# Improving International Capacity Development: Bright Spots

**LenCD General Assembly 2013: Brussels, Belgium**

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Jim's CD learning journey…

## *The research question…*

Are there emerging approaches to building the capacity of developing public sector intuitions that show more promise than the standard model?

## *The research…*

Theoretical and practical research, key informant interviews, case studies, lots of personal experience

Systematically examined "bright spots" or successful interventions that had surprising results

IMPROVING INTERNATIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

BRIGHT SPOTS

JIM ARMSTRONG
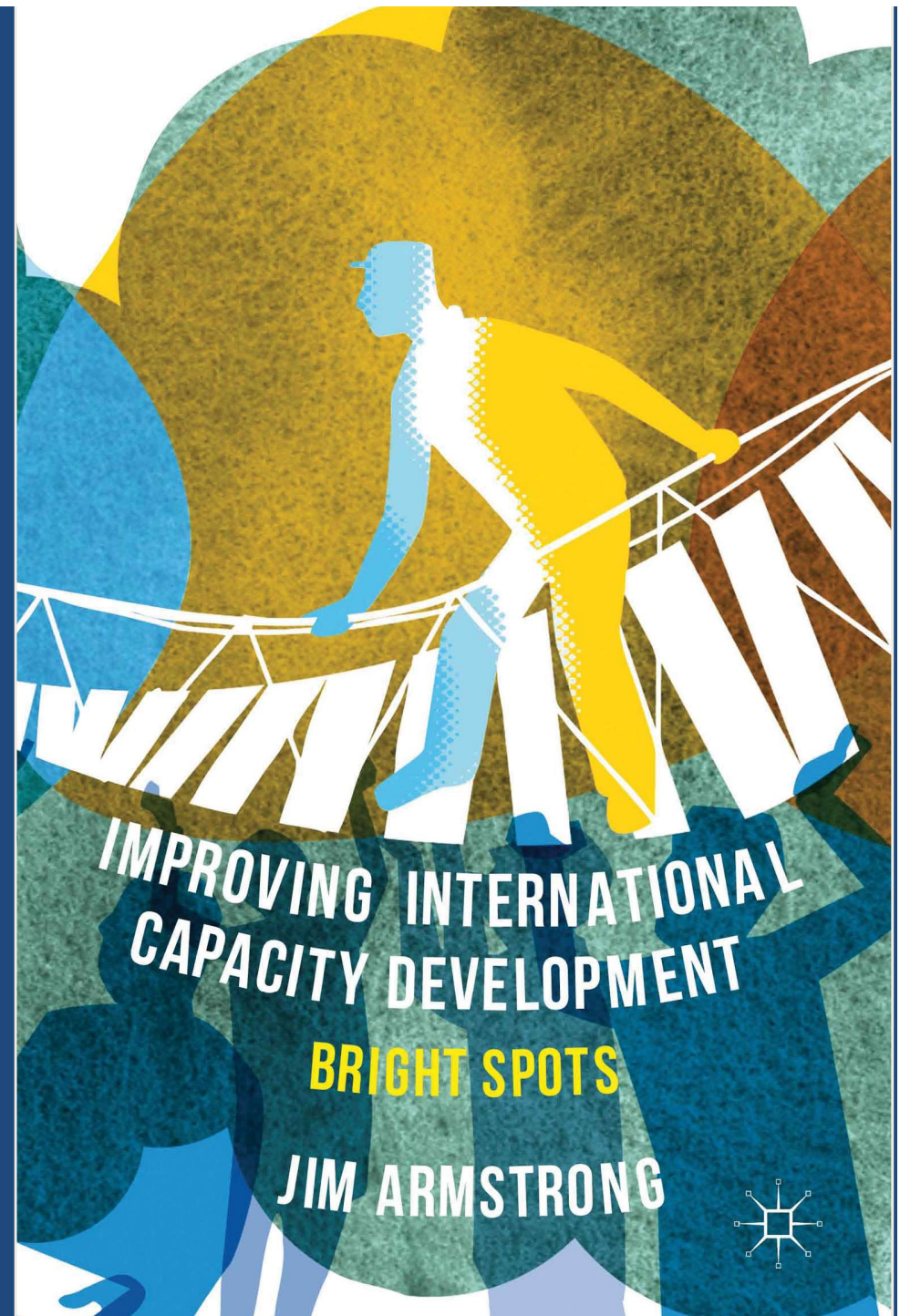
# Capacity…

## Is:

"*That emergent combination of attributes that enables a human system to create developmental value.*"

## Attributes:

1. Acting deliberately and self-organising

2. Generating results

3. Relating to citizens and stakeholders in a way that gains support and trust

4. Adapting and renewing

5. Coherence and focus

(Peter Morgan, 2006)

# *Many levels of capacity development*



- Level 1: individual
- Level 2: organisational
- Level 3: sectoral
- Level 4: institutional

- My main interest is level 4: legal, political, economic and cultural institutions

- Examples:
  - National governments
  - Public services
  - Agencies and ministries
  - Development banks
  - Universities

**Why is it important?**

Like organization change, less than 30% of government CD interventions succeed

*The result of billions of dollars of aid for the 60 poorest nations has been a significant and measurable drop in the standard of living.*

*Collier 2007*

| The best you can expect | |
| --- | --- |
| Indicator | Fastest 20/1 |
| Bureaucratic quality | 20/12 |
| Military in politics | 17/10 |
| Government effectiveness | 36/13 |
| Control of corruption | 27/16 |
| Rule of law | 41/17 |

*Range of timings that the fastest reformers in the 20th century took to achieve basic governance transformations (World Bank, World Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development)*

Annual expenditure on international development $150,000,000,000

$37,500,000,000 goes to capacity development

# *A universal CD standard model?*

- Simple solutions for complex/wicked problems

- External expert owns problem and solution

- Transfers best practices

- DDIME (diagnose, design, implement, monitor, evaluate)

- Outside-in—top-down

- Fixed protocols—projectisation—rigid contracts

# Doubts about the standard model

## The key question…

Has any country ever developed primarily through the outside-in model …based on the wholesale importation of beliefs, expertise and capital?

## The problem with CD…

… the passive importation of techniques, controls, and beliefs, via outside agencies and experts that run around solving everyone else's problems, may be the very problem of development.

**Henry Mintzberg (2006)**

# Capacity for what?
# Begs more questions...

1.  **What type of problem are we trying to address?**

    – Simple, complicated or wicked?

2.  **What type of change do we want to take place?**

    – Episodic, developmental or transformational?

3.  **What needs to change?**

    – Something, someone, relationships, institution?

4.  **What type of knowledge are we dealing with?**

    – *Episteme* (theoretical), *technic* (replicable), *phronesis* (practical wisdom)

# Institutional CD is a wicked problem: IDENTIFIERS

1. Unique in nature and context
2. Have no definitive solution
3. Are socially complex
4. Have no one right answer
5. Have no ultimate test of a solution
6. Efforts to solve them often leads to unintended consequences
7. Often a symptom of another problem
8. Have many interdependencies/multi-causal aspects

# *Exploring bright spots*

- Ministerial Performance Management Framework, Trinidad and Tobago

- Supporting Democracy Project, South Africa

- Capacity Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock, Afghanistan

- Ministry of Health, Afghanistan

- Modernisation of the Caribbean Development Bank, Barbados

- Public Sector Modernisation Design Plan, Guyana

- Overcoming Childhood Malnutrition (CD using Positive Deviance), Vietnam

*Main research finding: there are emerging approaches and patterns that show promise*

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# Co-diagnosing

- Diagnosis is an integral part of the change process—by understanding itself better institutional change is more likely

- Co-diagnosing impacts the system

- Needs stakeholder engagement—especially decision takers and the broader community

- Is critical to the building of the capacity for effective self-improvement and adaptive skills

- Legitimate ownership... respect for sovereignty

- Problem and resolution are *given back*

- *Asset* rather than *deficit* based

- Moves away from assessment against normative standards

# *Co-designing*

- Stakeholders agree on what they learned and what to do next

- Together, identifying what learning is needed by the system in order for capacity to grow

- People support what they help create

- The right people are involved: leaders, process owners, broader community

# *Co-acting*

- Rather than grand designs, co-acting takes an experimental and iterative approach to tackling wicked CD problems

- Based on an evolving understanding of both the problem and of what works in moving towards a solution

- Activities without which learning would be impossible—the relationship between the cerebral and the action creates the conditions for change

- Work is given back

- Learning by doing

- Places emphasis on the practical wisdom (phronesis) in the system

- External CD expert plays the role of coach, facilitator, inquirer

- Positive Deviance methodology

# *Co-learning*

- Developing a deeper understanding of the organisation is something for capacity developers and system members to do together

- It is demand driven—those doing the learning identify what they need to know

- Offered as experience that can be incorporated into locally appropriate solutions

- In real time

- Continuous throughout the intervention

- Development of adaptive skills

- Action learning

- Outcome Mapping

- Developmental Evaluation

# Essential criteria for successful institutional CD

1. Co-diagnosing, designing, acting, and learning
2. Authentic ownership (problem and solution)
3. Engaged leadership <u>and</u> community (broad and high)
4. Inside-out—demand driven
5. Replaces transplanted best practices (outside-in) with context specific, locally crafted solutions
6. More flexible time horizons, work plans, schedules
7. Large focus on developing adaptive skills
8. Highly skilled CD experts
9. Use of emerging evaluation methodologies (e.g. DE, OM)

# Institutional CD facilitator's role

*Standard Model:* **Expert**

1. Simple problems
2. Owns problem & solution
3. Transplants best practices
4. Right answers
5. Obliterates uncertainty
6. Separate from system
7. Lone Ranger
8. Promises to solve problems with simple solutions

*Phronesis Approach:* **Facilitator**

1. Wicked problems
2. Gives problem & solution back
3. Locally crafted solutions
4. Asks right questions
5. Embraces uncertainty
6. Part of the system
7. Coach
8. Promises to help system learn adaptive skills to be able to solve its own problems

# *Emerging competency profile for level 4 institutional capacity developers*

- **Ruminating with power**

- **Coaching skills**

- **Facilitation expertise**

- **Framing/sense making ability**

- **OD skills**

- **Relationship building**

- **Developing adaptive learning**

- ***Bricoleur***

- **Social innovator**

**Plus mastery of many tools:**
- Change management
- Partnering and collaboration
- Brokering
- Change readiness assessments
- Communications and social media
- Organisational assessment
- Stakeholder analysis
- Force field analysis
- Strategy
- Appreciative inquiry
- Monitoring and developmental evaluation
- Etc.

# Potential problems

- Political leadership engagement
- Broad community engagement
- Donor paradigm shift
- Giving up failsafe systems
- Knowledge to action gap
- Flexible work plans and contracting
- More process: less prescriptive activity
- Moving from supply to demand driven
- Scalability
- Lack of skilled level 4 CD facilitators
- More research needed