Under What Circumstances Does Capacity Building Work?

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Abstract Many of the capacity building projects initiated in developing countries have not met the goals expected. This situation has resulted in disappointments with various socioeconomic impacts in these countries. The goal of this chapter is to explore how to make capacity building work in developing countries. For this purpose, we look into four capacity building projects in Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam, conduct a case study and a qualitative analysis of 20 interviews with project practitioners, and draw out their success conditions or the right circumstances under which they work. We find out that there are structural, institutional, and managerial conditions, some of which are initial (i.e., they occur in advance of the projects) and others are emergent (i.e., they occur in the wake of the projects). We further identify four meta-conditions for capacity building projects to succeed: multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation. Then we show that to obtain and maintain these meta-conditions, proper attention should be given to attainability of objectives and demonstrating value, ability of stakeholders and inclusiveness, planning/design and mutual interest, and monitoring and support. Finally, we boldly submit that capacity building projects thrive when there are high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation.

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1 Introduction

This book chapter reports and expands on the findings of a recent research on capacity building[1] projects (Ika and Donnelly 2017).[2] The following project illustrates the challenge of delivering success. In 2006, PlayPump International, a development NGO, tested a delivery system to provide fresh water to sub-Saharan African villages where there are plenty of children but limited clean water sources. They conceived of a merry-go-round hooked up to a water pump that was to harness the energy of playful children. The goal of the PlayPump project was to install 4000 pumps in Africa by 2010 and to provide clean drinking water to some ten million people. The $16-million-dollar project turned out to be a nightmare, so much so that the charity went bankrupt. Yet, as Hobbes (2014) noted, "...in some villages, under *the right circumstances*, they [the pumps] were fabulously helpful."

All too often "commonsense" development projects succeed in one place and then fail, either partially or completely, somewhere else, emphasizing the power of context in project outcomes (e.g., Engwall 2003; Glewwe et al. 2009; Ika and Donnelly 2017; Munk 2013). "There are villages where deworming will be the most meaningful education project possible. There are others where free textbooks will. In other places, it will be new school buildings, more teachers, lower fees, better transport, tutors, uniforms. There's probably a village out there where a Playpump would beat all these approaches combined. The point is, we don't know what works, where or why" (Hobbes 2014).

This begs the following questions: Why do similar development projects in general and capacity building projects in particular work in some places and fail in others? Why do some aspects of the projects work, whereas other aspects do not in similar settings? What could the right circumstances be?

In this chapter, we argue that development economists focus on *what* to do and not *how* to do it, leaving a knowledge void around what actually makes capacity building projects work (Venner 2015). The whole project management process

[1]While some may actually distinguish between the terms "capacity building" and "capacity development" thereby making a difference between developing existing capacity and building it from scratch (e.g., De Grauwe 2009; Lusthaus et al. 1999; McEvoy et al. 2016), this chapter uses them interchangeably (e.g., Bloomfield et al. 2018; Potter and Brough 2004; Venner 2015).

[2]Whereas Ika and Donnelly's (2017) paper was written for the project management community, this chapter focuses instead on the international development community in general and the capacity building/development audience in particular. Thus, from a theoretical and conceptual standpoint, it includes a fresh discussion on topical questions such as: Does development aid work? Does capacity building work? Why does project management matter? In so doing, the chapter provides more context to a timely project management contribution to the capacity building debate in the development field. Furthermore, the chapter also extends on the literature review and, as such, covers key capacity building definitions and additional key project success factors. Finally, the chapter includes brand new empirical data and findings on respondent assessment of project success, which was not in the paper. All in all, from both conceptual and empirical standpoints, the chapter hence makes a rather stronger contribution to the capacity building debate than the paper.

becomes a kind of "black box" with no trace of how it contributed to project outcomes (Ika 2015). As very little has been written on how to manage capacity building projects [see Bloomfield et al. (2018), Datta et al. (2012), Lusthaus et al. (1999), for a few exceptions], we then make the case for a timely project management contribution to the capacity building debate in the development field. In particular, we note that capacity building represents both a development deliverable *and* a development process (Baser and Morgan 2008; Lusthaus et al. 1999). Interestingly, the capacity building debate clusters around two schools of thought, with some holding that capacity building is the end result of a development intervention while others see it as a means to an end (Moss et al. 2006).[3] Moreover, we contend that both schools rely on projects and project management approaches to reach their rather different goals (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999).[4]

Furthermore, to the best of our knowledge, no research has focused on project success conditions or the right circumstances under which capacity building projects work [see Turner (2004), and Wateridge (1995), about project success conditions]. Thus, we look into four *local government* capacity building projects (see Boex et al. 2006; United Cities and Local Governments [UCLG] 2013), funded by the same Canadian donor agency in Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam; conduct a case study and a qualitative analysis of 20 interviews with project practitioners including project managers, technical experts, and project coordinators; and draw out their success conditions. Opening the black box, we report our findings on what makes (local government) capacity building projects successful, and like Hirschman (1967), we unravel both initial and emergent success conditions or what happens both "in advance of the project" and "in the wake of the project" (p. 146).

In conclusion, we then boldly proffer that capacity building projects thrive when there are high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation and discuss the implications of this hypothesis for capacity building theory and practice. We hope this research will contribute to improving project managers' understanding of the circumstances in which successful capacity building projects occur and put their ability to deliver development into context (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; De Grauwe 2009; Engwall 2003; Gow and Morss 1988; Ika 2012; Ika and Hodgson 2014; Lusthaus et al. 1999; McEvoy et al. 2016; Potter and Brough 2004; Ramalingam 2013; Venner 2015).

[3] Some hold that capacity building is an upshot of development and, thus, advise to give aid where it is needed the most, to improve institutional development (e.g., Sachs 2005). Others, however, oppose this traditional view and, in contrary, proffer that aid works best where institutions are strong and, thus, instead consider capacity building rather as an independent variable in the aid equation (e.g., Burnside and Dollar 2000).

[4] Most development projects now include capacity building *activities*; some are actually capacity building *projects* as they specifically aim at capacity building (World Bank 2005; Venner 2015).

2 Stepping Back, Does Development Aid Work?

Over decades, the question "Does development aid work?" has been the focus of much of the development debate and has sparked controversies (Cassen 1986; Wako 2018). Proponents argue that aid works, albeit not perfectly (Mekasha and Tarp 2018; Sachs 2005). Opponents submit that aid is ineffective as there is little good to show for it (Easterly 2006) and even worse that it is actually *the* problem (Moyo 2009).

"But from a methodological standpoint, the two sides agree that one may assess whether aid contributes to economic growth and/or poverty reduction (macro-economic perspective) or gauge whether the projects achieve their own specific objectives (micro-economic perspective)" (Ika 2015, p. 1111). In the main, what Mosley (1986) has coined a micro-macro paradox[5] appears to be at work; micro-project-related studies show that specific projects do succeed but most macro-studies result in more nuanced and less positive results (Doucouliagos and Paldam 2009). Worse, "At the macro-level, only tenuous links between development aid and improved living conditions have been found. At the micro-level, only a few programs appear to outlast their donors' largesse, mocking aid agencies' goals of sustainability and ownership" (Gibson et al. 2005, p. 1). In the face of the apparent lackluster impact of development aid and the widespread perception that it does not work, many scholars and practitioners including officials from the development agencies have weighed in another rather important question: "What's wrong with development aid?" (Burnside and Dollar 2000; Collier 2007; Easterly 2006; Gibson et al. 2005; Moyo 2009).

Notwithstanding the controversies surrounding aid effectiveness, two things stand out. Firstly, while the empirical evidence from the past decade seems to suggest that aid does work and thus promotes growth in a statistically significant manner (Mekasha and Tarp 2018), there is no room for a universal praise for or disapproval of aid (Wako 2018). Secondly, while hundreds of problems and traps may explain the poor showing of aid, the view that good institutions are the result *not* the cause of development (Sachs 2005) has faded, and most development economists now argue for a prominent role of institutions and capacity building in development (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012; Bloomfield et al. 2018; Gibson et al. 2005).

3 What Is Capacity Building and Does It Work?

Capacity building, at least the underlying idea, is everywhere. For example, the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development targets capacity building. As Venner (2015) notes "Of more than 19,000 current development projects listed

[5]By some accounts, the paradox may not be real, but donors are advised to act as if it is and thus prevent the aggregate impact of aid being less than its projects' effects (e.g., Howes et al. 2011).

on the development business website DevEx.com in April 2014, almost half (8757) made reference to 'capacity'" (p. 85). While capacity building has become much of the focus of development since the 1990s, nobody seems to pin down exactly what it means and how it works. We are left with the impression that "we are reading the same book but not everybody is on the same page." But what does capacity really mean and what does capacity building entail?

The concept of capacity is difficult to probe, and arriving at a broadly accepted definition is challenging. Capacity means different things for different people at different times (Lusthaus et al. 1999; Venner 2015). The World Bank Institute, for example, underlines "the abilities of individuals, institutions, and societies to perform functions, solve problems, as well as set and achieve a country's development goals in an effective, participatory, and sustainable manner" (World Bank 2009, p. 1). The OECD Development Assistance Committee, DAC (OECD 2011), understands capacity as "the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully" (p. 2). To the extent that we can define the concept, Baser and Morgan (2008) suggest capacity as "the emergent combination of individual competencies and collective capabilities that enables a human system to create value" (p. 35).

These authors offer five core, separate, and interdependent capabilities that contribute more or less to organizational or system capacity: to commit and engage; to carry out technical, service delivery and logistical tasks; to relate and attract resources and support; to adapt and self-renew; and to balance coherence and diversity. Thus, Baser and Morgan (2008) notably distinguish between competencies which are individual attributes, capabilities which are collective ones, and capacity which is a combination of the former and the latter. Indeed, De Grauwe (2009) notes: "Improving the competencies of an individual planner or strengthening the capabilities of a planning department are elementary steps in a capacity development process, but the process will only succeed when the individuals and departments have the opportunity to use these competencies and capabilities in order to contribute in their specific way to development. In many cases, what an outsider may consider a capacity gap is an institutional or organizational constraint on the use of existing capacities" (p. 48). Thus, capacity is an ambiguous, inclusive, multidimensional, and generic concept; it is neither a specific ability/competency nor it is a secret ingredient as existing capacity may change, evolve, stagnate, deepen, erode, or stabilize (Datta et al. 2012) (to read more about the dimensions of the capacity concept, see Datta et al. 2012 and Venner 2015).

The term "capacity building" is a fashionable, slippery, ill-defined, elastic, elusive, and umbrella concept that includes key development concepts such as institution building, institutional development/strengthening, human resource development, development management/administration, organizational development, community development, integrated rural development, and sustainable development (e.g., De Grauwe 2009; Lusthaus et al. 1999; Morgan 1998). Many writers even consider it as the same as "technical assistance" or "technical cooperation" and, thus, so carelessly use the term that it becomes blurring and too broad to be useful for development purposes. The very idea of capacity building somewhat reminds us of the "good governance" concept in development: "Capacity development programmes variously

aim to promote transparent government, merit-based public service, active civil society organizations, gender equity, democracy, a market economy, and international standards in a range of government and private sector activities" (Venner 2015, p. 95). Capacity building has become a jargon of the development community, a cliché, if not a euphemism for the need for training or a synonym for a lack of time, money, staff, resources, equipment and infrastructure, up-to-date systems, appropriate incentives, authority, and skills to do things or a lack of institutional capacity (e.g., Baser and Morgan 2008; Potter and Brough 2004). A multifaceted phenomenon, capacity building is not about delivering activities and outputs but fostering ownership or change through a deliberate and inherently political process focused on developing effective and dynamic relationships between different stakeholders and the system as a whole [For more detail, read Bloomfield et al. (2018), Datta et al. (2012), OECD (2011), UNDP (2009), Venner (2015), and World Bank (2009) about the nature of the capacity building process and life-cycle]. But what does it really mean?

The OECD Development Assistance Committee, DAC (OECD 2011), refers to capacity development as the process "whereby people, organisations and society unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time" (p. 2). The UNDP understands capacity development as "the process through which individuals, organisations and societies obtain, strengthen and maintain the capabilities to set and achieve their own development objectives over time" (UNDP 2009, p. 2). The only thing that is certain is that we can talk of capacity building as being "a risky, murky, messy business, with unpredictable and unquantifiable outcomes, uncertain methodologies, many unintended consequences, little credit to its champions and long time lags" (Morgan 1998, p. 6). But does capacity building work, one may ask?

The capacity building mantra has not lived up to expectations. As a matter of fact, despite the billions of dollars invested in capacity building activities, their results and notably long-term impact, by and large, continue to disappoint stakeholders. The 2005 World Bank report on capacity building in Africa, for example, finds that "the resulting organizational strengthening has been modest" (World Bank 2005, p. 27). "Capacity development activities by international agencies have not led to the expected impact and many have failed to lead to sustainable change" (De Grauwe 2009, p. 32).

Furthermore, the aforementioned micro-macro paradox also seems to be at play when it comes to capacity building. From a macro perspective, Moss et al. (2006) suggests an "aid-institution paradox" where a large and sustained volume of aid has a negative effect on recipient country institutions (see also Wako 2018). From a micro perspective, the World Bank reports that about half of their public sector governance projects achieve an institutional development impact rating of moderately satisfactory and above (World Bank 2005, 2016). At best, for capacity building performance, the cup is half full.

Part of the problem is that the very reason why capacity building projects and programs fail is also the number one reason why they have been initiated in the first place: lack of capacity or ownership. This creates a vicious circle for capacity

building. "This is perhaps the most concerning aspect of the capacity development program. It identifies the people and governments of developing countries as the primary cause of their own lack of development, discounting, it would appear, the effects of history, geography and conflict, the legacies of colonial neglect, unfair trade relations and absent infrastructure, and reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between developed, capable donor countries, and incapable developing countries" (Venner 2015, p. 96).

Yet another part of the problem is that most capacity building initiatives consist of projects where there is a tension between a short-term project driven, results orientation, the ownership focus, and the sustainable and long-term goals of capacity building (Lusthaus et al. 1999; McEvoy et al. 2016). What capacity building really *is* is not necessarily what it *should* be, and it is not clear what a capacity building project really is in practice (Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999; Venner 2015). If any development activity can be subsumed under the umbrella concept of capacity development, then how can they achieve impact and deliver institutional development? Most capacity building projects from DevEx.com, for example, will focus on training programs, study visits, contracted technical advisers, and donations of equipment, only to fail to take root in the recipient countries, inadequately contributing to institutional development or development at large; others, perhaps the *real* capacity building projects, would include setting up new government agencies, reforming education systems, developing leadership skills, coaching, mentoring, and improving citizen participation and access to information (Venner 2015).

4 Why Does Project Management Matter and Why Project Management *for* Capacity Building in Particular?

Easterly (2006) distinguishes between the losing "planners" and the winning "searchers." In his view, the planners design big development plans and goals (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals), only to fail with regard to implementing these strategies through projects in a cost-efficient manner. Instead, the searchers, the advocates of change, really do many great things including specific homegrown initiatives, solutions, and projects, such as getting medicine to dying kids, to meet the desperate needs of the poor and, thus, find what actually happens to work. "How can the West end poverty in the Rest? Setting a beautiful goal such as making poverty history, the Planners' approach then tries to design the ideal aid agencies, administrative plans, and financial resources that will do the job. Sixty years of countless reform schemes to aid agencies and dozens of different plans, and US $2.3 trillion later, the aid industry is still failing to reach the beautiful goal. The evidence points to an unpopular conclusion: Big Plans will always fail to reach the beautiful goal" (Easterly 2006, p. 11).

As Ika (2012) swiftly points out, "whether we are Planners or Searchers, we may rely on project management to achieve our goals" (p. 35). Yet, because development

economists, by and large, are concerned with what to do and not how to do it, they just set forth the beautiful goals, take implementation for granted, and fall short when it comes to getting it done. They rather tell their project success or failure stories through the economic cost-benefit lens (e.g., Denizer et al. 2011) or through randomized control trials (e.g., Banerjee and Duflo 2011). Both approaches being grounded in microeconomics, development economists largely ignore the project management process, a luxury that project leaders could not afford in practice.

Indeed, the development literature has focused very little on how to get projects done [For development projects, exceptions include Biggs and Smith (2003), Brinkerhoff (1994), Hirschman (1967), Khan et al. (2003), Korten (1980), Rondinelli (1976, 1983), Struyk (2007), Vickland and Nieuwenhujis (2005); see Datta et al. (2012) and Venner (2015) for capacity building projects specifically]. The same can be said for project management literature, where very little has been written on development projects in general [see Diallo and Thuillier (2005), Golini et al. (2015), Ika (2012, 2015), Ika et al. (2010, 2011, 2012), Ika and Hodgson (2014), Ika and Saint-Macary (2012), Julian (2016), Khang and Moe (2008), Yalegama et al. (2016), and Yamin and Sim (2016), for a few exceptions] and capacity building projects in particular (e.g., Ika and Donnelly 2017; McEvoy et al. 2016).

Not surprisingly, development economists rather treat the project management process as a kind of black box whose inner workings are unexamined. Therefore, "they leave a void in terms of how inputs are actually translated into outputs, thus giving no explanation of what goes on in between" (Ika 2015, p. 1111). In so doing, they create a sort of "micro blind spot" that limits the potential to shed light on the micro-macro paradox. The Nobel Prize in Economics, Coase (2012) notes that this black box tendency results in an unfortunate loss of opportunity in that development economists offer little in the way of practical insight, thus leaving project practitioners with their own management acumen, personal judgment, and rules of thumb for getting projects right. What if development economists opened the project management black box?

> Opening the project management black box and seeing what is inside, which means focusing on how projects are actually carried out, might prove as challenging as rewarding for our understanding of aid projects and their performance. From a managerial perspective, then, we argue that we might learn, *inter alia*, more about why some ID [International Development] projects are abandoned; why other ID projects fail or succeed; how the management process fails ID projects; and what role strategy, leadership, supervision, coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation play in ID project success or failure. Insights gleaned from the past and an understanding of the present may enable us to achieve more success in the future. Hence, we could deliver more projects on time, under budget, and on target with their specific objectives. Moreover, we might meet the expectations of both beneficiaries and stakeholders. Then, we might hope to reach impact and sustainability, and thus, contribute more significantly to ID (Ika 2015, pp.1111 and 1112, brackets added).

So much about project management in general and its contribution to development (to read more, see Ika 2012, 2015). How about project management *for* capacity building in particular?

As we have seen in the introduction, the capacity building debate clusters around two schools of thought. But whether we view capacity building as a result or rather a

cause of development, we still rely on projects and project management to achieve our beautiful goals (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999). Development project management can help up to a point (Ika 2015). However, to really understand capacity building contributions, one needs to understand what makes capacity building projects so specific.

While most development projects focus on the pure delivery of goods and services such as the building or repair of a new road, school, hospital, or pipeline, capacity building projects are different in that they focus on ownership and the ability of people, institutions, and stakeholders to elicit developmental change (Datta et al. 2012; Venner 2015). In that sense, capacity building projects are not "hard" or "tangible" but "soft" or "amorphous" projects; they are not infrastructure or "blueprint" projects; they are often "change" projects, and, thus, they rely on a theory of change at the individual, organizational, and system-wide levels and a political process to bring about their outcomes (Datta et al. 2012; Ika and Hodgson 2014; McEvoy et al. 2016). Lusthaus et al. (1999) comment: "Whether they are aware of it or not, those involved in the field of capacity development are engaged in trying to understand and predict change" (p. 10).

But one size does not fit all capacity building projects. Indeed, as we have mentioned, capacity building projects include training local staff to improve the delivery of a service and improve waste or water management, or they may focus on internal organizational processes like improving financial management, accessing information or more efficient data collection, and strengthening political reforms. More conventional capacity building projects rely on training and workshops, technical advice focused on specific systems and procedures, support to project management, and support to lobby and advocacy work. More advanced capacity building projects focus on more intensive methods of multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue, knowledge brokering, networking, change and process facilitation, mediation, and leadership development and, as such, require a good understanding of context in building more effective and dynamic relationships between different stakeholders behaving in often unpredictable ways (Datta et al. 2012).

Conventional projects can more effectively benefit from standard project management approaches such as the logical framework analysis and PRINCE 2 (Projects in Controlled Environment) which are good for managing the delivery of outputs such as organizational procedures. But as Lusthaus et al. (1999) note, appropriate use of these approaches remains a challenge as they are part of the power relationship between donor and recipient. The more advanced capacity building projects, however, would be better managed with flexible project management approaches that emphasize observation, learning, and the delivery of outcomes or higher-order changes such as outcome mapping (Datta et al. 2012). (For a synthesis of the tools and techniques for capacity building, see Bloomfield et al. 2018).

From the above discussion, we note that the capacity building literature offers little in the way of practical insight and that appropriate manuals fail to provide practical detail about the implementation and delivery of capacity building projects (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Venner 2015). Thus, we contend that project management *for* capacity building is the missing link for success. This chapter focuses on capacity

building projects. But how do we assess capacity building projects' success and what makes them successful?

5 How to Assess Capacity Building Project Success: The Success Criteria

As we have seen, very little work has been done on capacity building projects from a project management lens. Though specific, capacity building projects are in fact development projects by nature. Thus, in this section, we turn to the general development project literature for insights about project success, which we will then adapt to the peculiarities of capacity building projects.

With so many layers of stakeholders[6] with conflicting, if not contradictory, expectations and such an intangible ultimate goal of poverty alleviation (Diallo and Thuillier 2005; Ika 2012; Ika and Hodgson 2014; Julian 2016), there is a lot of ambiguity and a lack of a consensus surrounding development project success (Ika 2015; Ika et al. 2011, 2012). Oftentimes, in development projects, there is no such thing as "absolute success" but only "perceived success" because the perspective of stakeholders matters and they hardly hold the same point of view. Although not all agencies embrace identical success criteria, with the leadership of the OECD, many now use more or less similar measures for success across the development sector. They include (1) relevance, the extent to which the project suits the priorities of the target group, the recipient, and the donor; (2) efficiency, the extent to which the project uses the least costly resources possible to achieve the desired outcomes; (3) effectiveness, the extent to which the project meets its objectives; (4) impact, the positive and negative changes produced by the project, directly or indirectly, intentionally or not; and (5) sustainability, the extent to which the benefits of the project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Notably the OECD does not use the term success per se but does provide a common baseline for measuring project success.

Building on the OECD work and looking into World Bank-funded projects, Ika et al. (2011, 2012) validated the following list of seven measures for development project success: efficiency (time), efficiency (cost), effectiveness (objectives), relevance (country), relevance (beneficiaries), impact, and sustainability. Then Ika (2015) showed that one may assess ID project success along two dimensions: the short-term "project *management* success," the delivery of the project on time, within cost, and to specific objectives, and the long-term "*deliverable* success," the long-

[6]For example, there may be as many as eight different stakeholders in World Bank-funded projects: The project manager, the project supervisor at the World Bank, the recipient country national supervisor, a steering committee, subcontractors, suppliers of goods and services, beneficiaries, and the population at large (Diallo and Thuillier 2005; Ika et al. 2012).

range project benefits such as impact, sustainability, and relevance for both country and beneficiaries.

In a sector where the final deliverable is mired in intangibility and sociopolitical complexity, many development project organizations understandably focus on tangible and demonstrable successful results and, thus, on project management success. At the same time, deliverable success remains the overarching success dimension for development projects [see Baser and Morgan (2008), Datta et al. (2012), and Ika and Donnelly (2017), for capacity building projects in particular]. But, as shown by Ika (2015), project management success does not significantly influence deliverable success. Yet without deliverable success, no development is possible. Project management success may in fact lead to deliverable success, but a "well-managed" project can be deemed a failure if other deliverable conditions are not adequately met. An example of this is the case of the Chad-Cameroon pipeline, the largest private sector investment project in sub-Saharan Africa. This project was described as an extraordinary example of project management success by being completed ahead of schedule, with scarce resources, and limited local capacity. Unfortunately, the project was ultimately deemed a failure by development experts because the lack of high-level political commitment (and lack of good governance models) meant oil revenues went to purchase arms and military equipment instead of addressing the needs of the poor (Ika and Saint-Macary 2012). Thus, we conclude that project management success and deliverable success are two sides of the same coin and should not be separated (e.g., Shenhar and Dvir 2007).

In light of the above discussion and considering the aforementioned peculiarities of capacity building projects, their success includes both project management success and deliverable success and, thus, the entire range of success criteria or measures mentioned above. More specifically, in the case of local government capacity building projects, impact assesses changes in awareness, skill, and behavior, in local government policies/services/practices, and in their enabling environment. Sustainability includes, for example, new collaborations with strategic organizations or other government departments; ability to secure revenue sources for new policies/services/practices; and expansion of institutional change (Baser and Morgan 2008; Datta et al. 2012; Ika and Donnelly 2017). So far, we have discussed the measures of project success. But what makes capacity building projects successful?

6 What Makes Capacity Building Projects Successful: Success Factors or Conditions

Once again, considering the scarce literature available on capacity building projects from a project management lens, we turn to the general development project literature for insights about project success.

In the microeconomic development literature, we often come across works that investigate whether project success or failure depends on the macroeconomic and institutional characteristics of the recipient country or on project characteristics such as project supervision (e.g., Chauvet et al. 2010). These characteristics may be termed project success factors or conditions. In fact, Ika et al. (2012) and Ika (2015) define critical success factors as *conditions*, events, and circumstances contributing to project outcomes. Although there is a dearth of literature on development project management, we learn that project success factors include supervision, monitoring, coordination, design, consultations, competency of project staff, etc. (see Diallo and Thuillier 2005; Ika 2015; Ika et al. 2011, 2012; Khang and Moe 2008; Yalegama et al. 2016; Yamin and Sim 2016). For example, if a project manager is trying to achieve "impact," a key factor contributing to this criterion may come in the form of strong local ownership (Khang and Moe 2008). Similarly, if a development agency is trying to ensure project management success, a key factor is project supervision (Ika 2015). For capacity building projects in particular, success factors include staff capacity, stakeholder commitment, accountability, clear understanding of context, appropriate project management approach, monitoring, learning, multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue, etc. (Boex et al. 2006; Datta et al. 2012; UCLG 2013). A summary of key success factors for development projects in general and capacity building projects in particular is listed in Table 1.

While the aforementioned success factors may initially appear more practical and easier to apply in project management practice, if a project manager attempts to design concrete activities into a project using these success factors as they are presented in the literature, the lists fall short. This is due to the fact that we do not know *in which circumstances* these success factors actually improve project performance (e.g., Hobbes 2014). Table 1 also illustrates the types of questions a manager needs to answer before they can make use of identified success factors. A more user-friendly list of *success conditions* needs to be devised to bring success factor knowledge into the practical realm of project management.

Oftentimes, scholars blur success factors and success conditions (Ika et al. 2012; Ika 2015). But in this paper, borrowing from Hirschman (1967) for our theoretical framework and, thus, sticking to his choice of words, we focus on success conditions. For that matter, we proffer that success conditions are the necessary states of being, circumstances, or prerequisites that must exist for project success to occur (Turner 2004). These conditions, Turner (2004) argued, should be assessed periodically in order to improve the chances for project success because circumstances are bound to change.

Success conditions are not only essential to the final outcome of the project, but they need to be maintained by the project in order to continue. Like a snapshot in time, identifying the success conditions provides project managers with a broader perspective on how they might influence project outcomes (Ika and Donnelly 2017). To the best of our knowledge, Hirschman (1967) is the only scholar that looked into development project success conditions from a managerial perspective. Celebrating the power of context and the sheer importance of social and political aspects in a project, he offered insights into development project success conditions and

Table 1 Key success factors summary

Authors	ID project success factors	Application
Diallo and Thuillier (2005)	Trust and communication	How does a project build trust? With whom?
Ika et al. (2012), Ika (2015), and Yamin and Sim (2016)	Supervision, monitoring, design, coordination, training, and institutional environment	What does a successful institutional environment look like? How does training lead to project success?
Khang and Moe (2008)	Understanding of project environment, competencies of project staff, effective stakeholder consultations, compatibility of rules and procedures, adequate resources, commitment to goals, sustained government policy, adequate local capacity, and strong local ownership	Who should be consulted? When? Which capacities are considered adequate? Under what circumstances does strong commitment and ownership occur?
Khan et al. (2003)	Flexible project planning, implementation approach, awareness and sense of urgency for change, publication of success stories, creation of powerful group of "champions" of change, networking and team building, anchoring changes in the organization's culture, project management structure, selecting the right team	How does a project build a powerful group of project champions? Who should be part of the project team?
Vickland and Nieuwenhujis (2005)	Integrated solutions vs. "best of breed," big band vs. incremental implementation, strong project management, extensive training, use of appropriate individuals from each functional area, senior manager's understanding of project, top-down implementation approach	How does extensive training lead to project success? What does a good understanding of a project entail?
Struyk (2007)	Degree of consistency of local leadership, policy characteristics, availability of resources, number of implementing actors, attitude of implementing personnel, alignment of clients, learning opportunity among implementers and between projects, past experience of implementers, local environment	What does a favorable local environment look like? How does a project achieve alignment of clients? How does a project create learning opportunities?
Yalegama et al. (2016)	Enabling community environment; measuring project management outcomes; and community project management engagement	How does a project enable a supportive environment and what does it look like? Who should be engaged and how?

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	CB project success factors	Application
Boex et al. (2006)	Ability of people to choose where they reside; local government independence from central government regulations; social capital; fiscal management; accountability to local population; and staff capacity	Under what circumstances does accountability occur? What kind of capacity?
Datta et al. (2012)	Right skills and abilities and clear roles for implementers; client-consultant relations; clear understanding of context and how change happens; selecting the most appropriate project management approach; monitoring; learning; a supportive organizational culture; trust and openness among actors; and multi-actor engagement and dialogue	What does a good understanding of the project context entail? What does a supportive organizational culture look like? What stakeholders should be engaged and how?
UCLG (2013)	Inclusion of local government in decentralization process; transfer of sufficient competencies; transfer of adequate financial resources; commitment by political leaders and senior staff to good local governance and people inclusion; and develop the necessary and technical capacity	How does a project achieve inclusion? Under what circumstances does stakeholder commitment occur?

Authors' own table

differentiated between the success conditions that would occur "in advance of the project," i.e., those that are already present at the project inception, and those that would emerge "in the wake of the project," i.e., the ones that arise once the project implementation has started (p. 146).

This theoretical framework speaks to a project's ability to recognize and hone in on initial (early) success conditions and emergent (late) success conditions, its ability to collect relevant information, and, perhaps more importantly, its ability to act on the project setting in a timely manner. Indeed, development projects interact with their settings; the whole of the projects is greater than the sum of their parts; thus, solutions cannot be imposed; rather they emerge from circumstances. Success is derived not from carbon copy replication but from the testing, scaling, and failing of initiatives in a variety of socio-politico-geographic contexts (e.g., Hobbes 2014; Ika and Donnelly 2017; Ramalingam 2013; Snowden and Boone 2007). As Hirschman (1967) suggests, "not only are projects voyages of discovery, they tend to be voyages of the true Columbus type—setting trail for one destination (perhaps an unattainable one) but arriving in the event at quite a different one (perhaps much more important than the imagined one)" (Singer 1969, p. 23). That is the case of capacity building projects which focus specifically on ownership and change on the

part of project beneficiaries and, thus, necessitate a good understanding of context (Baser and Morgan 2008; Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012).

"Much remains to be done in understanding the conditions for failure and success of projects," wrote Hirschman (1967, p. 188). Yet, these words of wisdom remain unheeded. Almost 50 years later, we still do not know what conditions enable development project success. Hence, in this research, we ask: What are the critical conditions that enable capacity building project success? But why does it matter?

7 Why Does Research on the Right Circumstances for Capacity Building Projects Matter?

The literature is replete with reasons why development projects poorly perform (Gow and Morss 1988; Ika 2012; Rondinelli 1976). But our focus here is on the struggle on the part of project leaders to understand not only the setting or context in which success occurs but in particular project success conditions or the right circumstances under which capacity building projects thrive (Baser and Morgan 2008; Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999). The research is significant for both scholars and practitioners. Firstly, in the multibillion dollar development sector where academic research on project management is surprisingly limited [see Bloomfield et al. (2018), and Venner (2015), for capacity building projects] and where little has been done to understand project success, its root causes, its key factors, or its success conditions (Ika 2015; Ika et al. 2011, 2012), this research will add to the literature.

Secondly, project leaders need more information about the journey, not simply the destination. Thus, drawing out key success factors such as consultations, supervision, monitoring, communication, staff capacity, accountability, etc. without providing more about the context in which the factors succeeded [see, e.g., Diallo and Thuillier (2005), Ika (2015), Ika et al. (2012), Khang and Moe (2008), Yalegama et al. (2016), and Yamin and Sim (2016), for development projects in general and Baser and Morgan (2008), Bloomfield et al. (2018), Boex et al. (2006), Datta et al. (2012), and UCLG (2013), for capacity building projects in particular] is not enough. Because, without this contextual knowledge, these key success factors are difficult to translate into practice. Different factors, as we know, can lead to different outcomes in different contexts; and when the project does succeed in improving the context, it changes it in ways that couldn't have been expected (Ika and Donnelly 2017). Thus, the research has the potential to improve future project management practice. It could help project leaders understand why some capacity building projects (or aspects of thereof) thrive in some settings and others do not and specifically identify the right circumstances under which projects work.

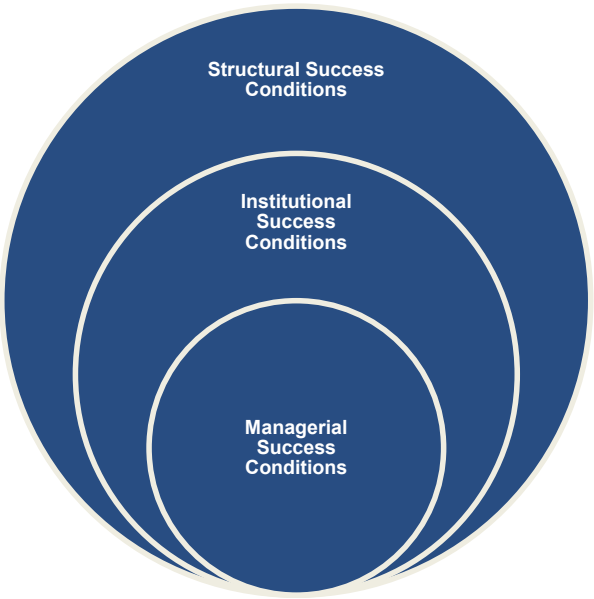

Fig. 1 Measurement framework for development project success conditions (Adapted from Ika and Donnelly 2017)

8 The Methodological Approach

In this book chapter, we sought to explore the following research question: What are the conditions that enable (local government) capacity building project success (Hirschman 1967; Ika and Donnelly 2017)? The limited research literature on development project success or failure conditions led us to apply an exploratory theory-building design (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). A two-step research approach was developed. Firstly, a conceptual framework (Fig. 1) was developed from the literature review and was labelled the "framework success conditions." Ika's (2012) assessment of make-or-break categories of success provided a starting point for identifying potential conditions both internal and external to the project. After Gow and Morss (1988) and Collier (2007), Ika's three categories are as follows: (a) structural, (b) institutional, and (c) managerial. These three areas, altogether, reflect the context surrounding the projects, including the social, political, technical, institutional, organizational, and managerial setting of the project (Acemoglu and Robinson 2012). Hence, project success conditions would include structural conditions (C1), institutional conditions (C2), and finally project *management* conditions (C3). Again, our research focuses on local government capacity building projects. Thus, more specifically, building on decentralization research by Boex et al. (2006) and UCLG (2013), we measure structural conditions. And using the work of UCLG (2013) again and Baser and Morgan's (2008) research on successful capacity development, we measure institutional conditions from both the beneficiary organization and the implementing agency points of view. Then, project management conditions were developed using Khang and Moe's (2008) and

Ika et al.'s (2012) work on critical success factors. Overall, the first two columns in Table 2 below account for these framework conditions and their indicators.

Secondly, an inductive approach was applied to identify new success conditions that came up from the research process. These conditions were labelled the "meta-conditions" as they appeared to incorporate the original framework conditions but also "success factors" examined in our literature review early on in the research. The research applied a multiple case study design, semi-structured interviews, and triangulation with written documentation (proposals, reports, and implementation plans) to further improve validity of the data. Finally, both the framework conditions and the meta-conditions were presented to project practitioners in a workshop to test the validity and applicability of the success conditions in everyday project management practice.

8.1 Case Selection and Studies

To draw out potential success conditions, we chose a replication logic (Yin 2013). *Most* successful cases were selected for their ability to demonstrate (overall) success, while a *less* successful case was singled out for its contrasting outcomes.[7] One Ottawa (Canada)-based implementing agency, focused on local government capacity building, was selected to facilitate the identification of the cases. The authors began by seeking 35 headquarters (HQ) for Ottawa-based project management staff perception of project success. Ultimately, four (4) case projects, including (3) most successful and (1) less successful, fit the criteria for selection.[8] Criteria included program component (project was part of a program), project success (high perception of the

[7] Ideally, it would have been best to select successful cases *versus* failed ones, to avoid "sampling on the dependant variable," in this case, project success. However, within the implementing agency selected for this study, finding complete sets of data for failed projects proved challenging. It was explained to researchers that in practice, if a project-level initiative was struggling to move forward, final outcomes could be redefined (in cooperation with the donor agency) and resources could be redirected to aspects of the program that are progressing well, as long as the broad higher program level objectives remain intact. Although "lessons learned" for individual projects were frequently described in case studies and the narratives of project reports, clear evidence for fully failed projects remained elusive. This left researchers with identification of most successful and less successful cases only. The experience of the second author who worked as a program manager at the same implementing agency attests to this reality (see Ika and Donnelly 2017).

[8] Asked to provide the researchers with *perceived* examples of successful local government capacity building projects, the HQ staff initially came up with six projects, but two were dropped because these projects did not have complete sets of existing documentation (reports, case studies, proposals, evaluations, mission plans, etc.) or interview candidates available for the research. Then, in order to further reduce the likelihood of skewed impressions in the overall research results and, thus, increase its overall validity, we later asked a variety of respondents from different hierarchical levels, functional areas, and geographical locations to rate overall project success (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007; Ika and Donnelly 2017).

Table 2 Framework conditions: indicators and findings

Conditions	Indicators	Total (# of respondents indicating condition-enabled project success)	Overall perceived importance of identified success condition (>60% = perceived as important[a])
Structural conditions			
C1.1 Legal/ regulatory frameworks	Legal mandate of local governments (LG) Degree of independence from central government Inclusive decentralization process	10 **(50%)**	Not perceived as important
C1.2 Financial resources	Sources of revenue for LG to fulfill mandate Predictability of revenue	5 **(25%)**	Not perceived as important
C1.3 Contextual environment	**Enabling institutions** **Community stakeholders** **Geography and size** **Other**	**20 (100%)**	**Perceived as important**
Institutional conditions (beneficiary agency)			
C2.1 Accountability and public participation	**Improvements to policies/services/practices through accountability mechanisms**	**18 (90%)**	**Perceived as important**
C2.2 Beneficiary institution capacity	**C2.2.1 Capability to commit (leadership, clear and aligned mandate, local champions)**	**19 (95%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C2.2.2 Capability to acquire new skill (measured improvement in performing a service or task)	**17 (85%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C2.2.3 Capability to attract resources and support (engaging key stakeholders and institutions)	**12 (60%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C2.2.4 Management of diversity (coordination, teamwork, consensus, and trust building)	5 (25%)	Not perceived as important
	C2.2.5. Capability to adapt knowledge/skills (individual and institutional integration)	10 (50%)	Not perceived as important

(continued)

Table 2 (continued)

Conditions	Indicators	Total (# of respondents indicating condition-enabled project success)	Overall perceived importance of identified success condition (>60% = perceived as important[a])
Institutional conditions (implementing agency)			
C3. Implementing organization capacity	C3.1. Capability to commit to a project (experience, knowledge of context)	10 (50%)	Not perceived as important
	C3.2. Capability to deliver services (tools, resources, technical expertise, capacity development methodology)	**20 (100%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C3.3. Capability to attract resources and support (engaging key stakeholders and institutions)	**17 (85%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C3.4. Capability to manage diversity (conflict resolution, collective decision-making, consensus, and trust building)	**18 (90%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C3.5. Capability to adapt and self-renew (ability to manage change, inspire innovation, capture emerging solutions, develop new knowledge, and promote internal learning)	**15 (75%)**	**Perceived as important**
Project management conditions			
C4. Project management	**C4.1. Project leadership (vision, empowerment)**	**14 (70%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C4.2 Project monitoring (measuring progress)	**16 (80%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C4.3. Project design	**15 (75%)**	**Perceived as important**
	C4.4 Stakeholder coordination (support, resources, process)	**18 (90%)**	**Perceived as important**

[a]This criterion is not meant to support any statistical test of hypotheses but is offered as an indicator of the overall perceived importance of a particular success condition
Authors' own table

project being most or less successful by HQ staff[9]), type of project (capacity building), time frame (completed prior to 2012), beneficiary organizations (local governments), and budget (under $150,000). In so doing, we ensured that the cases were each part of a program and typical peer-to-peer local government capacity development for the implementing agency.

We prepared four case studies for the projects. They are summarized in Table 3 along with their background, their umbrella program, objectives, and both main and unexpected results. Multiple case studies enabled a broader area of theory building as they provided us with the option to conduct cross-case comparisons, derive patterns, and clarify findings (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). A cross-case analysis was thus applied to identify similarities, patterns, and themes relating to success conditions for each case studied. The data was also examined for rival explanations, comparing the conditions for other influences or alternative explanations (Yin 2013). A within-case analysis was also conducted to identify variances in responses between interview respondents. Drawn from the collected project documentation, specifically from project proposals, reports, and implementation plans, this analysis helped in the interpretation of the research findings.[10] To ensure an in-depth analysis, the respondents were later asked to rate their perceptions of project success and success criteria. All the above further increased the overall validity of the findings.

8.2 *Semi-structured Interviews and Data Coding and Analysis*

This research received feedback from a total of 20 participants (8 men and 12 women). They were selected based on the length of participation on the project

[9]Not surprisingly, respondents view project success as deliverable success, which is the overarching success dimension for capacity building projects. However, the most successful projects were the ones in Vietnam (administrative reforms), Indonesia (library services), and Ghana (hand-washing). These projects scored higher on the success criteria scales for relevance (country and beneficiaries), impact, and sustainability. Thus, they could be termed *deliverable* successes. The Sri Lanka project (Waste management) scored lower and thus was considered the less successful one. We also note that even the most successful projects did contain elements of failure; they were not all project *management* successes (they did not fully meet time and cost criteria). Moreover, the less successful project did in fact come in on time therefore it too contained contrasting elements of both success and failure. Table 5 from our short series of Likert scale interview questions confirms the contrast between most successful and less successful projects and offers a presentation of the success criteria results across all four case projects (Ika and Donnelly 2017).

[10]Indeed, while reports, case studies, and evaluations could have provided valuable insights on their own, they did not always contain the context-specific information needed to identify underlying success conditions. Thus, written documentation was used to capture more general project information like the background, objectives of the broader umbrella program, primary participants, scope, main results, and unexpected results of the case projects. Combined, the two sources provided a stronger narrative and clearer snapshot of events as they occurred at the time (Ika and Donnelly 2017).

Table 3 Summary of the four case projects

Case projects	Location and beneficiary	Objectives/results	HQ staff perception of development success	Duration	Budget	Primary participants
Case #1: Support to administrative reforms in land management and taxation Background: As part of an ongoing municipal partnership program linking Canadian municipalities with communities in developing countries, the project was an adaptation of an earlier pilot project implemented in Vietnam in collaboration with the city of Saguenay, Quebec	The city of Nam Dinh, Vietnam	Objectives: To increase the urban planning and development capacity of the city Main results: All Nam Dinh territory mapped and entered into the registry; accelerated property-title-issuing process Unexpected results: The creation of one of the first land use public information centers in Vietnam and achievement of national impact through direct contributions to national land use legislation	*Most* successful	December 2004 to March 2008	$131,216	Two Canadian project staff, two staff from the Association of Cities of Vietnam, three municipal experts, five staff from the city of Nam Dinh
Case #2: Improvement of solid waste management services Background: The project was part of the larger Canada/Sri Lanka Municipal Cooperation Program (MCP) implemented as part of a reconstruction initiative in response to the 2004 tsunami that hit coastal communities in Sri Lanka	The Municipal Council of Galle, Sri Lanka	To improve sanitation and reduce waste disposal by strengthening garbage collection methods in pilot wards Main results: Reduced solid waste by 50% in two wards; reduced number and volume of waste in illegal dump sites Unexpected results: Contribution to a reduction of fatalities from mosquito-borne dengue fever in Galle	*Less* successful	December 2005 to March 2008	$65,730	Two Canadian project staff, two Sri Lankan field staff, two municipal experts, six staff from the municipality of Galle

(continued)

Table 3 (continued)

Case projects	Location and beneficiary	Objectives/results	HQ staff perception of development success	Duration	Budget	Primary participants
Case #3: Improvement of library services Background: The project was part of larger Canada/Aceh Local Government Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program (CALGAP) initiative aimed at supporting the reconstruction of Aceh province following the 2004 tsunami that hit the island of Sumatra, Indonesia	The district of Pidie, Indonesia	To meet the needs of the public through improved core library services and enhanced learning opportunities Main results: A 270% increase in visitors; improved interaction with community; better services to community needs Unexpected results: Success in the improved library led to acquisition of a second bookmobile; change in public working-hour bylaws; selected as the best library in the province in 2008	*Most* successful	December 2006 to June 2008	$122,365	Two Canadian project staff, two Sri Lankan field staff, two municipal experts, several staff from the district of Pidie
Case #4: Hand-washing in elementary schools Background: As part of an ongoing municipal partnership program linking Canadian municipalities with communities in developing countries, the project was the second phase of an already existing collaboration between the city of Ottawa	The district of Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA), Ghana	To promote good health among school children through the adoption of appropriate hand-washing practices for the prevention and control of spread of infection Main results: Joint development of a training manual and tools for the program; train-the-trainer program	Most successful	March 2007 to December 2009	$109,564	Two Canadian project staff, two municipal experts, several staff from the district of KEEA

and partners in the KEEA district		implemented with 25 public health workers; health workers trained teachers from selected pilot schools Unexpected results: Hand-washing behaviors went beyond the school children as parents began to adopt better hand-washing practices as well; the district health department implemented new regulations to improve hand-washing facilities and infra-structure in schools and in community health centers				

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Table 4 Respondent information

Number	Interview code	Role	Project	Gender	Years on project
1	VM1	Manager	Vietnam	M	3+
2	VM2	Manager	Vietnam	F	2+
3	VM3	Manager	Vietnam	M	3+
4	VE1	Expert	Vietnam	M	3+
5	VE2	Expert	Vietnam	M	3+
6	VE3	Expert	Vietnam	M	2+
7	VC1	Beneficiary/coordinator	Vietnam	F	3+
8	SM1	Manager	Sri Lanka	F	3+
9	SE1	Expert	Sri Lanka	M	2+
10	SE2	Expert	Sri Lanka	F	2+
11	SC1	Coordinator	Sri Lanka	F	2+
12	IM1	Manager	Indonesia	F	2
13	1M2	Manager	Indonesia	F	1+
14	IE1	Expert	Indonesia	F	1+
15	IE2	Expert	Indonesia	F	1+
16	GM1	Manager	Ghana	M	1+
17	GM2	Manager	Ghana	F	2+
18	GE1	Expert	Ghana	F	2+
19	GE2	Expert	Ghana	F	2
20	GB1	Beneficiary/coordinator	Ghana	M	2+

Authors' own table

(minimum 1 year) and their role in the project. Interviews were conducted by phone or in person with eight Canadian implementation managers (supervisory role), nine Canadian technical experts (specialized technical assistance), one implementation coordinator (country-based implementation assistance), and two beneficiaries/coordinators (project champions working for the local government but also in a coordinating role). Thus, respondents reflected a diversity of perspectives (i.e., project managers, field coordinators, technical experts, project beneficiaries/coordinators) and represented a range of different hierarchical levels, functional areas, and geographical locations. A summary of interview respondent demographics and their roles on the projects can be found in Table 4.

Interviews were then transcribed and coded using qualitative computer software (NVIVO). Once transcribed, the authors began with an initial scan of the data, labelling statements and observing potential emerging trends. Then, using the "framework conditions" as a guide, concepts were grouped together into condition categories to identify the common cross-case conditions for success. The authors reached consensus on the coding through careful revision of categories and determination of how a text passage could be coded to a category, thus ensuring trustworthiness or reliability of the coding. Interview questions were designed essentially to draw out the structural, institutional, and project management conditions that respondents considered important to the success of their projects. Interview

statements were coded according to the role of the respondents and the project that they worked on.[11]

To delve further into the reasons behind the framework responses (described by one of the researchers as the "what" conditions), data was then recoded using an inductive "meta- condition" analysis by distinguishing between answers that spoke to a reason (why), a process (how), and points in time (when), and answers that identified the engagement of different stakeholders (who). For instance, if an interviewee mentioned the fact that the mayor of a municipality contributed to the success of the project, this was coded as a subcategory under "stakeholders."

As the coding progressed, categories relating to the "who, when, how, and why" were surprisingly repetitive for each interview. Although unique in their detail, the broader categories were remarkably consistent and thus clustered into four new conditions for success. For example, the data revealed that a variety of stakeholder groups contributed to the success of all the projects (donors, elected officials, community groups, other municipalities, etc.). Although the individual groups were different between the projects, the unplanned and emergent involvement of stakeholder groups engaging at different points in time and contributing to the success of the project was mentioned by all 20 respondents. This resulted in the meta-condition labelled "multi-stakeholder commitment." Responses from the framework conditions and the meta-conditions were then cross-tabulated for any association. This pattern-matching approach, i.e., drawing from both case evidence and emerging logic, strengthened the rigor and depth of the emerging hypothesis, increasing the ability of authors to apply and test it at a future date (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

9 Respondent Assessment of Project Success: Findings and Discussion

In an initial analysis, the authors asked respondents to rate their projects on a scale of 1–5 where 1is strongly disagree, 3 is neither agree nor disagree, and 5 is strongly agree with the statements. Table 5 is a presentation of the success criteria results

[11]For instance, if a respondent was a manager on the Vietnam project, they were coded as VM1. If VM1 mentioned that the commitment of the beneficiaries was critical to the success of the project, VM1's statement was coded to C2.2.1 Capacity of Beneficiary Institution to Commit. The total number of respondents who mentioned each framework condition was then added together, giving the researcher a cumulative percentage of positively referenced framework success conditions. In the case of C2.2.1 Capacity of Beneficiary Institution to Commit, 19 out of 20 respondents (95%) mentioned this condition contributed to the success of their program. Framework conditions receiving more than a 60% positive response rate from interviewees were deemed important contributors to success. In our view, although these percentages of individual respondents mentioning the same success condition are not meant to support any statistical test of hypotheses, they are offered as a better indicator of overall importance of this particular success condition than the absolute number of times it is expressed and coded as a relevant success condition theme.

Table 5 Rating of project success criteria

Project success criteria	Vietnam							Sri Lanka				Ghana					Indonesia			
Interview code	VM1	VM2	VM3	VE1	VE2	VE3	VC1	SM1	SE1	SE2	SC1	GM1	GM2	GE1	GE2	GC1	IM1	IM2	IE1	IE2
Relevance country (e.g., aligned with national/local policy and priorities)	5	5	5	5	5	5	–	**4**	**5**	**5**	**4**	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
Relevance beneficiaries	5	5	4	4	4	5	–	**4**	**5**	**5**	**4**	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Effectiveness objectives	5	5	–	4	4	5	–	**4**	**5**	**4**	**3**	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Efficiency time	4	–	2	5	5	2	–	**5**	**5**	**5**	**5**	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5
Efficiency budget	4	4	–	–	–	–	–	**3**	**-**	**5**	**4**	3	–	5	5	5	5	4	4	4
Impact (e.g., changes in awareness, skill, behavior, local government policies/services/practices, and enabling environment)	5	5	5	5	5	5	–	**4**	**5**	**5**	**5**	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5

Sustainability (e.g., new collaborations with strategic organizations or other government departments; ability to secure revenue sources for new policies/services/practices; expansion of institutional change)	5	5	–	5	5	5		**4**	**5**	**5**	**3**	5	–	5	5	5	4	4	5	5
Overall success (overall perception of project success)	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	**4**	**5**	**5**	**4**	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Authors' own table
Results are not cumulative

across all four development projects. To identify the importance of particular success criteria, the authors asked respondents the following question: "how do you personally define a successful project?" The top two criteria used by respondents to define a successful project were impact and sustainability. This was followed up by relevance, effectiveness, and finally efficiency. This result is consistent with the findings discussed in the earlier literature review (Ika 2015; Ika et al. 2012).

Impact

Respondents generally described the criterion "impact" as a change in organizational capacity and a change in multi-stakeholder environments. In other words, respondents pointed to higher levels of success not only when a project increased the capacity of the local government institutions but also when it involved higher levels of government and contributed to changes in the enabling environment, changes in community behaviors, and even changes in the capacity of the Canadian municipalities involved in the project.

> There was a change inside the community and the institution. It reduced the costs of the municipal budget. There was learning at the municipal level; health workers, teachers were trained, and even parents were trained by their children. (Project Manager, Ghana)

> There was a change in the way a department conducts its operations, there was an institutional transformation and it successfully did something with a national scope by engaging the local government association. (Project Manager, Vietnam)

Sustainability

Respondents described the "sustainability" criterion as a change within the local government institution and the capacity for it to evolve or expand on its own once the project ended. As an additional aspect of sustainability, the two respondents mentioned the ability to share and replicate the project with other local governments as a criterion for project success. This added information points to the types of networks and activities that can contribute to project sustainability.

> ...A project that exceeds the objectives, that continues and expands beyond the scope. (Technical Expert, Sri Lanka)

> A project is successful when the small thing works but also when that small thing is creating a continuing change and the change is like a wave and you can't control it. (Project Manager, Vietnam)

Effectiveness

Respondents described the "effectiveness" criterion as achieving the project objective. The concreteness of the objective was emphasized in a number of instances. This was a stronger criterion for the project experts as over half of expert respondents mentioned it in their definitions of success. This can be explained by the mandates of the experts who are primarily responsible for enabling the achievement of a final objective.

> Objectives were obtained. (Technical Expert, Ghana)

> We achieved the results we set out to achieve. (Technical expert, Sri Lanka)

Relevance
Respondents described "relevance" in a number of ways. Projects were mentioned that responded to the needs of the beneficiary local governments, as well as local, regional, and country, and even Canadian priorities were mentioned. Also mentioned in definitions of success was a project that responds to multiple needs or challenges at once (e.g., health and environment). Like the "impact" criterion, there appears to be a multi-stakeholder dimension to this success criterion.

> ...Because it responded to the needs of the council, technical staff and community needs. It also responded to environmental and health needs. (Project Manager, Sri Lanka)

> A project that meets the needs of those that have defined it and of course meets the needs of the Government of Indonesia and the Government of Canada. (Project Manager, Indonesia)

Efficiency
Projects completed on time and on budget did not stand out as important criteria of success, having only been mentioned by 1 out of 20 respondents. This result is perhaps due to the open nature of the question. The managers, experts, and coordinators all held some accountability for the time it took and the money it cost to deliver a project, but when asked for an open definition of project success, the bias toward impact and sustainability emerged, confirming that in capacity building projects, deliverable success is the most important success dimension.

The lack of response around project budgets could be partially explained by the type of respondents interviewed. Experts, coordinators, and beneficiaries were not responsible for budgets and were not typically aware of project expenditures. That being said, even the managers struggled to provide a rating for the budget questions or assigned a neutral number "3" for an answer.

> Honestly, I can't even remember. The field office managed the detail of the budget management. I only saw the numbers twice a year, rolled up. (Project Manager, Sri Lanka)

10 Framework Success Conditions: Findings and Discussion

With almost all the framework success conditions perceived as important by the interviewees, the research confirmed the influence of all three categories of success conditions (context, institution, and project management) for development projects (see Ika and Donnelly 2017). Most notably, the research also elicited emergent success conditions, those that were not already present before the start of the projects but did emerge during their implementation, as observed by Hirschman (1967). They are discussed below. Furthermore, although difficult to summarize in the format presented in Table 1 above, these findings did prompt interesting narrative data on how the framework conditions contributed to the success of all four projects.

10.1 Context: Shifting Boundaries and Enabling Institutions

The interviews revealed that traditional barriers to new initiatives (like cumbersome management processes or administrations resisting change) were reduced due to important stressors occurring in the broader environment. For instance, in the case of the Indonesia and Sri Lanka projects, the chaos of the tsunami disaster created an opportunity for local governments to act more independently than usual and provided space for local government action. In Vietnam, the country was in the midst of a cultural reform process that made issues surrounding land rights and land management a priority for the government and its citizens. The Ghana hand-washing project began around the same time the World Health Organization (WHO) initiated a global hand hygiene campaign, increasing the visibility and importance of issues surrounding community health. Ultimately, changes in the contextual conditions brought additional relevance to the projects and helped contribute to their success.

> They were in a post-disaster context so everything got thrown up in the air. Even if there were clear regulations between the ministries for local governments and the ministries for environment before the tsunami, after the tsunami everything was a free-for-all. There were urgent needs and whoever was the quickest to attend was the one that was in charge. (Project Manager, Sri Lanka)

Organizations present in the enabling environment were seen as direct contributors to success as all projects benefitted from the help provided by other NGOs, donors, associations, other departments, other levels of government, or local academic institutions. Although the mandate and role of these organizations varied across projects, respondents consistently pointed to the involvement of additional organizations that volunteered resources and at times assisted in the delivery of certain project components (e.g., Yalegama et al. 2016).

> First the (local government) association saw the value of it, and then the ministry saw the value of it, and then the Swiss (development agency) saw it as a valuable component for their project. I think the combination of interest from different parties made the project a success. It was serving the needs of different actors. (Project Manager, Vietnam)

Interestingly, the involvement of these key enabling organizations was not always planned. The involvement and roles of the relevant organizations in the project emerged dynamically throughout the course of implementation, reflecting what we called, earlier, emergent success conditions in this research.

Overall, the context finding is consistent with the capacity building literature which underscored the importance of a clear understanding of context and how change happens (Baser and Morgan 2008; Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999; Venner 2015).

10.2 Beneficiary Organization: Leadership, Commitment, and Accountability

The abilities of the beneficiary champions to lead, manage, delegate, and motivate staff effectively figured strongly in the data. To this point, when respondents described the project leader's ability to adapt to new approaches, create effective teams, and broker resources across boundaries, they were often referring to the lead beneficiary of the project, not the implementing agency project managers.

> At first there was reluctance to help. The mayor and key city people might have felt a little threatened, but the city's director of health talked to them one on one and convinced them that this had nothing to do with their abilities or accomplishments. They were told that rather, this had to do with a lack of medical support and that this initiative would be a joint project in which the mayor and staff would benefit. Once they were convinced, the project took off. (Technical Expert, Ghana)

The capacity of the beneficiary organization to commit to the project also figured strongly in the data. The engagement and motivation of beneficiaries to contribute time to the project were important contribution to success.

> The staff owned it. Some projects were snubbed but this one became incorporated into their portfolio because of the level of engagement of staff. (Project Coordinator, Sri Lanka)

The willingness to be accountable to the public was seen by most respondents as an essential part of project success for the beneficiary organization (see Boex et al. 2006; Ika and Hodgson 2014). The level of enthusiasm among a wide variety of community stakeholders to not only participate in customer feedback surveys but to see their suggestions incorporated into improved service delivery was a strong success condition for the respondents interviewed (e.g., Lusthaus et al. 1999; Venner 2015; Yalegama et al. 2016). Building trust between the community and local government took time however. It was a condition that evolved gradually as government employees were able to demonstrate that they were listening and responding to community feedback. In Indonesia, a change of library hours and library materials occurred following regular customer service surveys. In Ghana, feedback from the public health awareness campaigns led to a change in local bylaws, making mandatory the availability of water for each new school built in the district. In Sri Lanka, the results of stakeholder inputs resulted in scheduling and route changes of garbage collection services. In Vietnam, public interest in the collection of new land title data led to the creation of a city service center to provide transparent access to information that was not available before. Altogether these are other good examples of emergent success conditions.

> The pressure was coming from the community and, seeing how well the project was going, more people used the facility. It was visibly improving. (Technical Expert, Indonesia)

In summary, the above finding is also supported in the capacity building literature [see Baser and Morgan (2008), about capacity to commit and Boex et al. (2006), Lusthaus et al. (1999), and Venner (2015), about ownership, participation, and accountability].

10.3 Implementing Organization: Expertise, Stakeholder Coordination, and Conflict Management

The strongest success condition for the capacity of the implementing agency revolved around the projects' ability to bring technical expertise and build the capacity of beneficiaries. The ability of the technical experts to adapt to the beneficiary environment, remain committed and supportive, work in collaboration, and provide the appropriate tools and feedback for their partners was mentioned as an important success condition by almost all respondents. Being able to mobilize the "right" expertise to fit the needs of the beneficiaries, in particular a practitioner-to-practitioner model, was also seen by respondents as important to success.

> They (experts from Canada) knew how to sit side by side and work with their partners. They would challenge them, they would disagree with them, and they would make suggestions and follow up. (Project Manager, Vietnam)

The capacity of the project agency to attract support, mediate misunderstandings, and broker consensus among a multitude of stakeholders, enabling institutions, different levels of government, and other donors highlights areas where the implementing agency was highly effective in contributing to projects. Indeed, the projects provided the opportunity for multiple stakeholders to work together in ways they had never done before. Creating opportunities for community outreach, consultation, and public interaction were described by respondents as moments when the local government beneficiaries were able to take pride in playing an active and visible role for their community. The deliberate and consistent engagement of multiple key stakeholders, including political stakeholders, working in partnerships toward a common goal, was mentioned frequently by respondents as an important contribution to the success of the projects (e.g., Yalegama et al. 2016).

> As project staff, we ensured that both departments were informed and we coordinated the people that had to come together to get things done. Working with the political leadership, which can be frustrating, was also something that the project staff were responsible for. (Project Coordinator, Sri Lanka)

The above findings are also supported in the literature [see Datta et al. (2012), about the skills and abilities of implementers and multi-actor engagement and dialogue].

10.4 Monitoring and Motivation

Respondents mentioned monitoring for its ability to demonstrate the concrete next steps to take toward addressing the local government challenge (e.g., Baser and Morgan 2008; Ika et al. 2012; Yamin and Sim 2016). This led to an increase in motivation by the beneficiaries and increased the credibility of the beneficiaries in their community and with elected officials. Monitoring was often as simple as

planned regular visits to revise step-by-step objectives, but it could also be more elaborate. The Ghana project created a monitoring committee to ensure proper adaptation of hand-washing training modules; the Indonesia project applied extensive customer feedback surveys; the Sri Lanka project allowed a local university to evaluate their efforts on behalf of community stakeholders; and in Vietnam, the project beneficiaries were in the habit of presenting results during their local government council meetings on a regular basis. The ability to see and demonstrate early successes was also seen as an important motivator for beneficiaries. This description of project monitoring by respondents, not only as a demonstration of progress toward final results but as a tool to motivate beneficiaries, broker commitment, and maintain proper alignment with community stakeholder needs (e.g., Ika 2012), was an interesting subtlety that emerged during the project implementation as an emergent success condition. Indeed, Datta et al. (2012, p. 14) wrote: "In many cases, unanticipated results or insights may prove more important to capacity development process than what was 'planned.'"

> As the teachers monitored progress using the tools, the monitoring provided an incentive to perform well in order to achieve success. (Technical Expert, Ghana)

This monitoring finding is consistent with the literature. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation serve numerous purposes in a capacity building project: accountability to donor, learning and improvement, local accountability, adaptive management, strategic thinking, and organizational credibility (Baser and Morgan 2008).

10.5 Workshop Findings: Framework Conditions

To validate the findings above, especially the framework conditions perceived as *less* important, a 1.5-h workshop brought together seven project practitioners from the implementing agency.

While the participants found the framework conditions truly reflective of their project management practice, they agreed that weak results on structural conditions like legal and regulatory frameworks (C1.1), financial resources other than the funding agency's (C1.2), and institutional conditions for the beneficiary like capability to manage diversity (C2.2.4) and capability to adapt knowledge/skills (C2.2.5) were likely due to the smaller sample size of some categories of interviewees. For example, had more project beneficiaries been interviewed, capability to manage diversity, although difficult to measure, would have been stronger. The weak result on institutional conditions for the implementing agency in the area of experience in the country and knowledge of context (C3.1) did not strike the workshop participants as surprising. They stated that full understanding of the country context was not feasible with the limited time frame of the projects (2–5 years). Workshop participants pointed to the importance of strong local stakeholders and project adaptability to make up for this "context" knowledge gap.

Table 6 Meta-conditions for success

Meta-conditions (100% respondents indicated conditions enabled project success)	Process (how conditions are achieved)	Application
Multi-stakeholder commitment	Attainability of objectives (strengthened commitment)	Attainability of objectives *Break down objectives, make them attainable; regular engagement*
	Demonstrating project value (strengthened commitment)	Demonstrating project value *Build narrative; provide tools; create sharing opportunities*
Collaboration	Ability of stakeholders (enabled effective collaboration)	Ability of stakeholders *Complementary teams; mutual accountability through joint ownership*
	Inclusiveness (enabled effective collaboration)	Inclusiveness *Create spaces for interaction; mediate tension; facilitate partnerships*
Alignment	Planning and design (contributed to alignment)	Planning and design *Plan incrementally; involve implementing stakeholders in design and planning stages*
	Mutual interest (contributed to alignment)	Mutual interest *Find the win-win scenario for multiple key stakeholders; timing*
Adaptation	Monitoring (contributed to adaptation)	Monitoring *Observe for opportunities and risks; act in a timely manner*
	Support (contributed to adaptation)	Support *Motivate; advise; facilitate; provide guidance*

Authors' own table

11 The Meta-conditions: Findings and Discussion

To complement the deductive exploratory process described above, an inductive cross-case analysis was also applied to identify any new patterns in the data. The authors focused on common conditions identified by all (100%) of the interview respondents as success conditions that came up from the data. As a guide to draw out the circumstances behind the framework (the literature-based) success conditions, categories relating to who, when, how, and why were coded. The authors distinguished between answers that spoke to a reason (why), a process (how), points in time (when), and stakeholder engagement (who). For example, interview data mentioning the contribution of the mayor of a municipality to project success was recoded as a subcategory under stakeholders. As a result, four new conditions emerged strongly. Table 6 below illustrates these meta-conditions and provides additional context on how projects could create and manage the conditions over time.

11.1 Multi-stakeholder Commitment

The commitment condition captures responses that speak to the motivation, engagement, participation, and ownership of the projects on the part of project stakeholders. This commitment condition shows the importance of not only one committed project champion but multiple committed project champions, all playing a unique role in the success of the project. In all four projects studied, the involvement of political champions, beneficiary champions, community champions, Canadian technical experts, other stakeholders (i.e., associations or academic institutions), and project management staff created a depth of resources working toward common results. Somewhat like an orchestra playing a musical score, if some of the instruments happen to falter, other instruments can continue carrying the tune. In Sri Lanka, when the political champions faced reelection, the technical champions and project staff helped carry the project temporarily until new political champions were engaged. In Vietnam, when the beneficiary champions were not able to move forward for regulatory reasons, the local government association stepped in and engaged key political stakeholders who resolved the issue and cleared the path for the project to continue. This finding is supported in the literature. For example, Datta et al. (2012) emphasized multi-actor engagement and dialogue for capacity building projects, and Yalegama et al. (2016) also highlighted the importance of engagement in the development project management process.

Respondents described the application of regular engagement mechanisms to fuel the commitment of a variety of stakeholders. Activities like study tours, open houses, knowledge-sharing workshops, and regular check-in meetings with mayors and/or community leaders (e.g., Bloomfield et al. 2018) were seen as effective ways of reminding stakeholders of project progress and project value. The ability of beneficiaries to demonstrate the value of their projects to the community, city councils, universities, higher levels of government, and donors was mentioned by respondents as an indicator of ownership and increased capacity. The project and project managers contributed to this condition by helping stakeholders build a narrative that helped beneficiaries tell their story. The project provided the communication or marketing tools, the venues, and the network to enable partners to share their successes among peers and colleagues.

The select following quotes are expressions of the multi-stakeholder commitment condition:

> A committed mayor is night and day to the success of the project. If a mayor isn't committed to the idea and doesn't take ownership of it then the chances of success are very low. (Project Manager, Sri Lanka)

> One thing that helped was that the province took an interest in the property titles aspect of the project. They understood that what we were developing would go faster than the central government's ability to bring a solution. The province really helped by giving the city approval to move forward using a different method of collecting land data. (Technical Expert, Vietnam)

11.2 Collaboration (Teamwork)

The collaboration condition captures interview responses that mention the coordination, quality, and ability of team members to work together to achieve the project objective. The collaboration condition demonstrates the importance of early participatory design mechanisms to generate feelings of ownership, trust, and partnership. Success was achieved by bringing together diverse high-functioning teams of stakeholders dedicated to implementing project goals. Respondents also mentioned the importance of consensus and joint ownership on the part of all team members to build mutual accountability around expected outcomes. Illustrating this point, the following quotes are from two respondents:

> The project should have a good team to implement the ideas. I have seen many ideas but to implement them requires a team to organize the work. (Project Coordinator, Vietnam)

> There was excellent collaboration between city staff and experts. Ideas and strategies were not imposed. There was a high sense of ownership. (Project Coordinator, Ghana)

The strong collaborative spirit built trust and, in some cases, helped provide access to information, people, and networks that other much larger donors could not obtain. This finding adds some context in support of Diallo and Thuillier's (2005) work on trust and communication being a critical project success factor. Notably, the core implementing teams in all four projects were described by respondents as stable. The experts and key implementing beneficiaries were consistent throughout the project despite considerable turnover with political stakeholders and project management staff. This suggests the importance of getting the core team "right" very early in the implementation process. By taking advantage of the ability of stakeholders and by being inclusive and participative, the project obtained and maintained the collaboration condition.

Effective communication mechanisms also figured strongly as a means of obtaining and maintaining the condition although it should be noted that two of the projects were faced with significant linguistic hurdles and lacked quality translators. The quality of the expertise, mutual accountability, and consensus around the goal overcame linguistic hurdles. Finally, the project and project managers contributed to the condition by creating safe spaces for feedback, helping mediate tensions, or simply creating new opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders that have never had a reason to collaborate before.

Overall, the collaboration meta-condition finds support in the literature. For example, Datta et al. (2012) emphasized consultant-client relations, fostering trust and openness among actors, and the ability to listen and observe effectively, which are all key for a successful collaboration.

11.3 Alignment (Compatibility, Fit)

The alignment condition captures interview responses that mention the compatibility and fit of the project theme within the environment. This includes not only the environment of the beneficiaries but also the environment of the implementing agency, the enabling institutions, and higher levels of government. The alignment condition demonstrates the importance of personal and organizational interests in the final outcome of the project. When project staff, experts, and beneficiaries are faced with competing work priorities, this mutual interest, understanding, or compatibility among a multitude of key stakeholders can help provide momentum and contextual fit for a target project objective. This is reflected in the quote below:

> We integrated the project so the basic needs of the country were met, the donor needs were met, the provincial authorities were on board, and the cities developed their own priorities. We impacted a greater distance. (Project Manager, Indonesia)

This finding is also supported in the literature. Yalegama et al. (2016) mentioned "enabling environment" as a critical success factor for development projects, and Ika et al. (2012) and Ika (2015) noted that project alignment should be obtained in the front end of the project and in particular in the project initiation phase. For capacity building projects specifically, Venner (2015) highlighted the critical role of the "enabling environment." And Lusthaus et al. (1999) stressed the importance of the relationship of the project to the environment and thus the consideration of all contextual elements and linkages between multiple stakeholders in an all-inclusive capacity building strategy.

However, project alignment can only be truly ascertained as a project evolves and stakeholders begin to interact. This alignment-by-evolution process highlights the importance of a project's ability to take an experimental approach in both project design and implementation. This process is consistent with the incremental/experimental approach suggested by Baser and Morgan (2008) and Hobbes (2014) and is captured by the following quote:

> At one point we said wait, let's test this in one district first. It was easier to control and it was a good idea. We got good results. It helped clarify a few things and they were able to expand it. (Technical Expert, Sri Lanka)

The alignment condition will shift throughout the course of the project; therefore designing mechanisms to maintain alignment is equally important. The project obtained and maintained the alignment condition through a fit with multiple stakeholder interests and multi-stakeholder planning/design. Respondents gave an interesting perspective on the role of local coordinators (we note that coordination has been shown as a critical success factor for ID projects; see Ika et al. 2012; Ika 2015). Coordinators provided real-time information that project managers could then use to ensure the project continued to stay strategically positioned. Assigning a more strategic role to the local coordinator is an interesting project management approach that surfaced in this research. Involving the coordinators in this role however requires including them in the early design process of the projects. Typically in ID

projects, coordinators are not involved in the early design stage. This research highlights an additional strategic value of involving the coordinators in this early role.

11.4 Adaptation

The adaptation condition captures interview responses that mention how the project managed to obtain/maintain a compatible fit with its environment and what resources were brought in to do so. Unlike the alignment condition above, which addresses more strategic positioning, this condition addresses the flexibility of project structures allowing it to evolve and adjust over time. Adaptation is all about the project's ability to monitor not only risk but also opportunity and be able to act on information in a timely manner. Indeed, as Lusthaus et al. (1999) note: "capacity is not a stable target: people change and contexts change" (p. 16). Monitoring for opportunity and risk is best done by those closest to project implementation (e.g., Ika 2012). It requires an intimate knowledge of the local context, sector context, and project management approach [see Datta et al. (2012), about capacity building projects]. This supports the recruitment and training of more experienced local project coordinators. These coordinators are best positioned to provide critical real-time information to project directors who may be located off-site or frequently travelling. It also makes a case for decentralized authority structures to allow project staff to act on information in a timely manner.

The adaptability of the implementing agency came through primarily in comments around the ability of the project team to act independently to find solutions to problems. Teams were given the space to design innovative solutions to challenges and adjust the plan as new opportunities emerged.

> We felt the staff had confidence in us and we had the flexibility to capitalise on opportunities. We had lots of room to maneuver and we could adapt the project as we went along to match the evolution of the government and context. (Technical Expert, Vietnam)

> At one point the city lacked funding to continue the land information system. The Mayor of Nam Dinh at the time sat down and spoke with the World Bank and the Swiss Development Cooperation who were also working in the city at the time. He arranged for a meeting to discuss how they could support the completion of the land information management system. In the end the Swiss supported the land surveying and the World Bank provided the equipment, the Canadians continued to provide the expertise. (Project Coordinator, Vietnam)

The projects obtained and maintained the adaptation condition through monitoring and support mechanisms that they used to fit the changing circumstances. The ability to act on new ideas was encouraged in all four projects. Interestingly, the responses to questions around project adaptability were less about resources or management processes but more about the management styles of the project staff (Shenhar and Dvir 2007). More specifically, project adaptability appeared to be linked to the ability of project staff to motivate and empower teams, facilitate

Table 7 Links between framework conditions and meta-conditions

Meta-conditions	Process (how meta-conditions are achieved)	Link to the framework conditions (% of respondent answers)			
		Structural context	Beneficiary institution	Project institution	Project management
Multi-stakeholder commitment	Attainability of objectives (strengthened commitment)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)	12 (60%)	12 (60%)
	Demonstrating project value (strengthened commitment)	2 (10%)	**16 (80%)**	9 (45%)	4 (20%)
Collaboration	Ability of stakeholders (enabled effective collaboration)	1 (5%)	13 (65%)	**16 (80%)**	8 (40%)
	Inclusiveness (enabled effective collaboration)	1 (5%)	12 (60%)	**18 (90%)**	11 (55%)
Alignment	Design (contributed to alignment)	5 (25%)	5 (25%)	9 (45%)	**15 (75%)**
	Mutual interest (contributed to alignment)	**17 (85%)**	7 (35%)	13 (65%)	6 (30%)
Adaptation	Monitoring (contributed to adaptation)	1 (5%)	9 (45%)	**15 (75%)**	**16 (80%)**
	Support (contributed to adaptation)	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	**19 (95%)**	**17 (85%)**

[a]These percentages are not meant to support any statistical test of hypotheses but are offered as an indicator of the overall perceived importance of a particular success condition
Authors' own table

relationships, provide guidance, solve problems, be resourceful, and act quickly. It was less about physical resources and more about providing the right mix of structure, flexibility, and learning while doing (Korten 1980; Ika 2012; Ramalingam 2013).

Overall, the adaptation meta-condition is supported in the literature. For example, Datta et al. (2012) promoted a flexible project management approach where capacity building becomes a voyage of discovery (Hirschman 1967) and where monitoring becomes an opportunity to test project assumptions, detect both errors and successes, give voice to stakeholders, explicitly promote learning and reflection, adjust the initial plan as necessary, and steer the project toward success.

Table 7 demonstrates the link between the meta-conditions and the framework conditions. By cross referencing the framework responses with the responses that were coded to the meta-conditions, a picture of why, how, and who contributes to project success appears. To illustrate the strongest framework contributing conditions, a threshold of 70% was used and highlighted in Table 7.

11.5 Workshop Findings: Meta-conditions

To apply the meta-conditions to current management practice, a 1.5-h workshop brought together seven project practitioners from the implementing agency.

The reaction by workshop participants to the four meta-conditions was positive. When asked to apply the conditions to a current project, one participant stated she could see immediately in which area her current project was struggling. Workshop participants unanimously agreed that for local government development projects to be considered a success, high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation are not only *likely to be present* (as the researchers initially suggested) but they are in fact *necessary* for a project to be considered a success.

12 Implications for Theory and Practice

12.1 Implications for Theory

Overall, this chapter makes five key contributions to the capacity building and development literatures. Firstly, the chapter offers a rather timely project management contribution to capacity building theory and practice. Secondly, by conceptualizing project success as a multidimensional and strategic concept, the research shows that in capacity building projects, deliverable success is the top success dimension and, thus, criteria such as impact, sustainability, and relevance override others such as time, cost, and objectives (project management success) (Datta et al. 2012). Thus, it contributes to the capacity building and development literatures.

Thirdly, by going beyond the lists of project success factors and highlighting the importance of structural, institutional, and managerial success *conditions* (Turner 2004; Wateridge 1995), the research provides more contextual information around already identified success factors such as supervision, monitoring, design, coordination, consultations, understanding the project environment, and competency of project staff. We know that macroeconomic, institutional, and project characteristics matter for the bottom line of projects, at least from a microeconomic perspective (e.g., Chauvet et al. 2010). Now, from a managerial perspective, the research highlights the contextual environment as structural conditions; accountability and public participation, beneficiary institution capacity, and implementing organization capacity as institutional conditions; and leadership, monitoring, design, and stakeholder coordination as project management conditions.

Fourthly, the paper identifies multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation as meta-conditions and, thus, proposes that high levels of these are necessary for capacity building projects to succeed; these four meta-conditions not only capture the structural, institutional, and project management

conditions above, but they also clearly link the aforementioned success factors with project context; hence, the research also adds to the literature.

Fifthly and lastly, the research adds support to the Hirschman's (1967) idea that there are both initial success conditions (success conditions that would "occur in advance of the project") and emergent conditions (the success conditions that would occur "in the wake of the project") (p. 146). Multi-stakeholder commitment and alignment could both occur in advance, while collaboration and adaptation could both occur in the wake of the project. However, as Hirschman (1967) notes, we are confronted with the "essence of the project design dilemma": we do not know whether it is realistic to expect success conditions to "occur in advance or in the wake of the project." (p. 146). Thus, to account for both initial and emergent success conditions, instead of asking what are the conditions that enable project success, we should henceforth ask: What is occurring in the capacity building project setting that prompts us to believe that project success will occur?

12.2 Implications for Practice

As mentioned above, this research proposes that high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation are necessary for capacity building projects to succeed. In a manner similar to other professions like meteorology or medicine, project management can also benefit from the use of "diagnostic" conditions to gauge the state of their projects and make changes to increase the likelihood of a positive outcome. Capacity building project managers can use the presence or absence of the conditions to assess the likelihood that success will (or will not) occur and adjust their project practice accordingly. For instance, the presence of strong alignment and adaptability conditions may indicate the possibility of novel adjustments to changing environmental circumstances or, as mentioned earlier, indicate the potential of a capacity building project to expand or scale out; the presence of strong commitment and collaboration conditions may indicate opportunities for beneficiary ownership of a potential developmental change. Through the identification of meta-conditions, the research has elicited practical knowledge around project success and a more user-friendly set of success conditions that can be applied and designed into future capacity building projects.

Let's take, for example, Khang and Moe's success factor "effective stakeholder consultations." How does this factor *really* contribute to project success? The results of this paper tell us the following: consultations will better align the capacity building project to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders (alignment), consultations will help build trust and enable innovative problem-solving (collaboration), consultations can improve stakeholder buy-in and ownership of the project (commitment), and consultations will help mitigate risk (adaptation). Additionally, information about who should be consulted also provides more practical insight for the development project manager. In the case of local government projects, this chapter finds that consultations should include beneficiary staff, political champions, and

various community stakeholders as each group contributes differently to the success conditions listed above. With this further understanding on how consultations contribute to project success, capacity building project managers can now conceptualize activities and target stakeholders to enable the success conditions.

Let's take another Khang and Moe example, the success factor "competency of project staff," or Datta et al.'s (2012) success factor "right skills and abilities for implementers." This paper provided additional information on which competencies led to successful projects including, the ability to manage diversity, the ability to engage stakeholders, the ability to troubleshoot concrete solutions to complex problems, the ability to apply the appropriate guidance or structure, and finally the ability to foster learning and leadership. Using this knowledge, capacity building project managers can select their staff, project experts, and potential beneficiaries in a way that will enable project success.

Furthermore, in this research, Datta et al.'s (2012) and Ika et al.'s (2012) success factor "monitoring" emerged not only as a compliance instrument but as an interesting motivational tool for project stakeholders. Monitoring also emerged as an important contributor to project flexibility by providing managers with the information needed to adapt their projects accordingly. Ika et al.'s (2012) success factor "design" contributed strongly to the alignment condition, illustrating how early planning with the right stakeholders does indeed help strategically position the project within the broader environment when done well. Diallo and Thuillier's (2005) "trust and communication" success factors were also further contextualized in this paper. Positive trust and communication develop through collaboration, teamwork, and interaction. A project manager can apply techniques and design activities to enable positive interactions that build trust, knowing that these interactions are fundamental to the successful emergence of new ideas and solutions leading to development. Finally, we note that the results of our research were enough to generate two internal workshop discussions around success conditions for the implementing agency's overall portfolio of international programs.

The meta-conditions that emerged in this paper provide future project managers working on local government capacity building projects with more contextual information on the stakeholders and processes that help spark success. Successful approaches, techniques, and processes were identified to increase beneficiary ownership, project relevance, impact, and sustainability. Practical insight into management practices (i.e., participatory design, incremental planning, enabling organizational involvement, etc.) that lead to success can now be applied in future capacity building project contexts.

The research also provided a snapshot of success conditions from a range of project stakeholders. The beneficiary institutions brought leadership, commitment, and the motivation to change. The implementing agency created the "umbrella" space enabling project success to occur by managing a multitude of stakeholders and introducing new ones, providing the right expertise, and maintaining project momentum through project management support. Enabling institutions helped mitigate risk, broaden impact, and improve chances for sustainability. Thus, knowledge on the specific technical capacities of project beneficiaries, project technical experts,

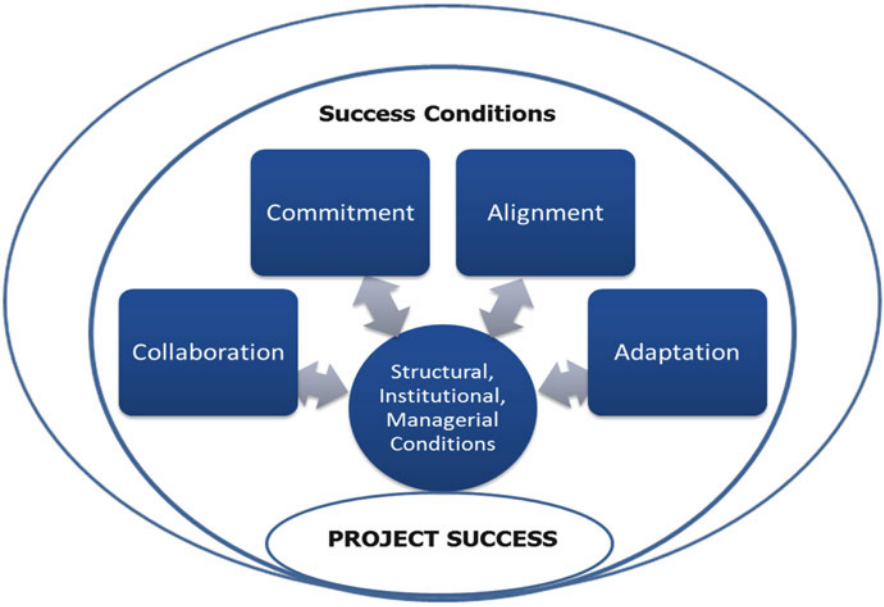

Fig. 2 Measurement framework for capacity building project success conditions (Adapted from Ika and Donnelly 2017)

and project staff also figured prominently in this research. Leadership ability and project management skills were two competency areas that emerged as strong contributors to project success. Project management training and leadership ability (i.e., fostering interaction, communication, and consensus; effectively navigating unpredictability; diagnosing situations quickly; changing, adapting, and developing new approaches on the fly; building and contributing to high-performance self-managing teams; etc.) are recommendations emerging from this research. Increasing leadership and project management training for project beneficiaries may contribute significantly to project success. By further understanding the relationship between project setting and project success, project managers can more readily identify which techniques, abilities, and stakeholders are contributing to (or hindering) the capacity building project, and they can adjust their management approach accordingly. Figure 2 displays our final framework for measuring capacity building project success conditions.

13 Limitations and Outlook

This research focused on most successful *versus* less successful projects, not successful projects *versus* failed projects as would have been ideal to avoid any success bias. A comparative study on project failures vs. project successes would strengthen

the validity of the findings. Additionally, the research limited the case sample data to four projects funded by the same agency in one implementing organization. Increasing the number of case projects across a variety of organizations would lead to a more robust contribution to project management research. The research was also limited with its thematic focus. Case samples were all local government capacity building projects, and it is likely not all conditions or sub-conditions would apply in different thematic or organizational contexts. The research collected data primarily from project managers and technical experts. A more diverse sample of interview respondents, including additional project beneficiaries and donor agency supervisors, would have added variety to the perspectives of a project's success. Also, by broadening the scope of the research, new success conditions could be identified. Moreover, additional research on the interplay between project settings, initial success conditions, emergent success conditions, and their influences on project success dimensions would add to the findings. Finally, considering the inherent complexity of capacity building projects (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999; Morgan 1998; Venner 2015), future research might examine capacity building projects from a complex adaptive lens and use sensitivity to initial conditions and emergence as theoretical base for shedding light on project success conditions (see McEvoy et al. 2016; Ramalingam 2013).

14 Conclusion

"Without capacity, there is no development" (De Grauwe 2009). Without a clear understanding of context, there is no capacity building (Bloomfield et al. 2018; Datta et al. 2012; Lusthaus et al. 1999; and Venner 2015). Without a better understanding of project success conditions, there is no capacity building. Thus, in this chapter, which reports and expands on the findings of Ika and Donnelly's (2017) paper, we set out to identify, from a project management's perspective, the right circumstances under which capacity building projects thrive. To that end, we analyzed success criteria and conditions of four local government capacity building projects in four countries: Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam. Opening the project management "black box" then and triangulating the data from 20 interviews (from a range of project practitioners) with written project documentation, we learned that these circumstances that could enable capacity building project success include structural, institutional, and project management conditions. More specifically, these positive circumstances are as follows: structural *conditions*, contextual environment and accountability/public participation; *institutional conditions*, beneficiary institution capacity and implementing organization capacity; and finally *project management conditions*, leadership, monitoring, design, and stakeholder coordination. We called them the "framework conditions" as we derived them from the literature.

The chapter also differentiated between initial success conditions, i.e., success conditions that occurred in advance of the project and emergent success conditions, i.e., those that occurred in the wake of the project. Then, the chapter drew out another

set of success conditions that came up from the data. We named them "meta-conditions" as they appeared to incorporate not only the structural, institutional, and project management conditions but also provided a stronger link between project context and success factors such as supervision, monitoring, design, coordination, consultations, understanding the project environment, and competency of project staff. Thus, we proposed that high levels of multi-stakeholder commitment, collaboration, alignment, and adaptation are necessary for capacity building projects to thrive. We also showed that to obtain and maintain these meta-conditions, proper attention should be given to attainability of objectives and demonstrating value; ability of stakeholders and inclusiveness; planning/design and mutual interest; and monitoring and support.

Broadening the contextual scope of project management research and measuring projects within the project context provide an interesting perspective on the nature of project contributions to the development process. While using projects (small, temporary endeavors) as delivery mechanisms to drive development seemed somewhat questionable and counterintuitive [e.g., Lusthaus et al. (1999), for capacity building projects], the research findings have left the authors with the impression that, although projects do not have the necessary control or influence to "drive" development, they are indeed quite well suited to "trigger" development. Using an analogy, if the process of development is like an uncontrollable fire, projects can be thought of as highly specialized sparks. Projects cannot necessarily control the direction or the strength of the development, but projects can certainly initiate a chain reaction. The observation that projects best serve development initiatives when viewed as highly specialized catalysts for development repositions the focus of performance measurement on the enabling mechanisms for development (and less on final results). This also supports the notion that performance measurement should indeed focus much more on the conditions that enable development (e.g., Baser and Morgan 2008). Through a deeper understanding of these conditions, project managers can increase the likelihood that their spark will result in a fire. Thus, we put the ability of projects to deliver into context and praise their power to trigger development through understanding project settings and the positive circumstances under which projects thrive in particular. Are researchers and practitioners up to the task?

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