



Workshop on New Approaches to Capacity Development

11-12 December 2017

OECD Boulogne Conference Centre



Workshop Summary

Context

The Capacity Development 4.0 workshop was the first in-person meeting for members of the Task Team that over the past eight months have reflected on current and innovative approaches to deliver capacity for national statistical systems. The event, which gathered nearly 60 participants, including new members, took stock on the work and intermediary inputs of the CD4.0 initiative. Three main elements framed the discussion during the two-day workshop. A new conceptual framework for designing capacity development programmes in statistics was presented, practices for implementation of programmes were discussed under this framework, and a set of indicators for assessing progress of such implementation efforts was defined. The feedback, perspectives and insights from a broad range of stakeholders to the workshop contributed to inform the work of the Task Team and define next steps ahead of the PARIS21 Board meeting and for the long-term consolidation of the project.

Day 1

11 December, Morning

PARIS21 and UNDP welcomed the participants and conveyed the main motivation for the workshop, stressing the existent need for re-thinking current approaches to capacity development, both to satisfy national priorities and the 2030 Agenda. Different initiatives for improving the mapping of current capacity needs and the implementation of the SDGs were briefly presented by the two institutions.

An introductory session allowed participants to share their perspective and expectations for the workshop, mentioning areas where capacity development should be looking. Some of these critical aspects included the notions of soft skills, management, innovation, modernisation, communication, data for education, sustainability, institutional autonomy, co-operation and quality assurance.

The first bloc of keynote plenary sessions presented an overview of two relevant areas related to capacity, particularly in the context of developing countries. The first presentation brought the result-based framework (used by the Development Assistance Committee members) into the discussion of capacity programmes, stressing the need for a better alignment between countries and donors in the implementation and use of national indicators and the role of result frameworks for SDG implementation. The second presentation explored the potential for skills transfer between private actors and national statistical systems, stressing the incentives and benefits that both parts could have for enhancing collaboration. Two countries, Myanmar and Laos, provided their perspectives on capacity development, exploring the factors that have made their programmes more successful in recent years.

The PARIS21 Secretariat provided an overview of the conceptual framework for Capacity Development 4.0 in the fifth session, followed by a discussion. Participants expressed their perspective on the approach, highlighting the importance of considering the whole national statistical system and the role of donors. The Secretariat engaged to integrate these aspects into the current framework and incorporate these comments ahead of the Board meetings.



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11 December, Afternoon

Breakout sessions:

Conceptual Framework

The session focused on presenting the CD4.0 conceptual framework, identifying the main components, levels and targets considered since its inception. Inputs for the session (from ODW and UNECE) focused on mapping the state of statistical capacity and the current strategies and principles for modernising the statistical field. The session was useful to define the scope of the CD4.0 concept, introducing the concepts of “capability” to the context of data and statistics. A mindmap exercise allowed for 6 main themes/branches of statistical capacity to be identified: tools and resources; challenges; institutional setting; opportunities; levels and types of actors; and concrete actions. The activity allowed participants to identify recurrent aspects in the assessment of capacity and to link statistical activities to different dimensions of the conceptual framework. Building on the mind map exercise and the discussions, participants acknowledged the multidimensionality of data and statistical capacity 4.0 so as its complexity when constructing the framework. Still, participants agreed on the insufficient scope of many programmes and the utility of having an innovative, structured approach to incorporate multiple dimensions when considering capacity development.

Operationalisation

The Operationalisation group gathered actors from different profiles involved in implementation mechanisms (countries, donors and multilaterals). The discussion centred on identifying current practices for capacity development and their subsequent “success criteria”. The discussion aimed at identifying these criteria through the lens of the CD4.0 framework. Input presentations from the Nordic bloc (Norway and Denmark), Eurostat and DFID reflected on lessons learned for what is considered to be successful implementation. The “ranking” exercise characterised the success criteria in 5 main groups: First, good project management, which allowed to set proper objectives, identify and involve key stakeholders and users and implement result-based monitoring. Second, countries’ commitment, that will be able to have absorptive capacity once the project is implemented. Third, human resources, where basic competencies are still lacking, talent is difficult to retain and management could be improved by consolidating a community of practice and changing learning methods (e.g. training trainers). Fourth, environmental factors, where culture and work environments are important when for programme success, and political institutions play a key role. Finally, sustainable solutions, where tangible outcomes can be defined. Team members also highlighted the importance of bringing examples of *unsuccessful* implementation and incorporating a time dimension to the Conceptual Framework.

Measurement

The session opened with presentations from FAO, World Bank, US Census Bureau and IDB who introduced their assessments on statistical capacity. Each institution highlighted the benefits of their own tools, stressing next developments (in particular: questions at the individual level – FAO and US Census) and how countries are expected to use the results. In this regard, the varying purposes of the tools were mentioned, since TASC and IdCA focus on benchmarking and producing recommendations, while Statistical Capacity Indicators is a publicly accessible tool to compare countries – although not the one used by the World Bank



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for investment purposes. IDB introduced the discussion on the comparability of results across countries and over time, showing how TASC performed in Latin America.

PARIS21 introduced the results of analysing questions and indicators from the Open Assessment Repository through a CD4.0 perspective. The conclusion was that most assessments target the same dimensions (mainly the production of statistics), while others are not covered (“orphan”): mainly those that refer to the individual level, and those related to politics and power and incentives. The discussion focused on the relevance of international assessments as a tool for national advocacy and for communication with donors. In this sense, in spite of the overlaps between assessments, each of them has its own purpose and makes its own contribution to CD4.0. Representatives from countries raised the issue of respondent burden, while representatives of international agencies mentioned how the confidentiality of assessments impedes sharing of results.

There was a consensus about the need for continuing to document assessment purposes, and proposing possible indicators for orphan dimensions. This would provide a practical way forward to foster co-ordination between international organisations.

Closing session Day 1

PARIS21 and UNDP delivered some key takeaways for the first day of the workshop: First, there was a wide consensus among participants on the need of change in perspective for statistical capacity development, building on the strengths of traditional approaches, incorporating new elements and looking for a modular approach in the future. Second, the debate was an opportunity to rethink the way statistical capacity is conceived. Third, the CD4.0 Task Team agreed to continue working as several questions remain open regarding capacity development. Finally, participants were invited to reflect on the concrete outputs of the Task Team for the short and medium term.

Day 2

12 December, Morning

The morning session during the 2nd day provided inputs for the participants on the future of capacity development for statistical systems. The first presentation showcased the OECD’s work on skills development and its linkages with the labour market. The presentation provided a snapshot of the current thinking for skills towards 2030, in connection to large-scale skills-focused projects such as the programme for international student assessment (PISA) and the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) and underlined the innovative domains for global competence/well-being. The second presentation reflected on the Problem-Driven Implementation Approach, an innovative approach for thinking and building state capacity. The presentation highlighted the importance of building capacity for implementation and the virtues and limitations of adaptive approaches and fit-for-purpose solutions. The ensuing discussion drew on reconciling the top-down and bottom-up approaches to building capacity to identify possible mapping of the OECD skills framework to CD4.0.



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Two participating countries (Palestine and Georgia) highlighted the human dimension that capacity development should incorporate, and the challenges faced by countries when aligning donor and national priorities. Countries also stressed the need for further dialogue with policymakers/government and mentioned key areas, including human resources, quality and trust and user engagement.

The second session in the morning focused on the future trends that will influence statistical capacity development over the next 10 years, which would set the discussion in the afternoon. The session brought the perspective of civil society, NSOs and the Secretariat on the elements that the group should consider when designing new capacity programmes. Participants stressed the importance of using the current momentum on the SDGs and involve countries and academia more actively in this reflection. The need for a holistic approach was also stressed, and the role that methodologies such as GSBPM could have for the modernisation and adoption of standards in statistical systems. Other trends that will affect statistical capacity development were discussed, including the changing demand for skills in the labour market, the effects of digitalisation for the public sector, the increasing importance of results-based frameworks, the debate on statistical legitimacy and post-truth, and the new funding mechanisms for data and statistics.

12 December, Afternoon

Breakout sessions:

Conceptual Framework

The session started with a presentation of the CD4.0 survey co-produced by PARIS21 with UNSD, and which will be circulated among NSO heads as part of the initiative. Participants noticed that several essential aspects of capacity development tend to be hidden within broad dimensions of the matrix. Participants also discussed the aspects/dimensions that could be included in the future, such as communication, ethics, timeliness, data dissemination, data quality, good practices and knowledge sharing. There was also some interest in including the timeframe to 2030 and having an iterative approach to the matrix. Participants also agreed to provide a revised version of the Matrix, together with an improved glossary, for the next PARIS21 Board meeting.

Operationalisation

The subgroup discussion started with the question on what the main output provided to the group should be. There was a general consensus that it was still early to propose Guidelines for capacity development. Alternatively, participants proposed on working with existing examples to identify horizontal issues not already captured through the existing capacity indicators, and consider the strengths and weaknesses of programmes. The reflection should eventually arrive at recommendations that will serve for the future design of guidelines. Participants also suggested to focus on the competency dimension of the CD4.0 framework, and donor countries stressed the importance of bringing a more clear donor dimension into the framework, incorporating a “partnership” dimension into the examples. Participants agreed that focusing on the innovative aspects of the CD4.0 framework, and bringing them to life through the provided examples could provide a good basis for the future work on guidelines. The audience also stressed the importance of collecting examples from recipient countries, including OECD experiences in the analysis, and identifying and targeting the right audience for this work. The Secretariat agreed to provide a template/structure for members to highlight innovative dimensions for capacity development. These



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examples will be provided around the end of January, to be included in the final report for the PARIS21 Board.

Measurement

Participants agreed on the fact that the progress looks good and satisfactory on the objectives and deliverables of the subgroup's Terms of Reference. They discussed what could be feasible to report to the board in April 2018 and what output could be achieved by the end of February. Participants agreed that the current draft report (Measuring Statistical) should be consolidated by 15 Feb-28 Feb; that measurement for orphan categories should be proposed and that a typology of assessment purposes should be made. The group discussed the assessment metadata; open content and response burden related to the assessments; and whether this report should be descriptive or prescriptive. It was also proposed to engage with other communities that might have solutions and measures; and to categorise dimensions according to what really matters (Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3).

Concluding comments

Switzerland, UNDP and PARIS21 summarised the discussion during the second day and described the main outcomes and future deliverables of the three Task Team subgroups.

The Conceptual Framework subgroup agreed on continue working on the current framework, incorporating new elements to the CD4.0 matrix and revising the companion glossary to better reflect the specificities of the framework. The Operationalisation subgroup agreed to work further on additional implementation examples, highlighting innovative dimensions considered in the CD4.0 framework; this work should set the basis for identifying successful practices in the future. The measurement subgroup agreed to consolidate the draft report, identifying indicators for unmeasurable categories in the framework.

The workshop came at a very timely moment to help take stock and assess the material that was produced over recent months, while also identifying areas that need further work. The next major milestone for this work will be at the 2018 PARIS21 Annual Board Meetings on April 4-5 in Bern, Switzerland. PARIS21 will present the main results of the Task Team as well as plans thereafter.

Switzerland emphasised that capacity development needs a strong framework and government support to be sustainable. Switzerland will continue helping countries attain the sustainable development goals. By involving civil society, private sector and academia in their national statistical systems to avoid politicisation and ensure accountability for the 2030 Agenda.

PARIS21 and UNDP are similarly committed to continuing the CD4.0 agenda, working towards hands-on and practical material that can help inform NSOs as well as donors to improve capacity development. The success of the workshop was largely due to the commitment and engagement of members of the Task Team and others, and this buy-in will be a great stepping stone for further leveraging this work into the statistical and development community alike.