ambiguity around the concept and 10 informants describe it as very complex, broad or empty. There is also a certain fatigue with the concept of capacity development:

> *"It's a buzz word within development, everybody talks about it but it is hard to reach a common understanding."* (A3)

> *"Lack of capacity has been slapped as a label on an awful lot of situations where it was not a very accurate description … and catches a lot of blame for not working."* (S6)

The results of the article are presented here under five themes emerging from the analysis on the interviews: flexibility vs control, changing context and focus, ownership vs donor priorities, individual vs organizational focus, and donor system constraints. It is interesting to note that there are no significant differences of opinion between the informants from the different donor agencies.

3.1. Flexibility vs control

15 informants consider capacity development a process requiring adaptability and flexibility to be effective: you need "a whole package of adaptivity … it never goes the way that you envisaged from the start, it always goes back and forth and up and down" (SA1). Five informants consider some external partners resistant to change towards more flexible and adaptable approaches, and three informants mention similar resistance among donors. According to one informant, despite the flexibility for the partner to present their Theory of Change (ToC) in whichever format they prefer, external partners still use strict result frameworks:

> *"They default back to log frames or to results frameworks, perhaps because they have other five donors that do require this, so for them … at the production level, it's just easier to do exactly as the majority is asking for."* (S1)

10 informants explain that an excessive focus on the results of capacity development rather than the process is a challenge for effectiveness both for donors and external partners. In this sense, two informants say, having short-term projects and strict project frameworks with defined inputs and outputs, gives an impression of control. Another two mention that the results-agenda places emphasis on having "clear, deliverable results" (S1) which can be demonstrated to tax-payers and help politicians obtain "quick results" (A3). One of them explains that when the focus is on supporting internal partners to have the appropriate rules, regulations and plans—all of them quantitatively measured—the capacity to implement these can be overlooked. This can lead to the misconception

Table 1
Interview guide.

Part 1	1 What is your position and main responsibilities? 2 What is your background? 3 What is your view on capacity development? *a. Probing*: Can you say more about this? What do you mean?
Part 2	4 What are the challenges for effective capacity development? *a. Probing*: Why is it like this? What do you mean by that? 5 What should we do to overcome these challenges? 6 In 10–15 years, what has happened/changed in relation to capacity development
Part 3	7 Summary of key issues. Anything else you would like to add?

that capacity has been developed when, in reality, the organization's capacity to carry out what is written in the plans and regulations has not changed. This focus on results takes attention away from the processes that are necessary for capacity development to happen:

> *"All these systems and rules and regulations and the rigidities, it's a way to try and manage this shifting world, and at the same time since those plans do not match what is actually going on in the world, we do not achieve the results we want."* (SS1)

> *"We ask: So, do you have systems in place to follow the money? Do you have systems in place to report on results? But we don't ask them: how do you work with capacity development?"* (SM1)

One informant reminds us that, although shifting the focus towards qualitative measurements is desirable, there is also a need to defend the outcomes of capacity development projects through quantitative measurements. Because capacity development projects must compete for funding against other types of programming that have clearer outcomes, such as short-term projects. In these instances, says this informant, having concrete, quantifiable outcomes, such as number of laws approved or number of trainings provided, can be useful to ensure continued funding. Another informant mentions a wish to see more project adjustments reported and says it is an opportunity for mutual learning. However, yet another informant expresses that, sometimes, external partners do not communicate to their project manager when something is not going according to plan during implementation, which makes it hard to perform timely adaptations even when the donor is willing to do so.

Capacity development is described by 17 informants as a long-term process and this long-term engagement goes hand in hand with the challenge of building of trustful relationships and partnerships, according to 10 informants.

> *"It takes 25 thousand glasses of tea, of chai, in [a country] before you can have … a very frank discussion with people in the administration."* (SA1)

> *"Institutional cooperation needs to be long-term and of course when we enter into these long-term agreements and relationships what happens is that very often there will be a change of personnel, there will be a change of governments, politicians, so we need to start over again."* (SM2)

Five informants state that even when donors provide flexible conditions, such as long-term agreements and flexible reporting, some external partners are still resistant to change. For example, even when a donor provides 5-year agreements to external partners, they, in turn, only provide 12-month agreements to internal partners:

> *"We were shocked actually when we found out that-that the local CSOs [Civil Society Organization] only had 12-month agreements … which means that local organizations are … loosing staff because they don't have any financial security, they can't do long-term planning."* (A3)

Three informants agree that this challenge might be a result of insufficient incentives for external partners to change their ways. As a way forward, one informant mentions that donors could be tougher in requiring external partners to make longer-term agreements with their internal partners. Further, donors should have greater clarity with external partners regarding risk-sharing of the resources they transfer to internal partners.

3.2. Changing contexts and focus

14 informants bring up the conditions in internal partner countries—e.g. changing political situation, corruption, nepotism and fragile contexts—as some of the challenges for effective capacity development. Five informants mention that their donor agency's strategies are moving towards work in fragile and conflict-affected states. One informant says the reason for this shift is to try to reach the poorest people in the world, yet it means they have to deal with the aid-paradox: "that the countries that are in the most need of development and maybe development cooperation are those countries that are least likely that the aid will have an effective result in the long-term" (PM7). Three informants state that, in these contexts, ignoring the state could risk further weakening the capacities of governmental institutions:

> *"Building parallel systems and institutions run by international partners, organizations, NGOs [Non-Governmental Organizations] … can actually backfire, you make the government weaker or it doesn't really strengthen the capabilities of the government or the state."* (PM2)

Four informants bring up the context of middle-income countries whose internal state budget has increased and who have acquired certain power at the international level. Two informants mention how, in these countries, Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) represents a very small percentage of the state income, which creates different dynamics. These countries have a very clear idea of what they need from donors and they have the power to make specific requests and place conditions on them, according to one informant. Two informants also mention that this situation creates a shift in the power dynamics and allows these countries to refuse the support if they do not feel like it contributes to what they need.

> *"They have a clear understanding that there is one specific part of a specific sector that has an experience that might be interesting for them, …and they are in a position to very clearly specify this and point down and say: 'either this or we are not interested'."* (A2)

However, another two informants mention that there remains an idea that capacities are "transferred" from one place to the other and that external partners hold greater knowledge than internal ones.

> *"I think in a way we are still, in certain aspects, a bit anchored in this modernization theories that there is more knowledge in one place than in the other, there is more technical advancement in one place than in the other and that is what we can offer."* (S1)

Within these changing contexts, 14 informants mention the potential role of donors as facilitators, brokers or matchmakers that can bring different actors together. Seven informants elaborate on how donors can have the convening power to bring actors in partner

countries together, increasing communication and coordination among them:

> *"Basically, do a bit the matchmaking … where we can really make a difference is linking and matching the right people: those with the needs with the experience holders."* (A2)

Core support[3] and direct financing are mentioned by six informants as an alternative support modality that helps ensure internal partners have resources for long-term operations, as well as the possibility to decide on their own development priorities. One informant also says that core support is a way to respect the capacity that exists locally and an important tool "to push out power and money to the local organizations" (SA2). Two informants mention that internal partners have asked for this kind of support:

> *"We are so capacity developed, we have received years and years of leadership development, now we are top notch [small laugh] in capacity, the only thing we need now is funds to do our work."* (SA2)

Nevertheless, five informants also speak about the difficulties in finding broad acceptance of such approaches, since donors and external partners lose control.

3.3. Ownership vs donor priorities

23 informants mention ownership as either an essential part of effective capacity development, or as a way to overcome challenges embedded in it. Nine of them describe the conflict between local ownership and donors' political priorities as one of the greatest challenges, and 13 informants state the importance of donors supporting internal partners' own demands. However, 11 informants explain that demand-driven approaches are not yet a reality. They acknowledge that the notion and importance of ownership has been central to development cooperation and capacity development for decades, yet it often clashes with donor priorities. Four informants mention explicitly that what internal partners demand often does not correspond to what donors and external partners are willing to provide:

> *"So, what we do then is that we kind of discard the demands of the poor people because we think that we know better how to provide this in the long run."* (PM7)

Moreover, five informants note that in order to be able to receive funding, internal partners organize and operate around donors' perspectives regardless of whether they correspond to the needs of the society where they work. Three informants openly question the relevance of donors continuously wanting to develop internal partners' capacities:

> *"We talk about it in a kind of colonial way sometimes: that we are capacity building … like assuming that there is nothing, you know? But people on the ground really know their own needs and we are not there yet to let them formulate that and fund that, but instead, together with international civil society organizations, the UN, everybody, like to decide. It's a power relationship. It's still difficult to really live local ownership because they might decide on [something] completely different."* (A3)

> *"[A] major weakness is that donors keep treating the in-country organizations as though this is the first time that anybody's tried to help them and they are starting from zero."* (S6)

Four informants doubt that the capacity gaps identified by external partners, are always representative of the needs on the ground, and one informant states that needs analyses are often done through the embassies rather than directly with the internal partners:

> *"Our definition of working demand-driven is to ask the desk officer at the [country] embassy, in the specific country: what are the demands? Not to ask the government, it's too complicated … And then that is of course a dilemma, because we have our … priorities."* (PM2)

The decentralized model, where embassies decide how to distribute the country budget is conducive to ownership, according to another informant. This informant says that these embassies are the foreign national actors closest to the local context and therefore possess the knowledge to decide which actors to provide resources to. However, this informant also mentions that the degree to which embassies involve internal partners in decision-making varies. While some embassies hold a lot of stakeholder workshops, others have less time and resources to do so. Another informant emphasizes the need for increased communication between embassies and external partners to provide them with the contextual knowledge they require. Four informants also speak about the need to communicate directly with internal partners. One informant specifically proposes developing targeted information for internal partners on what they should expect from external partners given donor strategies and regulations and paying more attention to their demands.

> *"Donors have not paid sufficient attention to third parties … the ones on the ground. We only talk to the big recipients of our money but … we hardly ever meet the third parties, we don't have a dialogue with them, they are not responsible for agreement conditions."* (A3)

10 informants express the need to advocate for a new and broader understanding of ownership, one which goes beyond internal partner's state priorities and into a more inclusive definition that encompasses the priorities and needs of citizens and civil society. Three of them mention a need to reframe the OECD DAC indicators for ownership so that they focus not only on state-to-state cooperation but also on that which goes through other actors such as local civil society.

According to 10 informants, internal partner involvement and leadership will increase in the future. They state that development cooperation will be increasingly demand-driven, with the internal partner acquiring a stronger voice in deciding what kind of funding

[3] Core support or core funding is defined as 'a flexible and substantial funding over several years for: 1) results focused programme implementation as defined by the Civil Society Organization (CSO); 2) institutional support (general costs of running the organization); 3) continuous institutional development/capacity building' [53]; p. 12). The idea of core support, as expressed by the informants, is to provide funding directly to local CSOs to support the achievement of their strategic plan.

is needed and how it should be spent. Approaches such as Triangular and South-South cooperation are mentioned by four informants as conducive to ownership. Another idea put forward by one informant is to let internal partners bring donors together. For example, through a database catalogue where organizations can state what they need funding for and where donors can pick projects according to their strategies and policies. However, another one of these ten informants also mention that local ownership is not necessarily the panacea for all capacity development and development challenges. Power dynamics and conflicts of interest also exist at the local level, which can mean some actors still get excluded from the capacity development processes. Two informants believe that, in the future, the methods through which capacity development is carried out will be affected by technological developments. Four informants highlight the role of technology in facilitating meetings of stakeholders without the need to travel. They also speak about the expanding possibilities of e-learning through online webinars.

Eight informants underline the importance of donor harmonization. The amount of resources external partners use to report back to donors could be decreased if agreement conditions and reporting formats were harmonized, because, as one informant highlights: "it's really ineffective the way it is now" (PM7). According to four informants, the political and organizational priorities of several donors have come in the way of effective donor cooperation that could help simplify procedures for internal and external partners. According to one informant, power imbalances among donors increase difficulties, since those with more resources tend to overtake smaller organizations during coordination initiatives, leading to conflict. One informant also mentions the difficulties in finding like-minded partners. Especially as the global political landscape has led to a shift in governmental donor agency configurations, moving most of them under Foreign Ministries. This means projects and interests are politicized and short-term, which makes it hard to maintain long-term cooperation, according to the informant:

> *"Every donor has their own strategies and their own perspectives that they want to push for and it's very difficult then to coordinate with other donors that have different sets of priorities, perspectives and ideas."* (PM7)

3.4. Individual vs organizational

19 informants agree that there is a prevailing focus on the transfer of technical capacities, and/or that individuals are the main target of the projects:

> *"Is capacity development about providing technical solutions or technical knowledge or is it about being able to, from your experience, facilitate a process of change?"* (S1)

Five informants explicitly mention International Training Programmes[4] (ITPs) as being problematic in the sense that they have short timeframes per programme round and they focus on individuals while expecting to achieve organizational change. They believe that this setup is ineffective for sustainable capacity development and that there is a need for greater connection between the different programme rounds and participants involved so change processes can translate into organizations and systems. Nine informants state that organizational change cannot happen while only focusing on individuals, especially not without the support of high-level management.

> *"It must be an organization. It can never be individuals. Because our theory of change is that if people mobilize and organize together, they then, together, can change their lives and impact on their own living situations."* (SA2)

18 informants speak about the connection between capacity development and learning, i.e., capacity development should involve a learning process, peer-to-peer learning where participants can have "an equal footing" (SA4) within the partnership, learning by doing and having mutual learning between participants. However, mutual learning "happens much too little" (SM1) according to one informant. Four informants highlight the importance of not falling for the illusion that knowledge can be transferred. They stress that not one single actor sits on the knowledge and that it is not possible to simply teach people what to do. Six informants mention that external partners often lack sufficient knowledge regarding what capacity development is and how to do it. External partners tend to focus their projects on teaching the technical capacities that they possess as subject-experts without necessarily considering factors such as organizational development and the appropriateness of pedagogical methods:

> *"You can't do it without the specialty, but it needs to be standing at least on three legs [subject matter expertise, sound pedagogy and organizational development] and when you put 95% of your focus on your subject matter expertise, well, you are doing something different than capacity development."* (S2)

> *"Anybody can pull on a capacity development hat … it's something that is seen as kind of "Well, just task anybody … they really have to know water [technical area of programme] to do this work, but capacity development … yeah … it's fine, we've done something."* (S6)

The six informants mention that donor agencies should provide better support to external partners on this matter. Seven informants add that the methods most used during capacity development projects are described as trainings, workshops and seminars even though they are not considered the most suitable.

3.5. Donor system constraints

The informants elaborate on different constraints in the donor system. Five informants mention the discrepancy between the

[4] ITPs is a common capacity development approach among several of the donors. They target middle-level management from different sectors such as public institutions, government agencies, civil society and private companies. The current approach aims at developing institutions through training, knowledge development, and mentoring of participants' change projects. ITPs generally last 5 years and consist of 1–4 'programme rounds'; in each round 25–30 participants are trained [54]; p. 68).

administrative budget and the development cooperation budget and how these budgets have not increased in the same way, especially for the donors aiming for the 1% goal. This brings increasing pressure to spend the money at the end of each financial year, which results in reduced consideration of project effectiveness:

> "*We have this huge budget to manage with not a lot of people to get it to move.*" (SS1)

> *"But for us it becomes detrimental, it can become dangerous to push money out the door in December and you know that there are extreme corruption risks, and so it can have very severe consequences [for internal partners].*" (A3)

Seven informants report that their contribution management system[5] (CMS) adds to the staff's already busy agenda, especially for program managers and embassy desk officers. Despite recognizing the need for documentation and transparency in project management, these informants believe the systems' requirements are oftentimes burdensome:

> *"We need to change our systems … because the system is … forcing you really to appraise certain things, and … if you ignore that, you are cheating, you are not doing your job as a civil servant."* (PM2)

However, the level of creativity of some staff members allows them to avoid getting caught up in complicated systems and to prioritize aspects such as building strong partnerships, says one informant. According to five informants, there have been recent efforts to simplify the CMS, changing the requirements to allow for program managers to have more autonomy to decide what they need to analyse in a specific project or phase. However, according to one informant:

> *"A lot of colleagues still believe they have to follow all these rules exactly and if they don't they will be a failed public servant."* (SS1)

Four informants describe that the way the system is currently structured can sometimes get in the way of innovative approaches to capacity development. According to one informant, some project initiatives have tried to carry out inception phases prior to implementation that are used to build trust and identify problems. However, each of these initial phases must be assessed as an individual project, which becomes administratively heavy for staff. When they have ideas on how to overcome challenges, they do not have enough time to see them through, since they are already overburdened, according to two informants:

> *"You know, there are people with ideas and so forth, but you don't simply have the time to look into new methods or ways of working, simply because your plate is full."* (SA1)

13 informants mention the importance of all stakeholders having knowledge of capacity development and how to implement it. However, three informants say the focus is on the external partners' ability to handle and account for the funds given to them, while less emphasis is placed on their ability to work with capacity development. Six informants also reflect upon donors' internal knowledge and perception of capacity development. One informant mentions that for project to be more effective donors need to modify some of the ways they operate: "It requires a little bit of unlearning of some of the ways we behave and some of the habits we have" (S6). Another informant mentions existing opportunities for staff to increase their knowledge and skills of capacity development through on-the-job training and voluntary learning weeks that are held twice a year. Nevertheless, three informants mention that training on capacity development is not available to donor staff. One of them thinks that training provided to program managers and desk officers should be more in line with the training that external partners receive. However, this is not currently possible because the budget used to provide external partners with capacity development training cannot be used to train donor staff. Given that donor staff and external partners receive different courses, this informant suggests that some external partners have expressed doubt concerning whether or not what they are taught will be approved by their donor program managers.

4. Discussion

The results stimulate discussion that can be organized under four different but related headings: 1) Principles, politics and power dimensions; 2) Capacity development knowledge; 3) Changing context; and 4) A risky business.

4.1. Principles, politics and power dimensions

The results show that all informants are highly aware of the principles and conditions for effective capacity development, including for disaster risk reduction (DRR). There seems to be a strong common commitment to forward the application of these principles, such as local ownership, long-term partnerships, flexibility and adaptability. For instance, nothing was brought up by more informants than local ownership, which they call essential or a cornerstone, and seen as a way to overcome some of the pressing challenges of capacity development. This is all supported by literature [37,38]; pp. 15–16). However, despite the recognition of, and the willingness to work with the principles for capacity development, there are strong indications that systemic constraints inhibit their realization', which has been pointed out by others [14]. The results clearly suggest that the principles are undermined by donors' political priorities, as the type of donors studied here do not exist in a vacuum but are highly politicized and tax funded organizations. In the end, what is funded is determined by what the donor can and is willing to fund within its political context, which is consistent with previous studies [22]; p. 53). This clash between principles and politics places donor staff in a dilemma in which they are bound by their own strategies, constrained by disincentives within the system, and tied to funding modalities that maintain current power structures. Moreover, the results indicate that donor staff are reluctant to openly criticize these structures. At the same time, Keijzer [24]; pp. 22–23) suggests

[5] Contribution Management refers to the processes of appraising and monitoring donors' financial contributions with the purpose of ensuring they are 'relevant, effective, feasible, possible to monitor and evaluate, and sustainable' [55]; p. 42). Contribution Management includes four different phases: initial preparation, in-depth preparation, agreement, and retrospective follow-up [56].

that donors and external partners have developed their own priorities and have an interest in preserving their existence and autonomy, which may clash with the principles.

The results also indicate concern about the increased politization of donor agencies when more and more countries bring them into their Foreign Ministries. These configurations can increase the level to which donor agencies' policies, strategies and timeframes are controlled by political interests (cf. [39], and reduce commitments to principles and conditions that are conducive to effective capacity development for DRR, as well as in general. This leads to more nationalized agendas instead of collaboration and donor harmonization, as emphasized in the results. Related to this, Keijzer [24]; p. 22) suggests that states have other political priorities—e.g. commercial, security and geopolitical—which may outweigh that of effective aid and development.

As political actors, donors have a responsibility towards their governments, which influences the power dynamics of who receives funding and for what purpose. The results thus place doubt on whether the so important principle of local ownership is truly achievable within these structures. According to Leutner and Müller (in Ref. [24]; p. 8), "[o]wnership is expressed by the ability and possibility of both sides to say 'no' to offers as well as to demands". If internal partners do not have the possibility to refuse the capacity development provided, as suggested by the results, then there is no space for genuine local ownership, which is fundamental for capacity development. The results indicate a wish among donor staff to adopt and apply a new notion of ownership, which would allow global indicators to measure the degree to which projects are driven by internal partners other than the state. This could serve as an incentive for donors to increase local ownership in their funded projects if they felt that their actions were recognized during global monitoring rounds. However, even if this notion was adopted at the international level, there is no guarantee this would lead to genuine ownership. Instead, the results indicate that there are disincentives for moving towards more demand-driven approaches on several levels of the aid system. For instance, the fact that change could mean lost privileges for donors and external partners.

Donors approve or deny funding applications for capacity development projects and therefore have power over what external and internal partners can do to develop capacities for DRR. This is what Lukes [40]; pp. 78–79, 210 [41]; pp. 16–19) calls the first dimension of power and is the most direct and obvious form of power to most observers. Additionally, the results show that donors also exercise immense power over what can be brought up for discussion and decision, through their power over the agenda. This is what Lukes [40]; pp. 78–79, 210 [41]; pp. 20–25) refers to as the second dimension of power, which in this context includes the preselected countries each donor focuses on, the specific issues and sectors they are interested in, and the amounts and timeframes that their funding can allow. Furthermore, embassies are commonly tasked with operationalizing bilateral strategies and reporting on the capacity needs of the country. This could be problematic since embassy staff are already working in line with their donor strategies and are thus liable to only identify the needs that match them and their own knowledge and interests, which has been referred to as the "expert's blind spot" [14]; pp. 4, 7). Lukes calls this the third dimension of power in which donors have shaped the norms and expectations of capacity development and for DRR through their prioritizations and decisions over time [40]; pp. 78–79, 210 [41]; pp. 25–29). This is clearly visible in the results showing how the historical prioritization of donor interests over local needs has created a dynamic where both internal- and external partners structure their functions around these interests instead of the needs on the ground in order to obtain funding and keep functioning, which is consistent with literature [42]; p. 710). According to Seddiky et al. [21]; p. 8), there is also unhealthy power dynamics and competition for funding among local NGOs that result in them not sharing information or coordinating with each other. The nexus of different power dimensions must be understood and taken into account if principles are ever to trump politics, which is necessary for effective capacity development for DRR, as well as in general.

4.2. Capacity development knowledge

The results show that informants have challenges understanding the concept of capacity development and that their understanding of it appears diverse. They often use capacity development, capacity building, and institutional development interchangeably, and see it as a broad and complex concept. Some even express discomfort using it. This is consistent with available literature arguing that capacity development is often misused and sometimes perceived as a buzz word that lacks real meaning within development cooperation [6,43]; p. 1). It is possible that this terminological confusion is a cause of the fatigue that some informants relate to the concept. Nevertheless, it seems that the essence of whichever term is used is mainly in line with more holistic approaches to capacity development. It is interesting to note how some informants explicitly highlight ambiguity in how their organizations understand capacity development, even though some organizations have published capacity development manuals and guidelines on how to assess, support and monitor capacity development. This clearly demonstrates that these documents are not broadly known within the organizations. Without a common organizational understanding of capacity development, it is harder to operationalize it in a consistent way throughout its various projects. This can create confusion amongst staff, especially recent recruits, on the principles and standards that they are expected to uphold.

This challenge is exacerbated by donor staff not having access to the training courses their organizations provide for external partners. A staggering result which indicates that training courses on central topics—such as capacity development, results-based management, and different cross-cutting issues—are generally not available for donor staff or embassy desk officers because their participation is not covered by their administrative budgets. This can create a gap between what external partners are taught to do in terms of effective capacity development and what donor staff believe they should do to approve their funding applications and favourably assess the progress and results of the project. This means that the possibility of effective capacity development is undermined in practice by ambiguity and confusion concerning what to do.

4.3. Changing context

The results show that several donors are trying to shift their capacity development work towards fragile and conflict-affected states, which entail unpredictable contexts that require less top-down control and greater flexibility and adaptability [44]. There is a worry

among the informants that the conditions in internal partners' countries, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states, can undermine efforts to build trust and maintain commitment to capacity development projects. The aid-paradox is a daunting dilemma: countries that need capacity development the most are at the same time those countries where capacity development is the least likely to be successful, long-term and sustainable. A holistic approach to capacity development projects could provide a way to tackle the aid-paradox by acknowledging that despite strong antagonistic forces and worn-down institutional arrangements in fragile and conflict-affected states, there are niches where capacity can develop and thrive. Finding these windows of opportunity may take considerable time and effort but can be ultimately rewarding if done appropriately (e.g. Ref. [45]. Evidence on the capacity development efforts in fragile states shows that their effectiveness is equally impacted by the way projects are structured and operationalized [46]; p. 4). Not enough attention seems to be given to the way that existing power dynamics and incentive structures enable or constrain capacity development efforts, nor to assessing the incentives, readiness for change and the interests that exist within the system [47]; p. 5).

The results indicate that middle income countries have a very clear idea what they need and they have sufficient resources to do things themselves, which shifts the power in their favour. In this process, the external partner needs to rethink their role in the capacity development partnership, as suggested in other research [14]; p. 6 [19]; p. 7). Donors expressed a desire to acquire a more active role in terms of being facilitators, matchmakers and brokers of change processes where some donor agencies already consider themselves to be partners in the projects they fund. They consider they have an added value at international level with regards to the normative dialogue and at the national or project level by using their convening power to bring actors together.

4.4. A risky business

The results suggest one critical challenge that donors identify related to the perception of project-related risk among external partners. It appears that external partners see themselves as primarily accountable for achieving the objectives of the funded capacity development project. They also feel responsible for the allocated funding because they perceive the internal partners' financial systems as less established and trustworthy. In short, capacity development is perceived as a risky business for them. The results indicate there are insufficient incentives along the aid chain to shift towards flexible approaches, which is in line with previous research [14]; p. 8). Even when some donors have increased their risk tolerance since the Paris agreement [48] and provide flexible and adaptable conditions to their external partners, these are generally not translated into flexible and adaptable conditions for the internal partners because of the risks perceived. Moreover, external partners generally do not communicate to their donor when things are not going according to plan, which inhibits timely adaptation. This unwillingness to communicate their challenges might be due to a perception that there is no space for flexibility and adaptability in the first place or that there might be negative consequences if appearing incompetent. If donors want more flexible conditions for the internal partners, they need to provide the enabling environment for external partners to let go of control by including explicit risk-sharing agreements in the formal requirements when the partnership is formulated.

One option, suggested by the informants, is to provide core support directly to internal partners. It is argued that this funding method pushes the power, risks and money out to internal partners, respecting the capacities already in place, and enabling ownership in allowing internal partners to determine their own priorities, agendas and change processes. However, the results also show there seems to be some reticence towards this approach, which could be ascribed to donor agencies' and external partners' fear of losing power and control [14]; pp. 4, 7). Another suggestion is to include internal partners as "co-investors" in their development processes and to assist them in finding local funding sources [49]; p. 7).

The results show diverging opinions amongst donor staff on how meticulously the steps of the CMS should be followed. Historically, the process of appraising projects has been too cumbersome and has inhibited the possibility to truly integrate capacity development in projects by placing a lot of administrative burden on staff [50]; p. 7). This has impeded them from focusing their attention on ensuring the principles and conditions of effective capacity development for DRR, as well as in general. Steps have been taken to simplify the system. Nevertheless, results show that some staff still feel there is a pressure to follow the CMS steps meticulously, because if they do not, then they are not fulfilling their duties as civil servants.

Internal donor budget allocations are a structural constraint that seem to influence the effectiveness of capacity development activities, according to the results. The siloed allocation of administrative budget versus development cooperation budget creates a discrepancy between the human resources the donor agency has and the amount of aid it must manage. There are indications that a development cooperation budget that grows at a faster rate than the administrative one results in the overburdening of donor staff. In combination with the work required to handle the CMS, program managers and desk officers have less time to ensure capacity development effectiveness since they must focus on fulfilling their administrative responsibilities. Further, the results indicate that the development cooperation budget may translate into ineffective and even harmful practices when it is pushed "out the door" at the end of the financial year. Consistent with literature [51]; p. 252), when money needs to be spent, there is less focus on the effectiveness and sustainability of the projects it is spent on. This inattentive spending increases risk in capacity development projects and creates ground for a risky business when organizations focus on spending the money so as to not lose budget the coming years.

In line with the results, there is an inescapable clash between flexibility and adaptability and the quixotic, i.e. unrealistic or impractical, need for control and upward accountability [14]; p. 7). This need is reflected in the requirement to have clear and deliverable results to avoid risks and to demonstrate to politicians and taxpayers in donor countries how the money is spent [52]; pp. 38–39; [14]. For this reason, the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development projects has focused on quantitative short-term outcomes, such as number of people trained or number of workshops provided. The results suggest that these targets produce a shift from a focus on the process of capacity development towards a focus on deliverables. In a field like capacity development for DRR, where outputs—e.g. number of people trained—are not directly correlated with outcomes—e.g. increased organizational

capacity—this trend is problematic, since the attention of the capacity development projects turns to the production of outputs and not the development of capacity [44]. It seems that there remains a highly technocratic approach with a strong focus on developing individuals' or organizations' technical skills. The "illusion that knowledge can be transferred", expressed by one informant, and the idea that there is more knowledge in one place—donor countries and external partners—than in others—internal partner countries—are two interesting findings that suggest that, in some cases, capacity development remains unilateral. This illusion, together with short-term projects, leads to stereotypical roles in the capacity development partnership. Furthermore, the focus on measurable outputs, along with overly technical solutions to capacity development problems, rewards a continued "isomorphic mimicry" [52]; p. 31). As Andrews et al. [52]; p. 31) write about isomorphic mimicry: "passing a labor law is counted as success even if lack of enforcement means it never changes the everyday experiences of workers. … Going through the ritualistic motions of trainings counts as success even if no one's practices actually improve". In other words, capacity development projects could be counted as successful when they produce short-term outputs but may, in the long-term, be unable to contribute to sustainable capacity development for DRR.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this article is to investigate the current challenges and opportunities for capacity development for disaster risk reduction (DRR) – and development cooperation in general – from the viewpoint of progressive governmental donor agencies. Its results reveal tensions between the principles and conditions that should guide capacity development and current political priorities, power dimensions, and structural constraints of the aid system. The involved donor staff are highly committed to the application of the principles for effective capacity development, e.g. local ownership, long-term partnership, flexibility and adaptability. However, the results also suggest that the prioritization of donors' political interests over local needs and the risk aversion of donors and external partners heavily constrain the achievement of the principles and further cement the common practice of overwhelmingly focusing capacity development on providing technical training to individuals, regardless of whether it is efficient for developing sustainable capacity.

Despite informants recognizing capacity development as a cornerstone in development cooperation, there is a difficulty to conceptualize it. It is generally described as a complex, broad or empty concept. Nevertheless, the understanding of donor staff on how capacity development should be approached has moved into a more holistic understanding. Flexibility and adaptability are considered important principles for capacity development —as a recognition of changing conditions and continuous development of local contexts—but are not currently part of common practice in the international system. Donors must also ensure they provide the conditions for flexibility and adaptability to translate into the actual work with the internal partners aspiring to develop their capacity. This is particularly relevant for capacity development in fragile and conflict-related contexts where situations often evolve in unpredictable ways, which are receiving increasing donor attention. However, even when donors do provide conditions for flexible, adaptable, and long-term capacity development, which is still relatively rare, external partners are reluctant to work accordingly with their internal partners. This seems to be a consequence of external partners perceiving themselves as primary accountable for achieving the approved capacity development objectives and responsible for the allocated funding. It is simply considered too much of a risk to let go of control. The same fear of losing control is also what keeps donor staff from allowing flexible, adaptable, and long-term capacity development more often, as they too are accountable to others further up the aid chain and heavily constrained by rigid and burdensome Contribution Management Systems (CMS). This upward accountability results in a quixotic need for control that, in combination with insufficient incentives for change, constrains the application of the principles. Effective capacity development requires donors and external partners to let go of control and allow flexibility and adaptability over longer time frames, which requires, in turn, explicit risk-sharing agreements along the aid chain.

Results suggest a shift in power towards middle income countries, where donors and external partners need to reconsider their roles. Core support, internal partners as co-investors, and increased local funding are proposed ways for internal partners to secure resources and determine their own development priorities, and for donors and external partners to respect local capacity. The results also indicate that donors wish to be more closely connected to both partners and projects, which could be accomplished if they were to take on a more explicit role as active facilitators of capacity development. However, this wish currently clashes with the disproportionate growth of the development cooperation budget in relation to the administrative budget for managing it, which gradually increases the workload on already burdened donor staff. The balance between these two budgets conditions the role and practices possible for donor staff and should receive more attention since it currently undermines effective capacity development and the human resource management of donors. Moreover, there is a worrying indication that donor staff cannot access capacity development training due to this division of budgets, which has a negative impact on donor agencies' human resources and ultimately the application of capacity development throughout the aid chain.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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