INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT AND PERFORMANCE OF CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate in Philosophy degree in International Development

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the concept of capacity building as a field of knowledge production and international development practice. It is organized around three articles. The first is a systematic review of the scholarly literature. The second is conceptual, examining the rigor and relevance of the scholarly literature. The third article is empirical, addressing the conceptualization of the context of capacity building projects and project performance.

Article 1 reviews the scholarly literature on capacity building based on 72 peer-reviewed articles. The article, published in the journal *Public Administration and Development*, sought to answer the following questions: what do we know about the evolution of the concept of capacity building? What does this tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of the concept? The article shows that while capacity building has benefited from conceptual renewal, the idea behind it is as old as development itself. This renewal is due to the weak theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the concept.

Article 2 is a conceptual article. It examines the scholarly literature on capacity building through the lens of the gap between methodological rigor and practical relevance. The article shows that the production of knowledge on capacity building is oriented towards practical relevance while neglecting methodological rigor. We propose new pragmatism as an epistemological background to reconcile methodological rigor and practical relevance.

Article 3 is empirical. Using Scott's (2011) institutional theoretical framework, it analyzes the conceptualization of the context of capacity building projects based on two comparative case studies from West Africa. Using a qualitative approach, the article measures the degree of integration of the regulative (project governance rules), normative (professional standards), and cognitive-cultural (beneficiaries' shared beliefs) pillars. The results indicate that the regulative pillar is largely compiled with in both projects, while the normative and cognitive-cultural pillars are to some extent neglected. Thus, while the projects appear successful in terms of project management, this does not necessarily guarantee development success.

Keywords: Capacity, capacity building, capacity development, institution building, institutional development, rigor-relevance gap, new pragmatism, context, institutions, institutional context, project performance, institutional dynamism.

Résumé

Cette thèse analyse le concept de renforcement des capacités en tant que domaine de production de connaissances et de pratique du développement international. Il s'articule autour de trois articles. Le premier est une revue systématique de la littérature académique. Le deuxième est conceptuel et examine la rigueur et la pertinence de la littérature académique. Le troisième article est empirique et traite de la conceptualisation du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités et de la performance des projets.

L'article 1 passe en revue la littérature académique sur le renforcement des capacités, sur la base de 72 articles évalués par les pairs. L'article, publié dans la revue *Public Administration and Development*, cherche à répondre aux questions suivantes : que savons-nous de l'évolution du concept de renforcement des capacités ? Qu'est-ce que cela nous apprend sur les forces et les faiblesses du concept ? L'article montre que si le renforcement des capacités a bénéficié d'un renouvèlement conceptuel, l'idée qui le sous-tend est aussi ancienne que le développement lui-même. Ce renouvèlement est dû à la faiblesse des fondements théoriques et méthodologiques du concept.

L'article 2 est un article conceptuel. Il examine la littérature scientifique sur le renforcement des capacités sous l'angle de l'écart entre la rigueur méthodologique et la pertinence pratique. L'article montre que la production de connaissances sur le renforcement des capacités est largement orientée vers la pertinence pratique, tout en négligeant la rigueur méthodologique. Nous proposons le nouveau pragmatisme comme fondement épistémologique pour réconcilier la rigueur méthodologique et la pertinence pratique.

L'article 3 est empirique. En utilisant le cadre théorique institutionnel de Scott (2011), il analyse la conceptualisation du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités sur la base de l'analyse comparée de deux études de cas en Afrique de l'Ouest. À partir d'une approche qualitative, l'article mesure le degré d'intégration des piliers régulateur (règles de gouvernance du projet), normatif (normes professionnelles) et cognitif-culturel (croyances partagées des bénéficiaires). Les résultats indiquent que le pilier régulateur est largement respecté dans les deux projets, tandis que les piliers normatif et cognitif-culturel sont dans, une certaine mesure, négligés. Ainsi, si les projets s'apparentent à des succès de gestion, mais cela ne garantit pas nécessairement en matière le succès de développement.

Mots-clés: Capacité, renforcement des capacités, écart entre rigueur et pertinence, nouveau pragmatisme, contexte, institution, contexte institutionnel, performance des projets, dynamisme institutionnel.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACBF: African Capacity building Foundation

AfrEA: African Evaluation Association

BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China & South Africa

CIDA: Canadian International Development Agency

ECBP: Evaluation capacity building project

EDS: Economic development services

FMI: Fonds monétaire international

GAC: Global Affairs Canada

GAR: Gestion Axée sur les Résultats

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HDI: Human Development Index

IDRC: International Development Research Centre

IMF: International Monetary Fund

LDP: Local development project

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MESA: Monitoring and Evaluation System Assessment

MDG: Millennium Development Goals

NGO: Non-governmental organization

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

OCDE: Organisation de coopération de développement économique

ODD: Objectifs de développement durable

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development

OMD: Objectifs du millénium de développement

ONG: Organisation Non-Gouvernementale

ONU: Organisation des Nations Unies

PDIA: Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation

PIP: Project Implementation Plan

PM: Project Management

RBM: Result-Based Management

UVICOCI: Union des Villes et Communes de Côte d'Ivoire

SAP: Structural Adjustment Policies

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

VOPEs: Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation

Dédicace

À ma maman
À mon papa et sa femme

À Marie-Flore et nos enfants, Adeba et Eliam !

Remerciements

Je tiens avant tout à exprimer ma gratitude au Prof. Lavagnon Ika d'avoir accepté de superviser ma thèse de doctorat. Sa disponibilité, sa patience, sa rigueur intellectuelle ont été de précieux atouts pendant cette longue et tumultueuse expérience doctorale. J'aimerais surtout souligner son exceptionnelle humanité qui fait de lui non seulement un superviseur, mais aussi un ami, un frère. Merci du fond du cœur!

Je voudrais également souligner toute ma gratitude au Prof. Lauchlan Munro, qui n'a cessé d'aiguiser ma curiosité depuis notre premier contact à l'occasion du cours de théories en développement qu'il m'a enseigné.

Mes sincères remerciements vont à l'endroit des professeurs de l'École de développement international, en particulier les professeurs Sanni Yaya, Nasser Ary Tanimoune, Susan Spronk, Joshua Ramisch, Stephen Baranyi.

Je remercie également le département et le personnel administratif de l'ÉDIM non seulement pour avoir été toujours prompt à aider, mais aussi de m'avoir offert la possibilité de donner des cours. Cette thèse est en partie le fruit de cette expérience.

À l'ensemble des étudiant(e)s de mes différents cours.

J'aimerais exprimer ma gratitude à Edoé Agbodjan, PhD et le CLEAR-CESAG pour avoir favorisé mon séjour de recherche à Dakar. Je remercie également Pascal Lavoie et la Fédération Canadienne des Municipalités.

À Christiane, je ne te dirai jamais assez merci.

À Emma

À ma « tantie » Juliette, merci pour votre soutien,

J'aimerais ici renouveler ma reconnaissance à toute ma famille à Toronto, Londres et Abidjan : Atta, Ataa, Fredrica, Eli, Abel, Samuel, Jean-Baptiste, Léon, Benjamin.

À mes amis Paul Zombre, Djétinan Koffi, Frédéric et Williams Kabran, Arnold Zinsou, Sarah Breka.

Merci Annick!

Je voudrais également remercier tous mes amis de la région de Gatineau/Ottawa : Douwere, Ben, Kramo, Amani, Herman, Richard, Louise, Les époux Yapi (Gérard et Zalira).

Introduction générale de la thèse

Cette thèse de doctorat porte sur le renforcement des capacités en général et la gestion de projets de renforcement des capacités en particulier, comme domaine de production de connaissances et de pratique en développement international. Elle porte à la fois sur les littératures académique et grise. D'un point de vue géographique, la thèse porte sur l'expérience de l'Afrique subsaharienne à travers les études de cas de la Côte d'Ivoire et du Sénégal, bien que des exemples en Amérique latine et les pays d'Asie soient évoqués. Il convient de souligner que la littérature ici analysée est largement inspirée de l'expérience des pays donateurs occidentaux et des organisations multilatérales, telles que la Banque mondiale, l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU) et l'Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Économique (OCDE). Ce choix se justifie par le fait que la quasi-totalité de la littérature du renforcement des capacités porte sur l'expérience des donateurs traditionnels (Kacou et al., 2022 ; Williams, 2021).

1. L'émergence du renforcement des capacités

Au début des années 1990, le concept du renforcement des capacités émergea comme une réponse aux défis du développement international (Mayville, 2019). Cette période fut particulièrement marquée par le constat d'échec des politiques d'ajustement structurel (Cornia et al., 1987 ; Krueger, 2004 ; Sarrasin, 1997, 1999), qui, selon Krueger (2004), s'expliquerait par le manque de volonté et l'absence de capacité des pays récipiendaires. Le renforcement des capacités fut présenté comme une réponse appropriée dans la mesure où il visait à mettre les pays récipiendaires aux commandes de leurs processus de développement (Jaycox, 1993). De ce fait, le concept de renforcement des capacités acquit le statut de pierre angulaire des politiques et pratiques du développement (De Grauwe, 2009). La création de la Fondation pour le renforcement des capacités en Afrique[1] en 1991, financée par un consortium de bailleurs de fonds au premier desquels la Banque mondiale, témoigne de cette orientation stratégique. Le renforcement des capacités est ainsi passé d'un concept marginal dans les théories de la modernisation à un domaine à part entière du développement (Mayville, 2019), avec un attrait à la fois pour les pays bénéficiaires de l'aide (Chimhowu et al., 2019), les organisations internationales (ACBF, 2018 ; OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2005 ; UNESCO, 2013 ; World Bank, 2009), les partenaires bilatéraux (AFD, 2020 ; AID, 1970; USAID, n.d.) et les praticiens (Baser & Morgan, 2008 ; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Morgan, 1999 ; Ubels et al., 2010).

Pourtant, la définition du concept fait débat (Analoui & Danquah, 2017 ; Kacou et al., 2022). Les organisations du développement ont tour à tour proposé une définition, qui, du reste, reflète leurs visions respectives du développement international (Analoui & Danquah, 2017 ; OCDE, 2008 ; UNDP, 2008 ; World Bank, 2009). Par exemple, OCDE (2008) définit le renforcement des capacités comme « le processus par lequel les individus, les organisations et les sociétés libèrent, créent, renforcent, adaptent et préservent leurs capacités au fil des ans » (P. 272). Cette définition est contestée par certains auteurs, suggérant qu'elle est vague et imprécise ; puisqu'elle est large et difficile à rendre opérationnelle (World Bank, 2009). Une telle définition rend laborieuse, voire impossible l'évaluation des capacités nouvellement renforcées ou développées (Lempert, 2015 ; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016). Et l'adaptation inadéquate des quatre niveaux du modèle de Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick (2010) dans la pratique

[1] African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

actuelle a pour conséquence de tronquer de facto la mesure de la performance des projets de renforcement des capacités, puisqu'elle vise à évaluer les capacités, plutôt que des performances (Williams, 2021). Les quatre niveaux sont les suivants : la réaction (le degré de satisfaction des participants) ; l'apprentissage (le degré de changement d'attitude et d'amélioration des connaissances et des compétences) ; le comportement (le degré de changement lié à la formation) ; et le résultat (le résultat final lié à la formation) (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2010). Dans la pratique, ces niveaux ont conduit à ce que Lempert (2015) a appelé les « smiling sheets », qui sont remis aux participants à la fin de la session de formation. Ces formulaires mesurent les deux premiers des quatre niveaux de Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick's (2010) à travers des thèmes tels que « la prise de conscience » ou « l'amélioration de la situation » (Lempert, 2015), tandis que l'impact est mesuré par un comptage des participants (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016).

Quoi qu'il en soit, les différentes définitions du renforcement des capacités (Kacou et al., 2022) mettent *à minima* l'accent sur l'objectif de capacitation des individus, des organisations et des sociétés. Les projets de renforcement des capacités visent donc à fournir aux pays en développement les outils et les connaissances nécessaires pour planifier, mettre en œuvre et évaluer efficacement leurs politiques, programmes et projets de développement (Chrysostome, 2019 ; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Haque et al., 2021 ; Lusthaus et al., 1999 ; Qualman & Bolger, 1996 ; UNDP, 2008), avec pour objectifs ultimes l'autonomie et la durabilité (Andrews et al., 2017; Ika & Donnelly, 2017).

Pourtant, l'émergence du renforcement des capacités n'avait rien de révolutionnaire, pour reprendre l'analyse de Kuhn (1970). L'idée du renforcement des capacités a connu ses balbutiements avec la naissance du développement international, et les concepts tels que « institution building »[2] ou « institutional development »[3] ont précédé à celui du « renforcement des capacités » (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002 ; Kacou et al., 2022 ; Venner, 2015). Dès la période des années 1950-1960, marquée par la décolonisation, la stratégie visait à aider les pays nouvellement indépendants à s'aider eux-mêmes (Ellerman, 2001 ; Smillie, 2001), en les dotant d'un inventaire de base des organisations du secteur public et, par la suite, de les renforcer afin d'améliorer leurs performances, c'est-à-dire la fourniture des services de qualité aux citoyens (Goldsmith, 1992). Au tournant des années 1980, le secteur privé fut intégré dans la stratégie, inscrivant ainsi le renforcement des capacités dans un processus de soutenabilité (Smillie, 2001). Par exemple, le Programme d'action d'Accra (2008) plaide en faveur de l'intégration du secteur privé dans les stratégies de développement, afin de garantir à la fois des emplois décents et la protection de l'environnement. Ainsi, les efforts de renforcement des capacités devaient concomitamment porter sur les entreprises privées pour en faire de meilleurs partenaires de développement (Kiwanuka et al., 2020 ; Siddiqi et al., 2023).

Désormais, le renforcement des capacités est un concept omniprésent du développement (De Grauwe, 2009). Il est enchâssé dans la quasi-totalité des programmes et projets de développement (Lussier, 2016 ; Venner, 2015). Il constitue une pratique à part entière du développement international, bénéficiant d'un financement important, environ 25 % du

[2] Institution building peut se traduire par « construction des institutions ». Dans ce texte, « institution building » est utilisé comme concept.
[3] Institutional development peut se traduire par « développement des institutions ». Nous utilisons la notion de développement des institutions.

volume total de l'aide publique au développement (Armstrong, 2013 ; Lempert, 2015 ; Mayville, 2019 ; World Bank, 2009). En outre, les pays bénéficiaires de l'aide financent des programmes et projets de renforcement des capacités, bien que ces financements n'aient pas été consolidés au niveau mondial (Kacou et al., 2022). Pour ces pays, les défis en matière de capacités demeurent une préoccupation majeure (Bockstael, 2017 ; Chimhowu et al., 2019 ; Horta et al., 2016 ; UNFCC, 2023).

2. Les défis du renforcement des capacités

Bien que le concept suscitât un enthousiasme justifié au début des années 2000, une série d'analyses, en particulier des praticiens, suggéraient que la mise en œuvre du renforcement des capacités était problématique (Baser & Morgan, 2008 ; Datta et al., 2012 ; Lusthaus et al., 1999 ; Morgan, 1999, 2000). Comme le soulignent Baser & Morgan (2008), la notion de renforcement des capacités présente une double caractéristique ou encore pose « des problèmes de capacité »[4], car elle renvoie à la fois à un processus (process) et le résultat de ce processus (outcomes) (Baser & Morgan, 2008; Ika & Donnelly, 2019; McEvoy et al., 2016; Williams, 2021). Dans la mesure où les projets contribuent à l'obtention de résultats en matière de planification, de mise en œuvre et d'évaluation de programmes et de projets de développement, il s'agit d'un processus : un moyen de parvenir à une fin (réduire la pauvreté à travers l'autonomisation des bénéficiaires). De même, les capacités peuvent représenter le résultat, le produit final, d'un projet de renforcement des capacités (former des bénéficiaires en évaluation d'impact).

[4] "The capacity issues."

Dans le schéma classique du développement international, le renforcement des capacités est un processus exogène de transfert de compétence et de savoir-faire par le biais de formations, de coaching, et d'ateliers, etc. (Ika & Donnelly, 2017). Cette approche se justifie par la faiblesse des institutions[5] des pays récipiendaires de l'aide. Selon la tradition néo-institutionnaliste, les institutions créent les incitatifs et les contraintes qui façonnent les comportements individuels et organisationnels (North, 1990; Scott, 2011). En l'occurrence, les débats sur la (bonne) gouvernance du début des années 1990 (World Bank, 1992) renvoyaient à la création et au renforcement des institutions, puisqu'il s'agissait d'instaurer un ensemble de règles de base de fonctionnement d'une économie de marché (Moore, 1993 ; World Bank, 2002). Bref, la richesse d'un pays dépend de la qualité de ses institutions (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012).

Le défi du renforcement des capacités est celui de la création et/ou du renforcement des institutions capables d'influer sur le comportement des acteurs. Pourtant, sa double caractéristique, processus et résultat de développement, qui constitue son bien-fondé, s'avère son talon d'Achille. D'un point de vue conceptuel, le lien entre les processus et les résultats peut paraître évident ; mais, la pratique tend à réfuter cette évidence, partant de la complexité d'un tel processus (Chapman, 2016; McEvoy et al., 2016). Dans une large mesure, les projets de renforcement des capacités créent de nouvelles organisations, introduisent de nouvelles procédures organisationnelles ou forment des individus à des techniques innovantes, mais les processus endogènes sont presque toujours ignorés (Olivier

[5] Les institutions ici désignent les règles formelles et informelles, tandis que les organisations sont les acteurs qui opèrent dans le cadre de ces règles (North, 1990, 1991).

de Sardan, 2021). Ainsi ces initiatives échouent invariablement parce qu'elles induisent un cercle vicieux : les capacités requises pour leurs succès sont quasi inexistantes, ce qui justifie d'ailleurs ces projets (Andrews et al., 2017; Ika & Donnelly, 2017). En réalité, cette carence de capacités s'explique par l'importation des modèles des pays donateurs, qui requièrent une organisation sociétale différente et un certain niveau de capacités que ne possèdent pas les bénéficiaires (Andrews et al., 2017). En Afrique, on observe couramment un écart entre les normes officielles prescrites, les techniques professionnelles requises et les comportements réels des agents de l'État, ce que Olivier De Sardan et al. (2017) appellent « les normes pratiques ».

3. Point d'ancrage philosophique et épistémologique de la thèse

3.1. Le nouveau pragmatisme

Cette thèse trouve son ancrage épistémologique dans le nouveau pragmatisme, qui est un terme que nous appliquons à un groupe d'universitaires, de praticiens et d'universitaires praticiens travaillant sur les politiques publiques et le développement international. Les nouveaux pragmatistes partagent plusieurs caractéristiques épistémologiques, méthodologiques et idéologiques. Les auteurs du nouveau pragmatisme sont entre autres : Andrews (2013); Ang (2016) ; Chang (2009); Grindle (2007); Hausmann et al. (2006) ; Nubukpo (2013) ; Ramalingan et al. (2014) ; Sabates-Wheeler (2009); Scott (1998) ; Stiglitz (2008) ; Swanson & Bhadwal (2009). Les précurseurs intellectuels sont notamment Hirschman (1967) ; Keynes (2008) ; Polanyi (1983) ; Rondinelli (2013), etc. Le nouveau pragmatisme est issu de la tradition du pragmatisme américain de la fin du 19ème siècle et du début du 20ème siècle (Dewey et al., 1998 ; James, 2014) et trouve sa source épistémologique dans le réalisme critique (Archer, 1998 ; Bhaskar, 2008 ; Collier, 1994).

Les auteurs du nouveau pragmatisme ne sont pas unanimes sur tous les sujets. Bien qu'ils aient parfois des désaccords les uns envers les autres, ils partagent les convictions fondamentales suivantes :

- une position relativement non idéologique par rapport aux débats des années 1980 et 1990 sur l'opposition entre l'État et le marché et l'acceptation que l'État et le marché – souvent accompagnés d'une société civile saine et indépendante – jouent inévitablement un rôle économique important dans toute société équilibrée (Rodrik, 2003 ; Stiglitz, 2008) ;

- un engagement éthique et idéologique en faveur d'une société progressiste dans laquelle les biens et les opportunités sont répartis plus équitablement, ainsi qu'une reconnaissance pratique de la difficulté d'y parvenir (Sabates-Wheeler, 2009; Stiglitz, 2012) ;

- un engagement en faveur de l'élaboration de politiques fondées sur des données probantes, en mettant l'accent sur l'importance d'adapter les politiques, les pratiques et les outils au contexte local, en prêtant attention aux variables historiques, géographiques, sociales, économiques, politiques, structurelles et épidémiologiques (Ang, 2018 ; Hausmann et al., 2006 ; Qian, 2003 ; Ramalingan et al., 2014 ; Rodrik, 2010) ;

- par conséquent, une position agnostique à l'égard de la question de savoir quel pourrait être le « meilleur » outil politique pour atteindre un objectif donné dans une situation donnée, et un scepticisme à l'égard des grands concepts et des solutions uniques (Grindle, 2007; Rodrik, 2008, 2009 ; Scott, 1998) ;

- une préférence pour l'apprentissage progressif plutôt que pour des recettes prescriptives ou des solutions prédéfinies (Andrews, 2015; Hausmann et al., 2006 ; Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009) ;

- un pluralisme méthodologique qui inclut des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives, ainsi que des méthodes mixtes (Archer, 1998 ; Danermark, 2012) ; et, par conséquent,

- la conviction qu'il n'existe pas d'étalon-or en matière de techniques d'évaluation qui soit applicable à tous les contextes ou problèmes politiques (Alkire et al., 2018 ; Bédécanats et al., 2018 ; Jatteau, 2020 ; Patton, 1997; Stern et al., 2012).

En substance, le nouveau pragmatisme est une épistémologie dont la quintessence réside dans une quête de solutions pratiques aux problèmes de développement, tout en évitant les postures idéologiques. Les bonnes intentions doivent être accompagnées d'outils d'analyse et d'évaluation appropriés afin de formuler des politiques, programmes et projets de renforcement des capacités pertinents pour les bénéficiaires (Chambers, 2017). Ce qui exige une bonne intelligence du contexte et une forte inclination à l'apprentissage. Ces auteurs sont conscients de la loi des conséquences inattendues (de Alteriis, 2020; Hirschman, 1967; Ika, 2018; Koch, 2024). De ce fait, ils prescrivent l'analyse du contexte institutionnel, en recherchant notamment les règles non écrites et les institutions informelles qui façonnent le comportement humain. Ils sont conscients du pouvoir social, politique et économique et des contraintes qu'il impose à l'art du possible. Bref, pour le nouveau pragmatisme, le contexte des projets de développement joue un rôle primordial ; car il permet de déterminer la pertinence des projets de renforcement des capacités, et rejeter toute forme de « décalcomanie » (Hugon, 2011). En filigrane, les nouveaux pragmatistes font la distinction entre le désir (la responsabilité morale) d'aider les pauvres et la capacité de le faire efficacement. Lorsque le désir d'aider n'est pas accompagné d'une approche appropriée, il peut involontairement nuire aux bénéficiaires (Coyne, 2013; Evans, 2004).

En insistant sur la nécessité d'adapter les politiques et pratiques du développement selon le contexte des bénéficiaires, le nouveau pragmatisme cherche à dépasser l'essentialisme ontologique qui sous-tend la théorie et la pratique du renforcement des capacités. L'essentialisme ontologique en développement postule la rationalité humaine, peu importe la situation géographique, selon la tradition philosophique et scientifique occidentale (Tellería, 2021). Il implique que, comme cela fut explicite dans les théories de la modernisation, les pays en développement (traditionnels) devraient, dans une perspective téléologique, suivre la voie de la modernisation des pays industrialisés. Partant, les théories de développement reflètent l'expérience des pays développés et de leurs critiques inhérentes (Nederveen Pieterse, 2010 ; Peet & Hartwick, 2015), offrant le spectacle d'une impasse (Schuurman, 2014). Cette impasse tient au fait que la dimension ontologique (la nature du développement) de ces théories a été éclipsée par des préoccupations épistémologiques (comment apprendre du développement) (Martinussen, 2004 ; Tellería, 2021).

Le nouveau pragmatisme vise à dépasser l'essentialisme ontologique en insistant sur l'intelligence du contexte des bénéficiaires de l'aide. C'est un impératif qui se justifie par la méfiance à l'égard « des modèles voyageurs » (Bierschenk, 2014 ; Olivier de Sardan, 2021 ; Olivier de Sardan et al., 2017). Un projet de renforcement des capacités qui a réussi à accroître les capacités administratives au Botswana ne sera pas nécessairement couronné de succès au Bhoutan ou en Bolivie. Puisque, la perception des acteurs diffère selon les zones géographiques (Sayer, 2000 ; Tellería, 2021). L'essence de l'existence humaine et les visions du monde sont influencées par le développement institutionnel qui s'inscrit dans le temps long (North, 1990; Scott, 2011); par conséquent, la recherche de solutions adaptées enjoint une compréhension approfondie du contexte.

3.2. Le pragmatisme américain, source philosophique du nouveau pragmatisme

Le nouveau pragmatisme est en quelque sorte une régénération du pragmatisme américain de la fin du 19ème siècle et du début du 20ème siècle (Bernstein, 2010 ; Dewey, 1954 ; James, 2014). Les pragmatistes partageaient une conviction commune sur les idées, perçues comme des outils, générées dans des contextes sociaux particuliers en fonction des défis (Bernstein, 2010 ; Menand, 2007). Pour eux, les idées ne se développent pas suivant une logique interne propre, mais dépendent de leurs porteurs humains et de leurs environnements. La philosophie pragmatiste est de ce fait à l'avant-garde de l'idée selon laquelle les politiques de développement doivent impérativement être contextualisées (Misak, 2011 ; Sayer, 2010). En effet, bien que les groupes d'humains soient confrontés à des défis de développement au Bangladesh ou au Bénin, la réponse à ces défis ne peut être identique, puisque ces défis et les interprétations qui en découlent varient selon les cas. Les idées sont des réponses provisoires à des circonstances particulières et non reproductibles, leur survie ne dépend pas de leur immuabilité, mais de leur adaptabilité (Menand, 2007). Autrement dit, les projets de renforcement des capacités doivent être des réponses contextualisées à des défis de développement particuliers (Tywoniak et al., 2021). Toute tentative de réplication doit être soumise à une adaptation rigoureuse (Grindle, 2004, 2011).

Pour les pragmatistes, les connaissances sont faillibles ; les vérités établies aujourd'hui sont susceptibles d'être renversées, rejetées et/ou démontrées comme n'étant qu'un cas particulier à l'applicabilité limitée (Misak, 2007). Un projet de renforcement des capacités de l'administration fiscale ayant connu du succès aux Bermudes en 2010 peut échouer en 2023 dans le même contexte. Pour les pragmatistes, les connaissances sont des instruments d'actions réussies (Dewey et al., 1998). Bien que les échecs offrent des possibilités d'apprentissage, une connaissance ne trouve sa légitimité que dans sa capacité à résoudre les défis de développement. La tradition pragmatiste américaine « met l'accent sur l'application pratique des idées en les mettant à l'épreuve de l'expérience humaine » et se concentre sur un « univers changeant plutôt que sur un univers immuable comme le prétendaient les idéalistes, les réalistes et les thomistes » (Gutek, 2014, p. 76 et p. 100). Autrement dit, le pragmatisme renvoie à une « sociologie de l'épreuve » (Lemieux, 2018). Ainsi, le développement des théories et des projets de développement doit être soumis à l'épreuve de la réalité des bénéficiaires. Ceci commande que la pratique du développement soit connectée à la recherche de premier ordre, aux exemples réels, à l'expérience de la vie réelle (Hacking, 2007) ; pourvu que cette connexion ne se fasse pas sur un mode anecdotique, et des « décisions arbitraires » (Fine, 2007). Lorsqu'il apparait que nos connaissances sont insuffisantes, voire inappropriées pour obtenir des résultats de développement, elles doivent être abandonnées afin d'évoluer vers de nouvelles idées, expériences, objectifs de développement qui tiennent compte de l'expérience vécue des bénéficiaires (Berk & Galvan, 2009 ; Fine, 2007).

À l'origine, le pragmatisme est une réaction au cartésianisme ; ce qui a eu deux conséquences importantes pour ce courant philosophique. D'une part, ce fut une force dans la mesure où les pragmatistes contestaient l'exigence d'une quête de fondement de la vérité à travers « le doute méthodique » que postulait le cartésianisme, ce que Dewey (2014) a appelé « la quête de la certitude » ou « la théorie de la connaissance du spectateur ». La faiblesse majeure du cartésianisme, selon les pragmatistes, est d'avoir établi des dichotomies nettes entre ce qui est mental et physique, le sujet et l'objet, supposant que toute véritable connaissance devrait présumément reposer sur des fondements indubitables afin d'écarter tous les préjugés. Or une telle conception de la philosophie impliquait toute une série de problèmes interdépendants qui préoccupaient les pragmatistes : le problème de la connaissance du monde extérieur, le problème de notre connaissance des autres esprits, le problème de la représentation indiscutable de la réalité (Bernstein, 2010). En revanche, le pragmatisme se présentait comme une méthode qui permet de régler les différends philosophiques en les confrontant à l'expérience humaine (James, 2014) : le test de la vérité étant l'épreuve (Lemieux, 2018).

D'autre part, la réaction au cartésianisme a conduit à une certaine réticence à l'égard de l'épistémologie et à un manque d'effort de développement théorique (Engel et al., 2005 ; James, 2014 ; Rorty, 1979). Il est possible d'établir rétrospectivement que les pragmatistes sont tour à tour empiristes[6], naturalistes[7], faillibilistes[8] et holistes[9] (Misak, 2011). Mais ceci n'est pas satisfaisant d'un point de vue scientifique, si tant est que nous souhaitions appréhender le réel de manière rigoureuse. Certes, l'épreuve exigée par le pragmatisme est un impératif pour répondre aux défis de développement, mais il appartient à la recherche d'analyser et de comprendre les mécanismes qui sous-tendent la pertinence et l'efficacité d'une théorie, d'une politique ou d'un projet de développement.

3.3. Le réalisme critique, l'école de pensée du nouveau pragmatisme

Les nouveaux pragmatistes ne sont généralement pas explicites quant à leur position épistémologique. Nous affirmons qu'ils sont en fait membres de l'école réaliste critique. Situé entre le positivisme et les épistémologies constructivistes/interprétatives, le réalisme critique synthétise les approches wébérienne et durkheimienne des sciences sociales. Il adopte une position critique et « déconstructiviste » à l'égard de la construction et de l'utilisation des concepts, tout en maintenant une perspective équilibrée. L'une des caractéristiques du réalisme critique est qu'il combine deux modèles qui ont souvent été imaginés comme étant non seulement différents, mais incompatibles : l'être humain en tant qu'agent causal, qui fait en sorte que les choses se produisent, et l'autre en tant que « créateur de sens », qui interprète le monde d'innombrables façons (Sayer, 2010, p. ix). Autrement dit, le réalisme critique fait le procès de l'essentialisme ontologique, en postulant que les groupes humains sont le moteur de leur existence sur la base de l'interprétation

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[6] En ce sens qu'ils exigent que les croyances et les théories soient liées à l'expérience.
[7] En ce sens qu'ils veulent des explications philosophiques terre à terre (naturelles par opposition à surnaturelles).
[8] En ce sens qu'ils pensent qu'aucune de nos croyances ne nous fournit un fondement certain pour la connaissance.
[9] En ce sens qu'ils considèrent que leur vision de la vérité et de l'enquête englobe tous les domaines d'enquête.

qu'ils font de leurs mondes. Selon que l'on soit au Canada ou en Côte d'Ivoire, les groupes humains appréhendent la réalité différemment, ce qui impacte leurs expériences quotidiennes. Par conséquent, les Objectifs de Développement Durable, applicables à presque tous les pays, ne peuvent se défendre que du bout des lèvres (Easterly, 2017).

Si le réalisme critique, comme les post-mouvements, tend à rejeter les grands récits et les projets universalistes du grand modernisme (Scott, 1998), il ne rejette pas la possibilité de généralisations en sciences sociales, pourvu qu'elles ne soient pas exprimées comme des lois universelles ainsi que le suggère le positivisme (Danermark, 2012). Les concepts tels que la « bonne gouvernance » doivent donc être soumis à une critique historique et théorique rigoureuse, comme l'a démontré Grindle (2004). La raison en est qu'une loi (par exemple, la loi de la gravité) est la description d'un mécanisme qui existe en tant que propriété dans la réalité, dont les effets observables varient fortement en fonction des circonstances concrètes (Danermark, 2012, pp. 74–75). Par voie de conséquence, les conditions de succès des projets de renforcement des capacités reposent sur des mécanismes particuliers selon les circonstances (Ika & Donnelly, 2017). La tâche fondamentale de la recherche est de découvrir ces mécanismes. L'attention du chercheur ne doit être seulement portée sur les évènements, mais aussi sur les mécanismes qui les produisent. Il est donc nécessaire de poser des questions « transfactuelles », c'est-à-dire aller au-delà des évènements factuels en postulant et en identifiant les mécanismes génératifs qui les rendent possibles (Archer, 2015).

Le réalisme critique n'implique pas qu'il soit possible d'atteindre une connaissance absolue et infaillible. Au contraire, le réalisme critique et le faillibilisme se complètent l'un l'autre. Il est possible de progresser vers une plus grande vérité ou une meilleure adéquation pratique, mais il ne faut pas s'attendre à la perfection, quelle qu'elle soit. En philosophie, le réalisme critique implique le passage de l'épistémologie à l'ontologie et, en ontologie, le passage des évènements aux mécanismes. Il s'agit des considérations métathéoriques (les défis ontologiques et épistémologiques) qui se trouvent au cœur du réalisme critique. Car, le travail scientifique doit nécessairement porter à la fois sur les questions ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques (Danermark, 2012). Le point de départ de la recherche scientifique est l'ontologie (les questions transfactuelles), puis de la méthodologie (déterminée à partir de l'objet d'étude), et des implications pratiques (Danermark, 2012), faisant en sorte que la connaissance et la pratique soient étroitement liées dès le départ d'un projet de recherche (Sayer, 2010, p. 17). Pour le renforcement des capacités, les questions transfactuelles doivent porter sur les mécanismes qui conduisent au succès des projets.

Par ailleurs, à travers le pluralisme méthodologique critique, le réalisme critique soutient que la division traditionnelle entre les méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives est souvent basée sur des notions erronées d'empirisme et d'objectivité d'une part, et de nature idéaliste et subjective de la réalité d'autre part. La solution n'est pas une simple fusion des deux méthodes dans un processus de recherche ; le chercheur doit garder à l'esprit qu'elles sont développées sur la base de deux métathéories différentes (Danermark, 2012). Le principe de sélection méthodologique doit reposer sur l'idée selon laquelle la connaissance est éminemment contextuelle. Les mécanismes (qui génèrent les évènements) dépendent de contextes spécifiques. En d'autres termes, l'efficacité des politiques de développement dépend des choix et des perceptions des acteurs ; l'application invariable de méthodes d’évaluation standardisées n’est donc pas appropriée (Sayer, 2000, p. 23). En recherche, le choix de la méthode relève de considérations pratiques. Les méthodes doivent être adaptées selon la nature de l’objet ainsi qu’aux objectifs et attentes de l’enquête (Sayer, 2010, p. 3).

4. La positionnalité de l’auteur

L’auteur de cette thèse est né en Côte d’Ivoire. Citoyen canadien, il a passé la majeure partie de sa vie adulte à Toronto et à Ottawa/Gatineau. Il se rend régulièrement en Afrique. Son analyse du développement est largement inspirée de son expérience africaine, qui, au demeurant, est le reflet d’une Afrique qui se mondialise. Pour reprendre l’expression de Nubukpo (2022), la perspective de l’auteur est donc celle d’un « Africain mondialisé », soucieux des conditions de vie des populations africaines. Spectateur engagé, l’auteur s’interroge sur la place de l’Afrique dans le monde, et de ses capacités à proposer un modèle de développement original pour corriger les excès du capitalisme occidental.

Depuis la fin de la colonisation, les pays africains tentent, bon an mal an, de relever les défis du développement, notamment par le biais de la coopération internationale. Pour ce faire, ils ont invariablement suivi les modèles sociétaux des pays occidentaux, en particulier celui de l’ancienne puissance coloniale ou en réaction à celui-ci. Cette trajectoire a, d’une certaine manière, été la source de l’exacerbation des défis de développement : elle n’a pas favorisé l’expression ou l’émergence d’un modèle de développement original.

Le point de départ de la thèse est donc une double critique constructive, envers les gouvernements en Afrique et les partenaires au développement. Depuis la fin de la colonisation, ni les gouvernements successifs ni les partenaires au développement n’ont fait suffisamment d’efforts pour comprendre l’Afrique pour ce qu’elle est ; ils sont tous préoccupés à discuter de ce qu'elle devait être (Ake, 2003 ; Mbembe, 2020 ; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). D'une part, les modèles de développement post-indépendance étaient fondés sur la base de proto-marxisme ou proto-capitalisme, inspirés par des leaders qui délibérément ignoraient l'agencéité des populations africaines (Nkrumah, 1970). Par exemple, la campagne villageoise de l'Ujamaa en Tanzanie, parfois présentée comme un modèle original africain, n'était rien d'autre qu'une forme de collectivisation à la soviétique (Scott, 1998). De nos jours, la dynamique n'a pas fondamentalement changé. Depuis l'échec des politiques d'ajustement structurel, les gouvernements africains ont adopté, parfois à leur corps défendant, le libéralisme politique et économique, convaincus de la « fin de l'histoire » (Fukuyama, 1992). Ce qui fait dire à Nubukpo (2019) que ces dirigeants sont « offshore » ; ils tirent leur légitimité de l'extérieur du continent (pp. 17 – 18). Lorsqu'ils sont aux rencontres annuelles du FMI et de la Banque mondiale, ils affirment leurs engagements en faveur des prescriptions des institutions de Bretton Woods : équilibre des finances publiques, stabilité des prix, ouverture des marchés, etc. Lors des sommets Chine-Afrique, Inde-Afrique, Turquie-Afrique et BRICS[10], ils vantent les mérites du volontarisme asiatique et du néomercantilisme, illustrés par une forte protection à l'entrée des importations et des politiques agressives à l'export. À New York, ils plaident en faveur de l'atteinte des ODD (Nubukpo, 2019, pp. 47–48). Bref, le modèle de développement des dirigeants africains relève à la fois de l'incongruité et de l'éclectisme.

D'autre part, les partenaires au développement appliquent systématiquement une vision occidentale du développement en Afrique, motivée par ce que certains chercheurs ont

[10] Organisation regroupant : Brésil, Russie, Inde, Chine et Afrique du Sud.

appelé « l'hubris du développement » (Chari & Corbridge, 2008). Comme le montre Tandon (2015), toutes les théories économiques du développement depuis l'émergence du capitalisme, des physiocrates aux néokeynésiens en passant par les marxistes, ont des bases fondamentalement eurocentriques (ou americano-centriques) (Ake, 2003). Une telle dynamique de développement théorique implique le développement de catégories conceptuelles inappropriées pour analyser des sociétés africaines (Hugon, 2011, 2013). Ainsi, des pans entiers de la littérature sur le développement de l'Afrique sont fondés sur des hypothèses erronées, puisqu'elles ne reflètent pas l'expérience des populations africaines (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Par conséquent, l'expertise, née de l'application de cette littérature, est en grande partie hors de propos (Kankwenda, 2000 ; Olivier de Sardan, 2021). C'est un cercle vicieux. Les théories découlent de l'essentialisme ontologique occidental, déconnecté des réalités africaines, la pratique du développement qui en découle manque généralement de pertinence : la recherche, à son tour, ne permet pas une bonne intelligibilité des processus pertinents de développement. L'abandon de l'essentialisme ontologique est une condition nécessaire pour la recherche de solutions adaptées de renforcement des capacités pour les bénéficiaires (Acharya, 2016; Fukuda-Parr & Muchhala, 2020).

Aujourd'hui, sur le continent, il existe un appétit de plus en plus grandissant en faveur du rejet du développement occidental, à travers notamment l'invocation intempestive du concept de décolonisation (Táíwò, 2022). L'auteur de la thèse ne soutient pas ces rejets systématiques. Car, d'excellents travaux, notamment ceux des nouveaux pragmatistes, peuvent servir de base de réflexion à une nouvelle dynamique de développement. En outre, le rejet systématique de l'Occident n'est pas un gage de lutte efficace contre la pauvreté, qui reste un enjeu primordial pour l'Afrique. Mais, il est certain que l'auteur ne partage pas les critiques acerbes qui consistent à présenter l'Afrique comme la source principale de son sous-développement (Kabou, 1991 ; Smith, 2007). Il est temps que les efforts soient mis au service d'une conception originale du développement africain à travers la perception de l'Afrique elle-même (Ake, 2003 ; Mbembe, 2013 ; Nabudere, 2006 ; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020 ; Tandon, 2015).

Cette thèse participe à cette réflexion à travers les projets de renforcement des capacités. Elle plaide plutôt en faveur d'un tri intelligent et de nouvelles formes de collaboration entre les pays donateurs et bénéficiaires. En filigrane, l'auteur défend l'idée, développée par Gibson et al. (2005), selon laquelle toute société a la capacité de rechercher des mesures collectives, intelligentes en réponse aux défis auxquels elles sont confrontées (James, 2014 ; Ostrom, 2015). De ce point de vue, les efforts de développement peuvent involontairement introduire des incitations perverses qui pourraient saper les structures existantes de ces sociétés (De Herdt & Olivier de Sardan, 2023 ; Gibson et al., 2005 ; Morss, 1984 ; Servet, 2010) . Les efforts de développement devraient donc s'inspirer des institutions des bénéficiaires (North, 1990; Scott, 2011), afin de renforcer l'action collective (Ostrom, 2015), de manière à consolider l'existant, plutôt que la recherche de transformations hypothétiques, inspirées par les donateurs.

5. Problématique, objectif et cadre conceptuel de la thèse

5.1. Problématique

En règle générale, les stratégies et les agendas de développement, tels que les ODD, font l'objet d'une grande attention (Fontana & Oldekop, 2020 ; Gupta & Vegelin, 2016 ; Moyer &

Hedden, 2020 ; Nayyar, 2013). Cette attention est certainement justifiée dans la mesure où ces stratégies offrent un cadre partagé pour aiguiller les efforts de développement. Ils constituent, en principe, le cadre de déclarations des politiques générales de développement de nombreux pays (Chimhowu et al., 2019), bien que les ODD ne soient pas toujours hégémoniques dans les faits (Munro, 2023). Il n'en demeure pas moins que l'adoption des ODD fut en grande partie motivée par les pays en développement (Fukuda-Parr & Muchhala, 2020). À ce titre, les stratégies et les objectifs de développement fournissent légitimement de la matière à l'enquête, puisqu'ils permettent d'évaluer les efforts accomplis.

Par ailleurs, comme le suggère l'objectif 16 des ODD, le renforcement des capacités est présenté comme un moyen de promouvoir et d'atteindre ces objectifs de développement (Eger et al., 2018 ; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002 ; Merino & Carmenado, 2012 ; UNDP, 2006). Ainsi que le suggère De Grauwe (2009), sans les capacités, le développement relève d'un mirage dans la mesure où elles sont nécessaires pour garantir des processus autodéterminés et soutenables de développement. Dans la pratique, le projet constitue l'instrument privilégié des organisations de développement pour promouvoir les agendas et stratégies de développement (Brière et al., 2016 ; Charnoz & Severino, 2015) et le renforcement des capacités (Ika & Donnelly, 2017 ; McEvoy et al., 2016). Pourtant, la littérature est relativement muette sur la gestion des projets de renforcement des capacités en général et le rôle que joue le contexte sur la performance des projets en particulier (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017 pour quelques exceptions). Le rôle du contexte dans le succès et l'échec des projets apparaît comme une sorte de « boîte noire », pour reprendre l'expression de Ika (2015), en dépit du fait que nombreux travaux insistent sur la pertinence du contexte (Bate, 2014; Love & Ika, 2021 ; Olivier de Sardan, 2021 ; Olivier De Sardan et al., 2017 ; Ramalingan et al., 2014).

5.2. Objectif

L'objectif général de la thèse est d'examiner le lien entre le rôle du contexte et la performance des projets de renforcement des capacités. Autrement dit, il s'agit ici d'ouvrir la « boîte noire » du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités. S'il existe un consensus sur la pertinence du contexte, il n'en demeure pas moins que le concept du contexte lui-même reste difficile à saisir (Dohn et al., 2018). Comme le montre Olivier de Sardan (2021), le concept de contexte peut se décliner de plusieurs manières : le contexte structurel[11], le contexte de délivrance[12], le contexte d'intermédiation[13], le contexte pragmatique[14], etc. Quoi qu'il en soit, la simple évocation du concept de contexte reste insuffisante pour parvenir à la contextualisation des projets de renforcement des capacités.

De manière générale, cette thèse répond à la question suivante : quel est le rôle du contexte dans la conduite et la performance des projets de renforcement des capacités? Les trois chapitres offrent un regard nouveau sur le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités. Ils examinent le concept de contexte de manière générale et en particulier le contexte de renforcement des capacités de manière spécifique. Plus précisément, la thèse met en évidence le lien entre le contexte institutionnel et le succès des projets de

[11] La configuration structurelle, incluant les facteurs institutionnels tels que le cadre légal, les plans de développement, les accords et conventions de partenariat, etc.
[12] Le contexte particulier des acteurs institutionnels, au contact des bénéficiaires, chargés de la mise en œuvre des projets de développement.
[13] Le contexte particulier des experts internationaux et des ONG et des organisations de mise en œuvre, chargés de planifier et d'adapter les projets de développement aux contextes des bénéficiaires.
[14] La confrontation entre le projet tel que planifié et la réalité de sa mise en œuvre sur le terrain.

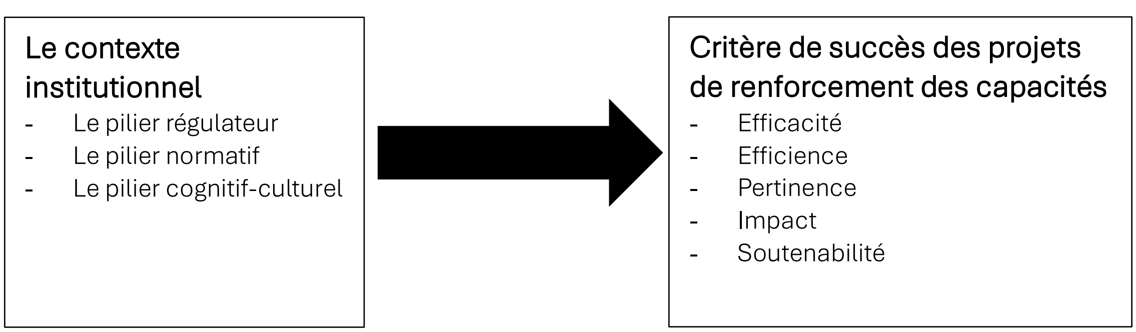
renforcement des capacités. Bien que le but ultime du renforcement des capacités soit de transformer les institutions des pays en développement, le contexte institutionnel entourant la conduite des projets n'a pas été étudié par rapport à cet objectif.

En ce qui concerne l'approche méthodologique de la thèse, les articles 1 et 2 utilisent une analyse de contenu des littératures scientifique et grise sur le renforcement des capacités. L'article 3 est plutôt empirique, avec deux études de cas comparatives basées sur une approche qualitative.

5.3. Cadre conceptuel

La thèse appelle à une meilleure conceptualisation du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités à l'intérieur d'un cadre conceptuel qui permet d'en évaluer la performance (voir Figure-1). La thèse utilise le cadre théorique du contexte institutionnel de Scott (2011) qui postule que les institutions sont composées des piliers régulateur (les règles formelles), normatif (les normes édictées par les ordres professionnels ou religieuses) et cognitif-culturel (les croyances partagées). De façon générale, la thèse fait le lien entre le contexte institutionnel et le succès des projets de renforcement des capacités, mettant ainsi en évidence le caractère holistique des institutions à travers les piliers régulateur, normatif et cognitif-culturel.

Figure 1: Cadre conceptuel de la thèse : relations entre le contexte institutionnel et les critères d'évaluation des projets de renforcement des capacités



La thèse retient les critères d'évaluation des projets de développement : efficacité (l'atteinte des objectifs) ; efficience (le respect des délais et des coûts), pertinence (pour les bénéficiaires, et le pays), impact (les avantages positifs ou négatifs, directs ou indirects, prévus ou imprévus du projet) et la soutenabilité (la probabilité que les avantages perdurent après la fin du projet) (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; OECD, 2019, 2021).

6. La pertinence de la thèse

La pertinence de cette thèse réside dans son analyse de la mise en œuvre de la stratégie actuelle de renforcement des institutions de développement en Afrique par le biais des projets de renforcement des capacités. Les institutions fortes sont essentielles à l'organisation de toute société. Qu'on soit favorable à une économie de marché ou dirigée ou mixte, les institutions sont essentielles pour offrir des incitatifs et réprimer les comportements indésirables des acteurs (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2023 ; Hodgson, 2006 ; North, 1991). La qualité des institutions d'une nation est un élément crucial de son organisation politique, de sa production économique et de la redistribution de la richesse qu'elle crée (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). Par ailleurs, l'efficacité de l'aide publique dépend de sa capacité à contribuer au renforcement des institutions des pays récipiendaires : condition nécessaire des processus autodéterminés de développement.

Lorsque les institutions sont faibles, le coût social peut être élevé. Les États sont incapables de fournir des services de qualité à leurs citoyens. Les efforts en faveur de la lutte contre la pauvreté sont inefficaces dans une Afrique marquée par la gangrène de corruption de ses élites (Tangri, 2013), et de nombreux foyers de violence (Cramer et al., 2011), exacerbés désormais par la présence terroriste dans la zone du Sahel (Châtaigner, 2019). Bref, les États sont dysfonctionnels en l'absence d'institutions capables de réguler les dynamiques sociales afin de lutter efficacement contre la pauvreté, l'exclusion, l'insécurité, etc.

La pertinence du renforcement des capacités pour le développement international réside dans le fait qu'il porte à la fois sur les individus, les organisations et les institutions. La stratégie du renforcement des capacités articule ces trois niveaux, mettant ainsi en évidence leur complémentarité nécessaire au renforcement institutionnel des pays pauvres. L'approche holistique du renforcement des capacités est particulièrement intéressante dans la mesure où elle suggère que tous les acteurs ont un rôle particulier à jouer en développement. Cependant, si l'orientation stratégique est séduisante, cette thèse suggère qu'il est crucial d'articuler la stratégie à une approche pratique pertinente afin de parvenir au renforcement effectif des institutions en Afrique.

7. Le format de la thèse et le lien entre les trois articles

Nous avons jeté notre dévolu sur une thèse par articles. Les trois articles de la thèse poursuivent essentiellement les deux objectifs de cette thèse :

- Analyser l'état de la production de connaissances du renforcement des capacités
- Analyser la pratique du renforcement des capacités

La thèse examine à la fois la littérature et la pratique du renforcement des capacités. Car, nous soutenons, à la suite de Rondinelli (2013), que les projets doivent être des instruments de renouvèlement de nos connaissances.

L’article 1 est une revue systématique de la littérature académique du renforcement des capacités. Il fait une analyse diachronique du concept depuis les années 1950 à nos jours. Ce travail a permis de retracer l’évolution du concept, en mettant en évidence ces défis conceptuels et méthodologiques, ainsi que les difficultés pratiques sur le terrain. Cet article a été publié dans *Public Administration and Development* (Kacou et al., 2022). Dans l’article 2, nous avons poursuivi ce travail en y ajoutant la littérature grise, en examinant la rigueur scientifique et la pertinence pratique de la littérature académique. Dans cet article, nous montrons que la littérature académique n'a pas surmonté de manière significative les faiblesses méthodologiques de la littérature grise. Dans l’article, nous examinons le concept de contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités. Les revues de littérature ont relevé que le contexte reste la clé de voûte de la performance des projets. Par conséquent, nous proposons le contexte institutionnel comme le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités, à partir de deux études de cas de projets financés par Affaires mondiales Canada en Côte d’Ivoire et la Banque mondiale au Sénégal.

Nous espérons que cette thèse favorise une nouvelle vision du renforcement des capacités et sa pratique sur le terrain.

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Article 1: Fifty Years of Capacity Building: Taking Stock and Moving Research Forward[15]

Abstract:

This paper assesses the literature on "capacity building" through a systematic literature review. Taking concepts as the ontological building blocks of theories, we ask: what is known about the evolution of capacity building as a concept and what can that history tell us about its strengths and weaknesses? To this end, we dig into the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of capacity building. Through this Foucauldian "archaeological description," we show that capacity building discourse has evolved dialectically, with each new concept emerging to address the failings of earlier concepts. The paper suggests the "new pragmatism" as a theoretical framework to guide a more rigorous and relevant theory and practice of capacity building especially for public administration. Rooted in sensitivity to context and methodological pluralism, the new pragmatism embraces complexity, delivers "best fit" rather than "best practice" solutions, and involves researchers and practitioners in decolonial knowledge co-creation to tackle capacity building challenges.

Keywords: Capacity, capacity building, capacity development, institution building, institutional development.

[15] Though the capacity building literature emerged in the 1970s (e.g., AID, 1970; Williams, 2021), this stocktaking covers the period between 1950 and 2020.

Introduction

Capacity building[16] has been granted a pivotal role in development discourse and practice (An et al., 2017; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Eger et al., 2018; Ricks & Doner, 2021; Wignaraja, 2006). The focus of the concept of capacity, which dates back to the 1960s, has shifted from individual capabilities in the 1970s, to organizational capabilities in the 1980s and 1990s, and in recent years to getting a community's, a state's or a society's institutions right. Yet, despite the efforts of practitioners, most projects focusing on capacity building in the public sector and civil society organizations still fail to produce their intended benefits and/or meet stakeholder and beneficiary expectations (Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017, 2019).

Consequently, research on capacity building as a concept is both promising and necessary. Such research must, however, avoid the conceptual and theoretical challenges of the past research on capacity building. Not least of the many problems found in the past literature is the frequent attempt at borrowing and shoehorning of hand-me-down theories from other fields such as governance, economics, organization studies, and management, without careful methodological assessment of their disciplinary and topical fit (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). Though "capacity building" may appear to be a practical and useful shorthand, nobody seems able to pin down what it really is; it remains a catch-all, elusive, complex, multidimensional, multi-level, and multi-layered concepts (An et al., 2017; Analoui & Danquah, 2017; Baser & Morgan, 2008; Bockstael, 2017; Eger et al., 2018; Williams, 2021). Given such conceptual ambiguity, capacity building as a concept should attract interest from

[16] Unless indicated otherwise "capacity building" refers to capacity building as well as capacity development (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Venner, 2015).

both scholars and practitioners alike. Since, like most development theories, concepts and buzzwords, the evolution of the concept of "capacity building" is likely to show path dependence (North, 1990), it is important to nail down the theoretical foundations of capacity building sooner, rather than later. More than mere academic pedantry, the search for conceptual clarity and strong theoretical underpinnings for capacity building can provide concrete benefits for all, not least of which is avoiding many intellectual and policies dead ends.

A remarkable feature in the evolution of the concept lies in the fact that, from the outset, practitioners in the public and non-profit sectors were at the forefront of knowledge production, creating an abundant grey literature (AID, 1970; Barnett & Engel, 1982; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Lusthaus et al., 1999; Qualman & Bolger, 1996; Wignaraja, 2006; World Bank, 2009). In search of normative frameworks or guidelines for "best practices," these practitioners have relied mostly on case studies and anecdotes (An et al., 2017). At the same time, there has been little peer-reviewed research on capacity building until recently (See Bockstael, 2017; Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Eger et al., 2018; Ricks & Doner, 2021 for the few exceptions). "Capacity building as a concept has frequently been criticized for weak theoretical underpinnings, a range of definitions, and a tendency towards integrating a wide range of phenomena into a single term" (Williams, 2021, p. 342).

Against this backdrop, this paper takes stock of the research on capacity building and three closely related concepts (capacity development, institutional development, and institution building) in order to move the research forward. Since concepts are the ontological building blocks of theories, our research questions are as follows: what do we know about the evolution of the concept of capacity building and what can history tell us about its strengths and weaknesses? To this end, we have performed a systematic examination of the peer-reviewed literature on these four cognate concepts of capacity building, capacity development, institution building and institutional development. Our focus on the peer-reviewed literature may appear odd in light of its relative scarcity but if the larger grey literature tends to score high on practical relevance, it falls short on methodological rigor, which is supposed to be the forte of peer-reviewed literature (Sumner & Tribe, 2008; Grix, 2002; Williams, 2021).

We begin this paper with a discussion of the concepts of capacity and capacity building. We then present the methodological approach used in selecting articles in our sample. After, we analyze and discuss the findings. Finally, we conclude and propose a research agenda.

1. The concept of "capacity" in development

Many authors discuss the concept of capacity building with no attempt to clarify what "capacity" means and how it can be measured (see Table-1 for a few exceptions).

Table 1: Selected definitions of capacity

Authors	Definitions
OECD, 1994	Capacity is defined as "a society's ability to identify and solve environmental problems" (p. 8).
Hilderbrand & Grindle, 1997	"Capacity" is defined as "the ability to perform tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainability" (p. 34).
OECD, 2006	"Capacity is understood as the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully" (p. 12)

Baser & Morgan, 2008	“Capacity—emergent combination of individual competencies, collective capabilities, assets and relationships that enables a human system to create value” (p. 3).
Coryell, Sailors, Nelson & Sehin, 2016	“Capacity is described as the ability to implement effective change and sustain development programmes” (p. 275).
Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017	“The ability of an organization to equip, enable, and induce their agents to do the right thing at the right time to achieve a normative policy objective” (p. 95).

Table-1 shows how broad and malleable the concept of capacity is, both inside and outside development studies and public administration (An et al., 2017; Williams, 2021). It also points out the double feature of capacity: it can be an input and an output. However, development practice focuses mainly on capacity as an output, as it is meant to be the desired “end product” of programs and projects. Thus, the classic capacity building project is essentially a process to transfer know-how, through training, coaching, and workshops (Ika & Donnelly, 2017) or an endogenous process of developing such ability to effect change without having to rely on external actors to provide or teach this ability. In most cases, capacity is described as an ability, which appears to be the output of the capacity-building processes. To some extent, the definition provided by Hilderbrand and Grindle (1997) characterize the most common view of capacity in the literature.

We suggest that capacity operates at three levels: individual, organizational, and institutional (An et al., 2017). At the individual level, capacity refers to technical and analytical abilities, skills, competences, and/or knowledge. At the organizational level, capacity refers to organizational capabilities or the ability to get groups of agents, a team, or a unit to get the right policy done right. At the institutional level, capacity is the overall ability of individuals, organizations, communities, states, and societies as a whole to successfully tackle their collective challenges and create long-term benefits for their diverse stakeholders. But to convert individual skills into organizational capabilities, one must assess institutional capacities. In other words, these levels are interconnected; they also take different shapes and forms depending on project contexts, including new capacities to be built or existing capacities to be developed at the institutional level (An et al., 2017). Accordingly, careful ex-ante evaluation of the context should be conducted to assess existing capacities, because there is a tendency within the development community "to ignore, misinterpret, displace, supplant, or undermine the capacities that people already have" (Eade, 2007, p. 633).

2. The concept of capacity building

From the 1990s onward, capacity building has gained currency in development discourse to the point where it has been viewed as the cornerstone of development. Few organizations would dare propose a development project today without delineating its capacity building dimensions (Lussier, 2016 ; Venner, 2015). But the concept of "capacity building" means different things to different authors and organizations. Capacity building is referred to as a process (OECD, 2006), an approach (Eade, 1997), an objective (De Grauwe, 2009a) or even a tool (Chrysostome et al., 2019). According to some authors, this ambiguity weakens the concept's usefulness (Analoui & Danquah, 2017; Venner, 2015). The OECD (2006) and UNDP (2009) definitions even present elements of circularity, as both define the "building/development" but not the "capacity." In our view, the most cogent definition in Table-2 is Armstrong's (2013).

Table 2: Selected definitions of capacity building

Authors	Definitions
Hilderbrand & Grindle, 1997	"Capacity building refers to improvements in the ability of public sector organizations, either singly or in cooperation with organizations, to perform appropriate tasks" (p. 34)
OECD, 2006	"Capacity building is the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time" (p. 12).
Baser & Morgan, 2008	"Capacity development (is) the process of enhancing, improving and unleashing capacity; it is a form of change which focuses on improvements" (p. 3)
UNDP, 2009	"Capacity development is the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set their own development objectives over time" (p. 4).
World Bank, 2009	"Capacity development is a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that brings about changes in sociopolitical, policy-related, and organizational factors to enhance local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal." (p. 3)
Armstrong, 2013	"Government capacity development (GCD) is a process in which governmental organizations and agencies come to understand, harness, expand—and retain—the ability to craft and implement policy that enables the country to become healthier, wealthier, and more resilient" (p. 3).

Despite the billions of dollars invested in them (World Bank, 2012), capacity building interventions in public administrations and non-profit organizations generally fail to reach their goals (Kühl, 2009; Lempert, 2015). The rate of failure, defined as an intervention that does not meet its own objectives or does not have benefits lasting beyond the length of the projects, hovers around 70% (Armstrong, 2013, p. xii). This disappointing result may arise because capacity building programming is usually delivered through what Armstrong (2013) calls "the standard model," a sequential four-step process: assess, plan, implement, evaluate. This positivist, linear-rational model downplays contextual peculiarities, despite beginning with "assess," though capacity building discourse suggests projects are context-specific. In practice, these steps are usually undertaken by international experts bent on transplanting deemed "best practices" to local contexts (Armstrong, 2013). At the same time, the technicist approach to programming gives the impression that capacity building can be defined as a mere technical process with predictable outcomes (Venner, 2015, p. 91).

This assumption follows from the adoption of results-based management (RBM) as the dominant approach for managing aid-funded capacity building projects. Donors favour RBM because they believe it provides rigor and accountability (Eyben et al., 2015), hoping that RBM "will give them a degree of security in an uncertain world" (Earle, 2002, p. 13). Over the years, RBM has proved to be ineffective (Sjöstedt, 2013), especially where "soft" objectives like improved governance or behaviour change are present. RBM and its instruments like the logframe "are perceived as rigid and can lead to the simplification of complex social processes" (Earle, 2002, p. 2). The practice of RBM thus tends to fall into what Ika (2012) calls the "accountability-for-results-trap" that demands tangible results, even if they are meaningless or dysfunctional. Project managers thus focus on providing quantifiable data (e.g., number of children receiving breakfast at school, number of graduates) (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016), usually at the output level. The indicators used in many capacity-building projects are irrelevant or dubious, such as "smiling sheets" asking beneficiaries if they are "happy" or "better off," and claiming to measure things like "raised awareness" or "enhanced skills" (Lempert, 2015, p. 157; Munro & Chibanda, 1997).

Like many other concepts that channel the lexicon of the day, capacity building is a development buzzword (Eade, 2007). Buzzwords provide concepts that can float free of concrete referents, to be filled with meaning by their users; they may shelter multiple agendas and provide room for manoeuvre and space for contestation (Cornwall, 2007, p. 427). While it is ubiquitous (Venner, 2015), "capacity building has no accepted body of theories on which people can draw" (Lussier, 2016, p. 149). Different authors use different disciplines and theories to analyze capacity building, leading to numerous conceptual frameworks (An et al., 2017). Thus, capacity building may be about social and political relationships (Eade, 1997), public sector reform (Armstrong, 2013; Grindle, 1997), project management (Ika & Donnelly, 2017), or organizational development (Analoui & Danquah, 2017). Thus, reaching an agreed theory for capacity building may prove challenging.

3. Methodology

The object of this study is to map out the trends in the peer-reviewed literature on capacity building in order to answer our research questions: what do we know about the evolution of the concept of capacity building and what can that history tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of the concept? To this end, we conducted a systematic literature review focusing on capacity building and its most closely related concepts: capacity development, institution building and institutional development (Goldsmith, 1992; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016). In a three-step query, we searched for “capacity building,” “capacity development,” “institution building,” and “institutional development” in bibliographic entries in the ProQuest database. First, using the “advanced search” feature in ProQuest, each statement as indicated above was entered in the upper row. The results, shown in the First Query column of Table 3, show the total numbers of articles mentioning each of these search terms anywhere in the publication (i.e., not just in the title, abstract and keywords). No restriction was placed on the date of publication.

Table 3: Total of notices retrieved from the search queries

	First Query	First Filter	Peer Reviewed
Capacity building	17,999	1,035	333
Capacity development	2,323	182	75
Institution building	1,096	97	52
Institutional development	17,100	1,545	182
Total of mentions	38518	2859	642

The second step consisted of entering “international development” in “All subjects & indexing-SU” (the lower row) to limit search results to the realm of international development; results appear in the “First filter” column of Table 3. The last step consisted in applying the “peer-reviewed” filter to limit the selection to peer-reviewed articles; results appear in the “peer-reviewed” column in Table 3. Conference presentations, working papers, occasional papers, pre-prints and publications by governments, NGOs and multilateral organizations were thus excluded.

Through this process, we identified 642 peer-reviewed articles (Table-3) published before 2020. We then conducted summative content analysis of each retrieved article through “counting and comparisons” of key concepts (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). To capture all instances of a concept, we searched using alternative spellings and acronyms (e.g., “CB” for “capacity building”). The raw word count per article was then divided by the number of pages in the document to provide an indicator of the average frequency with which a given term occurred.

We then further refined the search, selecting articles only if they extensively discussed or at least provided a section on “capacity building” and/or its related concepts. Articles were chosen only when they focused on countries that were classified as developing countries at the time of publication. At the end of the process, we identified 72 relevant peer-reviewed articles.

We analyzed these 72 articles through the thematic analysis approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Based on our prior knowledge of the literature and our iterative reading of the 72 articles, we classified our themes as follows: the peer-reviewed journals, the evolution of the concepts and their meaning in international development, their sectors and levels of application, and the research methods used.

From a historical perspective, the 72 articles selected show that publications on the theme of capacity building gained momentum from the 2000 (see Table-4). While the decade 2010-2019 recorded 43% of the publications, publications from 1976 to 1999 represent 40% of selected articles. In other words, there has been a considerable peak in academic publications that tends to increase over time. This trend is confirmed by the multiplication of recent publications in leading journals in the field of international development and other disciplines such World Development, Public Administration and Development, etc. An example is the recent special issue: Building capacity for development: "The administrative dimension in Asia" published in International Review of Administrative Sciences.[17]

4. Findings

4.1. Capacity building literature over the years

Capacity building, along with capacity development, is only the latest concept to deal with the lack of various abilities in developing countries (An et al., 2017; Williams, 2021). Through our content analysis, we identified four different periods in the evolution of concepts related to capacity building; each period has a dominant concept, emphasizes a different theme, has its own practices, and is underpinned by particular theories (Table-4). The conceptual evolution of capacity building is characterized by "a continual conceptual shift," from institution building to institutional development to capacity building and finally to capacity development.

Institution building emerged in the 1950s to tackle the lack of capacities in newly independent and aid-recipient countries. A decade later, following a growing literature on

[17] Volume 87, issue 2, June 2021.

institutional development in the United States, the development community integrated that concept into both discourse and practice (AID, 1970). Both “institution building” and “institutional development” display some ambiguities as “institution” and “institutional” are slippery terms. In the older literature, “institution” was usually synonymous with “organization”; hence, “institution building” was part of “organization studies.” With the rise of the new institutionalism in the 1990s (North, 1990), “institutions” came to be understood as the rules of the game (and societal norms) and organizations as the players. When capacity building emerged in the 1990s as a crucial term for public administration and public policy in developing countries, eliciting institutional changes was to be achieved through individuals’ skills and knowledge enhancement with the ultimate goals to bring changes at organizational and institutional levels.

Table 4: A retrospective look at the evolution of the concept of capacity building

	Period 1 1950s–1960s	Period 2 1960s–1990s	Period 3 1990s–2000s	Period 4 2000s—present
Concepts	Institution building	Institutional development	Capacity building	Capacity building/capacity development
Emphasis	Shifting from the provision of physical infrastructure and equipment to training of individuals for economic development	Creating or reforming organizations and institutions in different sectors to improve public sector effectiveness	Building individuals’ abilities and organizations’ capabilities to undertake different tasks in various development sectors	Strengthening individuals’ and organizations’ skills and knowledge for development, building on what exists already
Practice	Twinning, professional	Technical assistance,	Training, coaching,	Management support, study

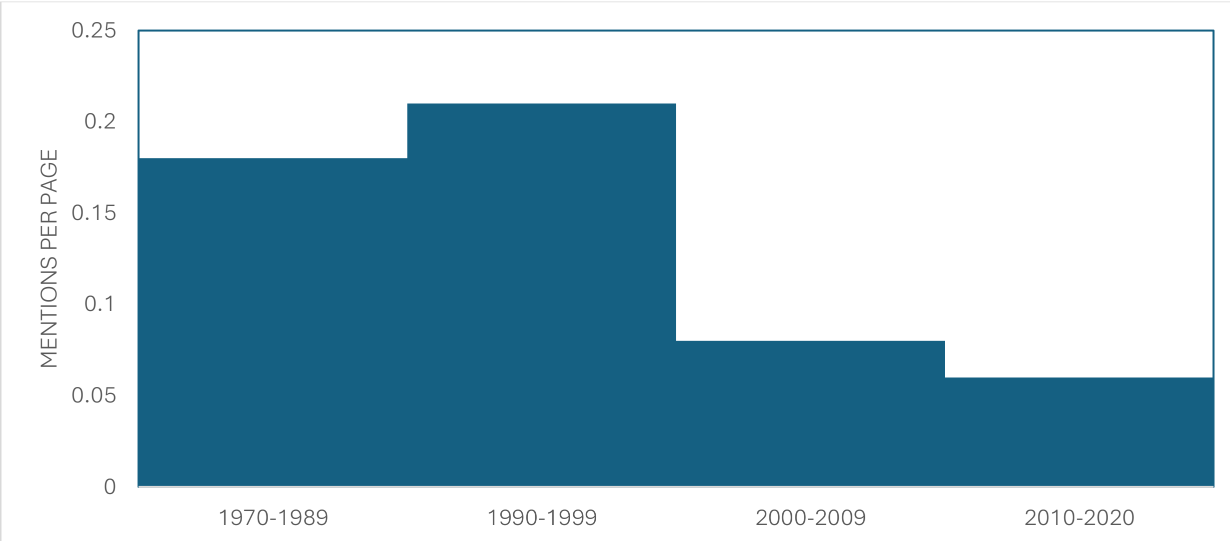
	advice, collaborative research, study abroad, temporary budget support	enhancing managerial structures, organizational culture and communications. Plus, training of individuals	workshops, technical advice, multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue.	tours, networking, knowledge dissemination, leadership development, stakeholder management
Theoretical roots	Public administration, Organizational theories, Human capital	New and old institutional theories, Development administration	Organizational behaviour, Human resource development, Decision Theory, Human capital, New institutional economics	Human capital, Social capital, Theories of innovation
Key authors	Blase, 1973 ; Eaton, 1972	Byck, 1991; North, 1990; Ostrom, 1973	Grindle, 1997; Jaycox, 1993	OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2009

Although these periods have different characteristics, they share a common dynamic. The notion and practice of capacity building in developing countries have been shaped by the dominant theoretical framework of the day.

4.2. Institution building

The idea of institution building emerged in the 1950s and 1960s due to the need to build indigenous institutions (that is, organizations in the language of the new institutionalism), with the support of donors, in newly independent countries to address the shortage of qualified personnel (Goldsmith, 1992). Whether entirely new (e.g., national planning commissions) or expansions of pre-existing organizations (e.g., universities), these organizations were to be increasingly managed by locals as part of the effort to replace colonial era administrators. Most aid in the 1940s and 1950s involved providing “hardware” like physical infrastructure and equipment; to complement this hardware aid (and to allow newly independent countries to run their new hardware) came “software aid,” defined as assistance for developing personnel (later called human resources) and organizations (Fujisaki et al., 1996). This institution building was delivered through training, professional advice, and design and testing of innovative programs within the receiving countries (Goldsmith, 1992), but also through twinning programs, which sent personnel from developing countries to be trained in analogous organizations in donor countries. Upon their return back home, these people were expected to spearhead change within their organizations (Jones & Blunt, 1999), making twinning a move from an “individual-centred approach” to an “institutional-centred approach” (Thompson, 1976). Figure-2 shows the rise and fall of the concept of “institution building” in the peer-reviewed literature.

Figure 2: The evolution of institution building in the peer-reviewed literature



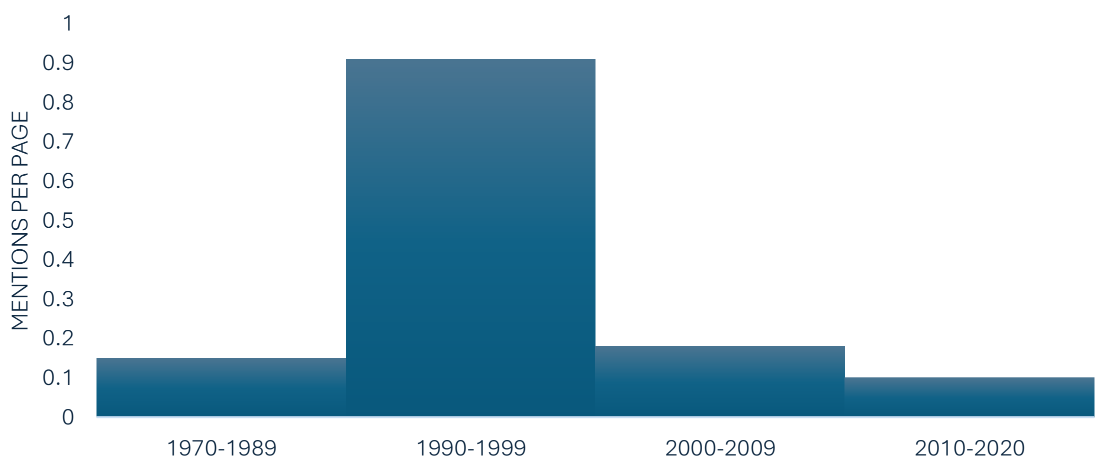
"Institution building" appeared in the peer-reviewed literature in the 1970s, and the number of mentions per page peaked just above 0.2 in the 1990s, and its peak has been in decline ever since. Institution building failed to address the issues at hand. The underlying tools were too abstract to be useful (Barnett & Engel, 1982). It was also criticized for being technocratic and elitist (Goldsmith, 1992), ignoring the political and cultural aspects of organizational life. Hence, institutional development emerged to replace institution building.

4.3. Institutional development

In the 1960s, the concept of institutional development gained prominence in the American literature (Venner, 2015) to address various challenges in the social service sector as the US government fought its famous War on Poverty. The concept of institutional development then spilled over into international development (AID, 1970). Institutional development focused on organizational work and its surrounding environment. It entailed interventions to improve inter-institutional relations, to reconstruct economic sectors and subsectors, to mend legal frameworks and to improve government regulations (Goldsmith, 1992; Hirschmann, 1993).

Contrary to institution building, the fundamental tenet of institutional development posited strengthening institutions within the boundaries of beneficiaries' countries (Moore, 1984). Regional training centres were established, such as the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute. Beneficiaries' involvement in such interventions was de rigueur. Thus, institutional development was perceived as "a means to improve the impact of aid" (Fisher et al., 1996, p. 217). As Figure-3 shows, the popularity of institutional development in the peer-reviewed literature peaked in the 1990s. However, institutional development was over four times more commonly used in the literature than institution building, at 0.9 mentions per page, versus 0.2 mentions per page for the same period (Figure-2 and 3).

Figure 3: The evolution of institutional development in the peer-reviewed literature



By the early 1980s, however, criticisms began to emerge. In practice, institutional development appeared to be elusive (Davies, 1997) and interventions had little effect (Moore, 1984, 1995). These shortcomings likely resulted from a lack of collaboration between donors and beneficiaries (Brinkerhoff, 1990) and disregard of the beneficiaries' context (Fisher et al., 1996; Hyden, 1983). Thus, capacity building emerged as the next brand-new concept.

4.4. Capacity building/Capacity development

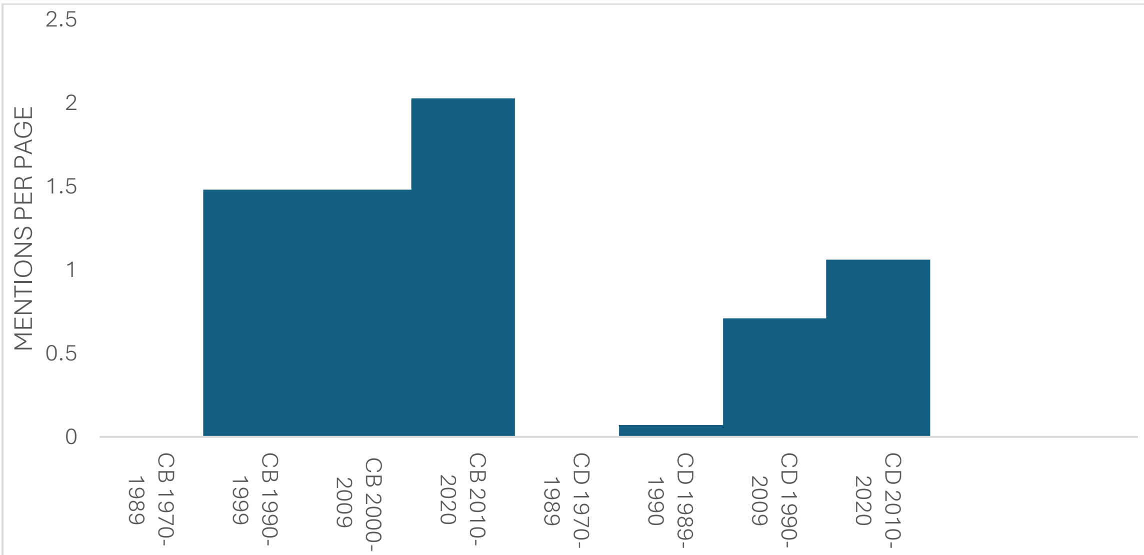
Here, we discuss "capacity building" and "capacity development," as these terms are often used interchangeably. The Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) promoted by the World Bank and the IMF generated considerable controversy in the 1980s and 1990s; the Bank and Fund were accused, *inter alia*, of ignoring local contexts and capacities and of promoting a one-size-fits-all set of policies (Gore, 2000; Helleiner, 1983). Faced with the growing evidence of failure and the associated public outcry, the World Bank first introduced the concept of "governance" and used the alleged lack of good governance to blame recipient governments for the failure of Bank projects (World Bank, 1992, p. 1). A year later, the Bank declared that the lack of "capacity" in recipient governments was responsible for their poor development performance, with the Bank's Vice President for Africa, Edward Jaycox, positing that capacity building was the "missing link" to development (Jaycox, 1993). Following his famous pronouncement, the development aid community progressively endeavoured to integrate capacity building in both discourse and practice across all development sectors (An et al., 2017). In practice, this meant generalization of training, coaching and workshops and technical assistance to build capacities in recipient country governments (Ika & Donnelly, 2017).

In so doing, the bilateral donors and multilateral organizations tamed the concept of capacity, which had its origins in the radical politics of liberation theology and Paulo Freire (1970/2017), using the language of capacity building in their "neo-liberal agenda of rolling back the state" (Eade, 2007, p. 632). Even after the Millennium Summit of 2000 and its associated drive against the Washington Consensus (Stiglitz, 2008), bilateral aid agencies continued to deploy capacity building as a tool to criticize the failings of developing country governments. It bears emphasizing that almost all the capacity building literature comes from bilateral donors, northern NGOs, multilateral organizations and the academics who study them, not from Southern governments, activists or researchers. In the literature we reviewed, 67% of articles were published by authors affiliated to Northern organizations represented 11%. In addition, about 11% of the articles were published with the first author affiliated with Northern organizations. For these articles, the authors are sometimes affiliated with organizations in the South and the North. Only 1 article (1.38%) was published with the first author affiliated with an organization based in the South.[18]

In recent years, the debate has shifted to whether to use "capacity building" or the newer formulation of "capacity development" (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010; Venner, 2015). Some maintain that capacity development is more appropriate, since "building suggests a process starting with a plain surface" (De Grauwe, 2009, p. 39) and, implicitly, "capacity development" entails already existing capacities that can be built on. This shift is arguably linked to the French terminology, *le renforcement des capacités* that is closer to the idea of "capacity development" than to "capacity building." However, as Figure 4 shows, this shift remains marginal, since twice as many articles use "capacity building" as "capacity development"; some authors, however, use the two terms interchangeably (e.g., Barakat & Chard, 2002; Godfrey et al., 2002; Lempert, 2015). Both concepts are, however, on the rise in the literature.

[18] It worth noting that 7 articles (9.72%) did not declare their authors' affiliations.

Figure 4: The evolution of capacity building and capacity development in the peer-reviewed literature



This newer literature has given rise to three criticisms. First, some author-practitioners point out deficiencies in the practice of capacity building to improve its delivery. Overall, they agree that the meaning of capacity building is "contested" and that there are no agreed standards as to what should be expected in terms of newly built or developed capacity (Barakat & Chard, 2002; Lempert, 2015; Straussman, 2007). Other authors insist on the necessity of building on endogenous processes, since capacity building initiatives are usually donors-driven; donors rely heavily on international agencies and consultants to implement their projects (Armstrong, 2013; Fagan, 2008; Olowu, 2002).

The second critique questions the imposition of "best practices" from donors. These authors advocate for tailored projects and associated techniques and tools designed to suit specific needs in specific contexts (Armstrong, 2013; Semrau et al., 2018). Ramalingan et al. (2014) advocate "best fit" to issue and context, rather than an ahistorical, universal "best practice." It is often recommended that capacity building interventions be seen as a long-term endeavor

(Caplan, 2004), involving beneficiaries in the design and the implementation phases (Konduri et al., 2017) and mutual learning and adaptation along the way (Swanson & Bhadwal, 2009). Furthermore, the lack of accountability may impede the delivery of successful capacity building initiatives (Lempert, 2015).

A third group of authors have questioned the very usefulness of capacity building. After decades of practice, it is generally agreed that donor-driven capacity building has had little to no impact with regard to sustainable development (Armstrong, 2013; Kühl, 2009; Lempert, 2015). At the core of this questioning lies, the idea that the formulation and diffusion of new concepts outpace the speed of the actual change (Keijzer, 2016; Venner, 2015). These new concepts do not systematically engender developmental changes, but they can be harmful to endogenous knowledge and skills (Eade, 2007; Morss, 1984). More controversially, Fagan (2008) argues that capacity building is a code not only for transforming and undermining local knowledge, but also for the importation of western rationality. In other words, capacity building is not ideologically neutral (Droney, 2016).

As in related fields like project management (Munro & Ika, 2020), the peer-reviewed and grey literatures have, however, focused almost exclusively on capacity-building initiatives promoted and funded by donors and multilateral organizations, thus overstating the role of aid in capacity building. But most developing countries are now middle-income countries with low levels of dependence on aid and considerable local; the World Bank's DataBank shows that official development assistance to middle-income countries in 2019 accounted for only 0.2% of the latter's gross national income.[19] The more populous middle-income countries containing a majority of the world's population (e.g., Brazil, China, India, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey) are (Lazarow, 2020) and have long been (Reddy, 2011) home to competent government bureaucracies and highly innovative, world-class firms. They considerable local, homegrown capacity, likely acquired through learning-by-doing (Munro, 2018; Rahman & Baranyi, 2018).

4.5. Data analysis

Table-5 shows that capacity building has been applied at different levels, including individual, organizational, and institutional. The underpinning rationality is that capacity building is mainly about institutional changes, in the sense that it aims to change "the rules of the game" at the local, national, regional, or even global levels. Whether the institutional level is analyzed solely or in combination with other levels, it appears that it is the preferred level of analysis in the peer-reviewed literature. "Institutional level" appears in 49 out of 72 articles, whereas "organizational level" appears in 26 and "individual level" in 16. It seems that authors are inclined to distinguish between "organization" and "institution", suggesting that capacity building ultimately focuses on "mindset transformations" in aid-recipient countries (Chrysostome, 2019).

Table 5: Capacity building and its related concepts and their levels of applications

Authors	Concepts	Levels of Application	Data Collection Techniques	Data Analysis Techniques

[19] https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators, consulted on 8 April 2022.

Thompson, 1976	Institution building	Individual	Not specified (N.S.)	N.S.
Fitch, 1979	Institutional development	Individual/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Brinkerhoff, 1990	Institutional development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Hirschmann, 1993	Institutional development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995	Capacity building	Individual/Organizational/Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Cohen, 1995	Capacity building/ institution building	Individual/Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Fisher, Mahajan, & Topgyal, 1996	Institutional development	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Davies, 1997	Institutional development	Organizational/ Institutional		
Fujisaki, Briscoe, Maxwell, Kishi & Suzuki, 1996	Institution building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Snoussi & Awosika, 1998	Capacity building	Individual/Organizational/Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Jones & Blunt, 1999	Institution building	Individual/Organizational/ Institutional	Interviews	Case studies, content analysis

Angeles & Gurstein, 2000	Capacity development	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Patrick, 2001	Capacity building	Organizational	N.S.	N.S.
Olowu, 2002	Capacity building	Individual/Organizational/Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Prowse, 2002	Trade-related capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Godfrey et al., 2002	Capacity building/capacity development/ institution building/ institutional development	Individual/Institutional	Interviews	Case study, content analysis
Barakat & Chard, 2002	Capacity building/capacity development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Hirschmann, 2003	Institution building	Organizational/ Institutional	Interviews	Case study
Ogilvie, Allen, Laryea, & Opare, 2003	Capacity building	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Caplan, 2004	Capacity building	Individual/Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
El-Zein & Sims, 2004	Institution building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Ramsbotham, Bah, & Calder, 2005	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Saner & Paez, 2006	Trade-related capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Straussman, 2007	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.

Desai & Snavely, 2007	Capacity building	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Fagan, 2008	Capacity building	Organizational	N.S.	N.S.
Jappe, 2009	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Kühl, 2009	Capacity development	Organizational	Unpublished and published documents & interviews	N.S.
Khalid, 2009	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Huyse, Molenaers, Phlix, Bossuyt, & Fonteneau, 2012	Capacity development	Organizational	Interviews, workshops, focus groups, survey, published documents	Case study
Selin, 2012	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Eze & Nwali, 2012	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
de Lange, 2013	Capacity development	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Hendrix, 2013	Capacity building/capacity development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Huisman & Ruijmschoot, 2013	Capacity building	Organizational	Survey-questionnaire	N.S.
Vian, Koseki, Feeley, & Beard, 2013	Capacity building	Organizational	Interviews & published and unpublishe	Case study, content analysis

			d documents	
Krishnaveni & Aravamudhan, 2013	Capacity building	Organizational	N.S.	N.S.
Fletcher, Thu, Maung, Hpeh, & Myint, 2014	Capacity development	Organizational	Workshops	Case study
Lempert, 2015	Capacity building/capacity development	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Darby, 2015	Capacity building	Individual/Organizational	N.S.	N.S.
Oduro-Kwarteng, Monney, & Braimah, 2015	Capacity building	Organizational	Surveys, interviews, workshops	Case study
Venner, 2015	Capacity development	Organizational/ Institutional	Devex.com, grey and scientific literature	Content analysis
Keijzer, 2016	Capacity development	Organizational	Literature reviews, informal discussions	Content analysis
Droney, 2016	Capacity building	Institutional	Participant observation, interviews, survey, ethnographic and archival research	Case study, content analysis

Coryell, Sailors, Nelson, & Sehin, 2016	Capacity building/capacity development	Organizational/ Institutional	Interviews	Case study, content analysis
Shin, Han, & Cha, 2016	Capacity building	Individual	N.S.	N.S.
Benabdallah, 2016	Capacity building	Institutional		
Konduri, Rauscher, Wang, & Malpica-Llanos, 2017	Capacity building	Institutional	Interviews	Case studies, content analysis
Ika & Donnelly, 2017	Capacity building	Organizational/ Institutional	Interviews, surveys, documents	Case studies, content analysis
West, Dawson, & Homer, 2017	Capacity building	Individual	Interviews	Case study, thematic analysis, coding
Semrau et al., 2018	Capacity building	Institutional	Interviews, systematic reviews	N.S.
Katoka, 2018	Institution building/capacity development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Long, 2019	Capacity building	Institutional	Workshops	Case studies
Merritt et al., 2019	Capacity building	Individual	Workshops	Case studies
Pitman et al., 2019	Capacity development	Institutional	Randomized control trial	Not specified

Diez Roux et al., 2019	Capacity building/capacity development /institution building/ institutional development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Shimoda, 2019	Capacity building	Institutional	Interviews, informal conversatio ns	Case study
Thapa et al., 2019	Capacity building	Individual/Institutional	Workshops	Case studies
Tilbrook et al., 2019	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Tiessen & Lough, 2019	Capacity development	Organizational	Survey, documents	Multivariate regression
Bueger et al., 2020	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Craveiro et al., 2020	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Grieve & Mitchell, 2020	Capacity building/capacity development	Institutional	Workshops	Case studies
Ibeneme et al., 2020	Capacity building/capacity development	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Michaelowa et al., 2020	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Muharremi, 2020	Institution building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Naal et al., 2020	Capacity building	Individual		

Schech et al., 2020	Capacity development/ capacity building	Individual	Survey, interviews	Case studies
Soe et al., 2020	Institution building	Organizational	N.S.	N.S.
Srisaeng & Upvall, 2020	Capacity building	Institutional	Interviews	Case study
White, 2020	Capacity building	Institutional	N.S.	N.S.
Zhang et al., 2020	Institutional development	Organizational/ Institutional	N.S.	N.S.

Capacity building and its related concepts feature in multiple sectors. However, the public sector represents the preferred target for capacity building interventions in 18 of 72 articles, along with ten articles on governance (which may focus on the public sector) and 3 on development policy. Most of the other sectors in which capacity building takes place according to the literature relates to public goods of one sort or another (e.g., security, health, education, climate change) and hence inevitably involve the public sector. Some authors discuss capacity building in relation to governance as that concept is applied to the private sector and NGOs as well as the public sector (Godfrey et al., 2002).

Only 30 articles out 72 mention their research methods. Interviews (mostly semi-structured qualitative interviews) stand out as the preferred method of data collection. In most cases, authors do not report on the number of participants in their studies. Case studies, along with content analysis of project documents, are the most used techniques for data analysis (Table-5).

Table-5 also shows the diversity of the peer-reviewed journals in which this literature appeared, including both development-related journals (e.g., World Development), specialized and disciplinary journals (e.g., Public Management Review) and journals that bridge the two (e.g., Public Administration and Development), confirming the idea that capacity building is everywhere. "Working definitions", or in this case sectoral definitions, of capacity building and related concepts have been put forward, though they lack rigor (see Table-6).

Table 6: Sector-specific working definitions in peer-reviewed literature

Authors	Working definitions
Fujisaki, Briscoe, Maxwell, Kishi, & Suzuki, 1996	"Software aid is defined as assistance for human resource development and institutional building in economic and social development" (p. 519).
Davies, 1997	"Institutional development could be seen as an improvement in an organization's responsiveness to the needs of its intended beneficiaries" (p. 615).
Khalid, 2009	"In the maritime realm, the phrase 'maritime capacity-building measures' entails assistance rendered to entities such as-usually developing country states—in specific areas in which those entities are not proficient or do not have sufficient resources to undertake on their own" (p. 433).
Prowse, 2002	"Trade-related capacity building refers to a coherent set of activities by donors (bilateral and multilateral) and partner countries designed to enhance the ability of policy-makers, enterprises and civil society actors

	in-country to improve trade performance through policy and institutional strengthening, as part of a comprehensive approach to achieve a country's overall development goals and poverty reduction strategies" (p. 1238).
Bukenya, 2018	"Bureaucratic capacity concerns the training, expertise and professionalism of government employees which determines the ability of States to implement its objectives" (p. 383).

Such working definitions tend to underline the fact that academia has not been able to address the grey literature's pitfalls, as sometimes happens in development studies (Sumner & Tribe, 2008). As it stands, the peer-reviewed literature has not substantially improved research on capacity building compared to the grey literature in terms of a strong conceptual framework. The common practice remains case studies to prepare guidelines for best practices with no regard to theoretical debates (Barakat & Chard, 2002, p. 818).

5. Discussion

This study reveals that the idea of transferring capacities to developing countries through development projects dates back to the 1950s with no interruption to this day, though using different concepts in each of four time periods. In the main, the evolution of the concept of capacity building has mirrored the dynamic in development thinking as a whole. That is, the common approach is to perceive "older schools of thought as precursors for those coming after, which tends to make earlier thinking 'outdated,' less relevant and less interesting" (Hettne, 2009, p. 3). At different periods of time, capacity building and its related concepts have served as “model problems and solutions” to a community of practitioners (Kuhn, 1970) in a sort of “continual conceptual shift” which has prevailed, though decades of ongoing efforts have not reached their pursued goals (Andrews, 2013; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Goldsmith, 1992; Venner, 2015). Put differently, through an “archaeological description” and hence delves into concepts and ideas in order to bring in to light the mechanisms through which they emerged, were transformed and vanished. Indeed, as Foucault (2002), we find that capacity building as a concept that has evolved in a dialectic fashion, in which a new concept emerges to address the failings and blind spots of the previous generation of concepts.

A case in point, the fact that capacity building has become the alleged cornerstone of development confirms this failure in that “institution building” and “institutional development” arose to solve these same issues decades ago. It is therefore critical to analyze the guiding thread that underpins the evolution of these concepts from the 1950s to this day. Our analysis proceeds with an “archaeological description” and hence delves into concepts and ideas in order to bring in to light the mechanisms through which they emerged, transformed and vanished. Indeed, as Foucault (2002) notes, new ideas generally emerge from pre-existing ideas: phases derive from what he calls “governing statements” (e.g., the lack of capacities in developing countries), which appear to be the common root for chronological phases. We are thus dealing with frameworks operating at different times with the same purposes (An et al., 2017) or different events “caught up in distinct historical webs” (Foucault, 2002, p. 163).

We contend that there is a dialectical process at play in the evolution of capacity building and its related concepts. In other words, each of these concepts emerged to solve a complex issue (thesis); but in practice, they failed to attain their objectives (antithesis); such challenges force the emergence of new or modified concepts (synthesis). In the 1950s, institution building emerged due to the felt need at the time to build institutions better suited to the needs and aspirations of peoples recently freed from colonialism. This idea came with a set of practices that proved to be problematic in practice. Next, institutional development, with its own set of practices, supplanted institution building in the 1960s and 1970s. However, institutional development in turn exhibited various problems in practice as it failed to reach its objectives. Hence, from the 1990s onward, capacity building has been the dominant concept in development to solve the very problem that institution building in the 1950s and institutional development in the 1960s set out to solve. In the recent years, increasing criticisms of capacity building have led to the emergence of the concept of capacity development. In this dialectical process, capacity building and capacity development might not be the final concepts to address the issues of capacity in developing countries (Chimhowu et al., 2019).

Broadly speaking, development studies have been criticized for their lack of rigor (Martinussen, 2004; Sumner & Tribe, 2008) and even their inability to improve lives in developing countries (Edwards, 1989). Moreover, most development researchers use existing bodies of theory borrowed and adapted from related disciplines (Sumner & Tribe, 2008, p. 91). Indeed, “much of theory construction in development studies has been introduced with no explicit considerations concerning basic ontological, epistemological and methodological positions” (Martinussen, 2004, pp. 345–347). Due to a “similar conflation process,” there has not been a serious attempt to settle what the ultimate reality of capacity building is or give it a sound theoretical background. As the dialectical process suggests, the problem-solving appeal trumps any serious endeavor to reflect on the underlying assumptions of the concepts. It is thus not surprising that practitioners do not know what newly built/developed capacities might look like (Lempert, 2015). If this dialectical process goes on unchecked, future concepts will replicate these shortcomings and also fail to solve the issues of capacities in developing countries.

Thus, instead of calling for a dropping of the concept of capacity building altogether, we direct attention to “a common trade-off for theory” where the fit for high-level abstractions may not well suit down-to-earth questions such as how to reach success (Williams, 2021). We call upon researchers to embrace rigor and join in the search for a strong theoretical framework of capacity building. Researchers can ponder on questions such as “what is the nature of capacity building?” before they ask, “what can we learn about capacity building?” and “how can we learn about it?” (Grix, 2002; Gauthier & Ika, 2012).

We suggest that the “new pragmatism” offers to maintain an appropriate balance between rigor and relevance in conceptualizing capacity building. The new pragmatism advocates for “diagnostics before prescriptions” (Rodrik, 2010). It aims to guide practices by seeking to uncover the nature of capacity building in a given context; it emphasizes the choice of policy tools required to achieve objectives in different sectors at different levels. To some extent, it is the resurgence of “old” pragmatism promoted in the US in the 1920s by Charles Pierce, John Dewey and William James (Bernstein, 1999, 2010). Despite their differences, they shared common attitudes toward ideas. They believed that a true theory is what people find useful and that ideas are tools that people devise to cope with the complex world they find themselves in (Green, 2014; Menand, 2001; Rorty, 1982). Though we advocate a "new pragmatism," we share some of the other pragmatists' views. For example, Misak (2007) argues that "the central question for all pragmatists is the question of how we should go from present practice to a future practice, where our very standards themselves may be thrown into question" (p. 3). In other words, pragmatists are consistently searching for practical standards to solve the problems of the day with a relatively non-ideological stance, as they embrace, not reduce, the complexity of the world, and seek to reconcile polar opposites such as the aforementioned high-level abstractions and down-to-earth considerations. This is the core principle of the "new pragmatism."

The new pragmatists are empiricists in the sense that they "follow the facts" but they are not positivists seeking out universal laws. They accept that what works in Bolivia will not necessarily work in Botswana or Bhutan. Their epistemological roots in critical realism and their sensitivity to the importance of local context leads them to look for "best-fit" rather than "best practice" or "first-best" solutions (Ika and Donnelly, 2017, 2019; Lipsey & Lancaster, 1956; Ramalingan et al., 2014; Rodrik, 2008). While they are open to the idea of replicating a given policy, program, project or solution elsewhere, they insist that any attempt at replication must be accompanied by substantial adaptation to the new context and a willingness to experiment and learn from experience. So often, capacity building programs are designed in line with donors' visions, which are not necessarily relevant to beneficiaries (Andrews et al., 2017; Qian, 2003). In the new pragmatism perspective, capacity building would require careful assessment in order to determine what can be the best-fit interventions given that some countries lack basic capacity to fix, for example, their existing infrastructure.

Best-fit solutions often entail “second-best” solutions (Lipsey & Lancaster, 1956; Rodrik, 2008). However, the new pragmatism is not meant to be a fifth wave in capacity building research. Rather, we see the new pragmatism as an epistemological framework for guiding and critiquing future research on this topic.

In sum, we suggest the epistemology of the “new pragmatism” offers a basis to guide both capacity building theory and practice. The new pragmatism is a term we apply to a group of like-minded scholars, practitioners and scholars-practitioners working on public policy and international development who share several epistemological, theoretical, and methodological characteristics (Albagli, 2005; Chang, 2009; Grindle, 2004; Ramalingan et al., 2014; Rodrik, 2010; J. Stiglitz, 2008a). Many of these authors do not work on capacity building. But, in our view, their commitment to evidence-based policy making, with an emphasis on the importance of adjusting policy, practice and tools to local contexts, issues and actors, paying serious attention to historical, geographical, social, economic, political, structural and epidemiological variables, provides a strong theoretical and practical ground for capacity building. In this sense, the new pragmatism epistemology is leery of the current predominance of positivism and the associated search for “best practices” in the delivery of capacity building.

6. Research agenda

The challenge ahead remains combining relevance and rigor in capacity building research and co-creating knowledge between researchers and practitioners in such a way that fosters creativity and innovation for better results (Donaldson et al., 2013; Sharma & Bansal, 2020). We propose five paths to move the research forward:

a) Without empirical evidence, it is not possible to grasp the causality between capacity and project or development success. Yet, little peers-reviewed and empirical research has been devoted to capacity building (An et al., 2017). Capacity building deserves its fair share of empirical studies in true peers-reviewed tradition. Consistent with the new pragmatism, such publications may be entrenched in various epistemological perspectives.

b) In the literature of capacity building, there is a consensus on the need to tailor projects according to context (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; OECD, 2006; World Bank, 2009). The question is how do we conceptualize and operationalize the context? This question deserves a great deal of attention because understanding context appears to be a prerequisite for appropriately tailored projects.

c) There is a growing criticism of RBM when it comes to implementing, monitoring and evaluating capacity building projects in both public administrations and the non-profit sector. For example, Vallejo & Wehn (2016) argue that “linear approaches to capacity building have clear limitations when it comes to specifying (ex-ante and ex-post) outputs, outcomes, and impacts of capacity development interventions” (p. 10). Developing new and more holistic approaches to implement, monitor and evaluate capacity-building projects is needed to overcome these setbacks and thus cope with their inherent complexity and uncertainty (e.g., Outcome Mapping, n.d.).

d) While there is growing recognition that aid and development are not the same thing, the grey and peer-reviewed literatures on capacity building continue to focus on the role of bilateral donors and multilateral organizations. The capacity building literature needs to be decolonized by forcing it to look at how countries not dependent on aid donors and multilateral organizations (e.g., Brazil, Chile, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, South Africa, Turkey) (Munro, 2018; Rahman & Baranyi, 2018) have built and continue to build their own capacities.

Conclusion

Kuhn (1970) argued that new paradigms emerge to provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners when past or existing paradigms come to exhaustion. Capacity building and its related concepts have followed this pattern, though the passage from institution building to institutional development to capacity building/development has not really been revolutionary, but more incremental. In addition, “archaeological description” (Foucault, 2002) has led us to uncover the dialectic process that spurred the evolution of these concepts. We reveal a *bricolage intellectuel* that allows specialists to import other “relevant” or associated disciplines into the discussion. This process of conflation has not been conducted through rigorous research methods as might have been hoped. As a result, capacity building has not been based on strong conceptual and theoretical underpinnings, despite its obvious importance to sustainable development goals (Chrysostome, 2019 ; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Jaycox, 1993; OECD, 2012; Williams, 2021). Given the history of the notion of capacity building, it is likely that a new concept will emerge to supplant capacity building/development. It is thus time for theorizing a stronger conceptual framework to prevent mistakes from the past and cater to the inherent complexity and uncertainty that surround the delivery of capacity building. Hence, we propose the "new pragmatism" as a theoretical framework for capacity building. We also encourage researchers and practitioners to join their efforts and co-create rigorous and relevant knowledge. In the process, it will reinforce the intellectual basis for a concept that aims to address slippery, complex, and yet crucial issues.

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Article 2: Killing two birds with one stone? A new pragmatist perspective on the rigor-relevance gap in capacity building projects

Abstract:

This article examines capacity building in the academic literature using the criteria of scientific rigor and practical relevance. Since the early 1990s, there has been a steady increase in publications in peer-reviewed journals related to capacity building. This trend marks a crucial milestone, as the normative agenda of capacity building originated in practice but failed to produce rigorous capacity building thinking (ideas, strategies, practices) as most projects failed to produce their intended objectives. We ask: Why has the normative agenda failed to produce rigorous capacity building thinking? What can be done to improve the normative agenda for successful outcomes in the field? To answer these questions, we analyzed 72 peer-reviewed articles through summative content analysis. Our findings indicate that 94% of the scholarly articles on capacity building lack rigor, while 71% of the articles are relevant to practice. We thus advocate for scholarly literature that combines rigor and relevance. We propose the new pragmatism as an epistemological framework to bridge the rigor-relevance gap in the capacity building literature through its sensitivity to context and methodological pluralism in research. The new pragmatism invites researchers to analyze practical consequences of capacity-building projects using methodologies appropriate to their ontological and epistemological positions. Similarly, new pragmatism invites practitioners to first understand context in order to deliver "best fit" capacity building solutions.

Keywords: capacity building, rigor-relevance gap, new pragmatism

Introduction

Capacity building is a widely accepted concept in the field of international development, as it is central to development strategies (Analoui & Danquah, 2017; De Grauwe, 2009 ; Rola-Rubzen & Burgess, 2016; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016). According to Ellerman (2001), foreign aid ought to be sustainable if development assistance were “help[ing] people help themselves,” and capacity building is to play a catalyst role in the process (De Grauwe, 2009 ; Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002; Lusthaus et al., 1999). The idea is not new. We can trace its origins back to the 1950s (Fukuda-Parr et al., 2002; Kacou et al., 2022). However, from the 1990s onwards, capacity building has become something of an “emergency” (Calhoun, 2004) in the context of the failure of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) (Grindle, 1997; Jaycox, 1993). The concept has received a great deal of attention as it was granted a pivotal role in strategies to fight poverty and improve lives in poor countries. For instance, UNDP (2009) proclaimed that “a country’s successful development hinges on sufficient capacity. While financial resources, including official development assistance, are vital, they are not enough to promote sustainable human development” (p. 2).

Despite capacity-building efforts, the gap in capacity has not been adequately closed in recipient countries (Bockstael, 2017; Chrysostome, 2019 ; Kühl, 2009; Mayville, 2019). Institutional reforms aimed at creating a framework for applying these capacities have mostly failed (Andrews, 2013), as have the capacity-building projects (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Lempert, 2015). For several decades, these failures have been the impetus for intellectual efforts to build a capacity building normative agenda, that is an effort to structure the idea of capacity building and its practical implications (Lusthaus et al., 1999).

By the mid-1990s, a group of practitioners and consultants set out to produce the "first wave" of the normative and operational frameworks, strongly inspired by practitioners' experiences from the field (Lusthaus et al., 1999; Morgan, 1997). In the face of what can be called the "failure of the first wave," development organizations and agencies published the "second wave" of the normative agenda (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2009b; World Bank, 2009), which was intended to help improve practices in the field but proved largely ineffective (An et al., 2017; Williams, 2021). With the benefit of hindsight, one can note that these different waves emerged with a "long history in practice, but less so in academic theory and research" (Bockstael, 2017, p. 336). To a large extent, this scholarly literature, although nascent, has mirrored this historical context (Kacou et al., 2022).

Why has the normative agenda failed to produce rigorous capacity building thinking (ideas, strategies, practices)? What can be done to improve the normative agenda for successful results in the field? This article aims to answer these questions by focusing on the rigor-relevance gap of the literature of capacity building. Indeed, to address the failure of the capacity building thinking, the strategy has consistently been to refine normative and operational frameworks based on field experiences (Barnett & Engel, 1982; Blokland et al., 2010; Chrysostome, 2019 ; Lavergne & Saxby, 2001; Morgan, 1998; Ubels et al., 2010). However, authors have not systematically and comprehensively explored the rigor-relevance gap in the capacity building literature, as we aim to do in this article. On the one hand, consistent with development studies (Sumner, 2006; Sumner & Tribe, 2008), knowledge production has often been instrumental in that authors generally seek to produce best practices to guide operations in the field (Feek, 2007; Grindle, 2004; E. Ostrom et al., 2007;

Ramalingan et al., 2014). Thus, the capacity building literature is highly relevant because it provides an in-depth understanding of practical problems faced by professionals (Van de Ven, 1989, p. 486). Nevertheless, this literature has fallen into the “best-practice trap” (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013), which led to what can be described as a “reductive relevance,” that is a relevance that does not necessarily have a decisive impact on the pursuit of development goals.

However, many publications on capacity building, including those in academia, lack rigorous research methods (Kacou et al., 2022), as most publications are based on “prima facie and intuitive analysis” (Alaerts & Kasperma, 2010, p. 10) with a good number offering anecdotal accounts by practitioners (Armstrong, 2013; Ubels et al., 2010). As a result, the concept lacks a strong theoretical foundation (Baser & Morgan, 2008; Bockstael, 2017; Lussier, 2016). There has been a “tendency towards integrating a wide range of phenomena into a single term” (Williams, 2021, p. 342), but much of this articulation is based on authors’ worldviews, beliefs about human nature, the current state of the world; and approach to operation in a cause and effect dynamic (Baser & Morgan, 2008; Williams, 2021). In short, such a lack of rigorous approach juxtaposed with seemingly relevant, yet little impactful research is detrimental to development practice.

To achieve “impact relevance,” i.e., to foster real developmental change, this article argues for a rigorous literature that builds on academic research while maintaining if not improving the current relevance dynamics in capacity building literature. We argue that in order to significantly advance the capacity building literature, the use of rigorous research methods is necessary, which in turn requires an explanation of authors’ ontological, epistemological, and methodological stances (Grix, 2002; Martinussen, 2004). It is not claimed that rigorous research will necessarily result in effective or impactful capacity building practices. However, it is argued that it can aid progress (Kacou et al., 2022). It is therefore critical to learn from similar debates in the fields of management and business (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Brunet, 2022; Carton & Mouricou, 2017 ; Gauthier & Ika, 2012, 2022 ; Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014 ; Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009 ; Kieser et al., 2015 ; Meredith, 2022; Nicolai, 2004; Sovacool et al., 2018; Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007; Willmott, 2012; Wood et al., 2023), so as to avoid the formation of competing tribes such as "rigorous research" and "relevant research" (Gulati, 2007).

We suggest the "new pragmatism" turn can help to maintain an appropriate balance between rigor and relevance of capacity building (Kacou et al., 2022). The new pragmatism derives from the tradition of pragmatism (Bernstein, 2013; Misak, 2013) and finds its epistemological foundation in critical realism (Bhaskar, 2008; Collier, 1994) or pragmatic-critical realist school (Sayer, 2000)[20]. The new pragmatism pays primary attention to the empirical consequences of development policies by emphasizing the need to recognize the context of interventions before specifying policies, projects, tools, and techniques. Yet, although capacity building is considered a long-term process, it is conceptualized and implemented through results-based management (RBM) as a linear mechanical process (Armstrong, 2013; Venner, 2015). This is likely due to the institutional focus on creating "good projects", designed to help those who are easy to help but not the poorest who are left behind (Krause,

[20] Sayer does not define himself as a pragmatist thinker, but rather as a member of a critical realist school. However, we believe, like Johnson and Duberley (2000, p. 157), that his philosophical thought offers a synthesis of pragmatism and critical realism.

2014). Treated as “commodities” by managers and development agencies, these projects are sold to key donors who often prioritize short-term results (Freeman & Schuller, 2020). To a significant extent, the capacity building literature reflects the dynamics driven by the need to produce good projects. Therefore, to address the rigor-relevance gap, this article aims to “problematizes” the concept of capacity building in an attempt to “disrupt the reproduction of [this] institutionalized line of reasoning” (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011, p. 34).

The article begins with a rigor-relevance gap conceptual framework. Section 2 offers a discussion on capacity building, followed by the section on its (weak) theoretical foundation. Section 4 explores the rigor-relevance gap in the capacity building literature. Section 5 argues for the new pragmatist turn to bridge the rigor-relevance gap, before presenting the conclusion and a research agenda.

1. A rigor-relevance gap framework

1.1. Debating rigor-relevance gap

The debate about the rigor-relevance gap arguably has its roots in business and management studies (Carton & Mouricou, 2017 ; Donaldson et al., 2013; Gauthier and Ika, 2022; Gulati, 2007 ; Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014 ; Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009 ; Kieser et al., 2015 ; Kieser & Leiner, 2009 ; Robey & Markus, 1998). The gap is associated with the so-called disconnect between research and practice which Van De Ven and Johnson (2006) coined the “knowledge transfer problem,” suggesting that many research results are not useful to practitioners in the field. According to Kieser and Leiner (2009), given the distinctive nature of research and practice, it is impossible to produce research that is both rigorous and relevant. By implication, it presumes that a work produced for practitioners is less rigorous, while researchers are inclined to publish studies with limited practical consequence (Gulati, 2007; Robey & Markus, 1998). This dichotomy led to the emergence of a "rigorous research tribe" and an "applicable findings tribe" (Gulati, 2007), that many authors have called to reject in order to bridge the rigor-relevance gap (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Gulati, 2007; Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009; Hodgkinson & Starkey, 2011; Sharma & Bansal, 2020).

An in-depth discussion of the concepts of "rigor" and "relevance" is beyond the scope of this article (see Table-7 for few definitions). It is worth noting, however, that what constitutes rigorous research may be subjected to debate for "it lies in the eye of the beholder" (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010; Weick, 2007). Indeed, whether we discuss a positivist and non-positivist approaches to research, the evaluation of "rigor" differs. Positivist research focuses on internal and external validity in the quest for universal truth, and measures evidence through deductive reasoning (Frauenberger et al., 2015), while rigorous non-positivist research rests on credibility, transparency, transferability, reflexibility, depth and volume of data (Rheinhardt et al., 2018). Nevertheless, although the approaches are different, it is important that the standards are shared to avoid a loss of direction of the social sciences (Brady & Collier, 2010).

Table 7: Selected definitional quotes of "rigor" and "relevance" adapted from Gill & Gill (2020)

Rigor	Relevance
"By scientific rigor, we refer to the process of systematically studying a phenomenon, using an appropriate design and methods for the problem, and often including the	"Careful attention is necessary but not sufficient to ensure high-quality research. Rigorous research is not 'good' research. Research must also be evaluated on the basis of its relevance to the profession and

development or testing theory" (Allison & Rootman, 1996, p. 334)	its potential impact on social justice" (Barusch et al., 2011, p. 18)
"The notion of 'rigour' is commonly associated with a strict positivist view on science, emphasizing universal truths validated by deductive reasoning or measured evidence" (Frauenberger et al., 2015, p. 94).	"Per Webster's dictionary, relevance is 'relation to the matter at hand' or 'practical and especially social applicability.' At first glance, this definition is not antithetical to that of 'rigor': 'strict precision ... exactness' (Gulati, 2007, p. 776)
"Rigorous (defined as extremely thorough, exhaustive, or accurate) does not imply newness or complicatedness. Rigorous explicitly includes accuracy, and it implies that one has chosen the right method for the problem" (emphasis in original) (McAlister, 2016, p. 565).	"Relevance is the degree to which research contributes directly to improving outcomes of interests to practitioners in the field, that is, solved an important class of problems" (Nunamaker et al., 2015, p. 41)
"The simple Oxford definition of rigor is 'the quality of being extremely thorough and careful.' This definition does not favor a particular research design, objective, discipline or method. Rather, this definition represents the practice of taking great care in establishing and articulating research objectives, selecting and implementing appropriate research methods and interpreting research results—while at the same time acknowledging omissions and limitations" (Sovacool et al., 2018, p. 13).	"Asking questions that are of importance to reality, while not making concession in terms of rigor in developing theory and empirical evidence, would provide most value. Relevance is then found in the question, rigor in the method applied to provide the answer" (Vermeulen, 2005, p. 980)

Generally speaking, as Table-7 shows, rigorous research entails a systematic and careful assessment in the choice of methods according to research problems and questions. And to be relevant, this research ought to help to solve practical issues in the field. In other words, to bridge the rigor-relevance gap, rigorous research should be made "consumable by practitioners" (Meredith, 2022; Robey & Markus, 1998, p. 8) so as to solve the "knowledge transfer problem" (Van De Ven & Johnson, 2006).

1.2. Rigor-research gap framework for capacity building

Gill and Gill (2020) have developed a typology of approaches to rigor in two categories: compliance-based and criteria-based approaches. Compliance-based approach to rigor examines the degree to which research methods comply with: (a) selection of an appropriate research methodology, (b) fidelity in executing the methodology, and (c) transparency in documenting the use of methodology. On the other hand, the criteria-based approach focuses mainly on responding to two questions: (a) is there evidence that the causal factors, processes, nature, meaning, and/or significance of the phenomenon generalize to the broader population? (b) Are the findings able to be replicated in the sense that two researchers asking the same question would come to the same interpretation of data? (Gill & Gill, 2020, p. 57.) In the context of this article, we hasten to note that our approach to rigor evaluation is substantially compliance-based. It allows us to evaluate the authors' ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions. In our view, this assessment appears to be critical because the concept of capacity building has been criticized for its theoretical weakness; authors have integrated several definitions and phenomena into a single term with no serious attempt to reflect on their ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions (An et al., 2017; Jreisat, 2012; Kacou et al., 2022; Williams, 2021). Methodological clarification is indeed key to evaluate authors' epistemological positions (Grix, 2001, 2002; Smyth & Morris, 2007). As Smyth & Morris (2007) point out "research methodology is located in the philosophy of how we come to know things, that is, epistemology" (p. 424). Methodological clarification does not only help to avoid confusion about theoretical debates and approaches to social phenomena (Grix, 2002), but also makes it possible to evaluate the relevance of authors' choice of method (Nola & Sankey, 2007; Smyth & Morris, 2007).

To be clear, this criterion for scientific rigor is not intended to favor a particular method, but rather to highlight the authors' careful approach to their research methods and the implications that flow from them. The aim here is to question the trap of producing best practices in order to improve the relevance of the work produced on capacity building, moving from "reductive relevance" to "impact relevance."

2. Capacity building: some key points and challenges

According to Fukuda-Parr et al. (2002), capacity has been a key component of development interventions since the 1950s as a result of the success of the Marshall Plan. Kacou et al. (2022) have found that capacity building evolved in a "dialectal fashion," with the emergence of a concept in response to the failure of the existing concept to address capacity challenges in developing countries. The early 1990s saw a significant turning point of capacity building as the concept became the cornerstone of development strategies, with among other things the creation of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). This period was defined by the widespread concern of the failure of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), and its subsequent criticism (Cornia et al., 1987) and attempts to explain this failure (Rodrik, 2006; Stiglitz, 2002). For some analysts, the lack of capacity to design, implement and evaluate development policies was the main cause of this failure (Jaycox, 1993; World Bank, 1989, 1992).

The promotion of capacity building in the development community is a good example of a commitment to create the conditions for self-determined development processes in poor countries (Mayville, 2019). What is new about this strategic orientation is that capacity building is placed at the core of international development policies. Capacity is viewed as "one of the critical missing factors" in development (Jaycox, 1993; OECD, 2006, p. 7). With the adoption of international development agendas, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need for capacity building has been reaffirmed as a prerequisite to meet these objectives. According to UNDP, achieving national and international development goals, such as the SDGs, depends on the ability of individuals, organizations and societies to transform themselves in order to achieve their development goals (Wignaraja, 2008). In fact, the SDGs emphasize the idea that capacity building is a means of implementing the plan's objectives (Bloomfield et al., 2018). Notably, target 17.9 aims to enhance the capacity of developing countries by inviting to enhance international support for effective and targeted capacity-building in these nations to facilitate the implementation of all SDGs. Such support can be achieved through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation.

Capacity building is viewed as a catalyst to achieve development goals; it is a means for change, effectiveness, self-sufficiency, and sustainability (Analoui & Danquah, 2017). Capacity building may include projects in their own right, such as training programs or providing computers to government agencies (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Ubels et al., 2010). In essence, capacity building efforts aim to create a virtuous circle that is the favorable conditions for a consistent, systematic, and sustainable use of skills and competences to reduce poverty. For example, Hanson and Sigman (2019) show that World Bank projects' success is correlated with relatively high capacity, regardless of political regime types and across different types of loans.

Indeed, the literature offers examples of ultimately successful capacity building projects (e.g., Ika & Donnelly, 2017). The recent report by the IDRC on the training of Afghan civil servants represents a good illustration (IDRC, 2020). But most donor-funded capacity building interventions fail to achieve their intended objectives (Armstrong, 2013; Kühl, 2009; Lempert, 2015; Mayville, 2019). At the same time, the effectiveness of capacity building projects funded by national governments in developing countries has not been studied yet (Kacou et al., 2022). And, more often than not, profound accounts of ultimately successful outcomes in the capacity building literature tend to be rare. In fact, in line with the commoditization of projects (Freeman & Schuller, 2020; Krause, 2014), project managers, in an effort to demonstrate results to donors, look for quantifiable and short-term results (Lempert, 2015; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016). These good projects are in many ways the matrix of development practice, since funding is contingent on demonstrating results (Eyben, 2006; Freeman & Schuller, 2020; Pollock, 2003). The adoption of RBM, and its tools such as the logical framework, make this a reality. From the perspective of donors, RBM is an effective approach because it requires project managers to plan and detail logically all project steps towards the desired objectives in a linear perspective (Earle, 2002). In recent years, there has been an attempt to go from what Munro (2020) called RBM 1.0 to RBM 2.0, that is to provide more flexibility to managers to apply changes if required. But in practice, RBM 2.0 remains primarily a tool for accountability (Earle, 2002; Kerr, 2008). In many ways, the “commodification of projects” (Freeman & Schuller, 2020) has a great impact on capacity building thinking in a quite problematic way.

Indeed, the normative agenda suggests that capacity building is a long-term process (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2009) aiming to address “wicked problems”; those are complex socio-economic and environmental problems spanning multiple systems, disciplines and worldviews; they are difficult to solve because they require sound knowledge of their contexts (Armstrong, 2013; Brown et al., 2010; Chapman, 2016; Ika & Munro, 2022; Rittel & Webber, 1973). Thus, the widespread acceptance of RBM by major development organizations necessitates its “problematization” in order to challenge the perpetuation of this institutionalized way of thinking (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Schneider (1975) wrote of Schumpeter’s life and work, calling him “the great social scientist” who suggested that good ideas survive while bad ideas disappear (p. 40). However, the concept of capacity building, in its evolution, has encompassed both positive aspects, such as consistent efforts to improve practices in the field, as well as negative aspects, including the linear conceptualization of capacity building. This approach enables aid organizations to appear more effective. International aid is maintained on the basis of the perceived effectiveness of results-based management (Eyben, 2010), while recipient countries participate in the “development dance” by constant renegotiation of aid delivery mechanisms (Swedlund, 2017).

3. The weak and shifting theoretical foundation of capacity building

3.1. The first wave of conceptual and operational frameworks

Capacity building provides a good illustration of a practice based on a weak theoretical foundation (Lussier, 2016). In the 1990s, when capacity building was granted a pivotal role in development, knowledge of the concept was quite limited. With this in mind, consultants and practitioners committed to providing a theoretical, conceptual, and operational foundation for capacity building based on their experiences in international development (Morgan, 1998, 1999a; Qualman & Bolger, 1996; Samuel, 2000). This essentially led to what can be called the first wave of capacity building thinking that set the tone for the subsequent intellectual production. In essence, the grey literature was the crucible of this first wave, for researchers showed a relatively low interest in capacity building. Indeed, while development agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA, now Global Affairs Canada) established a forum (Capacity Development Occasional Series for CIDA) to disseminate the views of practitioners and consultants, Kacou et al. (2022) show academic production was in its early stages in the 2000s, with an increasing interest from researchers over the years.

Table-8 indicates that the first wave of the normative agenda focused on providing a coherent and rational basis for capacity building. To some extent, this attempt at consistency was warranted since development organizations had mainstreamed capacity building into their programming without defining its intellectual contours. For example, Eade (1997) claims that Oxfam used the term "capacity building" for the first time in 1995 while the organization's thinking was not shaped by "academic debate" but by its "own experience as a poverty-focused British NGO" (p. 2). On the basis of "reasoning by analogy" (Ketokivi et al., 2017), the first wave of the normative agenda had integrated many development concepts such as participation, organizational development, technical assistance, performance, institutional economics, empowerment and many more with no clear sense of their interrelationships (Morgan, 1998, p. 2). In other words, these concepts were not introduced on the ground of "epistemological commitment," a notion that sets "the criteria by which we can know what does and does not constitute warranted, or scientific knowledge" (Johnson & Duberley, 2000, p. 3). This reflects the grey literature publications which, in general, are not based on a rigorous methodology (Olivier de Sardan, 2011 ; Sumner & Tribe, 2008), but rather on storytelling, and supporting anecdotes (Alaerts & Kasperma, 2010; Armstrong, 2013; Ubels et al., 2010).

Table 8: Selected sample of the first wave of the conceptual framework of capacity building

	Morgan (1998)	Bolger (2000)	Lavergne & Saxby (2001)
Nature	An approach, a strategy and methodology	An approach, a strategy and methodology	An approach to development
Definition	Capacity development refers to the approaches, strategies and methodologies which are used by national participants and/or outside intervenors to help organizations and/or systems to improve their performance (emphasis in original, p. 1).	Capacity building defined as abilities, skills, understandings, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviours, motivations, resources and conditions that enable individuals, organizations, networks/sectors and broader social systems to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time (p. 2).	Capacity building is a process by which individuals, groups, organizations and societies enhance their abilities to identify and meet development challenges in a sustainable manner (emphasis in original, p. 4).
Levels of analysis	Individuals, organizations, broader systems and institutions	Individual, organizational, network/sectoral and enabling environment	Individual, organizational, and societal.
Context analysis	Understanding the dynamics—political,	Context analysis embedded in the analysis	Not specified

	social, organizational, institutional, cultural—of the larger systems in which the particular program is embedded.	of levels of capacity building	

Table-8 shows that these conceptual frameworks generally provided a reflection on the nature of capacity building or its definitional analysis. The more advanced ones emphasized the need to understand the context of interventions (Morgan, 1998). While definitions reveal differences, the authors generally agree that capacity building involves at least three levels of analysis and operation (individual, organization, societal) (Bolger, 2000; Morgan, 1998).

The emergence of the "first wave" can be seen as the manifestation of the "prison of paradigm," where predetermined models are favored over goals (Blunt, 1997). While authors generally acknowledged the complex nature of capacity building (Cohen, 1995; Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995; Morgan, 1999b), RBM was chosen as its management approach (Morgan, 2000), based on the principle of "good projects" (Krause, 2014). According to Armstrong (2013), this practice resulted in the standard model of capacity building, which involves the processes of assessing, planning, implementing, and evaluating. Despite the goal of the "first wave" being to establish a normative and operational framework to improve practices in the field, these efforts were arguably unsuccessful. The first wave did not result in the development of a coherent normative agenda that would address the challenges of capacity building (Biswas, 1996; Cohen, 1995; Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995; Land, 2000; Morgan, 1999b). For example, Land (2000) indicates that formulating practical and strategic guidelines for approaching capacity building design is challenging. In some cases, this situation has reduced the concept of capacity building to a mere slogan (Lusthaus et al., 1999, p. 9).

3.2. The second wave and its ineffective remedies and prescriptions

By the mid-2000s major international organizations published improved versions of conceptual and operational frameworks for capacity building to serve as remedies for an ineffective practice of capacity building inspired by the first wave (see Baser & Morgan, 2008). The notable improvements in the new wave lie in the systematic focus on implementation and evaluation strategies for capacity-building projects. They had the virtue of providing a holistic perspective, including theoretical and practical insights (See Table 3). With the adoption of development goals such as the MDGs and SDGs, development organizations found it necessary to re-emphasize and reinforce the strategic role of capacity building in achieving these goals. In other words, the “second wave,” in contrast to the first wave which focused on operational challenges, took a strategic perspective on development.

Table-9 offers a selected sample of conceptual and operational frameworks published during the “second wave” period. To a large extent, these frameworks represent the positioning and vision of each organization (Alaerts & Kasperma, 2010), with a constant desire to develop best practices to guide operations in the field. In this dynamic, each development organization and agency has published a document on capacity building (Kühl, 2009, p. 562). What these documents have in common is an articulation of the concept whose basic premise is the dynamic and the multidimensional nature of development itself because capacity building is intended to play a catalytic role in development strategies.

Table 9: Selected sample of the second wave of the conceptual framework of capacity building

	UNDP (2009)	OECD (2006)	World Bank (2009)
Relevance of capacity building (CB)	“A country’s successful development hinges on having sufficient capacity. While financial resources, including official development assistance, are vital, they are not enough to promote sustainable human development. Without supportive strategies, policies, laws and procedures, well-functioning organizations, and educated and skilled people, countries lack the foundation to plan, implement and review their national and local development strategies.” (p. 2)	“Development efforts in many of the poorest countries will fail, even if they are supported with substantially increased funding, if the development of sustainable capacity is not given greater and more careful attention.” (p. 7)	“That level of commitment reflects donors’ belief that their aid mission will not succeed unless recipients improve their ability to use the assistance that donors provide, as well as the other resources at their disposal.” (p. 1)
Definitions	“Capacity development as the process through which individuals, organizations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the	“Capacity development is understood as the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create,	“Capacity development is a locally driven process of learning by leaders, coalitions and other agents of change that brings about changes in sociopolitical, policy-related, and

	capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time" (p. 4).	adapt and maintain capacity over time" (p. 12).	organizational factors to enhance local ownership for and the effectiveness and efficiency of efforts to achieve a development goal" (p. 3).
Nature	A long-term process promoted through a combination of shorter-term results (driven by the outside) and longer-term results (endogenous).	An endogenous process of change.	The Capacity development Result Framework posits that this process is driven by changes in how knowledge and information are applied at various levels of a society—that is, by learning.
Three levels of CB	Individual, organizational, enabling environment	Individual, organizational, enabling environment	Sociopolitical environment; Policy; Organizational
Context analysis	Capacity assessments are an essential step in developing rigorous and practical capacity development response, following in depth stakeholder dialogue and analysis of the policy and political context for institutional transformation.	Understanding the enabling environment through the "institutional analysis," "power analysis" or "drivers of change analysis."	Analysis of sociopolitical, policy-related, and organizational factors relevant to the achievement of a given development goal is context-specific.
Delivering strategy	Advocacy and advice; methods and tools; knowledge services; programme support and partnerships	Skill creation should always be integrated in organizations and institutions.	Assessing the sociopolitical environment; efficiency of policy instruments; effectiveness of organizational arrangements

Evaluation	Good-practice indicators, case evidence and analyses of quantitative and qualitative data.	Not specified	Using the Capacity Development Result Framework indicators.

As shown in Table-9, the second wave highlighted differences in definitions[21] as the concept means different things to different organizations within the international development community (Analoui & Danquah, 2017, p. 2). At the same time, they also reaffirmed the idea that capacity development contains three levels of analysis and operation.

In both the first and second waves, although they have inspired practice, these normative and operational frameworks have not been empirically investigated with real cases (An et al., 2017). While international organizations have been at the forefront in promoting the normative agenda, they have offered little information on the applicability of these frameworks and the results that have ensued (An et al., 2017). As a result, the normative agenda has not been successful in providing a strong theoretical foundation for capacity building (Lussier, 2016). Rather, capacity building is seen as a metaphor, an abstraction that refers to causal mechanisms that determine performance at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels (Williams, 2021). In practice, the prescriptions of these normative and operational frameworks are framed on a linear and mechanistic vision and delivered through RBM, according to the state of the art in development (Curth-Bibb, 2019; Earle, 2002; Kerr, 2008). But, as Chapman (2016) argues, conventional science, based on linear causality and

[21] In fact, World Bank (2009) argues that the OECD's (2006) definition is “very broad” and makes it difficult to evaluate the outcome a capacity building initiative defined as such.

reductionism, has neglected the social change agenda, which parallels the process of defining environmental problems, to emphasize the more tractable technical and scientific aspects (p. 2). While these deficiencies are well known in the literature (Curth-Bibb, 2019; Jreisat, 2012; Williams, 2021), research has yet to provide a systematic analysis of the rigor-research gap in the capacity building literature, particularly its scholarly stream.

4. Insights on rigor and relevance in capacity building scholarly literature

4.1. Rigor-relevance gap in scholarly literature

This section builds and extends on a most recent systematic review of peer-reviewed articles on capacity building and its three related concepts (capacity development, institution building and institutional development) by Kacou et al. (2022). Through a summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shanon, 2005), the authors have selected 72 peer-reviewed articles that extensively discuss capacity building and/or its related concepts. We believe that it is appropriate to assess the rigor-relevance gap of capacity building in peer-reviewed articles, as the academic literature is generally expected to be rigorous. The criteria of rigor and relevance of these 72 articles were evaluated on the basis of the compliance-based approach (Gill & Gill, 2020), which allows to assess the extent to which the authors are explicit about ontological, epistemological and methodological positions (see Section-1.2).

Table-10 shows that most authors publishing in peer-reviewed journals have imported the methodological weaknesses from the grey literature. The research method was not specified in about 33% (N=24) of the articles. More than 22% (N=16) of the articles were based on case studies without explicit justification from the authors on the choice of this method or the case to be investigated in the context of their studies. In addition, over 30% (N=22) of the articles combined case studies with other research methods. In other words, case studies remain the method of choice (52%) for authors publishing on capacity building. Only 14% (N=10) of the articles used methods other than case studies. To be clear, we contend that case study can be a suitable research method for capacity building, as the normative agenda recognizes that capacity building is specific to the context. The case study is arguably one of the most reliable methods to produce context-specific knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006), and therefore help to uncover causal mechanisms (Danermark, 2012) of capacity building in a given context. But similar to other methods, case study research needs a structured approach to evaluate the connection between real observations and theoretical concepts (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p. 19). This means case studies must also follow a rigorous methodology (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010; Yin, 2018).

Among other things, rigor requires authors to be explicit about their methodology. However, as Table-10 shows, 94% of the 72 articles are not explicit about their methodology, suggesting that the epistemological basis of their research is weak, thus progress in developing the knowledge base for research and practice is also weak (Smyth & Morris, 2007, p. 423). In the absence of rigorous methodology, studies may offer a biased understanding of the practical challenges of capacity building. Armstrong's (2013) book offers a good illustration. It provides a rich analysis of practical issues, while exposing the inconsistency between the conceptual and operational frameworks of international organizations, and the "positivist" implementation approach of capacity-building projects. However, the author relies mainly on anecdotes inspired by his personal experience.

Table 10: Rigor and relevance in capacity building scholarly literature (adapted from Kacou et al., 2022))

Authors	Research methods	Explicit about methodological basis?	Practical relevance?	Theme of relevance	Sectors
Thompson (1976)	Not specified (N.S.)	No	No	Not applicable (N.A.)	Education
Fitch (1979)	Case studies	No	Yes	Aid politics	Armed forces
Brinkerhoff (1990)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Public sector
Hirschmann (1993)	Case study	No	Yes	Understanding context	Public sector
Grindle & Hilderbrand (1995)	Case studies	No	Yes	Organizational culture/context analysis	Public sector
Cohen (1995)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Public sector
Fisher et al. (1996)	Case study	No	Yes	Monitoring and Evaluation	Governance
Davies (1997)	N.S.	No	Yes	Effectiveness	NGOs
Fujisaki et al. (1996)	Survey	No	No	N.A.	Aid policy
Snoussi & Awosika (1998)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Marine
Jones & Blunt (1999)	Interviews, case studies, content analysis	No	Yes	Sustainability/context analysis	Public sector
Angeles & Gurstein (2000)	Case studies	No	Yes	Participatory approach	NGOs

Patrick (2001)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	NGOs
Olowu (2002)	Case study	No	Yes	Project governance	Public sector
Prowse (2002)	Case study	No	No	Fragmented implementation strategy	International trade
Godfrey et al. (2002)	Interviews, case study, content analysis	No	Yes	Sustainability/context analysis/donor-driven	Public sector/NGOs
Barakat & Chard (2002)	Case study	No	Yes	"Best practices"/organizational culture	Governance
Hirschmann, (2003)	Interviews, case study	No	Yes	Sustainability/local ownership	Monitoring and evaluation
Ogilvie et al., (2003)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Health (nursing)
Caplan (2004)	N.S.	No	Yes	Reliance on international expertise	Public sector
El-Zein & Sims (2004)	Case study	No	Yes	Political context	Public sector
Ramsbotham et al. (2005)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Security
Saner & Paez (2006)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	International trade
Straussman (2007)	Case study	No	Yes	Unclear goals linked to imprecise meaning of C.B.	Governance

Desai & Snavely (2007)	Case studies	No	Yes	Transfer of Western institutions to recipient countries	Governance
Fagan (2008)	Case study	No	Yes	Undermining local knowledge in favor of Western rationalities	Environment
Jappe (2009)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Environment
Kühl (2009)	Unpublished and published documents & interviews	No	Yes	C.B. as requirement for international donors	Development policy
Khalid (2009)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Maritime
Huyse et al. (2012)	Interviews, workshops, focus groups, survey, published documents, case study	No	Yes	Monitoring and evaluation	Evaluation
Selin (2012)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Environment
Eze & Nwali (2012)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Entrepreneurs hip
de Lange (2013)	Case studies	No	Yes	Monitoring and Evaluation	Evaluation
Hendrix (2013)	Case study	No	Yes	Success story	Governance

Huisman & Ruijmschoot (2013)	Survey-questionnair e	No	Yes	Monitoring and evaluation	Evaluation
Vian et al. (2013)	Interviews, published and unpublished documents, case study, content analysis	No	Yes	Training strategy	Health
Krishnaveni & Aravamudhan (2013)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Governance
Fletcher et al. (2014)	Workshops, case study	No	Yes	Ownership vs Externally driven process	NGOs
Lempert, (2015)	N.S.	No	Yes	Practitioners' accountability	Development policy
Darby (2015)	Case study, semi-structured interviews, semi-structured questionnair e, content analysis	No	Yes	Understanding cultural context/ "best practice"	Security
Oduro-Kwarteng et al. (2015)	Surveys, interviews, workshops, case study	No	No	N.A.	Water
Venner (2015)	Devex.com, grey and scientific	No	No	N.A.	Development policy

	literature, content analysis				
Keijzer (2016)	Literature reviews, informal discussions, content analysis	No	Yes	Transparency and accountability	Governance
Droney (2016)	Participant observation, interviews, survey, ethnographic and archival research, case study, content analysis	Yes	Yes	Undermining local knowledge/Political driven	Health (herbal medicine)
Coryell et al. (2016)	Interviews, case study, content analysis	No	Yes	Monitoring and evaluation	Education
Shin et al. (2016)	N.S.	No	Yes	Tailored programme/project	Health (nursing)
Benabdallah (2016)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Security
Konduri et al., 2017)	Interviews, case studies, content analysis	No	Yes	Local institutions involvement	Health (pharmacy)
Ika & Donnelly (2017)	Interviews, surveys, documents,	Yes	Yes	Structural, institutional, managerial,	Public sector

	case studies, content analysis			collaboration, commitment, alignment, adaptation conditions for successful projects	
West et al. (2017)	Interviews, case study, thematic analysis, coding	Yes	Yes	Motivation and capabilities training	Health (midwifery)
Semrau et al. (2018)	N.S.	No	Yes	Context-specific approach	Health (mental)
Katoka (2018)	Case study	No	Yes	Bypassing local institutions	Governance
Long (2019)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Ocean affairs
Merritt et al. (2019)	Workshops, case studies	No	Yes	Training strategy	Health (mental)
Pitman et al. (2019)	Randomized control trial	No	No	N.A.	Research publication (biomedical)
(Diez Roux et al. (2019)	N.S.	No	No	N.A.	Health (urban)
Shimoda (2019)	Interviews, informal conversations, case study	No	Yes	Enabling environment for long endogenous process	Decentralization
Thapa et al. (2019)	Workshops, case studies	No	Yes	Assessment design/implementation/monitoring	Climate change

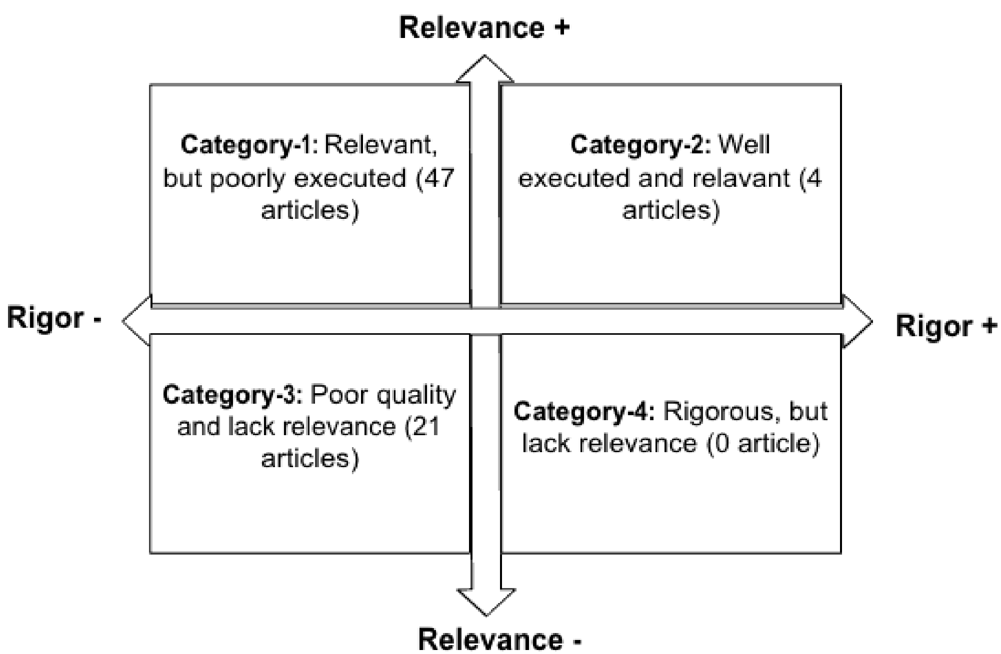
Tilbrook et al. (2019)	N.S.	No	Yes	Monitoring and evaluation	Ocean acidification
Tiessen & Lough (2019)	Survey, documents analysis, multivariate regression	No	Yes	Mitigating factors for capacity building and successful skill transfer	International volunteering
Bueger et al. (2020)	N.S.	No	Yes	Innovation	Maritime security
Craveiro et al. (2020)	Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, case studies inductive and deductive coding	No	Yes	Beneficiaries' perspectives	Health (research experience)
Grieve & Mitchell (2020)	Workshops, case studies	No	Yes	Power relation	North-South partnership
Ibeneme et al. (2020)	Workshops, case study	No	Yes	Sustainability/cost-effective	Health (digital)
Michaelowa et al. (2020)	Data from multilateral organizations, interviews, literature, and documents reviews	No	Yes	Aid politics strategy/ Strategic orientation	Climate change
Muharremi (2020)	Case studies	No	Yes	Best-practices	Governance

Naal et al. (2020)	Systematic review (academic database and grey literature)	No	Yes	Training strategy	Global health
Schech et al. (2020)	Survey, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, case studies	No	Yes	Endogenous process of adaptation and change	International volunteering
Soe et al. (2020)	Literature review, case study, interviews	No	Yes	N.A.	Governance
Srisaeng & Upvall 2020)	Interviews, case study	No	Yes	Partnership	Health (midwifery)
White (2020)	N.S.	No	Yes	Power relation	North—south cooperation in research
Zhang et al. (2020)	Regression analysis	Yes	Yes	Corporate sustainability	Corporate sustainability

On the other hand, Table 10 reveals that more than 70% of articles are relevant for practice. “Theme of relevance” is the perspective from which authors analyze the challenges faced by practitioners in the field. The challenges may imply donors’ strategic orientation (“aid politics”) or power relation that hamper an effective capacity building strategy or practice. According to many authors, context analysis (expressed in different ways), along with monitoring and evaluation, are key to an effective practice of capacity building (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Konduri et al., 2017; Semrau et al., 2018; Shimoda, 2019).

Figure-5 provides a classification of the articles in our sample based on the criteria of rigor and relevance presented in section 1. It identifies essentially 3 categories of articles.

Figure 5: Four representative quadrants of the capacity building literature (adapted from Tushman & O'Reilly, 2007)



As depicted in Figure-5, the overwhelming majority of peer-reviewed articles, 94% (N=47+21), lack rigor. Moreover, despite most articles being relevant to practice (71% (N=47+4)), only 8% (N=4) of these apply a rigorous research approach. Interestingly, all articles in our sample that use a rigorous research approach are also relevant to practice, i.e., 6% (N=4). Figure-5 reveals the parlous state of peer-reviewed articles on capacity building, deserving the attention of both researchers and peer-reviewed journals to ensure the pendulum swings in the proper direction. This refers to the 4 articles in Category 2.

Profile summaries are provided in Table.

Table 11: Three profiles of articles in capacity building literature

Category-1 (Relevant but poorly executed): This category includes a broad range of profiles, from researchers to professionals, consultants, and others. Establishing a link between profession and the quality of their articles would be risky. It is certain that these authors are dedicated to publishing works based on empirical experience that is relevant to capacity building. Example : Craveiro et al. (2020); Shimoda (2019) **Category-2 (Well executed and relevant):** Articles whose authors are explicit about their epistemological methodological positions and where the article is relevant to practice. All first authors of the four articles in this category are affiliated with academic institutions. One can conclude that these authors' status as researchers is likely the underlying reason for the quality of their work. Example: Droney (2016); Ika & Donnelly (2017) **Category-3 (Poor quality and lack relevance):** Articles that are not relevant to practice and whose authors are not explicit about their epistemological and methodological positions fall in this category. As Meredith (2022) argues for the field of business and management studies, works that fall into this category may be referred to as normative. In this category, the author identifies one or a group of hypotheses and then addresses a hypothetical problem related to capacity building in a hypothetical setting (e.g., how to conceptualize and operationalize the capacity building). While this kind of work may be welcome and their

authors may claim a theoretical contribution, the drawback is that this setting virtually does not exist, making the resulting theory dubious.

Example: Diez Roux et al. (2019); Eze & Nwali (2012).

Category-4: (Rigorous but lack relevance): No articles were found in this category in our sample. The absence of articles in this category in our sample provides some reassurance. This suggests perhaps that authors who publish on capacity building endeavor to avoid the "academic drift" (Meredith, 2022) of applying research theories and tools without the foundation of practical experience.

Furthermore, we conducted an analysis of the articles by capacity-building application sector to examine any correlation between the quality of the articles and application sectors. The findings indicate that the rigor-relevance gap is a widespread phenomenon across all fields of capacity building analysis. For instance, 4 articles with a rigorous approach and practical relevance are applied to three sectors: healthcare, the public sector, and corporate sustainability. Despite the healthcare sector appearing twice, no conclusive findings can be drawn. To provide another example, the healthcare sector is mentioned 12 times in our sample, with 8 articles in category 1, 2 articles in category 2, and 2 in Category 3. Likewise, the governance sector is discussed across 10 articles, with 9 in Category 1 and 1 in Category 3. This evidence suggests that the rigor-relevance gap is a generalized problem across multiple sectors.

4.2. Rigor and relevance gap: a trap to avoid

There is an urgent need to integrate rigor and relevance into the research of capacity building. When capacity building research is not rigorous and relevant, the social costs are high. Weak institutions in poor countries are at the root of poverty and its consequences (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). However, our advocacy for rigor should not lead to “science fiction” (Nicolai, 2004) where the rigorous application of scientific methods leads to a loss of practical relevance (Van De Ven & Johnson, 2006). Debates about the rigor-relevance gap in management studies (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Donaldson et al., 2013; Gill & Gill, 2020; Gulati, 2007; Gutiérrez & Penuel, 2014; Kieser et al., 2015a; Kieser & Leiner, 2009; McAlister, 2016; Robey & Markus, 1998) can serve as a cautionary tale in this regard.

Bridging the gap between the rigor and relevance of the capacity building literature requires a variety of research approaches and tools, i.e., different methodologies depending on the authors’ respective preferences. Nevertheless, using different approaches and tools requires “shared standards” (Brady & Collier, 2010), which means that authors need to clarify methodologies and their appropriateness concerning epistemology (Grix, 2002; Smyth & Morris, 2007). This is essential to thoroughly investigate the theoretical foundations of capacity building grounded in disciplines such as adult learning and training, organizational studies, project management, new institutional economics, human capital, social capital, among others (Kacou et al., 2022). Even if one concurs that the development of knowledge at the cutting edge of science involves different disciplines (Aram & Salipante, 2003; Harriss, 2002), assembling ideas and theories from different fields demands a rigorous approach that implies an “epistemological commitment” (Johnson & Duberley, 2000), to evade vague and unordered speculation or axiomatic systems of thought (Sutton & Staw, 1995, p. 371) being deemed theoretical foundations (Meredith, 2022). According to Pritchard (2006), epistemic justification is a necessary condition to differentiate between fact and fiction, or perception and knowledge.

The normative agenda has created perceptions that tend to reinforce ineffective capacity building practices among practitioners and academics (Maruyama, 1998). For example, despite their ineffectiveness, short-term training courses remain the primary approach for capacity building in practice (Morkel & Ramasobana, 2017). Capacity building literature must demonstrate “practical utility” (Brunet, 2022), while denouncing ineffective practices. It must propose “actionable knowledge” that maintains rigor and relevance (Wood et al., 2023) to help practitioners in the field. To achieve this, researchers should ensure that their work is easily understandable for practitioners through the utilization of straightforward tools and solutions, employing accessible language (Brunet, 2022; Meredith, 2022). By doing so, practitioners can engage with academic publications for improved understanding (Bailey, 2022). Simultaneously, practitioners should engage in the production of capacity building knowledge, performing their part as authors (Schön, 2008) or partnering with fellow researchers (Bartunek & Rynes, 2014; Božič et al., 2022; Sharma & Bansal, 2020).

5. The new pragmatism perspective: A way to bridge the rigor relevance gap

“The new pragmatism” is a term that we apply to what we see as a group of like-minded scholars, practitioners and scholar-practitioners working on public policy and international development who share several epistemological, methodological, and ideological characteristics. Authors whom we identify as new pragmatists include, but not limited to Andrews (2013), Andrews et al. (2017) Armstrong (2013) Chang (2012), Grindle (2004, 2007), Rodrik (2016), Sabates-Wheeler (2009), Stiglitz (2004), etc. What is new about the new pragmatism is their explicit concerns with issues of public policy in relation to their problems of international development. For this group of authors, the quest for practical solutions to development problems is not shaped by ideological positions, but rather a rigorous analysis of the "binding constraints" in a given context (Rodrik, 2009).

5.1. Bridging the rigor-relevance gap in knowledge production

The new pragmatism derives from the pragmatism tradition promoted in the United Stated in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. The new pragmatism is a sign that the best of Charles Peirce, Williams James and John Dewey has resurfaced in a profound, interesting and fruitful way (Misak, 2007). At its core, pragmatism is a problem-solving philosophy, hence its focus on the practical consequences of human action. For instance, William James contended that pragmatism is a method for settling philosophical disputes by checking the empirical consequences of a theory (James, 2014). For pragmatists, it is pointless to define a concept that is fundamental to human thought and possesses some autonomous interest; we should rather attempt to get leverage on it by exploring its connections with experience and practice (Misak, 2011, p. 862). Therefore, the endless discussions and controversies about the definition of capacity building appear to be fruitless. We should rather get a fix on it by seeking the best fit methods for an effective practice in the field for successful projects. From this perspective, researchers who embrace new pragmatism are inclined to produce studies that are "practically relevant" (Aram & Salipante, 2003; Misak, 2011) as they focus on the practical consequences of capacity building theory and practice.

New pragmatists are not usually explicit about their epistemological stance. We assert, however, that they are members of the critical realism school. Thus, the new pragmatism promotes the scientific rigor by espousing the "critical methodological pluralism." Critical realism argues that researchers should use many methodological tools in concrete research. That is to say, research should not be restricted to qualitative or quantitative methods; because there is often a need to mix methods. In any case, the choice of an approach is a matter of "practical adequacy" (Sayer, 2010). In other words, it is the context of the study that, in the first analysis, drives the researcher's choice. From the perspective of the new pragmatism, the contextual injunction applies to the practice of capacity building. Regardless of method choices, ontology and epistemology must be the starting point of research (Bhaskar, 2008; Danermark, 2012).

In the final analysis, critical realism argues that the fundamental task of research is to reveal the mechanisms that produce social phenomena, i.e., capacity building. To comprehend events, it is necessary to seek their underlying mechanisms rather than just their empirical occurrences. Critical realism argues that mechanisms are dependent on contextual circumstances but still holds that science should try to make general claims. Nevertheless, these generalizations are distinct from the generalizations in empiricism or positivism, which are based on extrapolations. According to critical realism, generalization means different things and varies depending on concrete circumstances. For instance, a law of gravity, is viewed as "a description of a mechanism existing as a property in reality, but whose observable effects vary" (Danermark, 2012, p. 75). Laws are thus analyzed as tendencies. This is why it is essential to understand the manifestation of laws in concrete circumstances, through what critical realism calls "transfactual conditions." The transfactual conditions are the conditions under which things like a social relationship, an action, an institution or a social structure, are what they are and not something else (Danermark, 2012). This type of investigation requires a methodological approach based on abduction (Danquah, Crocco, et al., 2022)[22] and retroduction (An et al., 2017; Ika & Donnelly, 2017)[23]. Thus, to understand capacity building, it is critical to gain an understanding of its underlying mechanisms. This is a requirement to study the context of the projects in order to better define the transfactual conditions for capacity building. In other words, critical realism offers an epistemology to (re)connect "the particular" and the "general" (Smyth & Morris, 2007).

5.2. From a practical perspective

The new pragmatism advocates for context-driven approach to capacity building project planning, implementation, and evaluation. In other words, it calls for "diagnostics before prescriptions" (Rodrik, 2010). In essence, new pragmatists acknowledge that good intentions must be combined with appropriate analytical and evaluative tools to see what works and what could potentially work. This implies a rigorous assessment of the beneficiary context to

[22] Abduction is a mode of inference that authors use for the sake of redescription or recontextualization. For example, Marx proceeds by abduction when he posits that the history of humanity is defined by class struggle. According to (Danermark (2012), abduction may be used to acquire "knowledge of how various phenomena can be part of and explained in relation to structures, internal and contexts which are not directly observable" (p. 92).

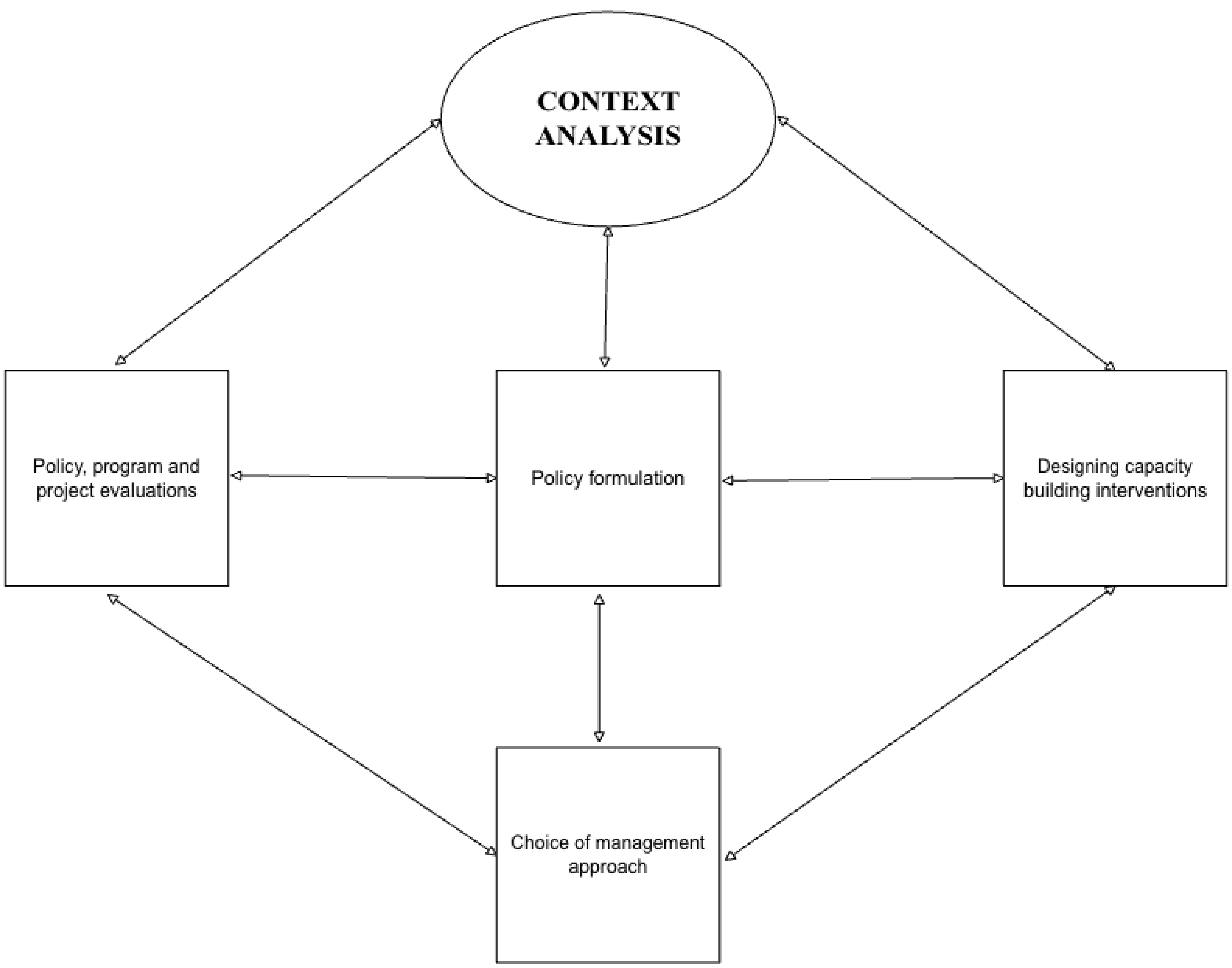
[23] Retroduction is a mode of inference that requires that author advance from one event (empirically observable) to a conceptualisation of its transfactual conditions (what makes that event possible). Authors seek to clarify the basic prerequisites or conditions for social relations, people's actions, reasoning and knowledge (Danermark, 2012, p. 96).

determine the contours of capacity building projects. This requires an innovative approach by project managers. For, as Olivier de Sardan (2021) shows, the results of development projects stem from their confrontation with local contexts. Carefully planned projects take on a real form through the interactions between managers, beneficiaries and other stakeholders. Thus, the lack of knowledge of the actors and the underestimation of their potential role are, among other things, factors of failure.

For new pragmatism, a rigorous contextual assessment includes, *inter alia*, the analysis of the institutional context of the recipients, i.e., the formal and informal rules that shape so much of human behavior (Andrews, 2013; Scott, 1995, 2011). As such, new pragmatists look for information asymmetries. They are keenly aware of social, political, and economic power and of the constraints that it imposes on the art of the possible. In other words, their policy proposals or research methods are driven by contextual analysis. Thus, they are at ease living and working in a “second best” world (Lipsey & Lancaster, 1956; Rodrik, 2008).

The new pragmatism offers an approach to capacity building that is contextually driven. This implies that capacity building interventions must be initiated and formulated on the basis of the real needs of the beneficiaries (Anderson et al., 2012). Many of the capacity building projects being promoted in poor countries are inspired by donor country standards without paying attention to the contextual realities of those countries (Andrews, 2013; Andrews et al., 2017). While they are open to the idea of replicating a given policy, program, project or solution elsewhere, new pragmatists insist that any attempt at replication must be accompanied by substantial adaptation to the new context and a willingness to experiment and learn from experience. From the perspective of the new pragmatism, capacity building interventions should incorporate “second-best” options, including the least appealing objectives (Qian, 2003), i.e., the “bureau-franchising” form of bureaucracy that does not conform to the Weberian model (Ang, 2017). The abandonment of best practices is an imperative. In the perspective of the new pragmatism, it is necessary to look for the best-fit practices (Ramalingan et al., 2014). As Figure-6 shows, this implies the use of various and diverse methods of context analysis, management and evaluation. In terms of practice, the new pragmatism holds the pragmatic tradition that requires ideas and theories to be tested against reality to determine whether they can solve development problems.

Figure 6: New pragmatism approach of capacity building



At its core, Figure-6 suggests that, given the complexity of capacity building, its practice should not rely on a single approach. In this case, the contextual analysis that is at the heart of this model can be undertaken in different ways depending on the scope or depth of the issue. This enables experts, consultants, or managers to be able to make wise and relevant choices. Ultimately, the choice of methods for contextual analysis, management and evaluation evaluations must lead to the objectives of sustainable development.

Research agenda

In the continued effort to pursue avenues for narrowing the gap between relevance and rigor in capacity building knowledge production, we propose four research paths.

a) We welcome proposals from researchers for alternative epistemological perspectives to further reduce the gap between rigor and relevance. Alternatively, we encourage deeper reflection based on critical realism and new pragmatism.

b) As Table 4 shows, one of the practical concerns of capacity building is context analysis. We invite researchers to help us conceptualize "context" and determine how to analyze it in concrete ways based on the needs of users.

c) As this article shows, neither RBM 1.0 nor RBM 2.0 is suitable for managing capacity building projects. We invite researchers to ponder alternative approaches relevant to complex projects such as capacity building.

d) There is a need to remove the bias towards the aid industry in the literature on capacity building. Research on the home-grown capacity-building efforts of governments, NGOs and the private sector in the Global South is desperately needed; only a fraction of these efforts are funded by aid.

e) There is also a need to analyze the pattern of the editorial boards and the quality of the articles published in academic journals.

Conclusion

Sayer (2010) argues that the starting point of a field of study and the conceptualization of key concepts shape the research dynamic long before the choice of methods in the narrow sense of techniques for obtaining data emerges. This implies that, when the initial conceptualization is problematic, the range of possible outcomes is quite limited. To some extent, capacity building has followed this trend. The starting point having been fraught with conceptual issues, the practice has revealed challenges, and the second generation of the normative agenda has failed to address those challenges. This has led to the emergence of scholarship that is relevant to practice but lacks methodological rigor. To make headway, scholars should design and assess their research not only on “the useful vs. non-useful” criterion (that is, relevance) but also on the “correct vs. incorrect” criterion (that is, rigor) (Pinto, 2022).

However, this call for rigorous methodology should not result in studies that emphasize rigor at the expense of practical relevance, as it has been the case with so many business and management studies (Carton & Mouricou, 2017; Donaldson et al., 2013; Gauthier & Ika, 2022; Gulati, 2007; Willmott, 2012). This would be no less problematic. It is, however, urgent to problematize the practice of capacity building by questioning the framework of “good projects” (Freeman & Schuller, 2020; Krause, 2014) and the heavy reliance on RBM as a management approach. If one agrees that capacity building is complex, it should not be conceptualized and implemented as a linear process. This article shows how the new pragmatism offers an epistemology to effectively bridge the rigor-relevance gap in capacity building research.

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Article 3: Institutional context analysis: a comparative study of two capacity building projects funded by Global Affairs Canada and the World Bank

Abstract:

This article analyzes the context of capacity building projects in West Africa. It asks: how is the context of capacity projects conceptualized? What is the effect of this conceptualization on project performance? To answer these questions, the article uses Scott's (2011) institutional context framework, which posits that institutions are made up of three pillars: regulative, normative, and cognitive-cultural. The article proceeds with a comparative study of two capacity building projects. The results indicate that both projects were complied with the regulative pillar but did not make a rigorous effort to take into account the normative and cognitive-cultural pillars. Despite this, both projects have had some management success. However, both projects lack a mechanism to deliver development success. To improve performance, project management and development successes, we propose institutional dynamism as a new approach to capacity building projects. The concept of institutional dynamism suggests that the three institutional pillars ought to interact during the project, resulting in a dynamic context.

Keywords: capacity building, context, institutions, institutional context, project performance, institutional dynamism.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, capacity building has emerged as a strategy for promoting development changes in poor countries (Jaycox, 1993; Venner, 2015). It promotes a self-driven process of development through institutional transformation (UNDP, 2006). Capacity building covers three interrelated levels of operation (individual, organizational, and institutional) (Kacou et al., 2022). Capacity building projects are intended to train change agents (individual level), who are empowered to transform organizational structures (organizational level) and institutions (national level or societal level) (An et al., 2017; OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2006). In other words, capacity building aims at “getting institutions right” (Cleaver, 2012; Stiglitz, 2004) through human resources development (Danquah et al., 2022; Rola-Rubzen & Burgess, 2016) and training, coaching, mentoring, etc. (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Preskill & Boyle, 2008.) Although this model appears appealing in theory, there is no evidence of its effectiveness (Kühl, 2009; Lussier, 2016). In fact, as An et al. (2017) note, the vast majority of the conceptual frameworks provided by development organizations (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2006; World Bank, 2009) have not been empirically tested.

Most capacity building projects fail to reach their goals (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Di Maro et al., 2022). One of the most commonly cited reasons for the failures is the lack of sufficient attention paid to the beneficiaries’ context (Andrews, 2013; Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Hagelsteen & Becker, 2019; Kacou et al., 2022; Ramalingan et al., 2014). Development actors concur with the view that taking into account the context of beneficiaries is crucial to successful capacity building (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2006; World Bank, 2009). This view is largely shared in the literature of project management (Ika, 2012; Ika

& Donnelly, 2017; Love & Ika, 2021; Martinsuo & Ahola, 2022) and organization studies (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Narayanan & Shin, 2019; Scott, 1995; Scott et al., 2011; Seidler, 2017). But, in reality, it seems that capacity building has followed the same trend as development aid in general, that is replicating “travelling models” (Rottenburg, 2009) or “travelling blueprints” (Bierschenk, 2014), despite efforts in favor of greater involvement of beneficiaries through participatory approaches (Bandé et al., 2024; Chambers, 2003; Eyben, 2022; Gaventa, 2022). It leaves the impression that capacity building is a solution seeking problems (Naudet, 2000).

The following research questions will be addressed in this article: how is the context of capacity projects conceptualized? What is the effect of this conceptualization on project performance? Very few studies have analyzed the context of capacity building projects (See Andrews, 2013; Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017 for a few exceptions). Of the few authors who have attempted to shed light on the subject, many tend to have a superficial approach to context. For instance, Andrews et al. (2017) propose a contextual approach based on the collaboration between external actors and the beneficiaries of the project, which implies that the context is somehow taken for granted. The assumption is that a collaborative analysis would enhance comprehension of the context. While this approach is appealing, it tells us nothing about the “institutional idiosyncrasies” that international experts may face (Henisz, 2003). For their part, Ika & Donnelly (2017) propose an analysis of capacity building that links the context with implementation, performance, and three success conditions. However, their analysis, inspired by the classic success factor theory, suffers from a lack of a stronger theoretical background.

In order to provide a much robust conceptualization of the context of capacity building projects, this article uses the institutional context framework developed by Scott (2011, 2014). According to Scott (2011), institutions are made up of three pillars: regulative, normative, and cultural-cognitive. Scott's (2011) institutional theory has been applied in various studies, including organization studies (Narayanan & Shin, 2019), cross-sector partnerships (Ordonez-Ponce, 2021), and public-private partnerships (Devkar et al., 2020). To the best of our knowledge, this theory has not been applied to capacity building projects. Thus, by applying Scott's (2011) institutional framework, this article offers new theoretical insights for improving capacity building projects.

In this article, we defined the context as the formal and informal institutional setting in which the capacity building project is implemented (Love & Ika, 2021; North, 1991; Scott, 2014). It suggests that institutional analysis must determine the type of project and management approach for capacity building projects (Kacou et al., 2022). Therefore, contextual analysis should be the first step of capacity building projects. We believe this is a prerequisite for transforming institutions. The need to act, indeed the urgency of the fight against poverty (Calhoun, 2004; Krause, 2014), leads donors and experts to act in haste (Munk, 2014), copying the institutional models of donors (Ramalingan et al., 2014), usually Western institutions (Andrews, 2013; Seidler, 2017). As a result, development aid has failed in many cases to deliver to the point that some have questioned whether it is still relevant (Alkire et al., 2018; Douch et al., 2022; Easterly, 2006; Moyo, 2009; Omata, 2023).

The article starts by discussing the context of capacity building projects. It is followed by the analysis of the institutional context for capacity building projects. Section-3 discusses the methodology employed. Section-4 illustrates the results. In Section-5, we present a discussion followed by concluding remarks.

1. The "context" of a capacity building project

Before turning to the concept of context for capacity building projects, it should be noted that contextual analysis appears to be one of the requirements in the guidelines of aid partners (bilateral and multilateral). For example, the guidelines of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) mandate implementing agencies to analyze beneficiaries' context and demonstrate their involvement in the process of the participatory approach. Clearly, donors are keen to contextualize the projects they fund. In the case of capacity building, donors strive to produce context-specific capacity building projects (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2006; World Bank, 2009).

To help with the contextualization process, the major development organizations have put forward some indicators. For example, UNDP (2006) suggests that these following indicators are relevant to analyze the context: port of entry, core issues, and technical/functional issues. A case in point, these indicators show the significance of context in capacity building practices for these organizations (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2006; World Bank, 2009). It is, however, the implementation approach for these indicators that appears to be problematic. For instance, according to UNDP (2008), if context analysis "was not conducted during formulation of a strategy, program or project, it can be initiated during implementation" (p. 10).

In fact, these indicators serve as the basis for a "checklist approach" (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004). UNDP has developed questionnaires and spreadsheet templates to capture and rank "capacity scores" against proposed normative capacity scales (Armstrong, 2013, p. 82). This checklist approach manifests itself through various tools such as performance assessment, risk assessment, training needs assessment, SWOT[24], stakeholder analysis, and so on (Armstrong, 2013; Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004; Clark et al., 2019; UNDP, 2012). In contrast, Boesen & Therkildsen (2004) promote an "analytical assessment of context," while rejecting "mechanical context analysis" (checklist approach) for it does not allow for in-depth context analysis. Our call for institutional analysis as a contextual analysis is consistent with such analytical assessment of context.

The lack of clarity around the concept of context likely contributes to the vague analysis of capacity building project context. As Dervin (2003) puts it, "there is no term that is more often used, less often defined, and when defined defined so variously as context" (p. 113). Most authors agree that context is a challenging concept to define and requires some sort of operational definition (Bate, 2014). On capacity building, there have been few endeavors to define and operationalize the concept of context. Andrews et al. (2017) have proposed analyses of capacity building, showing the disparity between donor instructions and reality on the ground. They demonstrate that the beneficiary context is frequently ignored when designing capacity building projects, leading to "capability traps" (Andrews, 2015; Andrews et al., 2017). This is what Olivier de Sardan (2021) coined *la revanche des contextes*[25], a dichotomy between "the structural context" and "the pragmatic context." While the structural context refers to the context defined by experts and specialists, based on, among other things, quantitative data such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Human Development

[24] SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.
[25] That is the revenge of contexts.

Index (HDI), poverty rates, and official policies such as national development plans; the pragmatic context refers to the reality of the project during implementation. In most cases, planned projects are out of step with the reality of the beneficiaries (Bierschenk, 2014; Olivier de Sardan, 2021 ; Olivier De Sardan et al., 2017 ; Rottenburg, 2009). Against this backdrop, participatory approaches, that have been around for decades, have not been effective in reconciling these two aspects of the context to a significant degree. In fact, participatory approaches can be situated on a continuum between passive (weak) and active (strong) participation. Passive participation suggests that the conceptualization and management of the project remain in the hands of the donor and the implementing agency, leaving the beneficiaries at the margins of the process, in a sort of "buy-in" strategy. On the other hand, active participation suggests that the beneficiaries influence the design, management, and implementation of the project (Bandé et al., 2024; Chambers, 2003; Eyben, 2022). But, as Bandé et al. (2024) demonstrate, the involvement of beneficiaries in the conceptualization of a project does not guarantee its success.

Moreover, to reconcile these two contexts, Andrews et al. (2017) have proposed the Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA), which is consistent with Armstrong's (2013) "co-diagnosis" and "co-learning" between donors and beneficiaries. It suggests a collaborative approach to context analysis, while focusing on the actual beneficiaries' concerns. While these approaches may be relevant, it is worth noting that implementing agencies can benefit from genuine context analysis to prevent what Orr & Scott (2008) identify as "institutional exception," that is "an episode that involves an entrant first being surprised by, then making sense of, and then adapting to institutional differences arising between itself and local project players or external stakeholders" (p. 563). Institutional exceptions may have negative effects on capacity building projects that extend beyond performance, including increased transaction costs, misconceptions, false impressions, relational friction, reputational damage, etc. (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2023; Olivier de Sardan, 2021 ; Orr & Scott, 2008.)

From a project management perspective, Ika & Donnelly (2017) make a compelling case pertaining to the link between context and the success of capacity building projects. Interestingly, the authors provide an operational definition for the context of capacity building projects, asserting that success hinges on two sets of conditions: initial and emergent, based on the contribution of Hirschman (1967). It is important to distinguish between initial and emergent conditions and Olivier de Sardan's (2021) structural and pragmatic contexts. Initial and emergent conditions refer to the conditions present at the beginning of a project and those that develop during implementation, respectively. The initial conditions for the success of capacity building projects reflect the general context of international development, plagued with political, legal, cultural, technical, organizational, social, economic, and environmental challenges. Inspired by the work of Ika (2012) who identify three problem areas that contribute to project failure, Ika & Donnelly (2017) also suggest there are structural, institutional and managerial conditions as well as four meta-conditions – commitment (stakeholders), collaboration (teamwork), alignment (compatibility with both beneficiary and implementing agency environments) and adaptation (flexibility during implementation) – that arise during implementation. In this instance, structural conditions encompass legal and regulatory frameworks, financial resources, and enabling institutions; while institutional conditions include organizational capacities of both implementing and beneficiary organizations; and managerial conditions refer to leadership, monitoring, and stakeholder coordination. Their model suggests that there are higher chances of success when a project scores high on the four meta-conditions (Ika & Donnelly, 2017).

However, this conceptual framework presents two main problems. On the one hand, except for the classic theory of key success factors that underlies them, these success conditions lack a stronger theoretical basis. In addition, the use of the term "institution" may indicate a limited understanding of the concept. Structural conditions integrate enabling institutions, which may cover various institutional elements. The authors also suggest additional institutional conditions, which cause confusion. From a neo-institutional perspective (North, 1991, 2005), what Ika & Donnelly (2017) refer to as structural conditions are actually part of the institution. In brief, the usage of institutional context differs significantly from Scott's (2011) institutional framework used in this article.

2. The institutional context of capacity building

2.1. Determining the context of a capacity building project

According to Dohn et al. (2018), context has two functional features. On the one hand, context plays a supplementary role as it "completes the conditions for understanding the focal object" (Dohn et al., 2018, p. 4). Contextual elements thus provide the framework for situating capacity building projects in time and space. This conceptualization of context leads Ika & Donnelly (2017) to contend that capacity building projects operate in contexts characterized by a multitude of political, legal, cultural, technical, organizational, social, economic, and environmental challenges (p. 46). To a great extent, the PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technical, Legal, Environmental) concept, which is a sort of a one-size-fits-all approach to context analysis stems from the “supplementary role” of context (Dohn et al., 2018). This conceptualization of context aids in understanding capacity building projects as it serves as a backdrop. As such, authors and managers can use multiple contextual elements to make their projects intelligible. Not surprisingly, the context of capacity building projects is often analyzed through several adjectives without theoretical justification (See for example, Baser & Morgan, 2008; OECD, 2006).

However, this accumulation of adjectives can be an obstacle to contextual analysis as it implies a focus on each of the adjectives (social, political, technical, institutional, organizational, managerial, etc.); which seems *a priori* challenging and time-consuming. It also overlooks the interdependencies between the different parts of the context taken together as they interact with each other and are dynamic. The other option would be to establish a hierarchy of relevant elements (Ives, 2005 ; Kaplan et al., 2010). But a hierarchical approach to contextual elements would not provide a complete picture of the context of capacity building projects.

On the other hand, the context can be *centered* around the focal object (Dohn et al., 2018, p. 4 emphasis in original). From this perspective, the context is conceptualized in an ordered and structured manner, by defining it according to the focal object. Context is thus determined by the nature of the project. In other words, it is the nature of the capacity building project that determines the context relevant to it. We thus posit that “institutional context” (Scott, 2011) is the context of capacity building projects. Indeed, the very nature of capacity building is to transform institutions (Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Kacou et al., 2022; UNDP, 2006) or “mindset” (Chrysostome et al., 2019) in poor countries. Although capacity building projects may target individuals (individual level) or organizations (organizational level), their ultimate goal remains to transform institutions (De Grauwe, 2009 ; Kacou et al., 2022; Merino & Carmenado, 2012; UNDP, 2009).

To transform institutions in developing countries, we argue that it is crucial to understand the institutional context of beneficiaries. Institutions consist of guidelines, constraints, and artifacts that establish a connection between the past, present, and future. They are a complex mixture of formal and informal constraints involving language, physical artifacts, and belief that shape human interaction patterns (North, 2005, p. 1). Hence, history is significantly a narration of institutional development (North, 1991, p. 97). In other words, institutions constrain and enable social behaviour of individuals and organizations (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2023; Hodgson, 2006; North, 1990, 1991). The study of institutions is also the study of how actors and organizations make sense of their environment (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2023). Institutional analysis helps to understand the challenges managers may face in international settings (Orr & Scott, 2008; Scott, 2011).

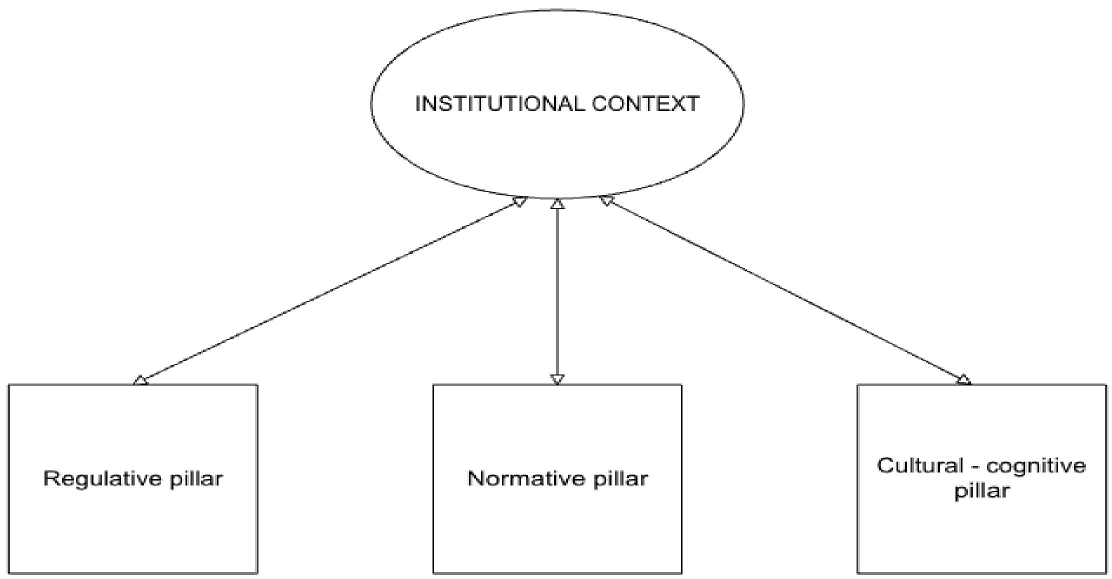
A word of caution is in order. Although we contend that the project context should be determined by the nature of capacity building, we do not aim to promote the “structural context” (Olivier de Sardan, 2021), which serve to justify “travelling models” (Bierschenk, 2014) and “travelling blueprint” (Rottenburg, 2009). In contrast, we advocate for a genuine institutional context analysis to inform project design and their appropriate implementation and evaluation approaches.

2.2. The theoretical background of institutional context

Institutions are formal (constitutions, laws, property rights) and informal (sanctions, taboos, customs, and codes of conduct) rules (North, 1991). We use Scott's (2011) theoretical framework to examine how context is analyzed in the design of capacity building projects. According to Scott (2011, 2014), institutions are made up of three pillars, regulative, normative and cultural – cognitive (definitions of the pillars provided below), which together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life. Institutions establish limitations by defining legal, moral, and cultural boundaries that differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable conduct. They support and empower activities and actors through the provision of incentives, guidelines, and resources for action, as well as restrictions and limitations on actions (Scott, 2014, p. 58). Institutions establish the conditions necessary for capacity building by dictating the constraints and opportunities available for the success of projects. Development organizations have tried to improve performance by changing structures, training staff, introducing new procedures, providing new equipment, and technical assistance. These methods have often failed due to reasons beyond the organizations themselves, such as the wider operating context, which must also be considered to understand the potential for organizational success and failure (Boesen & Therkildsen, 2004; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Figure-7 depicts Scott's (2011) institutional context framework. The implication is that a complete analysis of the institutional context necessarily proceeds from the analysis of the three pillars.

Figure 7: The three pillars of institutional context



The regulative pillar is mainly based on formal rules, backed up by enforcement and sanctions. In other words, these are rules that actors are expected to abide by; they do so as a matter of opportunity – to obtain rewards or avoid punishment. The basic mechanism underlying compliance is coercion. The institutional logic at work is instrumental (Scott, 2011, p. 55). Capacity building projects in developing countries are subject to compliance with the laws of the recipient countries, which define the general framework for project implementation. In most cases, this is embodied in the "non-objection notice," which suggests the approval of government authorities. At the project level, the implementing organization defines the governance of the project, which comprises "the system of values, responsibilities, processes and policies that enable projects to achieve the organization's objectives, and promote implementation in the best interests of all stakeholders, internal and external, and of the organization itself" (Müller, 2009, p. 4). Since the Paris Declaration

(2005), Result-Based Management (RBM) has been the official management philosophy for the implementation of programs and projects financed by official development assistance (ODA). In other words, project governance is inspired by RBM, which command, among other things, compliance to project formal rules (Earle, 2002; Hatton & Schroeder, 2007; Kerr, 2008). This approach is based on two principles: managing for results and accountability for results (Kogen, 2018), including supervision (Ika, 2012), monitoring and evaluation (El Hassar et al., 2021; Patton, 2011). We measure the regulative pillar by assessing the extent to which project rules and procedures are complied with by stakeholders.

Normative elements influence both expectations and behaviours. They introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life. In general, these elements emerge and function through the interaction of wider communities. For example, professional associations may formulate and promulgate behavioural prescriptions that are quite explicit, such as rules and regulations that are not backed by coercive power. Compliance with normative elements is based on the conviction that the guidelines are scientifically or morally sound (Scott, 2011, pp. 56–57). For capacity building projects, normative elements seem highly relevant insofar as they imply professional conduct from experts and consultants. Yet, at present, there is no capacity building community of practice that delivers accreditation, the implication of which would be an imposition of standards on members (Worthen, 1994). This does not imply a lack of effort in disseminating guidelines for capacity building. For instance, the normative frameworks published by development organizations (OECD, 2006; UNDP, 2009; World Bank, 2009) aim to standardize their respective approaches to capacity building. From this perspective, we can infer that efforts are being made to disseminate standardized capacity building practices. Some organizations provide training courses to share capacity building standards (Baser & Morgan, 2008; CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, 2023; Datta et al., 2012), similar to how organizations like PM4NGOs and PM4DEV offer training for development project management to maintain project management standards (Munro & Ika, 2020). In most cases, certificates are offered to participants to attest to a form of skills, competences or even expertise. However, these training organizations do not maintain a binding mechanism for professional conduct. Measuring the normative pillar involves identifying the existence of professional bodies that uphold standards and norms for capacity building.

Cultural-cognitive elements underpin the other two elements of institutions. They provide a basis for social order independent of normative or regulative control mechanisms, operating through constitutive mechanisms that enable the construction of social categories and create the very possibilities for certain activities and their sustainability over time (Scott, 2011). Shared beliefs provide a sufficient basis for social order, independently of normative or regulative control mechanisms; this is why cognitive-cultural elements are the most difficult to modify. Shared action logic means that individuals and organizations tend to be isomorphic (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), as they reflect their external environments (Scott, 1995). Capacity building projects must be designed and implemented while considering the cognitive-cultural elements of the beneficiaries, as this will help in incorporating their external environment. In this way, the consideration of cognitive-cultural elements has a strategic orientation as it makes it possible to anticipate the potential sustainability of capacity building projects. In effect, beneficiaries may return to social practices (Ginev, 2018;

McMillan, 2018) that existed before the project, rendering the current strategy of training change agents irrelevant if it does not align with the beneficiaries' external environment (Scott, 2011).

To measure cognitive-cultural elements of institutions, we use the concept of "mindset" put forward by Chrysostome et al. (2019). The poor performance of capacity building projects in Africa is attributed to a mindset that is "thought patterns, a set of assumptions, beliefs, values, or mental models of individuals, groups, societies, and even nations" (Chrysostome et al., 2019, p. 8). Over the years, the continent has developed human and institutional capacities, but the mindset of its people, especially its leaders, has not adapted to socio-economic change. According to the authors, this mindset manifests as large (octopus) families, megalomania syndrome, and expensive funerals. Thus, mindset transformation is necessary to build capacity. According to Chrysostome et al. (2019), current practices to capacity building have mostly centered on tools and skills, with little emphasis on the importance of mindset. For a thorough process of capacity building, these authors recommend considering beneficiaries' mindset. To measure the cognitive-cultural pillar, we assess the extent to which beneficiaries' mindset is taken into account during project planning.

Table 12: Three pillars of institutions (Adapted from Scott, 2014, p. 60)

	Basis of order and legitimacy	Indicators	Link to capacity building projects
Regulative	Regulative (formal) rules; legally sanctioned	Laws; regulations, rules	Project governance (Baser & Morgan, 2008); RBM (Earle, 2002; Ika, 2012)

Normative	Binding expectations; morally governed	Agreements; accreditation; certification	Capacity building standards (CSO Partnership for Development Effectiveness, 2023); PM4DEV, PM4NGOs; (Munro & Ika, 2020); M&E (El Hassar et al., 2021)
Cultural - cognitive	Constitutive schema; comprehensible, recognizable, culturally supported	Shared logic of action; common beliefs; isomorphism	Culture, Mindset (Chrysostome et al., 2019 ; Scott, 2011)

2.3. Defining the performance of capacity building projects

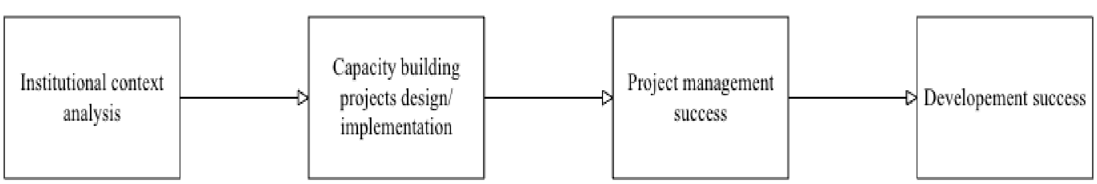
Many researchers posit that capacity building projects fail due to a lack of contextualization, as contextual factors play a pivotal role in project performance (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017). In other words, the relevance of the concept of context stems from its connection with project success. But what constitutes success is not always clear (Ika, 2009; Ika & Pinto, 2022), especially for capacity building projects (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016).

Thus, to measure performance, we use the two distinct dimensions of project success identified in the field of development project management: project management success in the short term and development success in the long term (Ika et al., 2012; Ika & Donnelly, 2017). The “project management success” captures the delivery of the project on time, within cost, and to specific objectives; and “development success” captures the long-range project benefits such as impact, sustainability, and relevance for both country and beneficiaries.

These two success dimensions are defined by shared criteria within the development community (Ika et al., 2012; Ika & Donnelly, 2017; OECD, 2019)[26]. These criteria involve effectiveness (objectives), efficiency (time and cost), relevance (beneficiaries and country), impact (the positive or negative, direct or indirect, planned or unintended benefits of the project) and sustainability (the likelihood that benefits will continue after the project ends). Following Ika & Donnelly (2017), we measure project management success with criteria such as effectiveness and efficiency and development success with criteria such as relevance, impact and sustainability.

Figure-8 depicts schematically the process of capacity building project path to success. It indicates that context analysis should guide the design and implementation of capacity building projects in order to achieve project management and development successes. It should be noted that in current practice, results-based management (RBM) actually tends to promote project management success (Curth-Bibb, 2019; McEvoy et al., 2016). But it does not necessarily guarantee development success (Lempert, 2015; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016). It is worth noting some development projects may be project management failures, but development successes (Ika, 2018).

Figure 8: Capacity building path to development success



[26] While the (OECD, 2019, 2021) expanded its set of criteria for measuring project performance by incorporating the "coherence" criterion, our analysis is limited to the previous five criteria that have been empirically tested and validated (Ika, 2009, 2018). These criteria have been applied to capacity building projects (Ika & Donnelly, 2017).

In practice, the skills and knowledge acquired during capacity building projects must be sustainable if development success is to be achieved. As Table-13 shows, each level of capacity building has its own specificity of project management success and development success considerations.

Table 13: Success of capacity building projects at each level

Levels of operation of capacity building	Project management success evaluation criteria: *effectiveness (objectives); efficiency (time/cost)*	Development success evaluation criteria: *relevance (beneficiaries/country); impact; sustainability*
Individual	Complete the delivery of all modules in a training course	Independent application of skills and knowledge beyond training.
Organizational	Complete implementation of all activities planned as part of training and organizational process changes	Increased organizational productivity
Institutional	Complete implementation of new legislation, regulations, rules, etc.	Behaviour changes towards development efforts

For example, at the individual level, successful management involves executing planned project activities, such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) modules. But to attain development success, trained individuals should be capable of applying acquired knowledge and skills with no supervision beyond the project. This is not often the case. In the field of evaluation capacity building, Morkel & Ramasobana (2017) find that 92% of those who benefited from capacity building projects were unable to present any evidence of M&E capacity building's sustainability. Another illustration may be found at the institutional level.

During the mid-1990s' Asian financial crisis, the IMF and World Bank established a commercial court and enacted bankruptcy laws in Indonesia as an institutional reform. However, it ultimately proved ineffective as firms continued to rely on traditional means to address bankruptcy-related contract breaches instead of using the newly introduced laws and court (Andrews, 2013, p. 35). Capacity building projects should focus not only on project management success, but more importantly on development success. In fact, we agree with Ika & Donnelly (2017) and Shenhar & Dvir (2007) that project management success and development success are interrelated, and should not be separated. The increasing interest in the context for capacity building projects aims to precisely establish the connection between management and development successes.

3. Methodological approach

3.1. Presentation of the case studies

In this research, we focus on a twofold case study: a Global Affairs Canada-funded project in Côte d'Ivoire and a World Bank-funded project in Senegal. The choice of projects by Global Affairs Canada (Local Development Project) and the World Bank (Evaluation Capacity Building Project) is relevant to our analysis of the capacity building context. Both projects are capacity building projects. But it is worth noting that, the selection of projects was based on a convenient approach. As the author had already collaborated with the implementing agency of the Global Affairs project, the agency facilitated his access to the project's stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire. A similar process occurred with the World Bank project, where collaboration was made possible thanks to his supervisor, who was working with the World Bank project in Senegal. In any case, both countries are relevant for this research for they share some similarities as well as differences. Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal are both francophone countries, former colonies of the French colonial empire. They both belong to the West African States communities, WAEMU[27] and ECOWAS.[28] However, there are some differences between these countries when it comes to their institutions. Côte d'Ivoire is still recovering from a political turmoil that started in the early 1990s and ended with the 2010 post-electoral crisis. Senegal, on the other hand, has been pretty stable despite some ups and downs.

Furthermore, GAC, through the former Canadian International Development Agency, has been at the heart of knowledge production on capacity building since the early 1990s. In addition, GAC requires that projects seeking its funding include a context analysis. On the other hand, the World Bank plays a central role in development policy. Since the 1970s, the World Bank has pursued capacity building through one of its predecessor concepts: institutional development.

As Yin (2018) points out, one of the justifications for a case study is whether the main research question is "how" or "why." Specifically, this research tries to understand "how" context is analyzed in the Local Development Project (LDP) and Evaluation Capacity Building Project (ECBP). Through an in-depth analysis, case studies are appropriate methods for this research as they help to "understand the perceptions and motivations of important actors" (Blatter & Haverland, 2012, p. 6). As such, they may help to better understand the underlying reasons for the approaches used to analyze the project context (Blatter & Haverland, 2012).

[27] West African Economic and Monetary Union
[28] Economic Community of West Africa States

3.1.1. Local Development Project (Global affairs Canada)

The Local Development Project (LDP) is a local economic development project in partnership with two municipalities in northern Côte d'Ivoire: Korhogo and Ferkessédougou. In West Africa, the project aims to create economic synergy through the establishment of an economic corridor between three beneficiary countries: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. For security reasons, the research focused on Côte d'Ivoire. In that country, the main partner is the country's municipal umbrella organization, UVICOCI[29]. Collaboration with the municipal umbrella organization is a key component of the implementing agency's strategy to enhance local government capacities. In Côte d'Ivoire, two municipalities were selected in the northern region of the country because of their geographical proximity to Mali and Burkina Faso, which had benefited from the previous phase of the program.

The LDP targeted three levels of capacity building. At the level of the umbrella organization, the project sought to strengthen the organization's administrative capacities in terms of human resources, financial management and its ability to lobby political authorities and international donors. At the municipal level, the project aimed to promote innovative approaches such as branding strategy, marketing and investment, support centres for economic empowerment projects for women, youth, and marginalized populations. With this in mind, the project set up Economic Development Services (EDS), an independent, specialized agency responsible for ensuring and maintaining various activities in order to foster sustainable economic development. The directors of these centres, whose capacities

[29] Union des Villes et Communes de Côte d'Ivoire (Union of Cities and Towns of Côte d'Ivoire)

are being enhanced by Canadian partners, are expected to assist job seekers, entrepreneurs, and economic operators. Finally, the program financed 10 sub - projects, known as "promoters," which were either existing organizations or organizations formed within the framework of the project[30]. Table-14 summarizes of the LDP.

Table 14: Local Development Project description

Project	Location	Beneficiary	Objectives	Duration
Local Development Project (LDP)	Korhogo, Ferkessédougou (Côte d'Ivoire)	UVICOVI, the city of Korhogo, the city of Ferkessédougou, job seekers, business community, young people (especially women and girls)	To strengthen local leadership in economic development, with a particular focus on developing growth-oriented planning and development mechanisms; to set up economic empowerment programs for women and young people in poor and marginalized areas; to promote trade and investment, and the adoption of regional economic development strategies capable of stimulating local economic activity.	2016 - 2020

The context analysis was carried out by means of a diagnostic and prospective study, after the two cities had been selected. This study was therefore presented as "the first step in the

[30] Plan de Mise en Œuvre – National (PMO – N), Affaires Mondiales Canada, N.D.

implementation”[31] of the project. Taking into account the socio-economic environment, its objective was to carry out an economic assessment and identify the opportunities and potential of the project intervention zone, with a view to strengthening the skills of the municipalities and regional actors and increasing the income of the economic operators benefiting from the project. Among other things, this study served as the basis for financing 10 sub-projects for “the promoters.”

3.1.2. Evaluation Capacity Building Project (World Bank)

The Evaluation Capacity Building project (ECBP) aims to institutionalize monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in developing countries, including Francophone Africa. More specifically, the project’s objective is to support a number of academic institutions or think tanks to implement programs designed to build M&E capacity, through awareness raising, influencing, developing and delivering innovative, responsive, context-specific and cost-effective M&E capacity building services. Through this program, the World Bank is seeking to stimulate demand for M&E within the public and private sectors, as well as civil society. It also aims to create a critical mass of M&E experts to meet the expected demand through capacity building programs and projects.[32]

Table 15: Evaluation Capacity Building Project description

Project	Location	Beneficiary	Objectives	Duration
Evaluation Capacity Building	French-speaking countries in Africa	Government, public and private organizations, civil society, M&E	To develop M&E capacity, through outreach, influence, and developing and delivering	2013 - ongoing

[31] ANADER, « Étude diagnostique et prospective des activités et potentiels économiques des communes de Korhogo et de Ferkessédougou au nord de la Côte d’Ivoire », Rapport provisoire, Août 2017.
[32] “Project Charter” Word Bank, 5 May 2015.

Project (ECBP)	(Francophone Africa)	experts/specialists, individuals	innovative, responsive, contextually relevant, and cost-effective capacity building services in M&E; to manage and drive the exchange of ideas, knowledge on M&E systems and methods; to inspire and inform practitioners in government and civil society to learn from the project's experience.	

In its intervention strategy, this project targets three levels of capacity building. At the institutional level, it aims to arouse interest in M&E among political authorities. In many cases, an intervention is preceded by a diagnostic study or Monitoring & Evaluation System Assessment (MESA) of the country's M&E situation. At this level, the intervention may result in the adoption of a legal framework and/or a national evaluation policy, the creation of an evaluation body (or the designation of an existing organization in charge of public policy evaluation). At the organizational level, the project offers M&E capacity building programs for public organizations wishing to acquire the M&E skills they need to assess public policies. In this case, the context analysis is carried out through need assessment. At the individual level, the project offers various capacity building programs for individuals wishing to acquire monitoring and evaluation skills. Contextual analysis is not carried out. It is assumed that participants are responsible for determining their own needs and existing M&E capacities.

3.2. Data collection

Data collection was achieved through methodological pluralism (Danermark, 2012), combining semi-structured interviews, participant and non-participant observations and document analysis as to ensure triangulation (Denzin, 2009; Grix, 2001).

3.2.1. Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews aim to elicit respondents' explanations and understandings of their lives and experiences (Kvale, 2007). It is an excellent way of gathering "factual" information (Willis, 2006, p. 146). They allow flexibility for both interviewee and interviewer. They provide an opportunity for various project stakeholders to give their view of the project's contextual analysis strategies and their relevance. Indeed, experience indicates that project stakeholders tend to accommodate the project strategy, derived from the contextual analysis, according to their preferences or apply it with varying degrees of conviction. In some cases, they often adopt it selectively, and sometimes distort, ignore or reject it (Olivier de Sardan, 2022). By interviewing participants with different roles in the LDP and ECBP, the semi-structured interviews brought out contrasting views of the participants.

A total of 30 interviews were carried out (15 for the GAC project and 15 for the World Bank). The length of the interviews was similar, with an average of 36:37 minutes and 37:34 minutes for the LDP and ECBP, respectively. The shortest interview for LPD lasted 11:31 minutes, while the longest lasted 1:01:57. The shortest interview for the ECBP was 13:31 minutes, and the longest was 1:01:09. Before each interview, participants read and signed the consent form. For online interviews, consent forms were sent by e-mail. Participants invariably read, signed, and sent the signed form to the researcher. For face-to-face interviews, participants read and signed the consent form before the interview began. All participants, except one, agreed to the audio recording of the interview. For this exception, the researcher took notes which he transcribed back into his database on the day of the interview.

For the LDP, interviews were carried out in most parts in Korhogo, in the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire. Most participants were in majority final beneficiaries (sub-projects). Other participants, such as past and present project managers from the implementing agency, were interviewed online. The national project manager was interviewed in Abidjan. For the World Bank project, interviews were conducted face-to-face in Dakar. Including past and present directors, deputy-director, beneficiaries, etc. Some interviews, for example with World Bank staff, were conducted online.

3.2.2. Interview guide

The interview guide was designed to conduct the semi-structured interviews in a systematic and rigorous manner. The guide's questions were structured around five themes: participant profile, relevance of context analysis, Scott's (2011) three institutional pillars (regulative, normative and cognitive-cultural), and measuring project management and development successes. No formal changes were made to the interview guide. It was administered to all participants, project managers, World Bank staff, and final beneficiaries. However, some of the questions, in particular those concerning the conception of the context and the practicalities of its analysis, could not be put to the final beneficiaries, as this is not their task.

On the other hand, during the interviews, spontaneous questions were asked to prompt participants on interesting points about the context, project performance, and so on. This was the case with clarifying questions, designed to give participants the opportunity to further explain their answers.

3.2.3. Sampling technique

Purposive sampling was used. The objective of selecting specific participants is to have those that will provide the most relevant and abundant data, given the subject of the study (Yin, 2011, p. 88). “Snowball sampling” was preferred for the research. Before going into the field, the researcher had established contacts with the managers of both projects in Côte d’Ivoire and Senegal. After taking part in the interviews, they indicated the relevant participants for the study of how the context was conceptualized and analyzed and eventually the prospect of success of their respective projects. In addition, some participants provided names of key actors of particular interest to the research. That said, the selection criterion was active participation in each of these two projects. Individuals selected should have participated either in the design of the project, in its implementation (as manager or capacity building trainer) or have been a beneficiary.

3.2.4. Interviews conducted

We conducted 30 interviews. As Table-16 shows, the different profiles enabled us to identify different perspectives on the project context and its chances of success. To a significant extent, this sampling led to the saturation of data, leading to data replication and data redundancy (Bowen, 2008, p. 140). In fact, the design and contextual analysis of capacity building projects is the concern of a small number of people, working collaboratively at best. The analysis of the context for both projects may have only relied on the viewpoint of the managers implementing them. However, we expanded the sample to encompass the account of beneficiaries in order to obtain a complete understanding of the context analysis and how it affects project performance.

Table 16: Profile of participants

Project	Interviewee's position
Local Development Project (LPD)	National coordinator
	Administrative assistant
	Development Officer (Canadian Embassy)
	Local Development Director
	Local Development Director
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Beneficiary (promoter)
	Project manager (Implementing agency)
	Previous project manager (Implementing agency)
	First project manager (Implementing agency)
	Expert (Canadian partner)
Evaluation Capacity Building Project (ECBP)	Director
	First project director
	Senior program manager

	M&E specialist
	Trainer
	Trainer
	Trainer
	Trainer
	Beneficiary (trainee)
	Beneficiary (trainee)
	Beneficiary (trainee)
	Young professional
	Administrative and Financial Director
	World Bank program manager
	World Bank grant manager

Of the respondents from the LDP, 60% were male and 40% were female. In contrast, 94% of respondents from the ECBP were male and only 6% were female. Regarding the duration of participants on the projects, there are notable differences between the two. The LDP project had an average duration of 1.66 years, with a range of 1 year to 5 years. In contrast, the ECBP project had an average duration of 5.13 years, with a range of 3 weeks to 10 years.

3.3. Participant and non-participant observations

Observation is a data-gathering technique used to understand how daily life unfolds by discovering patterns of behaviour, gestures, use of languages, symbols and tradition (Grix, 2001, pp. 78–79). Observation can be both participatory and non-participatory. This study combined these two forms of observation.

3.3.1. Non-participant observation

Non-participant observation is a method of observation that takes the observer directly away from the interactions or events being studied (Denzin, 2009, p. 260). It implies a passive role for the researcher. S/he requires to keep a certain distance from the project's activities. As part of this study, the researcher participated as an observer in two capacity building training courses: on gender equality and conflict management of the LPD. This participation enabled us to gain a sense of the participants' commitment and their levels of interactions with the other participants and the trainer. Among other things, this experience provided valuable examples to support questions during interviews.

3.3.2. Participant observation

Participant observation requires researchers to immerse themselves in the culture, customs, norms, and practices of the people they are studying. Presence in the field enables us to understand the unfolding of daily life, discerning patterns of behaviour, gestures, language use, symbols and tradition (Grix, 2001, pp. 78–79). This requires the researcher to take part in field activities, such as a political protest rally. As part of this study, the researcher spent eight months working and researching with the ECBP. During his stay, the researcher took note of the centre's activities, including weekly meetings. This opportunity enabled us to participate in a wide range of project activities. These included the drafting of the project's strategy document, the various evaluation reports and round-table discussions; the drafting of the normative framework for capacity building in monitoring and evaluation; and the drafting of grant application documents for the World Bank. He also took part in discussions on the M&E capacity building approach. He also attended a number of M&E capacity building courses as an observer.

3.4. Document analysis

According to Bowen (2009), "document analysis is systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents. Document analysis requires be examined and interpreted in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (p. 27). Document analysis is used as a means of data triangulation that lends "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Bowen, 2009, p. 28). It is thus important to delve into documents that provide different conceptualizations of context and their approaches to its analysis. Table-17 provides a summary of documents consulted as part of this study.

Table 17: Documents consulted

Project	Documents
Local Development Project (LDP)	- Plan de mise en œuvre – National - Plan de travail annuel - Rapport annuel 2018 – 2019 - Lettre d'entente (10) - ANADER, « Étude diagnostique et prospective des activités et potentiels économiques des communes de Korhogo »[33]

[33] Diagnostic and prospective study of economic activities and potential in the commune of Korhogo

Evaluation Capacity Building project (ECBP)	- Project Initiation Note - Project charter - Diagnostic des capacités nationales de suivi et évaluations de Madagascar[34] - Catalogue des formations[35] - Document stratégique 2021 - 2024

For the Global Affairs Canada-funded project, project documents include (10) letters of agreement for funding of final beneficiaries' projects, their implementation plan, annual work plan, annual report, diagnostic study, etc. As far as the World Bank project is concerned, project documents include a diagnostic report on national evaluation capacities, the project theory of change, a catalogue of M& E training courses, a post-training evaluation report, an annual activity report, a strategy document, project evaluation reports, conceptual notes, and so on.

3.5. Data analysis

3.5.1. Transcript data analysis

The data from the audio recordings interviews were transcribed in full by the researcher. The transcriptions were analyzed using NVivo. In order to ensure "qualitative rigor" (Benaquisto, 2008; Rheinhardt et al., 2018), we began the open coding with a careful reading of the data to identify words, phrases or paragraphs relating to the six initial codes identified in the interview guide, i.e., participant profile, context analysis, Scott's (2011) institutional pillars (regulative, normative, cognitive-cultural), and project performance. In the process, we found that certain sentences or paragraphs were particularly relevant, even though they did not fall into the

[34] Diagnosis of Madagascar's national monitoring and evaluation capacities
[35] Training Catalogue

category of the original codes. In these cases, we created new codes. Through a process of iterative refinement, we identified themes that stood out such as “compliance with rules and performance,” “mandate as a context approach,” and those that were variations on other themes like “approach to context,” “approach to capacity building context.” We thus combined codes with related themes. In the end, in addition to the first 6 categories, new themes emerged.

3.5.2. Data triangulation

Triangulation was a priority in this research, since it enables the researcher to guard against the possibility that the results of his studies are merely the artefact of a single method, source or bias (Patton, 2015). As Patton (2015) points out, triangulation in qualitative research can be achieved by combining interviews, observations, and documentary analysis (p. 479). This is because each data source has its strengths, but also its limitations. Using a combination of data types increases validity, as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another. Thus, notes from participant observations and project documents were analyzed through a “directed content analysis”[36] (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), to serve as a basis for triangulation. Moreover, to ensure that there were no discrepancies between the viewpoints of the beneficiaries, the managers and the implementing agency, we analyzed the data by contrasting their different viewpoints. In this study, triangulation is not intended to demonstrate that data sources yield the same result. Rather, it aimed to confirm, qualify or clarify interview data.

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[36] This method of content analysis enables the researcher to utilize previous knowledge or research to identify, validate, or extend existing theories, concepts, or knowledge.

3.6. Methodological limitations

Among the potential limitations of document analysis, the availability and reliability of documentation can be a major issue. Given that a number of documents are not available to the public, we were not able to access this documentation. For example, part of the Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the LDP was not available to the public. It is likely that these documents could have provided us with more information on how the beneficiaries' context was taken into account. This possible limitation was offset by the researcher's involvement in the ECBP during his research stay. As for the LDP, the researcher, having previously worked with the implementing agency, had informal discussions with his former colleagues to dig deeper.

Sample size may be considered a methodological limitation. As mentioned above, contextual analysis is primarily the responsibility of managers, i.e., a small number of people. We have, however, broadened the sample to take the perspective of both managers and beneficiaries. On this point, we feel it is important to make an important clarification. Despite repeated contacts with the project manager at Global Affairs Canada, he did not respond favourably to our request for an interview. To some extent, this may be viewed as a limitation of our methodological approach. That said, through our snowball sampling, we were able to obtain an interview with the manager who designed the project for the implementing agency. Since the LDP was an unsolicited proposal, we believe that her point of view on the design and analysis of the context is essential. Furthermore, according to GAC procedures, such a project must be submitted for context analysis by the Development Department at the Canadian embassy in Côte d'Ivoire. In other words, it is not the GAC manager who assesses the contextual analysis conducted by the implementing agency, but rather the Canadian embassy. We had the opportunity to conduct an interview with a development officer at the Canadian embassy. We can thus assume that GAC's perspective has been considered in this research.

4. Results presentation

4.1. The three institutional pillars and the contextual analysis

In this section, we present the research results according to Scott's (2011) institutional framework for both projects. We apply a 3-point Likert scale to each institutional pillar, where 1 represents pillars (regulative, normative, cognitive-cultural) not integrated into context analysis, 2 is somewhat taken into account, and 3 represents fully integrated. Table-18 summarizes the findings.

Table 18: Findings according to Scott's (2011) institutional framework

	LDP	ECBP
Regulative	3	3
Normative	2	2
Cognitive - cultural	2	2

On the three pillars, the results show a similar profile for both projects on context approach.

4.1.1. The regulative pillar

Both projects have put in place formal rules (guidelines and procedures) for governance. Even though they follow the same logic, they differ in how they are carried out. Global Affairs Canada gives out funds in batches to the LDP, while the World Bank provides multi-year funding to the ECBP. In either case, managers must regularly report on spending and performance.

Data shows that the regulative pillar's instrumental logic (Scott, 2011) was effective in implementing both projects. In both projects, the establishment of the partnership agreement has been crucial, as it is renewable, enabling revision or termination in case of deviation.

For the LDP, the partnership is renewed annually, obligating partners to a substantial degree compliance.

> *"Yes, the partnership agreement, is a legal document because it's a commitment. Partnership agreements exist and are even annual, since the program is renewed each year through an annual partnership."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP)*

To ensure that the execution is in line with the partnership agreement, the governance, as stipulated in the Project Implementation Plan (PIP), outlines that UVICOCI and the implementing agency develop an annual work plan and budget estimate each year. This plan and estimate are required for activities that support the specific outputs and activities outlined in the PIP.[37]

The ECBP follows the same principle as the financing is providing on a multi-year basis.

> *"So, the principle is that the funding is done for as big of a chunk of time as we can reasonably do; we like to do grants there are at least a few years because they take a lot of time to process."*
>
> *World Bank Grant Manager (ECBP)*

Indeed, the grant application with the World Bank is a long process. We participated in the grant application process for the ECBP, which involves drafting several documents such as the procurement plan, the project team, project activities, countries of intervention, and

[37] Plan de Mise en Œuvre – National (PIP)

objectives, etc. Prior to approval, the application details should be discussed with the Bank team. This will require several meetings to ensure all details are thoroughly reviewed.

In any case, whether the renewal of the partnership is yearly or long-term is inconsequential. The key is that partners must commit to diligently executing the partnership agreement to avoid punishment or receive reward. The prospect of punishment appears too obvious for stakeholders in both projects.

> *"From a financial point of view, we could indeed cut funding, which was one of the things we could do, given that expenses were planned in advance, and we advanced funds for activities beforehand."*
>
> *Previous project manager Implementing agency (LDP)*

> *"Non-compliance would ultimately result their project being suspended or terminated."*
>
> *World Bank Grant Manager (ECBP)*

While stakeholders may anticipate the potential consequences of non-compliance, the rewards of following rules may not be as readily apparent.

> *"But we're not going to talk about rewards, we're going to talk about benefits. The benefits that come from compliance with the rules that have been put in place, for example, and this is a key to being eligible for a subsequent program, because it's part of the implementation evaluation."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP)*

> *"Well, I think the project gets an operating licence. It is enabled to continue its operations and receive additional financing and when it doesn't that all withheld."*
>
> *World Bank Program manager (ECBP)*

As consequence, both projects comply with governance rules.

> *"Yes, everything was respected. The COVID-19 pandemic has limited the implementation of several activities. And some of the funds allocated for the program were not used, such as the cancelled visit of Canadian partners."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP)*

> *"Yes, we have no choice but to comply with the procedure manual and abide by the procurement plan."*
>
> *Senior program manager (ECBP)*

4.1.2. The normative pillar

On both projects, the data indicate that the projects were not intended for the dissemination of capacity building standards. Thus, both projects garnered 2 as a score (Table-18). This finding is supported by the fact that individuals involved in the design of the project, as well as those responsible for its implementation, are not affiliated with organizations that provide accreditation or promote practice standards for capacity building, M&E, or local economic development. However, this does not rule out an implicit diffusion of standards from these individuals. In many cases, they have received training in capacity building or related disciplines such as project management, local development, M&E, etc. For example, a respondent from LDP noted that within the implementing agency, there is a community of practice:

> *"In which, we share information, methodologies, and project management experience."*
>
> *Project manager (LDP)*

Regarding accreditation, both projects offer certificates upon completing training courses. However, these certificates lack intrinsic value for other development organizations.

> *"For example, if we provide a capacity building activity in human resources management, we will issue a certificate of participation. [...] But it's not recognized by organizations elsewhere. It's really an internal thing. It's like a motivation, a reward for people involved."*
>
> *Project manager (LDP)*
>
> *"To answer the question clearly, the answer is no. Accreditation no! because the professionalization of evaluation is not yet a reality in French-speaking Africa."*
>
> *Senior program manager (ECBP)*

During our stay, we developed a normative framework for capacity building in M&E, the "Spider web" approach. The team pondered on the opportunity to initiate the professionalization of evaluation in Francophone Africa as part of the normative framework. However, we concluded that we lacked the legitimacy to initiate such process. Thus, the "Spider web" approach for French-speaking African countries does not include a strategy for disseminating M&E standards. Yet, the approach is comprehensive, integrating all stakeholders in the evaluation ecosystem of a given country, including political authorities, government agencies, Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), etc. Consequently, although we advocate the adoption of evaluation regulations and the creation of public organizations dedicated to evaluation, our objective was not to disseminate evaluation standards of practice. This is because our normative framework lacks a vision that encompasses the professionalization component. Internally, it was agreed that the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), as the continental umbrella organization, would be better suited to initiate the process of professionalizing evaluation.

However, as part of the LDP, a small number of recipients, such as the national director, the administrative assistant, and the two local development directors, were trained in Canada This training was an attempt to diffuse the Canadian governance system according to one respondent:

> *"The governance system in Canada, through Global Affairs Canada. Because we had some training in Ottawa, that's what was presented to us. The GAC model was the inspiration for everything, from the financial package to the presentation of the standard project model, and even for cross-cutting issues such as the environment and gender."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP*)

The same applies to ECBP, where the definition of evaluation capacity building is a primary concern for the organization.

> *"Everyone gives their own definition, but we as an organization, what definition we could use to say that in our understanding, that's what we use."*

Director (ECBP)

This finding is consistent with debates on the definition of capacity building and its conceptual and operational implications (Kacou et al., 2022; Venner, 2015). The normative framework that we developed aimed precisely to address this issue.

4.1.3. The cognitive-cultural pillar

Based on the data, the score for the cognitive-cultural pillar is that of the normative pillar (2) for both projects due to a lack of rigorous effort to comprehend the mindset of the beneficiaries (Chrysostome et al., 2019). In other words, there has been no rigorous attempt to understand what Scott (2011) calls "shared beliefs" that provide a sufficient basis for social order, independently of normative or regulative control mechanisms. However, this does not mean that the project designers did not take into account the culture of the beneficiaries. In fact, one respondent thought that:

> *"The selection of Korhogo and Ferkessédougou was based on their location on the border with Mali and Burkina Faso, where the same population resides. It is noteworthy that these populations share cultural, economic, and dietary habits."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP)*

The project's relevance to beneficiaries was deemed indisputable by another respondent:

> *"As far as I'm concerned, even if the study had been carried out, it would have shown that the project could be set up in our area here."*
>
> *Local development director (LDP)*

In the case of the LDP, the context of the project is effectively a "background analysis," recalling the country's socio-political turmoil, of which the post-electoral crisis was the culmination (ANADER, 2017). This background analysis also includes the economic outlook (at the time the project was conceived). In short, the driving force behind the contextual analysis is actually the project's "justification." In addition, the methodology of the diagnostic study, as well as the resulting analysis, shows that the objective was not to understand both municipalities in their complexity, but rather to identify existing and potential opportunities in the intervention area in pursuit of the project's objectives. For instance, the authors indicate that the report was based on two main methods: documentary research (decentralization texts describing the role and missions of local authorities, sectoral policies, national programs and projects, etc.) and consultation of technical and administrative services (regional directorates of several ministerial departments, vocational training organizations, federations of youth and women's organizations, etc.) (ANADER, 2017.)

On the ECBP, considering that the main objective of the project was to promote M&E, the analysis of beneficiaries' mindset may have been considered irrelevant. The institutionalization of evidence-based policy is considered a crucial innovation for development. Therefore, what mattered was a strategy to achieve this goal. However, this does not necessarily indicate a lack of sensitivity to context. The World Bank says it takes into account the cultural and environmental factors of the beneficiaries when implementing the project. As respondent indicates:

> *"I think it really does (taking into account institutions) because um well we might specify directions like working from the approach of a country framework, etc. We really do ground the project ... there's a reason it sets in the region because it really is meant to be reactive to its environment. [...] so, I think it is very culturally sensitive."*
>
> *World Bank Program manager (ECBP)*

The degree to which the project considers "culture" and "environment" is not clearly defined in this approach. In fact, the "Regional and institutional context" referred to by the World Bank (for example, in the Project Initiation Note) is actually a background analysis that emphasizes the significance of evidence-based public policies and the progress made in this area in some French-speaking West African countries. Accordingly, the document asserts that the institutionalization of M&E is an essential prerequisite for enhancing democracy and hence a rationale for the project.

In fact, the initial step in our "spider's web" approach is to "engage with a champion." This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the evaluation ecosystem in a given country through a participatory approach. This approach is consistent with Armstrong's (2013) "co-diagnosis" or Andrews et al's (2017) PDIA. However, it does not systematically address the "shared beliefs" (Scott, 2011) or "mindset" (Chrysostome et al., 2019) of the beneficiaries.

4.2. Project performance

4.2.1. Project management success

On project management success, that is the effective implementation of project planned activities, it appears that both projects are to some degree successful.

4.2.1.1. Effectiveness

In the case of LDP, the data suggests effective implementation of activities. As a respondent indicates:

> *"So, we can already say that the project has been successfully implemented. In terms of institutional capacity building, we've done some excellent work with UVICOCI. We have developed tools and methodologies for human resources management, financial management and administrative management that will enable the association to make changes in the way it works as an organization, and that will also enable them to offer more effective services to member communes."*
>
> *Project manager (LDP)*

For the ECBP project, the aim is to carry out capacity building activities to achieve the project management targets, but changes to the initial plan may be necessary due to the specific nature of some training. In any event, project management success remains the guiding principle, as this respondent emphasized:

"Taking into account the concerns of the participants are part of the way we modulate all this. Let me give you just one example: when we come to do the PW[38] *on RCT*[39]*, and we realize that there are participants who have never touched a statistical software program, particularly Stata, a session we had planned for half a day doesn't allow us to cover all the needs. This means that we had to extend the session to the following day. This means we have to be flexible enough to adapt to the specific needs of the participants in our cohort, while at the same time keeping to our ultimate goal, which is to achieve the objectives set on the first day."*

Trainer (ECBP)

4.2.1.2. Efficiency

Despite encountering several obstacles (as discussed in the following section), the two projects demonstrate different levels of success in management. The LDP has been a management success; the ECBP a mixed management success.

The LDP was completed on schedule despite the disruption of the COVID-19, and as one participant noted:

"All planned activities were implemented within budget."

National coordinator (LDP)

Regarding the ECBP, its efficiency performance is not up to par, at least not at the level of the LDP project. Some of the funds were returned to the donor due in part to the previous coordination team.[40] According to the first project director, one of ECBP's main objectives was to establish a master's program in evaluation to create a critical mass in evaluation. As he puts it:

"Based on our planned schedule, the ultimate objective was to develop a master program."

First project director (ECBP)

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[38] Practical work

[39] Randomized Controlled Trials

[40] The author learned of this situation through involvement with the new coordination team and the application process for a new grant.

However, the master's programme was finally established in 2021 by the new coordination team, eight years after the first director had planned to do so. In fact, the project was not progressing according to plan; thus, a new coordination team took over and made significant progress. But it is important to note that unlike typical projects, there were no clear-cut targets for the time and cost of project activities.

4.2.2. Development success

Regarding development success, neither project has established monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring projects' impact and the sustainability of their accomplishments in terms of development success. However, data provides a glimpse of development success in terms of relevance, impact and sustainability.

4.2.2.1. Relevance

According to the data, both projects are relevant to both countries and beneficiaries.

In the case of the LDP, the development of the annual work plan is a crucial step in ensuring that activities are aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries. At this stage, project managers propose solutions based on the challenges faced in the field. As a respondent suggests:

> *"Each year, we had to determine the actions and objectives to be achieved, including those related to young people, women, and the economic corridor [...] When we develop the annual work plan, we gather information to ensure that it aligns with our goals in the field. This includes identifying training needs and other necessary resources."*
>
> *Administrative assistant (LDP)*

As stated in the PIP, project governance involves creating a multi-stakeholder advisory committee. The committee's purpose is to provide strategic direction and guidance for the LDP implementation. The committee's primary objective is to ensure that the program adheres to the development policies and strategies advocated by the government of Côte d'Ivoire.

For the ECBP, the project's relevance is self-evident for both the country and the individuals, according to a respondent for trained evaluators are a valuable resource for beneficiary countries. As he puts it:

> *"Above all, in terms of best practice, monitoring and evaluation have traditionally been conducted in an unconventional manner, particularly in French-speaking countries. There were individuals who identified themselves as evaluators or responsible for monitoring and evaluation, but lacked a comprehensive understanding of the field due to a lack of training or coaching."*
>
> *M&E specialist (ECBP)*

4.2.2.2. Impact

The data indicates that both projects have had an impact. For example, beneficiaries of the LDP have reported that the training has helped enhance their capacity and productivity.

> *"This project has already helped us to formalize a lot of things. It has taught us how to write reports, and also how to write minutes. And to understand that all expenses must be justified, even if they're not funded. So, it's as if they were forcing us to do internal accounting."*
>
> *Beneficiary (LDP)*

Regarding the ECBP, the project has had both positive and negative impacts. On the positive side, it has promoted a culture of policy evaluation. However, it has failed to create a sufficient number of competent evaluators to meet the demand for evaluation. As a respondent notes:

> *"I believe that significant progress has been made. We have accomplished some positive things thus far, but there is a growing demand that we must address. Our progress has led to this demand, and we must now work to satisfy it by increasing our supply."*

Senior program manager (ECBP)

4.2.2.3. Sustainability

The data does not allow for an analysis of the sustainability of the two projects, as they lack mechanisms for monitoring the sustainability of project benefits and it is too early to tell. Respondents often suggest that sustainability is hypothetical in nature.

> *"Regarding the sustainability of training courses, if everyone collaborates, it is possible to bring about a change."*
>
> *Beneficiary (LDP)*

Another respondent from the ECBP indicates that:

> *"Normally, we don't have the power to go beyond the training activity. However, we strongly encourage them to engage in restitution, report production, and sharing of the received material with colleagues. This will ensure that the knowledge gained during the training is disseminated within the administration. It is important to note that we do not have the authority to enforce these actions, they are merely recommendations."*
>
> *Trainer (ECBP)*

4.3. Compliance with rules and project performance

In this section, we discuss the implications of complying with rules on project performance. As shown in the previous sections, the regulative pillar is the most respected aspect of the three institutional pillars in these two projects. The instrumental logic of the regulative pillar seems to be effective to the extent that the beneficiaries comply with the rules in order to receive rewards and avoid punishment. Nevertheless, in both projects, data shows that complying with rules does not necessarily lead to better project performance.

> *"I believe the program has several bureaucratic issues that require attention to lessen administrative tasks and heighten focus on activities. This aspect needs to be reviewed."*
>
> *National coordinator (LDP)*

The same holds true for the ECBP.

> *"For instance, procedures are useful as they provide a framework for the practices and actions of those involved. However, strict compliance with these guidelines may not always facilitate efficient and timely completion of tasks. Certain aspects of compliance can even cause delays."*
>
> *M&E specialist (ECBP)*

This is consistent with what Ika (2012) has identified as "the-accountability-for-result trap." The tendency to prioritize strong procedures and guidelines over managing for results, which can result in neglecting the latter. As an illustration, the organization of the press dinner for the launch of the master's program we were in charge of was almost hindered by the tendency to prioritize strict procedures. The ECBP procurement procedure mandates at least three signatures from control officers, in addition to the authorization of the General Manager, making the process relatively lengthy. If it were not for the author's determination to obtain the control members' signatures by visiting their offices, the press dinner would have been cancelled. The rental fee for the hall was paid only a few hours before the event.

For the implementing agency (in the case of LDP), tight governance procedure is a key to ensure that funds are used only for project activities.

> *"If we do not receive the financial reports regarding the previous month's activities, we are not authorized to proceed with the next transfer. Therefore, each time they require funds to execute their activities, we must obtain the financial report for the previous month as well as the bank statements reflecting the expenses."*
>
> *Project manager (LDP)*

This finding is consistent with RBM that requires managers to define their objective, plan the project and then manage their activities and resources in order to achieve the desired results (Ika & Lytvynov, 2009; Munro, 2020). The RBM approach's lack of flexibility (Munro, 2020) has significant performance implications for the project. For example, the procedure of disbursing funds, which necessitates justification based on past spending, has resulted in the failure of certain LDP sub-projects.

> *"The only thing is that it's the flexibility of the fund that wasn't adapted to certain activities. First of all ... the implementing agency sends 15% and after several rounds of formalities, of documents to be filled in, when you take agricultural projects for example, it's a failure[41]."*
>
> *Local development director (LDP)*

The ECBP exhibits similar characteristics to that of the LDP. As a respondent indicates

> *"So, the short answer to your question is yes, the rules were followed, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the best results were achieved."*
>
> *World Bank Program manager (ECBP)*

Compliance with governance procedures has a negative impact on project performance. In some cases, some activities are suspended or abandoned due to the administrative red tape, making it impossible to meet the required deadlines.

> *"For example, we had to cancel some communication activities because we needed to follow procedures that prevented us from meeting the event's communication deadlines."*
>
> *Young professional (ECBP)*

This finding is significant because both projects are middling on the normative and cognitive-cultural pillars. The only aspect (regulative pillar) in which they seem to excel appears to be having a negative impact on project performance.

4.4. The three institutional pillars and project performance

While Scott's (2011), theoretical framework helps to analyze holistically the institutional context of capacity building projects, it does not help to capture how project build/enhance

[41] The failure occurred because the initial 15% was allocated to weeding, for instance. Delaying the next installment leads to the regrowth of weeds, which means repeating the work already completed.

capacity. Indeed, capacity building is about bringing developmental changes. As a respondent suggests, the project aims to introduce:

> *"Innovation for development. So, they're bringing us new ways of doing things. It goes without saying that a new way of doing things is bound to entail a change, an upheaval, a break with old methods."*
>
> *Local development director (LDP)*

As shown in Table-19, we therefore analyzed the data to measure "institutional dynamism," that is, the extent to which project context – the three institutional pillars – evolves over time and impacts capacity building project performance.

Table 19: Results according to institutional dynamism based on selected quotes

		Regulative pillar	Normative pillar	Cognitive-cultural pillar
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT	Individual	"Absolutely. We had some concerns about the quality of documents supporting expenditures after capacity building in financial governance. Invoices, documents, and narrative balance sheets are now properly prepared" National coordinator (LDP).	"Local expertise is now available. To ensure sustainability, it will be necessary to train another agent of agent." Expert, Canadian partner (LPD).	"Regarding the sustainability of training courses, if everyone collaborates, it is possible to bring about a change" Beneficiary (LDP).
	Organizational	"The umbrella organization is reaping the benefits. The project highlighted the necessity for a monitoring and evaluation supervisor, and the umbrella organization fills that	"This project has already helped us to formalize a lot of things. It has taught us how to write reports, and also how to write minutes. And to understand that all expenses must be justified, even if they're not funded. So, it's as if they were forcing	"Of course, we really need to give more time to see an impact on the country's beneficiary municipalities" Local development director (LDP).

		position." National coordinator (LDP).	us to do internal accounting." Beneficiary (LDP).	
	Institutional	The project was not intended to influence the country's legislative body, but rather play an advocacy role through the umbrella organization.	"In any case, many gains have been made. We don't know if all the gains will be sustained, but there are institutional gains, such as the change in the way municipalities are structured by setting up a communal women's commission (in 15 municipalities)" National coordinator (LDP).	There is no evidence that the project had institutional impacts related to practical norms about local development.
EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECT	Individual	"Some people, some politicians, believe that capacity building efforts have limited usefulness. They only benefit the beneficiaries, who typically search for better job opportunities after obtaining the necessary knowledge and leave the positions enabled them to get training. So, the real challenge is of structural change." Trainer (ECBP).	We're compelled to endorse their report, even if we know it's not of the highest quality, and so the aim of these training sessions is precisely to create this critical mass, this whole community behind it, which tomorrow will help to change thing, whether in each of the thematic areas of agriculture, local development and all these different elements, but also within the ministries, those whose job it is to commission impact evaluations" Trainer (ECBP).	"We provide training to individuals, which may result in them redirecting their careers. However, linking this to national development would be risky" Trainer (ECBP).
	Organizational	"We don't have the power to go beyond the training activity, but we recommend that they give feedback, share the material they've received with their	"I'd be lying if I said I had examples where training had changed the organizational structures of individuals who had taken part in capacity building programs" M&E specialist (ECBP).	No evidence suggests that the project has affected the cognitive-cultural pillar.

		colleagues, so that this knowledge can be disseminated and remain within the administration" Trainer (ECBP).		
	Institutional	"Yes, I think the project has a chance of success, because the need for evaluation and accountability is becoming more and more topical. For example, previously uninterested players are beginning to take interest in public affairs. Furthermore, development partners are seeking assurance that their allocated funds are being used for their intended purpose" Young professional (ECBP).	"If we take Niger and Benin as examples, ECBP has played a role in institutionalizing evaluation. Public policy evaluation commissions were established, and professional evaluation organizations emerged, thanks to ECBP's contribution. Although these are not radical transformations, ECBP has still influenced the development of evaluation culture" Director (ECBP).	"Today, the level of M&E knowledge is highly advanced in both French-speaking African environment and the English – speaking environment across the continent" Senior program manager (ECBP).

The LDP has adopted a schematic approach that involves individual training leading to institutional transformation. In other words, the project's strategy does not directly address the country's institutions, e.g., institutional reforms.

Regarding the normative aspect, certain changes seem to have taken place, particularly at the organizational level. According to the respondent, their internal organizational procedures have improved, thanks to LDP (See Table-19). This is a remarkable finding considering that this organization existed before the project started. At the individual level, data indicates that the importance of capacity building is not equally distributed among respondents. Most of the training was requested by beneficiaries based on their needs. In any case, the benefits of capacity building will depend on how useful the training is to the individuals involved and their ability or willingness to train their colleagues.

In contrast to the LDP, the ECBP has an individual, organization, and institution focus. The project offers capacity building training for individuals and tailored training for public and private organizations. Then, through its strategy of institutionalizing evaluation, it works with governments to ensure that they adopt national evaluation policies, regulatory frameworks for evaluation; they help to the creation of administrative units responsible for public policies evaluations, etc. As Table-19 shows, there is no clear evidence to indicate that the project has changed institutions. There has been some progress in raising awareness about evaluation and adopting policies and laws on M&E, but it doesn't mean people are engaging in their evaluations more often or using evaluation results to make evidence-based policies (Dorren & Wolf, 2023; Parkhurst, 2017). As Andrews (2013) shows, countries sometimes make reforms as signal to donors. The institutional level (in Table-19) discusses the strategy for institutional changes; however, it does not present concrete results.

On the normative pillar, although individuals have received training, there is no indication of a significant impact on organizational capacity. The lack of a professional body for evaluation capacity building prevents strong expectations for what happens beyond training activities (refer to Table-19 for a quote). Since public policy evaluation involves governance, its integration into administrative routines largely depends on political leadership. In some developing countries, especially in French-speaking Africa, senior civil servants sometimes avoid policy evaluation, which they perceive as auditing (Kouanda, 2016). Awareness and training in M&E are crucial, but not enough on their own.

5. Discussion

Through a comparative case study, this article addresses two research questions based on Scott's (2011) institutional framework: how is the context of capacity building projects conceptualized? How does this conceptualization affect project performance? Data analysis indicates that neither of the projects was designed rigorously according to an institutional context analysis. The document analysis reveals that the designers relied mainly on the structural context, including legal framework, policies, development plans (Olivier de Sardan, 2021).

Finding show that of the three Scott's (2011) institutional pillars, the regulative pillar is the most integrated in the design and implementation of both projects. Compliance with project governance not only provides assurance to donors but also operating licenses to beneficiaries (Earle, 2002; Ika, 2012; Sjöstedt, 2013). The normative and cognitive-cultural pillars were not included in the context analysis of the two projects, so implementation did not focus on these two pillars. Paradoxically, the regulative pillar, which is the most complied with pillar of both projects, appears to hinder performance in the short term. To some extent, the delivery process of both projects has been effective. In terms of efficiency, the LDP has been successful, while the ECBP has had mixed results. However, the positive results in terms of relevance and early impact need to be viewed with caution as the sustainability of these results remains uncertain over time. To achieve management and development successes in capacity building, results suggest that integration of the normative and the cognitive-cultural pillars into the project is essential, on par with the regulative pillar.

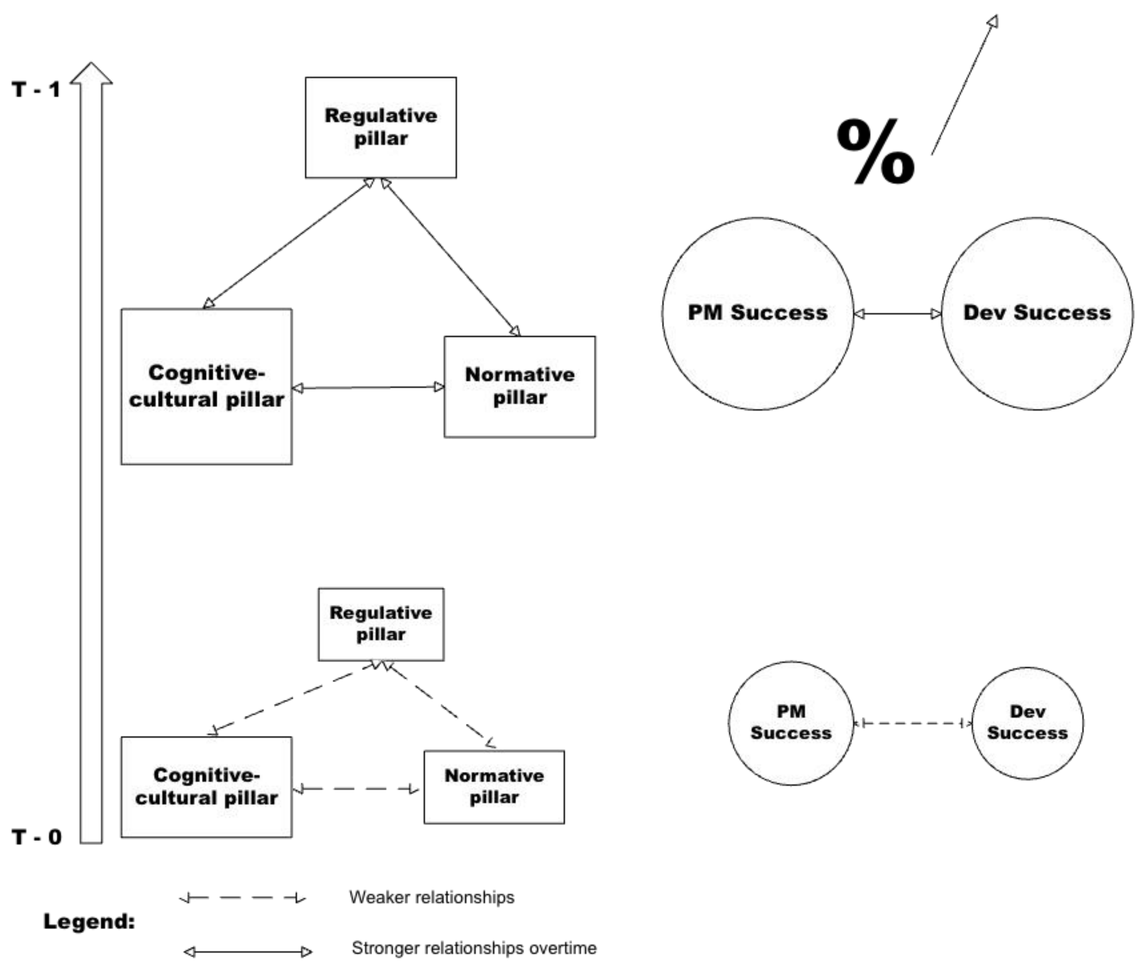
These results show that taking into account the regulative pillar is essential for the implementation of capacity building project, a view shared by other authors. For instance, Ika & Donnelly (2017) emphasize the importance of "structural conditions," while Andrews et al. (2017) highlight the significance of the "authorizing environment." By the same token, results indicate a need for an organization dedicated to professionalizing capacity building. In other words, more research should be conducted on the conditions for professionalizing capacity building to promote the dissemination of professional norms and standards. Current practice takes for granted that experts can effectively build/develop beneficiaries' capacity without imposing professional norms and standards. The literature does not address this crucial aspect, which is vital for the sustainability of capacity building projects.

The same holds on the cultural-cognitive pillar as most analysts pay little attention to the shared beliefs (Scott, 2011) or the mindset (Chrysostome et al., 2019) of beneficiaries when analyzing or planning capacity building projects. They rather focus on concepts like incentives, values, ownership, motivation, leadership, and power relations, etc. (Baser & Morgan, 2008; Chrysostome et al., 2019 ; OECD, 2006; Pearson, 2011; Ubels et al., 2010; UNDP, 2009). But these concepts are only relevant for organizational performance in the long run when they align with the cognitive-cultural pillar (Scott, 2011). By the same token, some authors highlight the disparity between the beneficiaries' context and the design of capacity building projects, but they fail to take into account the cognitive-cultural pillar (Andrews et al., 2017; Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017). For instance, in his book on the "the limits of institutional reform in development," Andrews (2013) acknowledges that the main cause of the failure of these reforms was the international experts' disregard for the cognitive-cultural pilar. However, this aspect of his context analysis is lacking in his PDIA approach.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

In the final analysis, we aim to offer both theoretical and practical implications of the institutional analysis of capacity building projects. We propose an approach that links the institutional context analysis – the three institutional pillars (regulative, normative, and cognitive-cultural) – and the success of capacity building projects in a dynamic, evolving manner. Indeed, Scott's (2011) theoretical framework suggests that each of the pillars is essential for understanding the institutional context of beneficiaries, but it says nothing about the dynamic nature of the three pillars which evolves during project implementation. In contrast, our research results indicate an interaction between the three institutional pillars and project performance over time, which we call institutional dynamism (see Section 4.4). In addition, institutional dynamism posits that the prevailing context changes after the project starts (Ika & Donnelly, 2017). Thus, institutional dynamism may help managers be more responsive from the start of the project (T-0 in Figure-9) and rigorously monitor the evolution of the three pillars during implementation to ensure both PM (management) success and development success over time (T-1). The concept of institutional dynamism aims to emphasize the combination and interactions among institutional pillars before and after the project starts (See Figure-9). To illustrate this, consider the metaphor of a rope, which highlights the continuous interaction between a capacity building project and its context, implying the co-constitution of the project in the making and its initial and its emerging context (Dohn et al., 2018; Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Love & Ika, 2021). Over time, an initial context turns into an emerging context and the three pillars and the initial and emergent contexts “become what they are through their combination and interaction” just like the strands are part of a rope (Dohn et al., 2018, p. 5). The institutional pillars should interact and combine dynamically with the project to spur the institutional dynamism. As shown in Figure-9, the cognitive-cultural pillar interacts with both the regulative and normative pillars during project implementation.

Figure 9: Capacity building institutional dynamism



In a nutshell, Figure-9 illustrates the institutional dynamism phenomenon that beneficiaries' institutions the centrepiece of capacity building and acknowledges that the institutional context is not static but rather changing over time. Additionally, it shows that the gross shape of the cognitive-cultural pillar provides the conditions for the regulative and normative pillars to perform (Scott, 2011). Figure-9 also highlights how the initially weak interaction between the institutional pillars (dashed lines) may hopefully become stronger over time (plain lines), as capacity building theory suggests. From this perspective, management and development successes are not guaranteed (T-0). Thus, during project implementation, it is crucial to observe the interaction between the three pillars and their influence on project performance over time. Capacity building projects should promote strong interaction between institutional pillars to strengthen institutions and increase management and development success rates of projects over time (T-1).

The institutional dynamism process proposes institutional context analysis as a key to design and implement capacity building projects in an adaptative manner. It may help to establish a robust foundation a for project's "theory of change," as assumptions will be reinforced by comprehension of the beneficiaries' "lived experiences" (Berk & Galvan, 2009). It is essential to analyze the three institutional pillars, in particular the cognitive-cultural one, during the front-end of projects. By doing this, regulative and normative pillars can be adjusted according to "shared beliefs" (Scott, 2011) or "mindset" (Chrysostome et al., 2019) and also to prevent "capability traps" (Andrews et al., 2017). Institutional dynamism aims to plan and implement best-fit projects (Ramalingan et al., 2014) according to beneficiaries' institutions.

As such, institutional dynamism extends beyond the traditional approach to participation. While institutional dynamism favors the active approach of participation as the passive approach can be burdensome (Cornwall, 2008), instrumental (Bandé et al., 2024) or even tyrannic (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), it maintains that institutional context analysis is crucial for successful capacity building approach. We argue that the context is not limited to participation. Contextual analysis aims to enhance our understanding of social practices (Ginev, 2018; McMillan, 2018), thereby enabling a more nuanced understanding of the interactions between stakeholders and the potential sustainability of contextual outcomes (Chrysostome et al., 2019).

5.2. Practical contributions

In the capacity building literature, few works propose this type of comprehensive approach to project management that bridges the gap between analysis of the beneficiaries' context, planning, and implementation. Table-20 provides few examples.

Table 20: Selected approaches of context analysis and project management

	Bandé et al., (2024)	Andrews et al. (2017)	Armstrong (2013)	Ika & Donnelly (2017)
Approaches	(Active) Participation	Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation (PDIA)	Co-learning (experts and beneficiaries)	Initial and emergent success conditions
Context - analysis	Beneficiaries have a significant influence on the analysis of capacity-building	Focus on specific problems in specific contexts, as identified and	Demand-driven; Co-diagnosis (experts and beneficiaries)	Structural conditions; institutional conditions; and managerial conditions

	challenges, either individually or through organized groups or associations.	prioritized by beneficiaries		
Operational implications	Beneficiaries maintain some control throughout the project lifecycle	Encourage continuous and active experimental iterations with new ideas; Establish an “authorizing environment”[42] for decision-making that encourages experimentation and “positive deviance;” Engage a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, and relevant.	Co-designing (experts and beneficiaries) and Co-acting (experimental and iterative)	Emergence of four meta-success conditions (commitment, collaboration, alignment and adaptation)

In a way, Andrews et al. (2017) suggest that the analysis of the beneficiaries’ context is somewhat irrelevant. They argue that the context of projects is *de facto* taken into account if

[42] Authorizing environment refers to individuals or structures that can approve, support or fund capacity building projects.

they address problems identified by beneficiaries. While we agree that beneficiaries should play a crucial role in identifying capacity building challenges (Armstrong, 2013; Bandé et al., 2024; Chambers, 2003; Cornwall, 2008; Eyben, 2022), we believe that institutional analysis is still *de rigueur*. This is because the agendas, viewpoints, and wishes of beneficiaries are rarely uniform (Elwert & Bierschenk, 1988; Fisette & Raffinot, 2010; Long, 2001; Martens, 2005; Mosse, 2005). Furthermore, the beneficiaries may suggest project ideas that are not relevant to their contexts, pointing out the limited nature of participatory approaches (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Olivier de Sardan, 2014, 2021). The case of the establishment of Local Development Services (LDP) serves as a good example. Within the municipalities, the local project managers requested the creation of these services to help young individuals in seeking employment or initiating businesses. In 2016, during the planning of the LDP, the Ivorian government established the Agence Emploi-Jeunes (Youth Employment Agency), which currently operates nationwide. Like the Local Development Service, the agency is created to assist young people in job search and project development. It provides funding for projects unlike the local development service that experiences a lack of funds at the closure of the LDP. Therefore, young people, job seekers, find it more appealing to utilize the agency instead.

Ika & Donnelly (2017) find that context analysis is crucial to identify initial conditions that prevail before the projects starts and those that emerge during implementation. And Armstrong (2013) combines both approaches as he suggests that projects ought to be demand-driven, while context analysis should be done by experts and beneficiaries. However, for both works, the institutional analysis is not the centrepiece of their contextual analysis. Regarding implementation, Ika & Donnelly (2017) suggest that the success of capacity building projects is linked to the emergence of four meta conditions (commitment, collaboration, alignment and adaptation). Andrews et al. (2017) and Armstrong (2013) share the same view as they posit that project planning and implementation should be carried out collaboratively (experts and beneficiaries), through experimentation and iterations. In addition, Andrews et al. (2017) suggest the creation of an environment that supports experimentation of new ideas, with the backing of funders, administrative authorities, and key stakeholders. For capacity building projects to be sustainable, it is crucial to have the support of all stakeholders who are committed to achieving development success.

The institutional dynamism process builds on these interesting works. Table-21 provides 4 steps of that approach to capacity building.

Table 21: Elements of the institutional dynamism process

Elements	Rationale
Context analysis	As a first step, institutional context of the beneficiaries ought to be analyzed. It is important to involve key stakeholders, including the beneficiaries themselves. The results of this analysis should be shared and discussed with all stakeholders.
Project planning	Capacity building project planning involves key stakeholders, including donors, managers, and beneficiaries. The institutional context analysis serves as a basis for determining the best – fit project and its theory of change.
Management approach	The selection of the project management approach should be based on the nature of the capacity building project. The approach should be flexible to allow for necessary adjustments.

Monitoring and evaluation	Establish a monitoring and evaluation approach to measure the dynamism of the institutional pillars. This will help measure management and development successes.

This process of capacity building admittedly takes time, consistent with widely shared consensus within the development community (Baser & Morgan, 2008; Datta et al., 2012; A. Kaplan, 1999; Lusthaus et al., 1999). In most cases, short-term training courses are ineffective to achieve capacity building (Munro & Chibanda, 1997; Pearson, 2011; Tarsilla, 2014; Wao et al., 2017; Wotela, 2017).

Conclusion

This article analyzes the context of capacity building projects through two case studies. It asks: how is the context of capacity projects conceptualized? What is the effect of this conceptualization on project performance? Through Scott's (2011) institutional framework, this study demonstrates a high level of compliance with governance rules in capacity building projects. However, although both projects lack a strategy for disseminating the norms of capacity building, the cultural-cognitive pillar of the beneficiaries has received less attention. The article introduces the concept of institutional dynamism, that is a holistic process that takes into account the three institutional pillars and project performance. It stresses the need for institutional contextual analysis in designing capacity building projects and advocating for project managers to base their theory of change on careful assumptions grounded into context. We believe this approach is crucial for achieving both project management success and development success.

The quasi-ritualistic invocation of the context of development projects (Dervin, 2003), especially capacity building projects, is often justified by their past failures (Andrews, 2013; Andrews et al., 2017; Ika & Donnelly, 2017; Kacou et al., 2022). The traditional “best practice” approach is now making room for the “best fit” approach (Ramalingan et al., 2014), emphasizing the importance of tailoring projects to the context. Nevertheless, this approach has given way to a new form of “best practices” which includes contextual analysis techniques such as PESTLE, leaving room for reliance on “structural context” (Olivier de Sardan, 2021), and diagnostic analysis. In other words, the contextual analysis that justifies a “ready-to-implement” project (Bierschenk, 2014). Both projects in this study are a case in point. However, if context analysis ought to play a crucial in capacity building, it should inform project design, implementation and evaluation strategies (Rog et al., 2012).

Research agenda

a) There is a need to assess the extent to which the three institutional pillars (Scott, 2011) are taken into account by development agencies in their efforts to implement institutional reforms in developing countries.

b) It is also necessary to measure the context of capacity building projects through a quantitative study, using the adapted Scott's (2011) theoretical framework as outlined in this article.

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Conclusion générale de la thèse

La thèse ici soutenue est que la dynamique du renforcement des capacités offre des clés de compréhension de sa contreperformance, voire de son échec. Ses fondements conceptuels, ses littératures académique et grise, et sa pratique, offrent des pistes pertinentes de réponse. Le concept du renforcement des capacités est né d'un besoin évident dans les pays bénéficiaires de l'aide, en l'occurrence, l'amélioration des capacités des administrations publiques et des organisations du secteur privé pour leur contribution effective développement. Cependant, motivés par la responsabilité morale d'aider les pauvres (Rist, 2013), les bailleurs de fonds et les organisations de développement donnèrent la priorité au désir d'aider et d'agir plutôt qu'à la recherche d'une approche appropriée à la tâche (Chambers, 2017; Hirschman, 1981). De ce point de vue, la contreperformance des projets de renforcement des capacités n'est pas en soi surprenante : c'est une conséquence logique des conditions de son émergence, de son évolution conceptuelle et de sa pratique inhérente.

Pour rendre compte de la « science normale » (Kuhn, 1970) du renforcement des capacités, les chapitres de cette thèse portent sur le renforcement des capacités en tant que domaine de production de connaissances et pratique de développement international de manière générale. À ce titre, il est au carrefour de plusieurs disciplines, notamment l'épistémologie en sciences sociales, la gestion de projet, le suivi et l'évaluation, la sociologie, l'économie, la politique, le néo-institutionnalisme, l'étude des organisations, etc. C'est un effort qui nous a semblé indispensable pour rendre le plus fidèlement compte du renforcement des capacités qui est un concept au carrefour de plusieurs disciplines. Rappelons que le renforcement des capacités porte à la fois sur les individus, les organisations, et les institutions (les sociétés). Il vise à transformer les institutions (les règles formelles et informelles) par le biais des formations individuelles et organisationnelles (OCDE, 2006 ; Pearson, 2011 ; Venner, 2015 ; Wignaraja, 2008). L'étude du renforcement des capacités commande donc ce que Harriss (2002) appelle « la discipline » et « l'anti-discipline », c'est-à-dire la possibilité d'outrepasser les frontières d'une discipline académique, en recherchant constamment des connaissances pertinentes dérivées d'autres disciplines.

De manière spécifique, elle tente de répondre aux questions de recherche suivantes : que sait-on de l'évolution du concept du renforcement des capacités en tant que concept et que nous apprend cette histoire sur ses forces et ses faiblesses ? (Article 1) Pourquoi l'agenda normatif n'a-t-il pas réussi à produire une réflexion rigoureuse sur le renforcement des capacités ? Que peut-on faire pour améliorer l'agenda normatif et obtenir des résultats positifs sur le terrain ? (Article 2) Comment le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités est-il conceptualisé ? Quel est l'effet de cette conceptualisation sur la performance des projets ? (Article 3).

1. Les résultats de la thèse

1.1. Article 1

L'article 1 présente une revue systématique de la littérature académique sur le renforcement des capacités. Il montre notamment que l'idée sous-jacente du renforcement des capacités, c'est-à-dire la création ou la consolidation des organisations des secteurs public et privé, a émergé dès les années 1950, avec le développement lui-même. Le concept a évolué sous de différentes formes dans une dynamique dialectique. Au début des années 1950, le concept de « institution building » a émergé pour répondre aux défis des capacités dans les pays en développement. Mais, en pratique, le concept de « institution building » et ses pratiques inhérentes échouèrent à produire des résultats satisfaisants. Ainsi, dès le début des années 1960, le concept de « institutional development » est apparu à son tour pour répondre aux problèmes des capacités. En raison de son échec à produire des résultats, il fut abandonné au profit du concept de renforcement des capacités. Pour cette raison, nous suggérons que le concept de renforcement des capacités n'est probablement pas le dernier concept pour répondre au défi de capacités dans les pays en développement, puisque les travaux montrent que la majorité des projets de renforcement des capacités échouent (Armstrong, 2013 ; Di Maro et al., 2022).

1.2. Article 2

L'article 2 analyse la rigueur méthodologique et la pertinence pratique de la littérature académique du renforcement des capacités, en examinant dans quelle mesure les auteurs sont explicites par rapport à leurs positions ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques. L'article montre que la littérature académique n'a pas surmonté de manière significative les faiblesses méthodologiques de la littérature grise. Comme la littérature grise, la littérature académique est en grande partie inspirée par les défis pratiques du renforcement des capacités. Les résultats indiquent que 71 % des articles sont pertinents pour la pratique, tandis que 94 % manquent de rigueur méthodologique. Seuls 8 % des articles sont à la fois rigoureux sur le plan méthodologique et pertinent pour la pratique. L'article appelle les chercheurs à être explicites par rapport à leurs positions ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques (Danermark, 2012 ; Johnson & Duberley, 2000 ;

Martinussen, 2004). Nous proposons le nouveau pragmatisme pour réconcilier la rigueur méthodologique et la pertinence pratique dans la production de connaissances du renforcement des capacités.

1.3. Article 3

L'article 3 porte sur le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités à partir de deux études de cas : un projet financé par Affaires Mondiales Canada et un autre financé par la Banque mondiale. La revue de la littérature indique que la principale cause de l'échec des projets de renforcement des capacités est l'absence de prise en compte du contexte des bénéficiaires (Andrews, 2013; Armstrong, 2013; Ika & Donnelly, 2017). En utilisant le cadre théorique de Scott (2011), l'article postule que le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités est le contexte institutionnel des bénéficiaires, composé des piliers régulateur (les règles formelles), normatif (les normes édictées par les ordres professionnels) et cognitif-culturel (les croyances partagées).

L'analyse des données montre que les deux projets intègrent le pilier régulateur : des procédures et des règles sont mises en place par les donateurs et les agences de mise en œuvre pour prévenir la corruption et garantir la bonne utilisation des fonds. Néanmoins, les piliers normatif et cognitif-culturel sont pris en compte dans une certaine mesure, même si ce n'est pas dans la même proportion que le pilier régulateur. En l'occurrence, les formateurs ne sont pas enjoints de diffuser des normes professionnelles, et les planificateurs et les gestionnaires des projets ne déploient pas une méthodologie éprouvée pour rendre intelligibles les croyances partagées (le pilier cognitif-culturel) des bénéficiaires afin de les intégrer dans la conception, la gestion et l'évaluation du projet. En outre, bien que les deux projets aient produit des résultats notables, en particulier en ce qui concerne le succès de gestion (efficacité et efficience), rien ne garantit que ces résultats s'inscrivent dans le temps et surtout contribuent au succès en matière de développement. Nous proposons donc le concept de dynamisme institutionnel qui vise à intégrer les trois piliers institutionnels et leur évolution au fil du temps (passant d'un contexte initial à un contexte émergent) et la performance des projets, de manière à inscrire les résultats de succès dans une dynamique de soutenabilité.

2. Les contributions de la thèse

2.1. Contribution conceptuelle

L'article 1 montre que l'émergence du concept de renforcement des capacités renvoie à une série de concepts similaires, visant à relever le défi des capacités dans les pays récipiendaires de l'aide. Les concepts de « institution building » et de « institutional development » sont apparus dans les années 1950, à peu près en même temps que l'idée même de développement. Ces concepts ont été introduits de manière séquentielle, car aucun d'entre eux ne fut capable d'aborder pleinement le défi des capacités. L'échec des politiques d'ajustement structurel a marqué le tournant des années 1990, créant un terrain fertile pour la résurgence de l'idée de renforcement des capacités pour relever les défis de développement. Le concept de développement des capacités *(capacity development)* semble avoir des velléités de substitution du concept de renforcement des capacités *(capacity building)*, considéré, à son tour, comme inefficace face au défi des capacités.

L'article montre que la trame causale de l'émergence et de la disparition de concepts destinés à relever le défi des capacités s'expliquent par une dynamique dialectique. Chaque concept, avec ses pratiques inhérentes, émerge pour répondre au défi des capacités dans les pays en développement. Mais, en pratique, ils échouent à relever ce défi, faisant donc place à de nouveaux concepts.

2.2. Contribution épistémologique

L'article 2 fait une contribution épistémologique à travers le nouveau pragmatisme, en plaidant pour la pertinence pratique et la rigueur méthodologique dans la production de connaissances du renforcement des capacités. Il montre que l'agenda normatif du renforcement des capacités – les efforts visant à offrir un fondement théorique et une approche pratique – a, dans une large mesure, influencé les littératures académique et grise, ainsi que la pratique. Les grandes organisations du développement, telles que la Banque mondiale et le PNUD, ont participé à l'établissement de cet agenda, à travers une importante contribution des consultants et des praticiens. Les fondements théoriques du renforcement des capacités sont donc faibles ; car, comme l'a souligné Olivier de Sardan (2011), le travail des consultants manque en général de rigueur méthodologique. Curieusement, la littérature académique n'a pas suffisamment corrigé cette faiblesse théorique et méthodologique de la littérature grise. Elle est, dans une large mesure pertinente pour la pratique, mais pas assez rigoureuse d'un point de vue scientifique, ce qui contribue peut-être à perpétuer la pratique ineffective du renforcement des capacités.

La thèse propose le nouveau pragmatisme pour combler le fossé entre la rigueur et la pertinence par le truchement de la philosophie pragmatiste et l'épistémologie du réalisme critique. Le nouveau pragmatisme propose de rechercher des solutions pratiques au défi du renforcement des capacités en les adaptant au contexte des bénéficiaires, ce qui favoriserait une recherche à la fois rigoureuse et pertinente. En prônant le pluralisme méthodologique, le nouveau pragmatisme ne pose aucune exigence en termes de méthodologie de recherche. Dans tous les cas, il plaide en faveur de la clarification des positions ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques des chercheurs lorsqu'ils font de la recherche sur le renforcement des capacités.

2.3. Contribution théorique et pratique

L'article 3 propose une extension de la théorie néo-institutionnaliste de Scott (2011) au domaine de la gestion des projets de renforcement des capacités et met en évidence le lien entre le contexte institutionnel et la performance des projets. Bien qu'il y ait un consensus sur l'importance de la contextualisation des projets de renforcement des capacités, le concept de contexte peut être difficile à cerner. Les praticiens sont dépourvus d'instruments conceptuels et théoriques pour analyser le contexte des projets. Ils ont parfois recours à des documents officiels de politiques publiques, tels que les plans nationaux de développement, les ODD, les documents de politiques sectorielles, etc. (Olivier de Sardan, 2021). Les chercheurs ont, dans une large mesure, réduit le contexte à une multiplication des adjectifs renvoyant le contexte à des variables de nature politique, sociale, historique, géographique, etc.

L'article 3 postule que le contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités renvoie aux institutions formelles et informelles des bénéficiaires. En utilisant le cadre théorique de Scott (2011), l'article montre plus spécifiquement que le contexte institutionnel renvoie aux règles formelles (pilier régulateur), aux normes (pilier normatif) et aux règles informelles telles que les croyances partagées (pilier cognitif-culturel). La thèse apporte une contribution théorique en soulignant que le dynamisme des trois piliers pendant la mise en œuvre du projet est crucial pour le succès du renforcement des capacités, un phénomène qui évolue dans le temps.

3. Discussion générale : la production de connaissances et la pratique du renforcement des capacités : le nexus

L'une des originalités de cette thèse est le lien qu'elle fait entre la production de connaissances (en particulier scientifiques) et la pratique du renforcement des capacités. Comme le souligne Kuhn (1970), la « science normale » est le reflet d'un cadre paradigmatique temporel, offrant un modèle de problèmes et de solutions à une communauté de praticiens. En d'autres termes, le développement des connaissances s'inscrit dans un paradigme particulier. Les développements théoriques servent, à ce titre, à améliorer la pratique sur le terrain, sauf lorsque les scientifiques s'adonnent à « la science-fiction » (Nicolai, 2004). Il en est de même pour le renforcement des capacités, domaine dans lequel les praticiens ont été à l'avant-garde de la production de connaissances (Baser & Morgan, 2008 ; Bolger, 2000; Datta et al., 2012 ; Morgan, 1998, 1999 ; Samuel, 2000). Rendre intelligible la dynamique du renforcement des capacités commande une analyse holistique qui intègre à la fois la production de connaissances et la pratique sur le terrain. Mettre l'accent sur les projets reste l'approche la mieux adaptée pour souligner la (dis)jonction entre les méthodes de planification et de mise en œuvre utilisées par les gouvernements et les agences internationales et la nature des défis de renforcement des capacités (Rondinelli, 2013 ; Venner, 2015).

De fait, les besoins constamment renouvelés en matière de renforcement des capacités en développement (Chimhowu et al., 2019 ; Kacou et al., 2022) attestent de l'inefficacité de ces projets. Cinquante (50) ans après l'émergence du concept de « institution building », son renouvèlement deux décennies plus tard à travers le concept de « renforcement des capacités », avec des pratiques singulières selon les époques, est la preuve d'une quête continue à laquelle participent, les chercheurs, les praticiens et les bailleurs de fonds. Le cadre paradigmatique n'a manifestement pas contribué à atteindre l'objectif d'autonomisation inhérent au renforcement des capacités ; puisque la grande majorité de projets de renforcement des capacités échoue sur le terrain (Lempert, 2015 ; Venner, 2015). Selon Armstrong (2013), si l'on définit l'échec des projets de renforcement des capacités comme une intervention qui n'atteint pas ses objectifs ou dont les retombées ne sont pas maintenues au-delà de la durée du projet, le taux d'échec est alors supérieur à 70 %. En outre, la récente étude de Di Maro et al. (2022) montre que les projets de renforcement des capacités du secteur public en Tanzanie n'ont pas d'impact significatif. L'étude montre que les organisations qui ont bénéficié des projets ne sont pas significativement différentes de celles qui n'en ont pas bénéficié. Dans bien des cas, les projets de renforcement des capacités non seulement échouent, mais sapent les capacités existantes, bloquant involontairement le progrès plutôt que de le promouvoir (Andrews et al., 2017; Campbell et al., 2019; Lempert, 2015).

Selon Andrews et al. (2017), deux concepts expliquent ces résultats : le mimétisme isomorphique et le palier de charge prématuré[43]. Le mimétisme isomorphique rend compte

[43] Premature load bearing

de l’importation des « meilleures pratiques » des pays donateurs vers les pays bénéficiaires de l’aide. Il peut prendre la forme de « modèles voyageurs », c’est-à-dire la transposition des modèles organisationnels ou institutionnels développés dans un pays pour en faire une solution standardisée de renforcement des capacités (Bierschenk, 2014 ; Olivier de Sardan, 2021). En général, ces solutions standardisées, en dépit de leur prétention universaliste (Faille, 2011), produisent parfois des résultats inattendus, contraires aux objectifs poursuivis (Chambers, 2017; de Alteriis, 2020; Koch, 2024). C’est d’ailleurs ce processus que Naudet (2000) présente à travers la caricature du tailleur et de son client, popularisée par Fernand Reynaud dans les années 1960. Le tailleur présente un costume prêt-à-porter à son client, qui doit ensuite l'essayer. Il apparaît immédiatement que le costume n'est pas à sa taille. Après de nombreuses tentatives et contorsions, le client finit par porter le costume, mais il en ressort déformé. Ainsi, lorsque les pays en développement importent des modèles de renforcement des capacités, ils en ressortent « déformés », ce qui se manifeste sous la forme de « normes pratiques » (Olivier de Sardan, 2021).

D’autre part, le palier de la charge prématurée se produit lorsque les projets tentent de mettre en œuvre des réformes et des procédures qui ne correspondent pas aux capacités existantes des organisations bénéficiaires. Par exemple, il est coutume que les bailleurs de fonds soient dans l’expectative que des organisations nouvellement créées dans les pays en développement fonctionnent au niveau des organisations des pays développés. Dans cette dynamique, les meilleures pratiques sont multipliées sans tenir compte du contexte des bénéficiaires, créant ainsi des « pièges à capacités »[44]. Par exemple, il est parfois demandé

[44] « Capability traps » (Andrews et al., 2017).

aux pays en développement de mettre en œuvre une « croissance verte » ou d'introduire un code fiscal progressif avant même qu'ils aient des ressources pour réparer des nids-de-poule (Andrews et al., 2017).

Cette analyse pertinente que nous partageons largement fait l'économie des raisons sous-jacentes à cet échec conceptuel. Nous postulons que la dynamique du renforcement des capacités – la production de connaissances et la pratique sur le terrain – résulte largement du « piège développementaliste », une sorte de carcan qui entrave les efforts de renforcement des capacités, créant un cycle de handicap perpétuel. Il renvoie d'une part aux conditions de formulation des politiques de développement, c'est-à-dire les objectifs ambitieux poursuivis par les bailleurs de fonds (Easterly, 2006; Escobar, 2012; Moyo, 2009 ; Rist, 2013) ; et, d'autre part la légitimité procédurale des organisations de développement et la forte technicisation du développement qui en découle (Dar & Cooke, 2008; Dellmuth et al., 2019; Giovalucchi & Olivier de Sardan, 2009 ; Honig, 2018; Martens, 2002; Scholte & Tallberg, 2018; Sims, 2023). Ainsi, la production scientifique n'a pas modifié l'expérience des praticiens, si bien que, même si dans une large mesure elle a été pertinente pour la pratique (Article 2), elle n'a pas créé les conditions d'une révolution scientifique (Kuhn, 1970). Les chercheurs, en grande partie, ont analysé le renforcement des capacités dans le cadre paradigmatique des bailleurs de fonds. L'exemple de Andrews (2013) est symptomatique de cette dynamique. Dans son travail sur « les limites des réformes institutionnelles » proposées par les organisations de développement, Andrews (2013) fait une analyse lucide de l'échec de ces réformes, mettant en évidence le fait que les organisations internationales négligent souvent de prendre en compte les institutions informelles (les piliers normatif et cognitif-culturel)[45] des bénéficiaires, qui sont pourtant cruciaux pour inscrire les retombées des projets dans une dynamique de soutenabilité. Cependant, son modèle[46] subséquent de renforcement des capacités (Andrews, 2015; Andrews et al., 2017) n'aborde pas les institutions qu'il avait à juste titre identifiées dans ses travaux précédents. En l'occurrence, ils proposent que les efforts de renforcement des capacités soient concentrés sur les besoins identifiés par les bénéficiaires ; puis, lorsqu'une solution est identifiée, elle doit être répétée de manière itérative. En outre, il insiste sur l'importance de rechercher du support des supérieurs hiérarchiques pour créer ce qu'ils appellent « l'environnement autorisant »[47].

En d'autres termes, l'analyse contextuelle et la quête d'intelligibilité des dynamiques institutionnelles disparaissent de leurs modèles. En filigrane, Andrews et al. (2017) suggèrent que les besoins identifiés par les bénéficiaires sont nécessairement légitimes, ce qui constitue une autre faiblesse du PDIA. Car, des travaux montrent que les bénéficiaires ne font pas toujours preuve de sincérité (De Herdt & Olivier de Sardan, 2023 ; Martens, 2005 ; Olivier de Sardan, 2021). Ce modèle a été largement adopté par des organisations de développement, en particulier celles qui reçoivent du financement de l'Agence américaine du développement international (USAID). Bien qu'il soit attrayant et commode pour les agences, le modèle ne modifie pas la perspective historique de la pratique, dans la mesure où il ne remet pas en question le piège développementaliste du renforcement des capacités. La pratique du renforcement des capacités ne relève pas uniquement de la responsabilité

[45] Andrews (2013) utilise le cadre théorique institutionnel de Scott (2011) pour analyser « les limites des réformes institutionnelles »
[46] PDIA: Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation
[47] « Authorizing environment »

des praticiens : les chercheurs, avec leur recul analytique, doivent également jouer un rôle actif pour susciter des « révolutions scientifiques » et une amélioration de la pratique sur le terrain.

4. Limites de la recherche

La thèse porte uniquement sur la littérature grise et académique issue des bailleurs de fonds occidentaux et des organisations internationales. Les projets, qui constituent les études de cas, suivent cette tendance. Cela peut fausser ses conclusions générales, car il est impossible de comparer les expériences d'autres donateurs, telles que les pays nouvellement émergents, ou les expériences endogènes des pays bénéficiaires de l'aide. La littérature du renforcement des capacités porte essentiellement sur les expériences des pays occidentaux et des organisations internationales, comme le montre notre revue de littérature (Article 1). Il est certainement temps de « décoloniser » la production de connaissances du renforcement des capacités.

Une autre limite de la thèse est son absence de focus sur le transfert de connaissances au-delà des résultats escomptés des projets de renforcement des capacités. En d'autres termes, la thèse n'analyse pas les conséquences inattendues des projets de renforcement des capacités, telles que le transfert de connaissances ou de pratiques des bénéficiaires vers les donateurs.

Une autre limite de la thèse est l'absence de contrefactuel dans le choix des projets. L'examen des données indique que la performance des deux projets (article 3) est, pour l'essentiel, similaire. Il aurait été bénéfique d'analyser deux projets aux performances différentes afin d'établir un contrefactuel et ainsi contraster leurs résultats respectifs et leurs conceptualisations du contexte des projets.

5. Implications pratiques

La thèse soutient que le renforcement des capacités se limite souvent à des formations de courte durée. L'auteur suggère d'abandonner l'approche positiviste du renforcement des capacités, incarnée par la gestion axée sur les résultats et ses instruments. Les projets de renforcement des capacités sont complexes, amorphes et s'inscrivent dans le long terme. Par conséquent, une expertise spécifique est nécessaire pour analyser rigoureusement le contexte institutionnel afin de planifier, mettre en œuvre et évaluer les projets de renforcement des capacités sur la base de cette analyse.

La thèse propose de professionnaliser le renforcement des capacités par la création d'une association professionnelle qui formule, maintient et diffuse des normes professionnelles. Cela inclut une formation spécialisée, l'établissement d'un corpus de connaissances et de savoir-faire, une certification reconnue par l'association professionnelle, des critères d'inclusion et d'exclusion des professionnels, et des normes pour guider la pratique dans le domaine du développement (Worthen, 1994).

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Annexes

1. Guide d'entretien

Projet d'étude : L'analyse du contexte institutionnel dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des projets de renforcement des capacités

Code du participant :

Date de l'interview : --------------------------------- Heure de l'interview :--------------------------

Lieu de l'interview :

Interview conduit : en personne------------ ou plateforme en ligne :---------------------------------

Salutations

Consentez-vous à participer à cette étude ? Oui Non

Aucune compensation n'est offerte : Accord Désaccord

Acceptez-vous que vous l'interview soit enregistré ? Oui Non

Avez-vous une ou des questions avant d'entamer l'interview ?

Quel projet ? PMI-DEL2016-2020 CLEAR

Information sur participant et le projet

Pouvez-vous nous parler brièvement de ce projet ?

Quand avez-vous commencé à travailler dans ce projet ?

Quelles sont vos fonctions dans le cadre de ce projet ?

Quelle est votre formation ? Quelles études avez-vous faites ?

Pouvez-vous nous décrire brièvement votre expérience dans les projets de renforcement des capacités ?

Avez-vous déjà travaillé dans des projets de développement en Afrique ?

Avez-vous été impliqué dans la conception de ce projet ?

Êtes-vous impliqué dans la mise en œuvre de ce projet ? En quelle qualité ?
Analyse du contexte institutionnel

Analyse du contexte institutionnel

Il est généralement admis que le contexte institutionnel, c'est-à-dire le cadre entourant, par exemple, les procédures de suivi et évaluation, les normes des bailleurs de fonds en matière de renforcement des capacités, et les attentes des organisations bénéficiaires sur le plan des comportements individuels, joue un rôle crucial dans la conception, l'exécution et le suivi des projets de développement.

Dans l'ensemble, pensez-vous que le contexte institutionnel a été pris en compte dans ce projet-ci ?

Si oui, comment a-t-il été pris en compte ? Et quelles ont été les méthodes et les techniques d'analyse du contexte utilisées ?

Pourquoi d'après vous ?

Quelle documentation du projet renseigne sur l'analyse du contexte ?

Cette documentation est-elle publique ? Si oui, comment puis-je en avoir l'accès ?

Personnellement, qu'avez-vous fait pour mieux appréhender le contexte ?

Le pilier régulateur

En matière de renforcement des capacités, il y a souvent des règles qui entourent la conception, l'exécution et le suivi des projets (lois, règles, conventions, procédures, etc.).

Quelle était la gouvernance du projet (les règles entourant sa conduite et sa supervision) ?

Dans quelle mesure ces règles ont-elles été respectées ?

Quelles étaient les règles en matière de passation des marchés et dans quelle mesure ont-elles été respectées ?

Comment l'équipe de projet a pris en compte le cadre légal du projet ?

Pourriez-vous préciser les mécanismes de suivi en place dans ce projet ? Spécifiez svp.

Dans quelles mesures ces mécanismes respectent les procédures de suivi ?

Qu'est ce qui se passe dans ce projet si les règles ne sont pas respectées ?

Quelles peuvent-être les récompenses pour le projet en cas de respect des règles ?

Le pilier normatif

Plusieurs agences de développement (PNUD, Banque mondiale, OECD, etc.) se sont dotées de cadres normatifs en matière de renforcement de capacités, afin de guider la conception et l'exécution des projets vers les résultats escomptés et ainsi promouvoir le développement.

À votre connaissance, est-ce qu'il y a un ou des cadres normatifs des bailleurs de fonds entourant ce projet ? Si oui, lesquels ?

Comment ont-ils influencé la conception et la mise en œuvre de ce projet ?

Ces cadres spécifient-t-ils les rôles des individus dans la mise en œuvre du projet ?

À votre connaissance, ces cadres spécifient-ils des activités et des buts liés à ces rôles ?

Si oui, le projet répond-il aux attentes ?

À l'échelle locale et nationale, existe-t-il, à votre connaissance, une communauté de praticiens qui établit des normes de pratiques, des agréments, des certifications ou des reconnaissances sociales en matière de renforcement des capacités ? Si oui, lesquels ?

Faites-vous partie d'une communauté de praticiens ? Si oui, ces normes ont-elles influencé la mise en œuvre du projet et votre gestion en particulier ? Précisez svp.

Le pilier cognitif culturel

Dans l'analyse des facteurs institutionnels, on conçoit que la conduite des individus et des organisations puisse être le reflet de la représentation qu'ils se font de leur environnement, c'est-à-dire que ces derniers modèlent leurs comportements sur cette base.

L'analyse du contexte institutionnel a-t-elle pris en compte les structures organisationnelles (par exemple, les dynamiques relationnelles et de pouvoir ainsi que les mécanismes de coordination) à l'échelle locale et/ou nationale ?

Le contenu des formations de ce projet reflète-t-il les structures des organisations bénéficiaires à l'échelle locale ou nationale ?

Comment les formations offertes dans le cadre de ce projet comptent-elles changer durablement les structures organisationnelles ?

Comment les formations offertes dans le cadre comptent-elles changer durablement les comportements individuels ?

Dans l'ensemble, est-ce que l'approche de gestion utilisée dans le cadre de ce projet est culturellement sensible aux préoccupations des individus et des organisations bénéficiaires ?
Votre appréciation du succès du projet

Votre appréciation du succès du projet

Au regard de l'avancement du projet, quelles sont, selon vous, les chances de succès de ce projet ?

Comment apprécierez-vous le succès global de ce projet ? Pourquoi ?

Le projet a-t-il des chances d'être livré dans les délais ? Le budget ? Élaborez svp!

Le projet a-t-il des chances de susciter un impact institutionnel durable dans le pays ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

Le projet change-t-il les pratiques des organisations bénéficiaires ? Le cas échéant, comment ?

Ces résultats peuvent-ils se poursuivre au-delà de la réalisation du projet ?

L'analyse du cadre institutionnel a-t-il aidé ou nui au succès du projet ?

2. Interview guide

Study Project: Institutional Context Analysis in the Design and Implementation of Capacity Building Projects

Participant Code:

Interview date: --------------------------------- Interview time:--------------------------

Interview location:

Interview conducted: in person----------- or online platform:---------------------------------

Greetings

Do you agree to participate in this study? Yes No

No compensation is offered: Agree Disagree

Do you agree to have the interview recorded? Yes No

Do you have any question(s) before we begin the interview?

Which project? PMI-DEL2016-2020 CLEAR - FA

Information about the participant and the project

Can you tell us briefly about this project?

When did you start working on this project?

What are your duties in this project?

What is your background?

What education have you completed?

Can you briefly describe your experience in capacity building projects?

Have you worked on development projects in Africa before?

Were you involved in the design of this project?

Are you involved in the implementation of this project? In what capacity?

Analysis of the institutional context

It is generally agreed that the institutional context – that is monitoring and evaluation procedures, donor capacity-building norms, and individual behavioral expectations of beneficiary organizations – plays a crucial role in the design, implementation, and monitoring of development projects.

Overall, do you think that the institutional context was taken into account in this project?

If so, how was it taken into account?

And what context analysis methods and techniques were used?

Please explain the rationale behind this approach.

What documentation informs the institutional analysis of the project?

Is this documentation public? If so, how can I access it?

What have you personally done to better understand the context?

The Regulative Pillar

In capacity building, there are often rules surrounding the design, implementation and monitoring of projects (laws, rules, conventions, procedures, etc.).

What is the governance of the project (the rules surrounding its conduct and supervision)?

To what extent were these rules followed?

What are the procurement rules and to what extent were they followed?

How do the project team take into account the legal framework of the project?

Could you specify the monitoring mechanisms in place in this project? Please specify.

How well do these mechanisms comply with monitoring procedures?

What happens in this project if the rules are not followed?

What are the potential rewards for the project for following the rules?

The normative pillar

Many development agencies (UNDP, World Bank, OECD, etc.) have normative frameworks for capacity development to guide project design and implementation towards desired outcomes and thus promote development.

To your knowledge, are there any donor normative framework(s) surrounding this project? If so, which ones?

How have they influenced the design and implementation of this project?

Do these frameworks specify the roles of individuals in the implementation of the project?

To your knowledge, do these frameworks specify activities and goals related to these roles?

If so, does the project meet its expectations?

At the local and national level, is there, to your knowledge, a community of practice that establishes standards of practice, accreditations, certifications, or social recognitions for capacity building? If so, which ones?

Are you part of a community of practice? If so, have these standards influenced the implementation of the project and your management in particular? Please specify.

The Cultural Cognitive Pillar

In the analysis of institutional factors, it is conceived that the conduct of individuals and organizations may reflect their representation of their environment, i.e., that they model their behaviors on this basis.

Did the analysis of the institutional context take into account organizational structures (e.g., relational and power dynamics and coordination mechanisms) at the local and/or national level?

Does the content of the trainings in this project reflect the structures of the recipient organizations at the local or national level?

How do the trainings offered in this project intend to change organizational structures in a sustainable way?

How do the trainings offered in this project intend to change individual behaviors in a sustainable way?

Overall, is the management approach used in this project culturally sensitive to the concerns of the individuals and organizations involved?

Your assessment of the project's success

Given the progress of the project, what do you think are the chances of success for this project?

How would you rate the overall success of this project? Why?

Is the project likely to be delivered on time? The budget? Please elaborate!

Is the project likely to have a lasting institutional impact in the country? Why?

Does the project change the practices of the recipient organizations? If so, how?

Can these results be sustained beyond the project?

Did the analysis of the institutional framework help or hinder the success of the project?

3. Formulaire de consentement

Sujet de thèse de doctorat : L'analyse du contexte institutionnel dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des projets de renforcement des capacités (Institutional context analysis in design and implementation of capacity building projects).

Chercheur principal	Superviseur de thèse
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Invitation à participer : Vous êtes aimablement invité à participer à l'étude susmentionnée, dirigée par Pascal Kacou, doctorant à l'École de développement international et mondialisation de l'Université d'Ottawa.

Objectif de l'étude : Cette étude vise à analyser le concept de contexte dans la conception et la mise en œuvre des projets de renforcement des capacités. Spécifiquement, la recherche répond à trois questions : 1) Comment le contexte est-il conceptualisé à travers les projets de renforcement des capacités ? 2) Comment l'analyse du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités se fait-elle ? 3) Dans quelle mesure l'analyse du contexte affecte le résultat des projets de renforcement des capacités ?

Participation : Ma participation consiste essentiellement à être le répondant dans une interview. L'opportunité m'est offerte de réviser la transcription de l'interview/citations. L'interview dure environ 60 minutes ; il est conduit par Pascal Kacou. L'interview se déroule ………………………………………………… (date et heure) à ……………………………………………………………………………………………… (SVP spécifiez l'adresse/en ligne/téléphone).

Avantages : Étant donné que cette étude met particulièrement l'accent sur la centralité du contexte des projets de renforcement des capacités, elle peut potentiellement aider à améliorer les pratiques des organisations participantes. Elle peut également aider à améliorer l'efficacité, l'efficience et les résultats à long terme des projets de renforcement des capacités. Plus précisément, les leçons et les conclusions tirés de cette étude peuvent intéresser les bailleurs de fonds et les concepteurs des projets de renforcement des capacités, mais également les praticiens de façon générale. Lorsque le rapport sera finalisé, le chercheur m'enverra une version électronique via email ou le lien du site internet qui l'hébergera.

Participation volontaire : Ma participation n'est pas obligatoire. De même, si je décide de participer, j'ai la latitude de suspendre ou de rompre ma participation à tout moment sans préavis et justification de ma part. J'ai également le choix de refuser de répondre à une ou plusieurs questions au cours de l'interview. Si je choisis de suspendre ou de rompre ma participation à cette étude, toutes les données obtenues de ma part seront détruites systématiquement.

Compensation : Aucune compensation n'est offerte en contrepartie de ma participation.

Enregistrement audio/prise de note :
J'accepte que le chercheur procède à l'enregistrement audio de cet interview (SVP, mettez vos initiales près de votre choix de réponse)
Oui Non
À tout moment de l'interview, je pourrais demander l'arrêt de l'enregistrement audio.

Je souhaite que le chercheur ne prenne que des notes au cours de cette interview (SVP, mettez vos initiales près de votre choix de réponse)

Je comprends que si l'option de l'enregistrement est retenue, l'enregistrement audio sera retranscrit en une forme textuelle. L'enregistrement audio servira uniquement à garantir l'exactitude de la retranscription écrite. L'enregistrement audio sera transféré à l'ordinateur du chercheur, qui lui-même est protégé par un mot de passe. De surcroît, le dossier contenant l'enregistrement sera protégé par un mot de passe.

Confidentialité : J'ai reçu l'assurance du chercheur que toutes les informations partagées au cours de cet interview sont strictement confidentielles.

Oui non

Au cours de cette étude, seul le chercheur aura accès aux données collectées. Cependant, en participant à une entrevue en ligne ou au téléphone, il est possible que quelqu'un de mon entourage entende mes propos. Il est donc important que je planifie la tenue de l'entrevue dans un endroit qui m'assure un maximum d'intimité.

Anonymat : Dans le contexte de cette étude, mon nom, ma fonction et le nom de mon organisation ne seront pas indiqués comme participant. Je serai mentionné dans la liste des répondants de cette étude que par un code. Seul le chercheur pourra faire le lien entre les codes et l'identité des répondants. Si une citation par son contenu, son contexte ou sa formulation, pouvait éventuellement révéler mon identité, le chercheur supprimera ou modifiera le contenu de cette citation. De plus, si je le souhaite, le chercheur m'enverra une copie de la transcription par voie électronique par le truchement d'un fichier verrouillé par un mot de passe. J'aurais l'opportunité d'examiner la transcription de l'enregistrement audio et les parties du rapport de recherche où mes propos sont directement ou indirectement cités de manière à demander des clarifications, des modifications, voire des suppressions.

Utilisation des données : Je comprends que les données collectées dans le cadre de cette étude seront utilisées uniquement pour le rapport de recherche, mais aussi pour les futures publications (exemple : articles académiques, blogue, document PowerPoint pour des présentations, etc.), et des présentations orales (exemple, des conférences). (SVP, mettez vos initiales près de votre choix de réponse)
Oui

Conservation des données : Les données collectées (l'enregistrement audio, les retranscriptions textuelles et n'importe quel autre document) seront gardées pour une période de 5 ans ; elles seront détruites par la suite. Les fichiers de données électroniques et les dossiers qui les contiennent seront conservés dans l'ordinateur du chercheur, qui lui-même est protégé par un mot de passe. Les fichiers en papier seront gardés dans une armoire verrouillée dans l'appartement du chercheur pendant les 5 années de conservation, et ne seront accessibles qu'au chercheur.

Acceptation : Moi ………………………………………………………………… (Nom du participant) accepte de participer à l'étude susmentionnée, conduit par Pascal Kacou, doctorant à l'École de Développement International et de Mondialisation de l'Université d'Ottawa.

J'ai la latitude de contacter le chercheur, Pascal Kacou, aux coordonnées susmentionnées si j'ai des questions ou des préoccupations à propos de cette étude.

En cas de questions concernant la conduite éthique de cette étude, je pourrais contacter l'Officier du protocole du Comité d'Éthique et de la Recherche, Université d'Ottawa, Pavillon Tabaret, 550 rue Cumberland, Pièce 154, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 6N5.
Tel : +1-613-562-5387
Email : ethics@uottawa.ca

Deux copies de ce formulaire de consentement sont disponibles, une de ces copies m’est réservée.

La signature du participant .... Date..................................

La signature du chercheur .... Date.................................

4. Certificat d'éthique

Cette thèse a fait l'objet d'une certification éthique. Le numéro du certificat est : S-02-21-6191