

Institutional Capacity Development through an Integrated Needs-Based Practical Approach

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QITABI 2

World Learning

Context

Lebanon's current political and economic situation imposes inherent limitations in implementing institutional strengthening interventions at the ministry and the educational system level. The Human and Institutional Capacity Development (HICD) presents a scientific tool, which needs to consider in its holistic assessment approach internal and external factors. Including the overall circumstances surrounding public educational systems, the deteriorating size and availability of human resources, the need for external funding and increased efficiency, and lack of national decision-making. HICD also needs to adapt its ways to the distinctive nature of Lebanese governmental institutions, how they function, their procedures, and the complexity of their operations.

Literature review

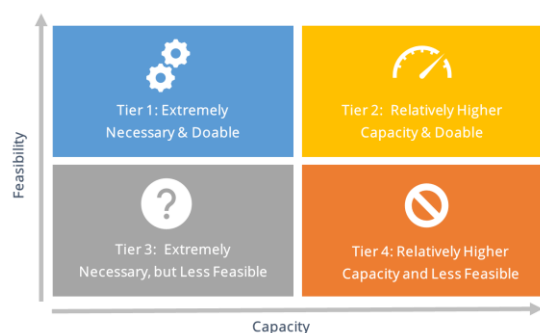
Capacity development approaches that have been previously implemented in different countries/sectors by multiple donors have mostly assumed a stable countrywide political and economic environment. The available literature mainly focuses on the scope of interventions and the tools used for assessment purposes. At the same time, a prevailing challenge is identifying the feasibility of what could be implemented considering the ministry's structure and capacities. In parallel, the USAID HICD framework has successfully been applied for non-governmental institutions and the private sector. Nevertheless, less literature is available on adapting and modifying the HICD methodology to rigid structures of governmental institutions. Accordingly, no "one-size fits all" framework could be adopted when assessing the capacities of our partner public entities and deciding on the most effective package of interventions to build their human and institutional capacities. When configuring its proposed solution package that addresses the performance gaps and needs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) in Lebanon, QITABI 2's approach was not only scientific but also feasible to implement, ensuring efficient delivery of desired results. Its proposed interventions are characterized by less reliance on the efforts of the staff of the public entities and lower dependence on national and inter-institutional decision-making and drastic reforms.

Process and Challenges

Following the HICD methodology in tackling performance gaps through identifying and improving management, support, and primary processes of organizations, QITABI 2 created an integrated assessment tool that matches the requirements imposed by the unique nature of MEHE as a public institution and its sub-entities and their surroundings. It adapted the renowned USAID

Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tool to assess the management and support processes capacities (M & M&S). Regardless of the type of the organization (private, public, NGO, and others), its M&S processes that include strategic planning, Human Resources Management, Financial Management, among others, can be compared and benchmarked according to international best practices. Hence, OCA was revised and adapted to be easily used at MEHE and quantify its M&S processes on a common scale that allowed QITABI 2 to provide its partners with a scientific analysis of the relevant capacities. This exercise highlighted the areas that are in most need of developmental support.

On the other hand, the unique core functions of MEHE's sub-entities (General Directorate of Education-GDE and Directorate of Primary Education-DPE), which are within the scope of QITABI 2, were identified by interviewing their staff and logging their tasks. The collected data were then classified into broader categories and a thorough list of their main unique primary processes. In the absence of comprehensive documents, staff interviews were the only tool that could be used to ensure a complete and wide-ranging method. QITABI 2 will document the main processes, current and improved, to further support the ministry.



This exercise was then followed by an analysis of the feasibility of implementing any suggested interventions. As noted earlier, dependence on the efforts of the public entities' staff and expectations of effective national decision making and drastic reforms in the near future would make the upcoming interventions less feasible to implement and more destined to fail.

Findings

QITABI 2 developed its Capacity-feasibility matrix to identify and touch on areas of highest developmental needs and whose performance solutions have a higher probability of being achieved. QITABI 2's capacity development approach is evidence-based, integrated, tailored to needs, and practical to implement., which accomplishes the highest impact through a well-studied and focused use of funds. The methodology that QITABI 2 followed highlights the importance of explicitly considering the internal and external factors that affect the operations of its partners. Any approach that does not capture the impact of external and internal factors has less probability of succeeding and achieving the desired developmental objectives. The HICD analysis that is holistic in nature, if accompanied with other tools — OCA and Feasibility Index — would serve as a complete solution to assessing and implementing capacity development for public educational institutions in evolving and shifting challenging settings.