
Capacity Building across Cultures and Contexts: Principles and Practices

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Abstract: This article provides an opportunity to look at issues related to capacity building—how the concept has evolved and how it is currently being applied—and a review of the components of effective capacity building in working with individuals and organizations. This is followed by a description of capacity-building projects undertaken by ECDVU students that illustrate the application of these principles at all levels of society—from working with parents as they support their children’s develop-

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International Journal of Educational Policy, Research, & Practice, Volume 5, Number 3, Fall 2004. ISSN 1528-3534; Copyright 2004 by Caddo Gap Press; All rights of reproduction reserved.

ment, to providing training and support to caregivers, to building the capacity of those responsible for creating and evaluating programs, to developing community capacity to sustain programs, to raising the awareness of civil society at large to issues related to early childhood development. In spite of the variety of audiences for whom capacity-building activities were created, the set of projects reviewed in this article have several commonalities, a key one being the fact that the capacity-building activities created have been developed within the context of the cultures where the projects were operating. Another notable quality is that the capacity-building activities were developed in consultation with those who were seeking new knowledge and skills.

Let us understand capacity building as a journey, or a series of journeys. There is a path, and a facilitator . . . There is an inner as well as outer journey. Therefore a capacity building journey must be understood in both senses. One is of the organic body of the organization, the other of the minds of the people working there. (Sakil Malik, 2003)

As African countries increase their efforts to address poverty and social inequities, the demand within Africa (and from external donor agencies) is for the development of local capacity. From the community perspective there is recognition of the need for support in the development of civil society (Fowler, 1997, 2000). From the donors' perspective there is a realization of limits in the absorptive capacity of government and country-based organizations to handle the breadth of work that could be funded (Cissé, Sokona, & Thomas, n.d.; Eade, 1996; Gupta, 2004). As Malik (2003) notes, the link between needs and supply is weak, and there is a need for capacity building support to accomplish change.

These issues also arise in relation to the field of ECD. As awareness has increased of the crucial importance of ECD, this has led to greater investment in programs for young children and their families, resulting in an increased demand for people who can implement effective early childhood programs. However, to date, many capacity-building programs in relation to ECD: (1) have seldom provided a holistic perspective on children's development; (2) often have not provided people with the knowledge and skills required to work in a specific context; (3) have tended to be highly Western-oriented; (4) have only sporadically been built on local strengths and wisdom; and (5) have frequently been conducted by institutions and organizations that are isolated from others attempting to undertake similar activities (Evans & Ilfeld, 2002).

What is capacity building? One definition states that the purpose of capacity building is "to strengthen or fortify the operation of systems and

the skills of individuals” (Evans, Myers, & Ilfeld, 2000, p. 392). Malik (2003) states: “Capacity building is much more than training and includes the following: human resource development, the process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills and access to information, knowledge and training that enables them to perform effectively” (para. 1). While technically these definitions are accurate, they do little to emphasise the importance of process in the development of human capacity. A more dynamic interpretation of capacity building is provided by Ahmed (2004, quoting Ball, 2000, p. 3), who points out that “capacity-building initiatives must be anchored deeply in the community’s context, existing strengths, potential for cultural reconstruction, and ability to push forward their own agenda towards self-identified goals” (Ahmed, p. 46).

If a capacity-building effort is indeed anchored in context, then it does not just entail offering a training course or set of courses. It is best understood as a process that begins with a thorough understanding of the participants’ reality and identification of the knowledge and skills they already possess, as well as the gaps in their understanding. From there, activities can be created that provide participants with new skills, knowledge, and understandings that become embedded in their daily life and enhance the capacity of the organizations within which they operate.

Experience and research related to the process of capacity building have led to the identification of the elements of effective capacity-building activities, whether the focus is on individuals or on organizations (Fowler, 1997, 2000; Gupta, 2004; Malik, 2003; Matheson, 2000; Reinhold, 1993; Torkington, 1996). These will be discussed in the section that follows.

Effective Capacity Building

In a sentence, effective capacity building entails contextualizing processes and content. The dimensions of this include building relationships; deepening knowledge and understanding through linking theory and practice; identifying and building on what would motivate people to change; creating an enabling environment; ensuring time for reflection; and creating systems for monitoring and evaluation. It is also important to realize that effective capacity building requires time and a long-term commitment to the process (Cissé, Sokona, & Thomas, n.d.; Fowler, 2003; Malik, 2003).

Building Relationships

Development, in every context and at all levels, revolves around relationships between people. Capacity building requires creating trust

and having a mutuality of purpose that allows for co-creation of vision, objectives, and activities.

In a capacity-building context, one of the keys to the creation of good relationships is clarity and honesty in establishing a shared understanding of the purpose of capacity building. This requires dialogue. As Fowler (2000) notes, “early, balanced negotiation between relevant stakeholders is . . . vital” (para. 2). If the dialogue or negotiation results in mutual trust and respect, one of the outcomes is a shift in focus from what the facilitator has to pass on to an appreciation for what everyone has to offer.

Identifying and Building on What Motivates People

Identifying and building on what motivates people involves tapping into what drives people to do what they do. It means focusing on understanding attitudes and beliefs and building on people’s present level of development.

Fowler (2000) refers to this dimension as identifying “the ‘trigger’ for change” (para. 4). He notes that it is important to identify whether the trigger is internal or external and goes on to state that when the trigger is external, “far more attention must be paid to issues of ownership, commitment and empowerment” (para. 4). Ownership, commitment, and empowerment happen most easily when capacity-building activities are built on people’s internal motivation, two elements of which are 1) what people know and 2) what they bring to the experience from their culture.

1. Building on current knowledge and understanding. People are unlikely to learn if they are told that what they currently do is not adequate. For example, almost all parents want to do the best they can for their child (the motivation), and if there is acknowledgement that what parents are doing now is supporting the child’s development in many ways (i.e., there are many good things happening already), parents are likely to be open to learning about other things they can also do to support the child’s well-being. In this scenario, an effective approach to working with parent groups would be to allow parents to pool their own knowledge and experience about how children behave and ways in which they have responded to that behaviour, with the facilitator bringing in additional or alternative responses to the situations. By sharing knowledge and participating actively in sessions, parents will learn from each other, gain confidence in their own knowledge and abilities, and expand their repertoire of parenting behaviours.

It is important not only to identify local knowledge, but also to work with the holders of that knowledge and to build on it when possible. As noted by Cissé, Sokona and Thomas (n.d.), “The primary task for each

country is the identification of local expertise. There is no need to replace existing expertise or to start from scratch” (para. 11).

2. Building on local culture and tradition. What people know is grounded in their culture. With an understanding of culture, it is possible to identify attitudes and beliefs that determine the behaviours that people exhibit. Building on local culture can help get a project started but, more importantly, it helps ensure that the project continues and is owned by those participating in it (Cohen, 1994; Eade, 1996; Matheson, 2000; Salole, 1991).

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

Deepening knowledge and understanding includes increasing knowledge on a given topic and reflecting on and incorporating that knowledge into the way one works; it represents an integration of theory and practice.

Training approaches and methods need to help individuals to bridge the gap between practice and theory. As noted by Malik (2003), bridging the gap happens only when training allows for full participation in the learning process of both the facilitator and the participants. Torkington and Landers (1994) expand on this idea: “Working together, trainer and trainee can construct situations which give the trainee first hand experiences during the training itself. These experiences can illuminate and bring greater understanding of theoretical concepts” (p. 8).

Co-constructing of experiences involves questioning, thinking, talking, debating, and taking action, all of which lead to greater understanding. As understanding deepens, people become more self-confident in expressing their knowledge and in putting it into practice. In essence, people become empowered to act.

Creating an Enabling Environment

Supports (formal and non-formal) need to be created to ensure that the processes set in motion to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals are sustained over time.

Creating an enabling environment means looking beyond the parameters of a given program and ensuring that the intervention has supports within the wider community. In an article focused on the need for social mobilization and advocacy, Bautista (2003) notes: “We can no longer afford the luxury of seeing Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) as primarily ‘delivery of services,’ because experience has shown us that services that are delivered without supports and learning built into the environment around the child and/or family will quickly diminish in effect when the services are withdrawn” (p. 13). Therefore, capacity-building programs need to be developed within a broad conceptual

framework that is part of a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy; they should not be developed in isolation of other services. Fowler (2000), in stating the preconditions for effective capacity building, cautions those involved “to check how the anticipated level of intervention ‘nests’ within others. . . . Taking a system view of CB [capacity building] is one way of understanding and mapping linkages to important features surrounding the intervention” (para. 3).

Ensuring Time for Reflection

Having time for reflection helps deepen understanding of what is being accomplished. One of the striking outcomes of a study to determine the elements of effective early childhood programs was that the projects built time for reflection into their ongoing work (E. Ilfeld, 2003, personal communication). While in some instances this was a conscious part of the formative evaluation process undertaken by the organization, in other instances a space to reflect on what was happening within the project was informal and, not infrequently, included those being served by the project. This time for reflection was frequently characterized as a safe place within which personal (as well as program) issues could be explored, due to the fact that an atmosphere of trust and mutual support had been created.

Creating Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation

Too often there is little thought given to evaluation until the project is well underway. And, while setting aside time for reflection is an important part of a monitoring and evaluation system, additional activities need to be developed that allow a range of stakeholders – from those funding the program to those being served – to identify the impact of their work and to make recommendations in terms of what might happen next (Evans et al., 2000).

The ECDVU Capacity Building Projects

The projects that provide the core set of examples of capacity building for this article represent a continuum in terms of their focus—from working with parents to engaging with civil society in general. A brief description of each of the projects follows:

Working with Parents and Grandparents in Support of Children’s Development

Three projects focused on developing support for parenting and caregiving. In one of them, Chalizamudzi Matola undertook a study to understand the dynamics within women-headed households in rural

Malawi to determine the kind of capacity building these women required. Matola interviewed the women and observed their interaction with their children. In addition, however, she assessed the context within which they live to understand the supports (or lack thereof) for these women in their communities. Based on information gathered, capacity-building activities were created. While the basic content focused on mother-child interaction to improve the kind of care that the children are currently receiving, the training also provided women with skills so that they could become economically independent.

The second project on parenting was undertaken by Rosemary Hua, who examined the role that fathers play in early childhood care and development among the Tiv in Nigeria. Focus group discussions indicated that the fathers' current attitudes, beliefs, and practices in relation to childcare are deeply rooted in their cultural settings. Also evident were the ways in which fathers' roles have intergenerational family support, with grandparents playing a major role in childrearing. The care of children was and still is a communal role. Of particular interest to Hua was the fact that if fathers' roles are to change, there needs to be acceptance of this change within the wider culture.

In the third project, developed by Lydia Nyesigomwe in Uganda, the focus was on strengthening the capacity of grandparents to care for grandchildren affected by HIV/AIDS. The importance of grandparents, especially grandmothers, in looking after children in this era of HIV/AIDS cannot be overestimated. The main purpose of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the already existing community support system to ensure that all children under the care of ageing grandparents receive quality care, as defined by a holistic approach to development. In addition the project was designed to address the overall welfare of the families taking care of the children. (A more detailed description of the project is provided in the article by Jackson et al. in this issue.)

Building the Capacity of Those Responsible for Creating and Evaluating Programs

As part of an evaluation of a Plan International-assisted ECD program in Ghana, Stella Etse interviewed parents, ECD providers, and managers of ECD centers in relation to their understanding of children's development and what they thought was required to best support that development. The study employed quantitative and qualitative approaches in the design, data collection, data management, and analysis and reporting. The major findings of the study indicated that parents are knowledgeable about what children need to develop well and what is involved in designing quality ECD programs. Equally important was the fact that parents' knowledge and understanding did not differ signifi-

cantly from that of other respondents. Thus there is good reason to believe that in this setting there is congruence among stakeholders in understanding children's development and determining the kinds of supports that need to be provided.

Developing Community Capacity to Sustain Programs

Two projects were included in this category, one of which illustrates an appropriate way to enter and begin working with a community to ensure that what is developed is embedded in that community, while the other focuses on ways to build supports within the community that will sustain a well-established ECD program.

Charlotte Day's project involved the creation of a rural, community-driven ECD program in Malawi where the emphasis was on engaging the whole community in an exploratory, experiential learning process. At the time that the project was begun, there was no system of care and stimulation for young children in the community. Project activities that were used to ensure that the project was built on culturally and developmentally appropriate practices included interviews, participatory learning and action (PLA) processes, modelling, observation coupled with reflective times, and teacher training sessions. Over time an ECD program was created, a kit of experiential teaching and learning aids was compiled, and a shelter for the ECD activities (as well as other community activities) was built.

The second project, undertaken by Asha Ahmed, is illustrative of capacity building in relation to a well-established ECD program—the Madrasa Preschool Program (MPP) in Zanzibar. The objective was to ensure the sustainability of the program through the development of local Community Resource Teams (CRTs) that have the responsibility for ensuring that the existing technical expertise in communities is sustained. The MPP was developed over a ten-year period with the aim of supporting poor communities to establish, manage, and own quality preschools. However, during that period no support system had been put in place to maintain the quality of the preschools over the long term. Ahmed's project involved creating a set of training and support activities with the CRTs to take on a sustaining support role.

Raising the Awareness of Civil Society at Large to Issues Related to Early Childhood Development.

Ben Missani implemented a project emphasizing leadership skills training for administrators and parent support training for caregivers. Due to a high incidence of abuse of children's and young people's rights

in the Mtwara region of Tanzania, this project focused on raising awareness within the community of the importance and value of children's participation. The project involved working with a wide range of stakeholders—teachers, school inspectors, communities and village leaders. The process included consultation meetings and children's workshops, using techniques such as focus groups, interviews, and observations. These methods were used to explore issues related to children's needs and rights and the potential for children's greater involvement in governance and curriculum matters and their potential to bring about change in their communities.

Applying the Principles

Within the limits of this article it is not possible to describe the many ways in which the projects illustrate the principles outlined above. For that reason, only brief examples of the principles are provided in this section.

Building Relationships

As noted, capacity building requires creating trust and having a mutuality of purpose that allows for co-creation of activities. This respect for what each person brings to a capacity-building activity was evident in many of the projects where there was a shift away from a top-down approach to activities that resulted in the building of trust and a mutuality of responsibility. Day (2004) credits "an overall relational mode of leadership which provided a departure from a 'top-down' prevalent type of hierarchy" (p. 58) as one of the keys to the success of the project in Malawi.

Building trust takes time. When work begins with a group of people, the degree of openness is quite limited, with people providing answers to questions based on what they think the questioner wants to hear. As a trust relationship is established through people really listening and taking on ideas from all involved, participants feel freer to express their ideas. This change in openness was noted by Nyesigomwe (2004) during the evaluation of her project:

Unlike during the needs assessment, grandparents were willing to answer the questions they were asked during the evaluation period. They were friendly and welcoming, and they willingly gave out all the information needed. This indicated ... that they had developed a positive attitude towards themselves and others around them. (p. 70)

A key in developing trust was the fact that early on in the project the grandmothers were included in community meetings where issues relating to their situation were discussed. The grandmothers felt impor-

tant because they were able to participate in the initial stages of the program and their ideas were incorporated from the beginning. One person attending the meeting comments: "I feel so valued and recognized by your organization. I know a lot about our community but I did not know I would be consulted. Now that you have involved me, I will give you full support so that together we can help the elderly" (p. 59).

Identifying and Building on What Motivates People

As noted, one of the keys to effective capacity building is assessing current knowledge and behaviour. All the projects included extensive data-gathering processes using quantitative and qualitative methods and triangulating to ensure understanding. Methods included:

1. Observation and Interview. Etse (2004), for whom the project and setting were new, began by making an informal visit to the community to gain an understanding of the general community layout, accessibility to services and the way in which the population was distributed. In addition, the visit "provided an opportunity to find out the 'entry point' or contact persons for the communities, the expected procedures for entry into the communities and when parents were likely to be available for interviews" (p. 34). Matola (2004) also used both observations and interviews, which proved to be very useful; the observations helped to verify the information that was provided during the interviews.

2. Focus Group. A focus group brings together different sets of people to talk about an issue or idea. A group setting allows for cross-fertilization of ideas as a topic is discussed, with the result being a richer understanding of people's thinking about an idea than would be gained by individual one-on-one interviews.

Focus groups were one of the basic activities employed by Hua (2004) in Nigeria to gain an understanding of fathers' roles in relation to childcare. Hua developed an open-ended questionnaire that was used as a guide to conduct the discussions. Items in the questionnaire included general perceptions of children, role and responsibilities of fathers in the family, attitudes towards childcare, and factors that are likely to encourage or discourage fathers from participating in childcare. The focus group discussion was documented and recorded through note-taking and by use of a video camera.

3. Participatory Learning for Action (PLA). Participatory Learning for Action (PLA) builds on the idea of a focus group but takes it further. In addition to activities that help define people's reality, within PLA the community determines actions that can be taken and engages in taking the actions. As in the creation of focus groups, PLA groups can be created for specific purposes.

Day (2004), in Malawi, conducted PLA activities with traditional leaders, parents, and children. The meetings were called by the local Chief; this helped ensure wide participation. The suggestion of a village ECD program generated a meeting of parents, children, and traditional leaders from other villages. The meeting involved an interactive PLA process that provoked the interest and future involvement of the community. The process took the group to a “point of action”: an informal preschool was proposed. When asked what they wanted for their children, a parent commented, “We want something happening to help our children stay in school” (p. 46). Subsequent activities were developed in relation to the goal of creating and supporting a preschool.

In his exploration of attitudes and beliefs about children’s participation, Missani (2004) also used PLA to assess the current level of children’s involvement in different activities at family, school and village levels. In group discussions, children were encouraged to speak about their concerns to their parents and leaders. Missani noted:

Documentation of stories and experiences was carefully done to enable the participants ... to have complete records and reference materials regarding all matters discussed. Minutes for implementation were jointly approved, providing a plan to ensure that in future children and youth are fully involved in the process of bringing development to their villages (p. 6).

4. Appreciative Inquiry (AI). Appreciate Inquiry involves identifying the positive things that are taking place. In contrast to a needs assessment, a capacity revealing assessment takes place and appreciation is shown for what is working. This technique was used in Malawi in a meeting with villagers. As Day (2004) notes: “The exercise ‘rippled’ to an inclusionary time when the capacities of the village became apparent. . . . From this beginning by the village grew a project for the village, sustained with resources from the village” (p. 46).

5. Self-evaluation. Interestingly enough, as participants came to understand that their ideas were valued and had worth, they themselves began to define the kinds of additional knowledge and skills they wished to acquire. This happened in the Zanzibar setting where CRTs, based on their understanding of their roles, reflected on these roles and prioritized their needs and the issues and topics they wanted to know more about. Staff then identified how these could be introduced through theory and practice (Ahmed, 2004). In the Malawi rural childcare setting the caregivers themselves requested training; they wanted to learn more about child development and ways of supporting children through play. Day (2004) notes: “The teachers’ desire for training emerged from the reflective times, as requested by them” (p. 36).

6. Taking it back. A key in many of the projects was not just the gathering of data, but taking the data back to those from whom the data were gathered to see if the conclusions drawn by the facilitator were accurate. This occurred in the Uganda project where, once the data were collected and analyzed, the organization called the grandparents together to share the findings with them. Participants, together with facilitators, grouped the challenges into different categories: those to be discussed and solved by grandparents, those to be discussed by Action Groups, and those to be addressed by the community (Nyesigomwe, 2004). Because the women had been involved in analyzing the data, they could see what needed to be done. Ownership in terms of defining the needs created ownership in the activities undertaken to meet those needs.

Deepening Knowledge and Understanding

The data-gathering process, in its various forms, eventually led to a definition of the content and process to be used in support of participants. Since the focus of the projects was ECD, it is not surprising that the great majority of the content included in the various capacity-building activities emphasized issues related to child growth and development. However, many of the projects went beyond promoting theory and practice related to child development.

In Zanzibar (Ahmed, 2004), where the CRTs were already well-grounded in child development information, they required skills and knowledge related to management and community organizing. Thus their training content included basic knowledge of: (1) classroom practice; (2) financial management including keeping financial records; (3) general management and administration of the preschool; (4) monitoring and evaluation skills; and (5) the development of monitoring/evaluation tools. Once trained, the CRTs took responsibility for training others, training as they were trained, using methods that integrated theory and practice.

Creating an Enabling Environment

Several of the projects recognized the need to pay attention to the context within which their interventions were being created. For example, Hua (2004) became convinced that it was necessary to create a male-friendly environment to facilitate the creation of a culture of men's involvement in childrearing. She recognized that it would not be sufficient to simply provide parenting training for fathers; the wider society had to be supportive of fathers' new roles.

Matola, in her work with women-headed households in rural Malawi, quickly identified the lack of supports for these women. She concluded that it was important to sensitize the community to the challenges these

women face and to find ways for the community to support the women, rather than stigmatizing them. Matola also recognized the need to develop supports beyond the community: laws concerning marriage, divorce, and maintenance of children need to be changed as part of creating an enabling environment.

Ensuring Time for Reflection

In a discussion among the authors, it became evident that they built time for reflection within their projects. All felt this was a critical element, the benefits of which included:

1. A deepening of knowledge and understanding. “The reflective times spent with the *Mizu* village teachers provided informal fora allowing theory and culture to be translated into practical ideas. These times built confidence within the teachers, provided collegiality, in addition to offering opportunities to hone their new ECD skills” (Day, p. 78).

2. Greater confidence in carrying out their roles—increased self-esteem. “The [caregivers] assumed new responsibilities, exhibited more initiative and creativity. Their commitment to the center grew exponentially. They seemed to gain a more purpose-driven lifestyle” (Day, p. 60).

3. The creation of a therapeutic environment. For the grandmothers in Uganda, time for reflection often provided a place where people could share their experiences and mourn their losses. Many had lost hope, and the sharing process was healing (Nyesigomwe, 2004).

4. Peer-to-peer support. Participants became each other’s teachers and problem-solvers. “When working with CRTs, this time for reflection helped make them aware of their accomplishments, and this gave them motivation to work together to define the way forward” (Ahmed, p. 66).

5. The evolution of other projects. The women in Matola’s group in Malawi began to talk about other ways in which they could help themselves and created income-generating activities. This was also true in the grandmothers’ support groups in Uganda.

Day (2004) summarizes the value of creating times for reflection: “The synergy that developed fueled the project” (p. 59).

Creating Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation

The capacity-building activity that was the focus of each of these projects was a relatively new activity—regardless of how old the hosting organization—so the outcomes of these efforts are not yet fully evident. Some preliminary data, however, would suggest that there are levels at which the positive impact of the program can already be seen. These include:

1. Impact on the community. Where the wider community was involved in the overall project, there was evidence of the impact of the project on that community, even within a relatively short period of time. In the Uganda case, Nyesigomwe saw the impact of the grandmother's project in terms of community mobilization and organization. She concluded that it would now be easy to implement any development project in the community as a result of the process used to create the support groups. In addition, the project had an impact on services being offered in the community. Within the local health post there was better access to health care and improved health within the population being served; most grandparents were now seeking health care from the health post.

2. Impact on those involved in the capacity-building activities. Day describes what she felt were some of the changes for those caring for the children: "I observed, over time, that the teachers gained increased self-confidence in their teaching. In their new capacities, they gained respect from the community. Leadership became evident in a natural way as teachers found the activities with the children that they enjoyed and accomplished well" (p. 48).

In the Zanzibar case, during the course of working with CRTs, some of them stated that they found the training and support valuable, so much so that they were able to help bring about changes in their communities even during the training.

As noted by Nyesigomwe, "Learning does not end" (p. 76). Grandparents were able to attend residential training sessions and became trainers and leaders themselves. Through the project, grandparents improved their 'social lives' through weekly meetings in their support groups, exchange visits, and other community gatherings. They also realized that the community appreciated their role in caring for the children. They felt recognized.

3. Impact on the family. For Day in Malawi, the impact on the family had several dimensions: (1) it freed parents to work in the fields as there was now a safe place for children to be while the parents were away; (2) it gave parents an understanding of the ways in which they can interact with the child to support the child's development; (3) parents saw the ways in which their children were more prepared for primary school. Day noted that the long-term payoff is that by continuing their education, the children will later help with family income. In this sense the children were both participants and benefactors (p. 7).

4. Impact on the child. Impact on the child was reported in two of the cases: Missani's work in Tanzania and Day's work in Malawi.

Children were impacted directly in the community awareness workshops in Tanzania since they were a part of these activities. In the focus

group discussions and consultation meetings with parents, children were very open in telling how they were being excluded in the process of school governance. As a result, teachers for the most part expressed a willingness to examine the assumptions and wrong perceptions they had about children (Missani, p. 46).

While the children in the Malawi child care center were quite young, they were still consulted. From the inception of the project, all children felt welcome and were considered important by the teachers. When asked their opinions during the PLA, they said they wanted “to sing and dance.” That contribution resulted in traditional songs and dances being included in the daily schedule (Day, p. 34).

5. Ripple effects. Through the ECDVU experience it has been possible to identify ‘ripple effects’ which, in many cases, represent unanticipated outcomes and/or spin-offs resulting from activities people have engaged in along the way.

A significant spin-off is when trainees take responsibility for ‘the next step’ in the development of a project, whatever that might be. In the case of the Zanzibar Madrasa Resource Center, the next step was to create additional training materials and processes. According to Ahmed’s description, once the CRTs were trained in selected classroom practice and school management topics, they drafted a set of training outlines to be used in their training of others. This was expanded on later and made into a full training manual to be used in the training of CRTs (Ahmed, 2004).

Nyesigomwe (2004) describes how participation in the support groups motivated the grandmothers to engage in additional activities. Over time they developed income-generating projects (group and individual gardens) and worked within the community, providing support to the community health center and sending school-age children to school. Grandparents were encouraged to work and save money. As a result, they had income they could use for emergencies. The project also had a multiplier effect in that, even during implementation, non-project families were already copying and learning from the grandmothers. They started cleaning their homes, making utensil racks, and digging rubbish pits. In addition, the zone leaders gained popularity and were now attracting more development projects for their community.

Missani (2004) reported that because of the positive feedback and lobbying effort, the processes used within the community awareness project continue to be introduced and practiced in the rest of the wards. The host organization and district officials have replicated the exercise, with government counterparts and district inspectors taking the lead.

Conclusion

In summary, the principles of effective capacity building have been evidenced in the cases presented in this article. While those involved in the capacity-building activities may have had a theoretical understanding of these elements as their course of study began, the projects they engaged in provided an opportunity for them to apply these principles in a wide diversity of settings, at very different stages in the life of the projects. Clearly the results have demonstrated the ECDVU participants' ability to bridge the divide between theory and practice – for themselves and for those with whom they work. Day commented that the learning of new skills encourages acquisition of more skills. And, as Nyesigomwe notes, "Learning does not end." Indeed, it would appear that the processes stimulated by the capacity-building activities described in the case studies will, in fact, continue, that new skills will be acquired, and that learning will not end.

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