

The Software Side of Capacity Development: Experiences on the Ground

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From a perspective of practical experience in capacity development efforts in a very intensive way it became increasingly clear that even in a situation where people have a reasonable level of technical and professional capabilities these need to be translated into delivery capacities on their responsibilities, and for the public services in particular on the delivery of satisfactory services to the general public and to their clients. The kind of interventions required to turn these technical capabilities into delivery capacities are what are identified as the software side of Capacity Development. What they entail and their importance to CD efforts is what is being shared here below, though this may well be well known to most of the Network members.

The key CD interventions addressed from this perspective are:

- Workers' motivation and the incentive structure leading to a total overhaul of pay and wages structure in the public service,
- Change of work culture and attitudes to become more responsive and more positive from the despondent and the "just being there" attitude. Furthermore, instilling new values and integrity in public service.
- Improving physical work environment as well as management practices to make the workplace more attractive and more convenient to human needs and to make work atmosphere more empowering to workers to encourage innovativeness and creativity,
- Investing in working tools and work facilities.

The above interventions necessitated government to adopt a more strategic planning approach for the use of the meagre budgetary resources that were allocated to transform a low performing public service, in itself a CD initiative, as it introduced an efficient manner in which public service can be turned into a more effective and better performing institution. These types of CD interventions are usually not accorded the deserved importance by most of the "experts" in CD.

More recent exposure has revealed that beyond the attitudinal issue in the equation of CD is the general state of the mind of the group of people in question. Where there exists a general state of low or lack of empowerment, where the minds are not sufficiently freed to be able to identify the problem and take an appropriate action, or where they lack the confidence to be assertive in facing the challenges before them. The conclusion is that CD interventions can only succeed where people enjoy freedom of their minds to allow them to think freely, and act independently. To prepare people and to develop them to acquire such a frame of mind requires strong leadership competencies.

Leadership competencies can be described in several ways but in this context it can be described as:

- The ability to inspire people for change even when it carries pain to do so, with no visible gains in the immediate future.
- Ability to focus people on issues that are ripe for change while avoiding excuses and detractions from responsibility for the outcomes of self action, or even inaction!

These are only examples of the necessary competency areas identified here to be able to foster and nurture self esteem and confidence that is the foundation of CD among followers. It is widely acknowledged that leadership competencies do not just emerge on their own. There has to be deliberate efforts to develop them. Therefore it can be concluded that the first point of entry in CD efforts is first to address the leadership issue and leadership competencies.