

# Learning purposefully in capacity development

## Description

[Tweet](#)

Why, what and when to measure?

An opinion paper prepared for [IIEP](#), by Alfredo Ortiz and Peter Taylor, INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (IDS), 25th July, 2008

>>[Full text](#)<<

## Abstract

Many capacity development (CD) programs and processes aim at long-term sustainable change, which depends on seeing many smaller changes in at times almost invisible fields (rules, incentives, behaviours, power, coordination etc.). Yet, most evaluation processes of CD tend to focus on short-term outputs focused on clearly visible changes. This opinion paper will offer some ideas on how to deal with this paradox, by examining how monitoring and evaluation (M&E) does, or could, make a difference to CD. It explores whether there is something different and unique about M&E of CD that isn't addressed by predominant methods and ways of thinking about M&E, and which might be better addressed by experimenting with learning-based approaches to M&E of CD.

## Contents

1. INTRODUCTION&WHAT SHOULD MONITORING &EVALUATION (M&E) TELL US ABOUT CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (CD)? 1
2. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT MEANS AND ENDS&WHAT ARE WE MEASURING AND WHEN SHOULD WE MEASURE IT? 5
  - 2.1. IN SEARCH OF PERFORMANCE AND IMPACT .. 5
  - 2.2. STANDING CAPACITY 10
3. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM M & E OF CD DILEMMAS? 13
  - 3.1. DEVELOPMENT BEING A PROCESS ALREADY IN MOTION 13
  - 3.2. LINEAR VERSUS COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS (CAS) THINKING, PROGRAMMING AND MEASUREMENT 14
  - 3.3. ATTRIBUTION 17
  - 3.4. DONOR ACCOUNTING FOCUS VERSUS OPEN LEARNING APPROACHES .. 18
4. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS 24
  - 4.1. INCORPORATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING APPROACHES TO M&E OF CD 26
  - 4.2. LARGE-SCALE EXPERIMENTATION AND ACTION RESEARCH . 27
  - 4.3. USE OF THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) APPROACHES FOR DESIGNING M&E OF CD SYSTEMS 28
    - 4.3.1. WHAT CAN A THEORY OF CHANGE OFFER? . 28
    - 4.3.2. HYPOTHETICAL EXAMPLE OF TOC USE IN EFA 31
  - 4.4. CONCLUSION 33
5. ACRONYMS 34

## 6. BIBLIOGRAPHY 35

### Tags

1. capacity building
2. complexity

### Date

09/06/2026

### Date Created

13/06/2009

### Author

admin