Capacity Building Activities for Educational Stakeholders for Improving the Quality of Education

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Abstract

The commitment of the Indonesian Government to improve the quality of education over the last decade has continued to pose a serious challenge to all stakeholders in the education system. One of the strategic approaches to improving education quality is through the employment of capacity building activities. This paper deals with capacity building activities for educational stakeholders in Kabupaten Sikka, Nusa Tenggara Timur Indonesia during the implementation of the Nusa Tenggara Timur Partnership Education Program (NTT PEP). Specifically, attention will be on the capacity building activities for education stakeholders such as school principals, school supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* (District Education Office) staff, and school committee members in Kabupaten Sikka. Efforts will focus on how the capacity building activities have affected the performance of the schools in Kabupaten Sikka and how this has also been reflected in the level of improvement of education in Indonesia. Finally, what can be learned from the capacity building activities in Kabupaten Sikka will be highlighted.

Keywords: capacity building, school, system, improvement, stakeholder, education.

Introduction

In the years since the enactment of Indonesia's Act No. 20/2003 on National Policy in Education System, which regulated educational decentralization, Indonesia has made significant progress in the education sector. The implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) and School-Based Curriculum (SBC) can be outlined as a part of the education progress. Capacity building or the capacity development program, which relates to school activities, has made an important contribution to this progressive achievement.

Like in many developing countries, in Indonesia, capacity building is considered as a major issue of concern in the development agenda of the government. Even the meaning and nature of capacity building is not well understood in Indonesia (Fanany, Fanany, & Kenny, 2009), but capacity building has become one of the major themes for Human Resources Development in Indonesia, especially in the field of education. Therefore, a number of capacity building activities in the education sector have been conducted, with the main goal being to improve the quality of education.

The conventional term capacity building is defined by UNDP (1998) as *"Capacity can be defined as the ability of individuals and organizations or organizational units to perform functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably"*. This basic terminology covers three important aspects: (i) capacity building as a continuing process or an ongoing activity and not a passive state (short-lived condition); (ii) the human resources and their empowerment are the most important aspect of capacity development; and (iii) the function of the organizations plays an important role, especially with implementing strategies for capacity development (Enemark & Williamson, 2003). Principally, the main purpose of capacity building is to improve the abilities of action or process in order to perform activities or functions, solve problems and to set and achieve objectives (Gibbon, Labonte, & Laverack, 2002; Yeatman & Nove, 2002; Murray & Dunn, 1995; Twigg, 2001).

In many developing countries, most capacity building activities are conducted in response to 'ad hoc' requests from governments, mostly from ministries of education. However, capacity building has, in fact, developed as a strategic approach and as a key feature of education that enables people to address determinants of standards and to improve education outcomes (UNESCO, 2009).

Eade (1997, p. 3) argue that capacity building should be seen as an approach to development rather than a set of discrete or pre-packaged interventions. Furthermore, organizations and institutions must think and understand how capacity building operates, not about a program or initiative (National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), 2008). As Pannell (2004) suggested, there are two conditions that ideally should both be met for capacity building: (i) capacity building should be expected to result in changed practices or actions 'on the ground', and (ii) anticipated changes or actions should be sufficient to make a real difference to program outcomes. The OECD basic concept of capacity building states it as: "the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully" (OECD, 2006).

In the context of this paper, it will present the experiences of the author in conducting and facilitating some capacity building activities for education stakeholders such as teachers, school principals, school supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* (District Education Office - MoNE) staff, and school committee members in Kabupaten Sikka, Province of Nusa Tenggara Timur,

Indonesia during the period 2004-2007, when the author worked as a System Support Advisor (SSA) at Nusa Tenggara Timur Primary Education Partnership (NTT PEP), an Indonesia-Australia Basic Education Project.

Brief Information about NTT PEP

Between 2002 and 2008, the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Australia implemented a bilateral basic education program. The program was known as the Nusa Tenggara Timur Primary Education Partnership (NTT PEP).

The partnership was implemented in two phases. The first phase was from 2002 to 2003, in which the partnership location was the District of Bajawa, Ngada. The second phase was carried out from 2004 to 2008, with partnership activities covering three districts on the island of Flores, namely Ende, Ngada, and Sikka.

The goal of the partnership was to support the introduction of sustainable improvements in the quality of education for Grades 1-3, in line with Indonesian primary education and administrative reforms. The partnership developed and implemented improved classroom practice, school- and community-based management, and supportive district and sub-district educational management activities.

There were four interrelated components of the partnership:

- Classroom teaching and learning (Component 1);
- Effective, transparent and participatory school management (Component 2);
- System support and policy implementation (Component 3);
- Partnership management, coordination and monitoring (Component 4).

Capacity Building Program in Kabupaten Sikka

Kabupaten Sikka is located on the island of Flores, Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), Indonesia. According to Indonesia National Statistics (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2010), Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT) is one of Indonesia's poorest and most deprived provinces.

Over the last decade, many national and international donor programs/projects carried out significant components in Sikka District. Most of the projects were designed to build and improve on individual and institutional capacities in a variety of disciplines across all levels. Some international organizations such as GTZ, AusAID, UNICEF, UNDP, JICA, Plan International, Swisscontact, and Care International have engaged in projects in Kabupaten Sikka (Sikka District).

Most projects focus on the support of the local government to implement decentralization and devolution of power and authority from the center to the regions.

In supporting the implementation of a national decentralization policy in education, NTT PEP especially through Component 3 (system support) has conducted series of programs to support capacity building of Education stakeholders in the Sikka District for education policy implementation.

As partnership baseline data indicates, there are few differences in the form of administration practices for the three districts (Ende, Ngada, and Sikka). The difficulties and challenges they face are very similar, though there are evident differences in the capacities of the systems to address them. The quality of senior educational administrators varies both

between and within the three District Education Offices, but this does not change the basic nature of the required programs for capacity building.

The examples presented in this paper are selections of the capacity building activities, conducted from 2004 to 2007, which focused only on human capacity building, and institutional capacity building. Although, within the partnership there were some activities related to infrastructure capacity building.

Human Capacity Building refers to the "process of equipping individuals with the understanding, skills, and access to information, knowledge, and training that enables them to perform effectively" (UNDP, 1992) for educational stakeholders, while Institutional Capacity Building focusses on developing and fostering an educational issue or policy in order to enhance decision making (GEO, 2006). According to Berg (1993), both human and institutional capacity building in general consist of three main activities: (i) organization strengthening, this activity deals with the process of institutional development; (ii) procedural improvement, which aims at the changing of a general functional or system reform; and (iii) it is related to skill enhancement, in this context: general education, On-the-Job Training (OJT), and professional deepening in crosscutting skills (Tachiki, 2002). Furthermore, Tsafack Nanfosso (2011) describes three different kinds of capacity building activities; professional enhancement, procedures improvement, and organization strengthening. Moreover, capacity building can also be distinguished by its purpose and can be divided into two activities; technical capacity building, and general capacity building (Simister & Smith, 2010).

Outline of the Partnership Capacity Building Activities

There are eight selected capacity building activities of main concern to the partnership aimed at improving the capability of Educational Stakeholders in Kabupaten Sikka. The following explanations of each capacity building activity are arranged sequentially or based on the necessity of the activity (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of capacity building activities for educational stakeholders

N	Capacity Building Activity	Targeted Stakeholder
1	Curriculum	Teachers, principals, supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* (District Education Office – MoNE) staff
2	Planning	Principals, *Dinas Pendidikan* staff
3	Staff selection	*Dinas Pendidikan* staff
4	Primary Education Testing Program	Teachers, principals, supervisors
5	Service delivery at Sub-district level	*Dinas Pendidikan* staff
6	Development/improvement of grievance processes	Teachers, principals, supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* staff
7	Management of document distribution to schools	*Dinas Pendidikan* staff
8	Improvement of cluster activity regulation	Teachers, principals, supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* staff

Capacity Building in Curriculum

Curriculum management and curriculum leadership have become major challenges for the districts in Indonesia since the introduction of the new competency-based draft curriculum in 2004. Accompanying the new draft curriculum was the decision that districts may allow up to 30% of instruction time in primary schools to be devoted to locally generated curriculum. This has been undertaken by schools primarily by including an element of instruction in local customs and arts.

The 2004 draft curriculum had significantly less guidance for classroom teachers than the previously used syllabus, and this guidance was further reduced when the draft was revised in 2006. The 2006 curriculum framework has only broad, minimalist guidelines for the outcomes to be achieved. The expectation is that the development of detailed curriculum will be undertaken at the local level.

In *Dinas Pendidikan* (District Education Office - MoNE), a Curriculum section is a part of the District Education Office structure, but these tend to be staffed by civil servants with no educational background. The sections' main tasks involve the management of a range of educational competitions (national, provincial, local) and the management of the districts' testing programs. When, a test needs to be developed, the Curriculum officers arrange for a small group of senior educators in the district, usually supervisors, to come together to produce the test. The curriculum leadership function is yet to be well articulated at the district level. Most of the staff in the Curriculum sections have the capacity to help teachers translate the national curriculum guidelines into a teacher's program, but none try to tackle that task.

The issue is compounded by the fact that Indonesian school principals, unlike their Western colleagues, do not see this work as a part of their role. They expect to manage the school, but not to direct teachers or assist with teachers' programs or classroom practice. Professional supervision and the guidance of teachers is the responsibility of the supervisors. In this context, teachers and principals look to supervisors for leadership in all professional areas, including the new field of curriculum development. The supervisors, however, have not been trained for this role, and have tended not to engage in the articulation of the curriculum. In addition, there is a problem with how effectively the supervisors can perform this role – in many cases, they do not visit teachers often enough to provide the necessary level of support. But the respective roles of school principals and supervisors are deeply rooted in national educational history and regulation. If districts are to improve their performance in curriculum development and implementation, they have to make use of their supervisors for this task.

An example of capacity building in curriculum is in the professional development program for supervisors, which addresses the issue of curriculum leadership and curriculum development, including the explored notion of a partnership in this work between school principals and supervisors.

Capacity Building in Planning

An examination of the current District Education Office-MoNE planning processes demonstrated the need for improvement of data collection and analysis. Timely and accurate data are essential underpinnings of educational planning, which in turn is an essential component of effective administration.

All schools in Indonesia complete an annual national survey (Format T) which covers key areas such as the number and state of classrooms, student and teacher number, teacher qualifications, student learning outcomes, student drop-out and repetition rates, and student-to-book ratios. District Education Offices had grown in their appreciation of the importance of data for educational administration and was at various points along the road to improving their data collection and data utilization systems. Much of this work has been focused on Format T, data from which was not previously available to District Education Offices because they did not have the capacity to enter computer data locally. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which aggregates the data, provides disaggregated data at a provincial level only, thus not enabling district access to or use of their schools' data. The provision of district-level data is necessary in order to improve the targeting of a range of District Education Office budget lines, including *Dana Alokasi Khusus* (DAK)/Special Allocation Grand, the district-administered budget for the improvement of school infrastructure, and the *Dana Alokasi Umum* (DAU)/General Allocation Fund, a district-administered budget for the refurbishment of classroom equipment, including furniture.

Policy development at the national level has seen the construction of Minimum Service Standards for schools. This policy outlines the required minimum standards for schools in areas such as facilities, equipment, learning resources, and student outcomes. Districts need to be able to monitor and support their schools' progress towards the achievement of these standards. Most of the required information is contained in Format T, and making that data available to District Education Office makes it much more possible for them to plan and monitor the progress of schools towards the Standard.

While Format T provides much of the data which is useful for the District Education Office administration, it does not cover all data needs. Every year, each District Education Office engages in a number of ad-hoc data collection processes in response to local, provincial, and national needs. It is impossible to establish a system which can predict all these needs in advance, but it is possible to institutionalize additional data collection processes which will reduce the number of times information is sought on an ad-hoc basis.

To build District Education Office capacity to collect and use data needed for effective planning and data-based improvement of District Education Office budgeting, some actions have been carried out. The action focused on Format T, on the identification of other required data which is not available through Format T, and on building the capacity of the District Education Office in their Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and skills to support the data collecting/gathering, reporting and analysis.

Capacity Building in Staff Selection

The partnership program has made a significant contribution to the improvement of selection of school principals and supervisors in Kabupaten Sikka. This was an important area of educational administration as international research demonstrates a strong correlation between the quality of educational leadership and school effectiveness (Austin, 1978; Brookeover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Edmonds, 1979; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979; Fuller, 1987; Lezotte, 1989; Levin & Lezotte, 1990; Reynolds & Cuttance, 1992; Cheng, 1994; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Kythreotis & Pashiardis, 2006; De Maeyer, Rymenans, Van Petegem, Van den Bergh, & Rijlaarsdam, 2007).

It is important to note, that the quality of schools depends in large part on the quality of educational leaders or head teachers. The quality of new head teachers depends, among other things, on the promotion process and on the preparatory training for them. One of the objectives of capacity building in staff selection is to improve the promotion and training program for head teachers and school supervisors.

Since head teachers play a crucial role in improving the quality of education in schools, the District Education Office considers that the replacement process provides an excellent opportunity to improve the quality of schools by: improving the head teacher selection process itself; and improving the training offered to newly selected head teachers.

The current process for the selection of head teachers is conducted centrally, lacks transparency and is poorly understood at the school community level. Baseline data indicates that schools perceive the selection process to be unfair.

Effective leadership is particularly important at this time, when Indonesian education is undergoing major change. Contextually, as in other districts of Indonesia, past practices of selecting school principals in Sikka District did not focus on evaluating the educational leadership qualities of the candidates. Factors like seniority and personal patronage played a significant role and the processes were not transparent or fair. Qualifications, prior professional performance, and student learning outcomes were intended to be taken into account, but their weighting against factors like seniority was unclear, and anecdotal information suggests that they were often of secondary importance.

As a result of partnership initiatives, new processes for the selection of principals have been developed and implemented in all three districts. Senior District Education Office staff, supervisors, and Component 3 System Support Advisers (SSAs) have produced selection procedures which are more transparent and focus more on 'promotion on merit'. The process included selection panels and a more transparent assessment of candidates' abilities, capability, and potential.

Since 2006, Sikka District has implemented new processes to select and to appoint new principals. There was an expectation that the processes would continue to be used as new national regulations limit principal appointments to a four-year tenure, with the possibility of one additional term of reappointment to the same school.

The past practice of selecting supervisors in Sikka exhibited similar problems to those found in the selection of school principals. The selection processes for supervisor positions were not transparent and not well focused on educational leadership. The head of the District Education Office was the key determiner of promotion to supervisor positions.

The partnership has supported the development of new procedures for the selection of supervisors. These are much more transparent and include selection panels, tests of relevant knowledge and interviews.

The activities regarding to the selection procedures have built capacity in two ways: by raising the standard of appointees to the positions, and by honing the skills of senior administrators at District Education Offices-MoNE in designing and managing the selection processes.

Capacity Building in Primary Education Testing Program

As a part of the decentralization of education, the national end-of-primary-school examination was abolished, and districts were thus charged with the responsibility for all primary level assessment. The development of large-scale testing instruments for primary education is a highly specialist task, with the required expertise not readily found at the district level. Districts have approached their new testing responsibilities in a variety of ways. In some cases, no attempt was made to construct district-wide tests, and tests were written and administered at the sub-district or cluster level; where in others, district tests were constructed for the end of grade six. However, without taking the quality of tests into account, results cannot be validly compared to assess district-wide standards because the marking and recording was undertaken by local staff, with no external quality control.

The problem of primary school testing is not a local issue, but a national one. To solve the problem, the Partnership has conducted a series of capacity building activities for school supervisors in order to improve their knowledge and skills in constructing, administering, validating, and marking these tests.

Capacity Building to Improve Service Delivery at Sub-District Level

The district is divided into administrative sub-districts, with the District Education Office represented by an office within each sub-district. These offices are small, with an appointed head and up to three other staff. In some areas, it has not been possible to fill all the positions.

The sub-district offices are staffed by public servants who are not expected to possess a background in education. Their functions are largely administrative, but include some tasks which relate closely to the professional work of schools. For example, the sub-district offices are expected to be involved in approving the schools' budgets and expenditure reports, and in approving school development plans. They are also expected to manage complaints from parents and school staff.

In practice, the sub-district offices are frequently bypassed by parents and school staff who take their issues direct to the District Education Office-MoNE. In the absence of suitable forms of electronic communication this results in inefficiencies, with much time lost to travel, particularly from the more remote areas. It is not uncommon for the trip to be made more than once because the required officer of District Education Office may not be present, may be busy, or may require additional documentation.

The partnership has also conducted capacity building to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the sub-district office, in terms of solving school problems in the sub-district office level, and for reducing the need for parents and school staff to travel to the District Education Office-MoNE.

Capacity Building in Development/Improvement of Grievance Processes

One of problems regarding to the new selection procedures for school principals and supervisors, which has been implemented in the partnership program, was that the procedure does not have an associated grievance process. Transparency and accountability are key criteria of good administration, and grievance processes are an important contribution to both transparency and accountability.

Contextually, Sikka district has processes for management of complaints from parents, teachers and principals. A partnership survey indicated anecdotal information that these are not always effective, with some parents and teachers having a legitimate grievance choosing not to proceed with their complaint, and others bypassing the official process. The effectiveness of the sub-district office's role in complaints management needs particular attention in order to improve the grievance process.

As the result of capacity building, the partnership has established a grievance process guideline for new principal and supervisor selection processes and document reviewing the complaints management process for parents and school staff.

Capacity Building in Management of the Distribution of Documents to Schools

Communication between the District Education Office and schools is a significant problem in some districts due to the difficult topography and limited transportation and communication options.

Systems for distributing correspondence to schools vary. Sometimes, when the matter is deemed not urgent, they can be as basic as leaving mail unattended on a desk in a public area of the District Education Office until someone from the school picks it up. Another common strategy for the dissemination of information is for the documents to be provided to heads of sub-districts, who then call school principals to their offices to be passed the information.

The partnership focused the capacity building program as a way to improve the distribution of documents to schools, on the work with District Education Office staff responsible for the distribution of documents to explore options for improving the system and the processes for distribution of letters and other documents to schools.

Capacity Building to Improve of the Regulation of Cluster Activities

School clusters are an important part of the administrative structure of district education. Primary clusters can have as few as three schools, although five to seven is more usual. The clusters form the main focus for professional development activities for both teachers and school principals. Teachers' Working Groups and Principals' Working Groups exist in the clusters, and operate with varying degrees of frequency and effectiveness. Each cluster has one core school and several satellite schools, and the principal of the core school is the chair of the cluster. An important source of professional development funds for clusters is the province, which provides the districts with a purpose-specific budget. The districts require clusters to make submissions, identifying the activities which they want funded. The budget is not sufficient to meet all requests, and the District Education Office make decisions about which applications are to be funded. At present, clusters use a variety of processes to determine the nature of their professional development programs, and not all the processes are of high quality. It is proposed to develop a set of guidelines to support the clusters in this process, with the aim of ensuring that the processes are participative and result in professional development programs which better meet the needs of the teachers and principals in the cluster.

Some problems arise because although they are active, clusters have no formal status in educational administration. Funds to be used by the clusters are given to the core schools, and in some cases, satellite schools have not had appropriate access to these funds. It is therefore important to create the regulations for cluster activities. For this reason, a

Guideline for Clusters' Development of Professional Development Programs and Regulations for Cluster Activities has been developed and implemented in the three districts, as a part of capacity building program of the partnership.

Conclusion

As key lessons and experiences of the capacity development program, it can be highlighted that capacity building for educational stakeholders had resulted in a number of major achievements in the Sikka district of Indonesia. Results of the capacity building program have been acknowledged in the District/Kabupaten level, regional/provincial level, as well as at the national level.

The program has improved community participation in education management processes at the school level, greater commitment among the district governments, behavioral changes in the classroom and community levels, and the establishment or on-going development of transparent and accountable selection procedures for the professional development programs.

Finally, a series of capacity building activities during the project has positively impacted on individual, institutional, and societal level. These achievements relate to key UNDP polices on capacity building goals such as the goal of capacity building to tackle problems related to policy and methods of development, while considering the potential, limits and needs of the people (in this context, school principals, school supervisors, *Dinas Pendidikan* (District Education Office-MoNE) staff and school committee members) of the country (referring to Kabupaten Sikka, Nusa Tenggara Timur) of Indonesia (UNDP 1997). In general, that means that capacity building activities are concerned with measuring up to the UNDP criteria.

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