

“The need for a verifiable and robust training management system for the capacity building projects and TRTA within the trade/WTO context”

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Introduction

Initiatives like Aid for trade and the Enhanced Integrated Framework target the need of developing and least developed countries to integrate fully into the multilateral trading system, while pursuing a path of sustainable economic development and poverty reduction. Trade is viewed as an engine of such growth and development, which in turn is dependent on existence of adequate capacities, both human and infrastructural. Capacity building is crucial for the implementation of the Aid-for-Trade Strategy and other development policies related to the integration of LDCs, DCs and transition economies into the world economy.

Experience in implementation of capacity building initiatives being carried out under the trade-related technical assistance activities of the WTO, bilateral donors and multilateral organisations and programmes like the IF has highlighted the need for 'coherence' and 'effectiveness' in all such endeavours. The IF and the Aid for Trade Task Forces have underscored the relevance of the Paris principles on aid effectiveness¹. The Paris Declaration, recognising capacity building as a key element for improving development results stresses on ownership, aid alignment and mutual accountability. Its 12 indicators of progress include the

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¹ Report of the Chairman of the Task Force on an Enhanced Integrated Framework: WT/IFSC/W/15, 29 June 2006;

Recommendations of the Task Force on Aid for Trade; WT/AFT/1, 27 July 2006

results oriented framework' which seeks to reduce the proportion of countries without transparent and monitor-able performance assessment frameworks by one-third by 2010.

Diagnostic studies have identified the lack of adequate capacity in terms of trained human resources and strategic management tools in many developing countries that result in unsuccessful project completion. It is thus essential to ensure an acceptable and sustainable return on investment in training and education based technical assistance activities. Beneficiary countries need an integrated training quality management system that guarantees that the investment made in their people will also lead to improvement of organisational and societal effectiveness of their country.

ISO 10015 is a robust and verifiable training quality management system. Its principles are aligned to the Paris Declaration and it can be flexibly implemented in different national contexts. The Authors suggest its adoption as a complementary instrument to the existing programme and quality assessment tools that are at the WTO disposal for training based capacity building.

Rationale

Urgent problem recognized

The assumption underlying many trade related training and development investments has been that individual learning would automatically lead to organisational and institutional performance improvement and that hence no additional resources nor enablers are needed to ensure successful transfer of individual learning to organizational practices.

Evidence based on impact studies of traditional capacity building efforts at the institutional level provides a mixed picture. Individuals benefiting from training based TA programmes in general have, without doubt, benefited from such training investment and enhanced their professional competences and employability. However, many studies show that the organizations which were supposed to benefit from training based TA programmes do not show improvement of their productivity indicating a failure of the assumed automatic transfer of newly gained skills and knowledge from individual to organizational reality.

Many developing countries currently lack appropriate and adequate tools to effectively manage their own capacity development processes, thereby jeopardizing the sustainability of the TA programmes and projects. The lack of strategic management tools in host country actors often result in unsuccessful project completion which in turn often leads to reactive donor-driven evaluation studies to find out what went wrong and how.

Instead of such continued disappointment, it is essential to ensure an acceptable and sustainable return on investment of training and education based TA activities. Host country actors need an integrated training quality management system that guarantees that the investment made in their people will also lead to improvement of organizational and societal effectiveness of their country.

Quality assurance for capacity building

When investing in people as means to achieve organisational performance improvement, what matters most are sustained results, not simple input-output indicators, such as the number of persons trained or the amount of money spent on training. To be effective, efforts to build individual skills and knowledge must be embedded in an overall framework to ensure that trainees can apply their newly acquired skills and knowledge at their job sites otherwise individual competencies might improve, while organizational and institutional performance most likely will stagnate or continue to decline.

Traditional input-output evaluations tend to take an external, reactive (end-of-pipe) approach, which neglects the importance of both the capacity building process itself and the integration of human development initiatives in overall enterprise or government strategy which unfortunately is the norm today. As an alternative to this traditional approach, we recommend that both providers and recipients of trade related capacity building services implement professional training management systems and quality assurance standards (e.g., ISO 10015) to ensure that results-based strategic management tools ascertain success of the capacity building efforts.

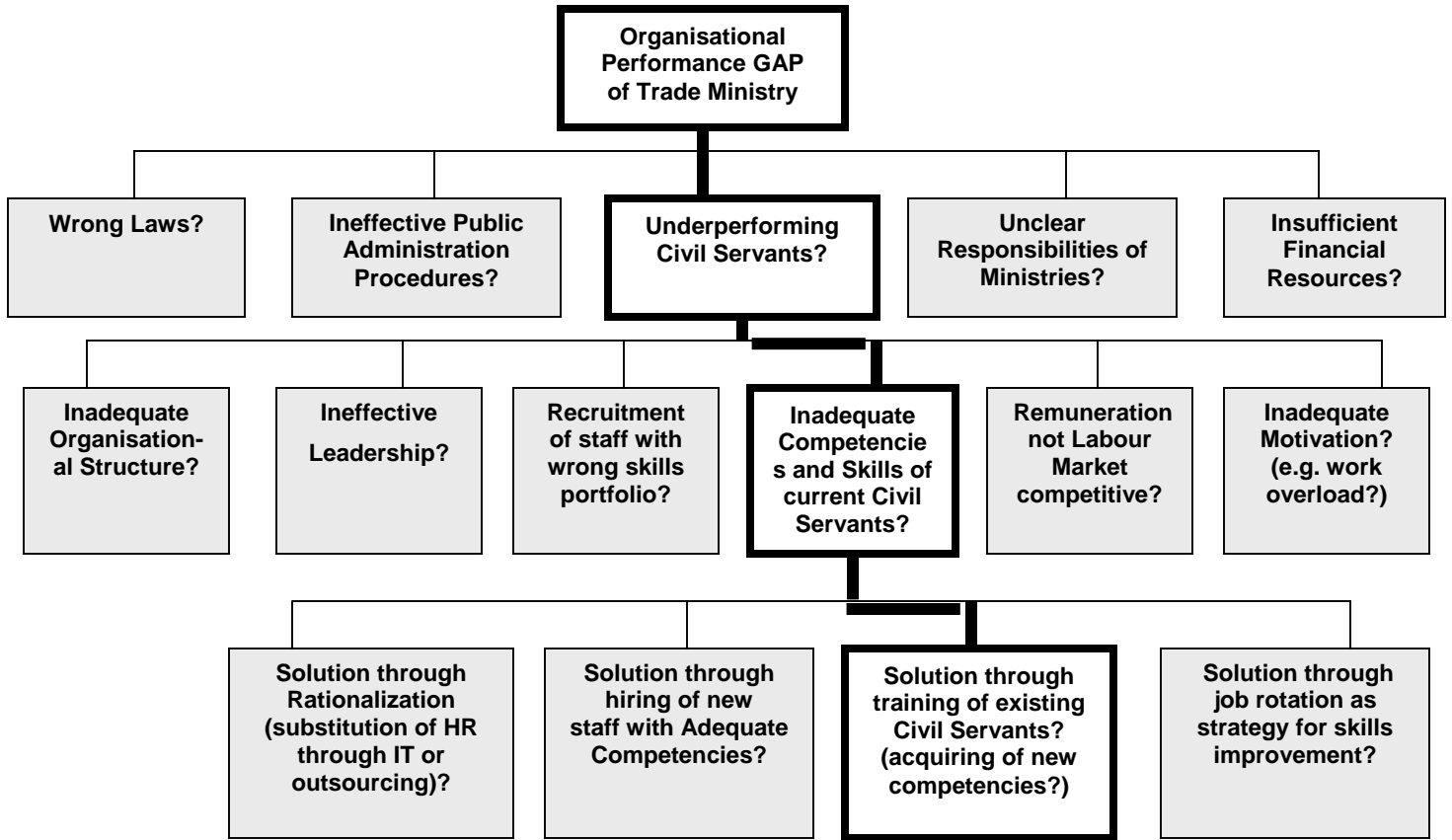
State-of-the-art training management systems

The ISO 10015 quality standard, available since 2000, offers the most succinct quality assurance criteria for adult training so far and is available for use by private and public organiza-

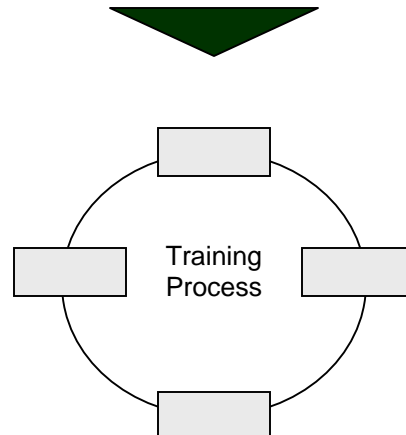
tions interested in improving their return on training investment. The main features of the ISO 10015 quality standard for training are illustrated in the following chart:

Why Training?

(Adapted from ISO 10015 Training, 1999, Figure 1, p. V)



Legend:
 S1 = Analyse
 S2 = Plan
 S3 = Deliver
 S4 = Evaluate



While the monitoring and evaluation of most training programs is often end-of-pipe and restricted to the training program itself (Cycle B of the training process), the impact of the training intervention on performance objectives at the “macro” level (Path A) is rarely given serious consideration. The ISO 10015 standard provides a systematic and transparent framework for determining how training programmes can contribute to the overall performance objectives of an organization/institution, while simultaneously identifying other necessary interventions for performance improvement. Such a comprehensive training management system would thus lead to better design guidance *ex ante* and delivery of data for continuous improvement and serve as the basis for organisational learning and innovation.

Transparent and Performance Based Approach

Application of a quality assurance management tool such as ISO 10015 would bring additional benefits besides optimal use of training resources and greater training impact. The adoption of an external verification process and quality assurance instrument within the WTO training/capacity building programmes would be in line with the general trend in the field of life long learning and professional education.

Quality assurance and its external audit procedure would enable national actors to assume management responsibility and to become accountable for the outcome of training investment offered by the WTO and other bilateral donors for LDCs and other developing countries or partner countries. At the same time, the same QA instrument would provide the WTO member countries and the WTO secretariat with the necessary control on the use of its resources without necessarily adding more workload to its already overextended implementation arm.

Application of ISO 10015 Based Training Management System

The Academy for Quality in Training and Education (AdeQuaTE™, www.adequate.org) has since February 2003 been working as an accredited certification body for training systems, training programmes and training providers in the private and public sector based on the ISO 10015 Quality Standard for Training.

AdeQuaTE™ suggests that this state-of-the-art approach be applied to capacity building for sustainable development aid. A user-friendly and beneficiary-oriented management system as

ISO 10015 provides timely and transparent information on capacity building processes and empowers the implementation partners to continuously improve their approach and methods based on facts and valid data.

The Enterprise Management Development Section of the International Trade Centre (ITC) in Geneva has applied for certification of its training programmes through us and the United Nations Peace Keeping Organisation (DPKO) is making ISO 10015 the centre of its new training policy. International Labour Organisation (ILO) is applying ISO 10015 in its capacity building project for the vocational education and training institutions.

Application of ISO 10015 to A4T and its training based capacity building projects and programmes would be timely and useful for all parties concerned be they donor, beneficiaries and experts alike.

Conclusion

This short article outlines a capacity building proposition for the A4T and enhanced IF programmes and policies. ISO 10015 quality standard is put forward as the monitoring and evaluation framework and instrument in managing training based technical assistance projects. And for providing the necessary architecture to achieve sustainable capacity within partner countries while promoting the ownership of development capacity initiatives as articulated in the 2005 'Paris declaration on aid effectiveness' which have been underscored by the enhanced IF and A4T projects.

AdeQuaTE™ recommends that ISO 10015 to be incorporated in training based capacity building projects to enable self-regulation by the national implementation partners and to ensure more effective project evaluation and feedback. Third party verification would facilitate continuous improvement of project performance and ensure project sustainability after the exit of A4T or related bilateral donor support.

This same instrument could also be utilised by the WTO Training Institute for its TPCs for overall programme management and review. A just-in-time tracking and documentation system, an integral part of the ISO 10015 training management system, could provide the A4T task force, the WTO secretariat, the participating LDCs and DCs and executing experts with

timely and robust information for crosscutting programme review and performance enhancement.

ISO 10015 could thus bring about consolidation of collaborative partnership between donors and partner countries, which is an integral requirement of the IF process and the proposed Aid for Trade initiative. In particular, partner countries would become actively engaged in the diagnostic and strategic planning phase of the capacity building process.

