Learning in Highly Distributed Organisations

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1. Introduction

IDS is scoping out the need for a learning hub that aims to "improve knowledge and information flows between practitioners and experts in the field of low carbon climate resilient development (low carbon growth and adaptation). It is a new approach in this field that combines practitioner learning networks with bespoke research and analysis. It will build the capacity within DFID to champion best practice, support innovation, and access practical tools and methods that enable appropriate action". As part of this scoping phase in order for the hub to best serve DFID, its country offices and potentially other bilateral donors, IDS has commission this paper to provide an organisational learning and change perspective in answering the following questions:

- How do organisations with highly distributed staff learn effectively?
- How have comparable learning hubs operated, what has been successful and not so successful?
- What lessons/recommendations should be considered by the IDS learning hub team?

Drawing on examples, the paper includes dimensions on networking, training, capturing experience, practice communities, different forms of communication, (dis)incentives to learning, validation of principles, and other working practices. Given consideration of the first question, answering the second involves presenting concrete examples that highlight operational elements such as functioning of expert/resource groups, communications tools, capacity support dimensions etc.

One of the assumptions made in the paper which bears highlighting is what an organisation with highly distributed staff means in the development context. The answer is perhaps obvious, but because this understanding is almost too familiar within development it is worth reflecting on, not least because it shows how different international aid agencies are compared to many of the organisations around which approaches to organisational learning and change were originally formed.

So, an organisation with highly distributed staff in the international development context means:

- having people in locations that are spread out on a large scale – with significant implications for communications and logistics in terms of physical distance, asynchronicity of time, and contextual diversity;
- having people in teams that extend beyond formal organisational boundaries (e.g. seconded to or embedded in partner governments or multilateral bodies) – with big effects on reporting, incentives and role in terms of multiple line management, competing reward systems and fluid identities;
- having people in partner organisations who's loyalty and career prospects may be as closely tied to the donor organisation as to their employer (e.g. salary enhancements, special management units, sector and budget support) – with complex repercussions in terms of transparency, motivation and credibility with peers.
- having people who behave much like those in a network of federated organisations – hence we shall use the term **Highly Distributed / Network Organisation** in this paper (abbreviated to HD/NO)

All these factors impinge on learning at the individual, organisational and societal levels in ways that even large multinational businesses (with much more vertically integrated objectives, goals and services) would find challenging. Consequently expectations about the impact of investments in organisational learning need to be tempered, whilst not losing sight of the benefits from even marginal improvements given the profound challenges that development engages with.

2. Context

The context for this paper's exploration of learning within HD/NO is the demand within DFID for a learning hub, the policy domain of climate and development, adaptation, resilience and low carbon pathways, the development sector and its comparators and the existing learning mechanisms at DFID.

2.1. Demand for a Learning Hub

It is the aspirations and challenges of DFID advisers, program managers, administrators and their partners working on climate change that the learning hub shall aim to support. IDS will be working where energy and enthusiasm is found at the individual level and so will be working out from a cluster of countries. There is most awareness amongst climate and environment, but also considerable experience amongst livelihoods and infrastructure advisers. There are very practical needs amongst country staff to know how and why the climate change agenda needs to change their day to day mainstream work on existing development priorities.

2.2. Climate and Development / Adaptation/Resilience/Low Carbon

Within the climate change and development sector knowledge network initiatives already exist. At the global level these include:

- Adaptation Learning Mechanism (UNDP) is mapping good practices, providing information, building knowledge and networks on climate change adaptation (partners GEF, World Bank, FAO, UNFCCC, UNEP): www.adaptationlearning.net
- weADAPT is providing graphical (Google Earth layer) and textual (wiki) spaces to co-create and access adaptation data and information
- Climate and Development Knowledge Network (PWC/ODI): www.cdknetwork.net
- Nairobi Work Program (UNFCCC)

And at the regional level

- AfricaAdapt (ENDA, FARA, ICPAC, IDS) is providing spaces (online and face to face) for knowledge networking between Africa scientists/researchers, communities, policy makers and civil society

As a high priority international issue with strong policy and funding drivers, the climate and develop field is seeing considerable growth in the knowledge sharing mechanisms and a degree of competition / positioning over audiences, knowledges and modes of service delivery. This is to be expected given the youth of the sector (less than five years) and overlap and competition is healthy for the time being. Consolidation and efficiency gains should be sought only once sufficient time has elapsed for innovation in modes, knowledges and audiences to evolve and be tested in practice.

2.3. Development Sector

Within the larger international development sector, knowledge networking initiatives have a longer history going back at least to the early internet (more than 10 years for initiatives such as Livelihoods Connect) in online form and in print form for considerably longer (e.g. 22 years for the Participatory Learning and Action notes series). This history is also very broad, with most development issues covered by more than one knowledge networking initiative globally, in regions and in different major language groups. DFID and IDRC have a record in initiating many of these networks but there are also many examples of knowledge networks being created by practitioners in NGO and CBO settings, both out of necessity and the imperative to link up otherwise isolated practical experiences. IDRC has commissioned reviews of experience with such initiatives from IIED and think tanks including ECDPM and ODI have also studied knowledge networks in the international development sector. Whilst DFID does not appear to have commissioned comparable public reports, it has internally reviewed knowledge networking within reviews and evaluations of the sectoral resource centres that support its staff and programs with technical advice and research syntheses.

2.4. Comparator Sectors

Looking at sectors outside of international development and particularly to the private sector knowledge networking has been around for somewhat longer. Face to face exchanges and secondments have been more prominent features of learning within large international corporations (e.g. BP, IBM) because of the ability to convene and circulate staff internationally within global corporate structures. There has traditionally been less openness in the private sector, because of intellectual property / commercial sensitivity issues. However, this has led to the development of interesting semi-public knowledge networks, such as the open innovation platforms supported for R&D purposes by Proctor & Gamble, Eli Lilly[3] and IBM or fully independent such as NineSigma[4].

2.5. Existing Learning Mechanisms at DFID

DFID has a longstanding repertoire of learning mechanisms which is little changed over the last decade. These include structured mechanisms such as annual global retreats organized by advisory cadre / group which bring advisory staff from country programs together with HQ colleagues for several days of seminars, discussions and optional training. These usually occur in the UK in the summer. Typically they include a lower proportion of administrative staff or staff recruited in country than they do advisers recruited in the UK. There are also stand alone training opportunities, usually commissioned and provided by DFID resource centres. Regional meetings of advisors also take place in response to emerging demands on a semi-annual basis. The Policy Division at DFID HQ in London organize topical lunchtime seminars (with some participation by country based staff by video link) and the heads of group and department send out policy updates and messages. The Research Division, also at HQ in London, supports access to knowledge by commissioning new research and has a network of Senior Research Fellows and Knowledge Brokers whose role is to sense and stimulate demand for knowledge amongst staff. At a more informal and personal level DFID staff commonly use emails to send each other interesting documents (most usefully with a short summary or highlight of the relevance). The DFID Intranet (which includes a climate chat stream) and external websites are also a source of knowledge for learning, the level of use is low and has been declining in response to mounting time pressures to respond to initiatives and demands from higher in the organization.

2.6. How Comparable Learning Hubs Operate

In Annex A we review seventeen practical examples of learning support initiatives in Highly Distributed / Network Organisations (HD/NOs) to illustrate how they operate, highlighting examples of successful and less successful operation. The review draws on firsthand experience, official documentation (papers, websites), evaluations and research articles. The HD/NOs reviewed are:

- ALNAP – Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
- GSDRC – Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
- U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre
- LC/LN – Livelihoods Connect / Livelihoods Network
- AWN – Aid Workers Network
- KM4Dev – Knowledge Management for Development
- AA – Africa Adapt

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[3]   Innocentive open innovation platform: http://innocentive.com/

[4]   NineSigma open innovation platform: http://www.ninesigma.com/

- SE – Solutions Exchange
- SDC - Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
- GLT – Global Libraries Toolkit
- WB – World Bank
- UNDP – United Nations Development Program Bureau for Development Policy
- SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- ML – MicroLINKS USAID
- WHO – World Health Organisation
- CGIAR - Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
- CARE
- DP / IS - Development Practitioners / Info Spring
- eA - e-Agriculture
- PN - Practitioners Network

Table 1. below summarises this evidence and shows that most HD/NOs use an average of 4 methods and approaches to learning, with five being the most common number and three second most common. There were only single instances of using one method / approach or using as many as ten. This suggests that using a relatively compact sub-set of methods and approaches (around four) is likely to be appropriate – this could be called bounded pluralism. This set will need to change in composition over time in response to changes in demand and in the operating environment for the HD/NO, but unduly overloading or restricting learners' access to methods / approaches would not seem to be a good tactic.

The review also shows that this bounded pluralism in selection of methods and approaches is practiced by all the major organisational types represented in the review: network (ALNAP, KM4Dev, AfricaAdapt), multilateral (Solutions Exchange, CGIAR), bilateral (Microlinks) and international NGO (Global Libraries Toolkit, CARE). It can be suggested then that bounded pluralism is at least agnostic relative to organisational type and potentially neutral.

The review also shows that across the seventeen HD/NOs the most frequently represented methods and approaches are in descending order:
1) Networking
2) Sharing Own Learning / Capturing Experience
3) Communities of Practice
4) Socialisation
5) Open Innovation
6) Reflection / Reflexivity
7) Story and Narrative
8) Development & Validation of Principles /
9) Training
10) Expert Groups

This suggests that methods / approaches that support learning from other practitioners (e.g. sharing own learning) are more frequently used than those that support learning from experts (e.g. expert groups). It also suggests that methods / approaches that support learning in context and in collaboration (e.g. networking) are used more frequently and those supporting learning in the abstract (training) are used less frequently.

Table 1. Learning Methods / Approaches Used by Comparator Hubs

Approach / Example	Networking	Training	Capturing Experience	Communities of Practice	Sharing Own Learning	Development and Validation of Principles	Open Innovation	Expert Groups	Reflection / Reflexivity	Socialisation	Narrative and Story
ALNAP	■		■	■	■	■					
GSDRC							■				
U4		■									
LC/LN	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
AWN	■		■		■						
KM4Dev	■		■		■					■	
AA	■		■							■	■
SE			■	■	■		■				
SDC	■				■					■	
GLT				■	■				■		■
WB		■	■				■				
UNDP				■						■	
SIDA			■		■				■		
ML	■		■	■						■	
WHO						■					
CGIAR	■				■		■		■		
CARE			■	■					■		
DP / IS	■			■	■		■				■
eA	■		■	■	■						■
PN	■				■					■	
Total	12	3	11	10	11	4	7	1	5	9	5

2.7.   Theories and Models of Learning

Theories and models of learning associated with David Kolb, Paolo Frère, knowledge sharing, organisational learning and capacity development have influenced the way organisations understand and support learning. The review of these theories and models in Annex B shows that:

- there are patterns behind our individual experiences of informal learning (through practice, reflection and sharing (Kolb's collaborative cycles of learning) that can be amplified and sustained through support at the organisational level
- learning is a process and learners are agents who cannot be separated from the world, which both changes and is changed by learning (Freire's critical and social adult literacies). This co-construction effect could be harnessed to drive powerful organisational change.
- as self-directed and collaborative learning within organisations becomes the norm (knowledge sharing in people centred Web 2.0 environments) the new challenge for human resource management and professional development leadership is networking decentralised micro learning activity around macro organisational outcomes.
- the reflexive and creative power of learning shows the transformative potential of whole systems approaches (Senge's organisational learning) and poses the question of when an organisation should set in train learning processes whose outcome could lead to profound change in its values and goals?
- the purposes and outcomes of learning within development organisations should be in creative dialogue with those program modalities supporting learning for change in development (capacity development as re-imagined by the Capacity Collective and Morgan) or risk creating gaps in attitudes, behaviours and mindset that could undercut trust and legitimacy between staff and beneficiaries.

2.8.   Methods and Approaches Highly Distributed / Network Organisations use for Effective Learning

In Annex C we review the methods and approaches to delivering learning represented in comparable hubs. Informed by the review of theories and models of learning, in each case we have explored what takes place, how tools and other processes are used and how this links into wider aspects of organisational learning and change. Table 2, summarises our view on the fit between methods and approaches and influential theories and models of learning. Reading across the methods and approaches, Sharing Own Experience and Communities of Practice show the best fit (followed by Open Innovation, Reflection/Reflexivity and Socialisation). Those that fit least well are Training, Development and Validation of Principles and Expert Groups (followed by Networking and Story and Narrative). Organisations whose experience in these areas could be drawn on are the Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, Livelihoods Connect / Livelihoods Network, KM4Dev, Solutions Exchange, the Global Libraries Toolkit and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. These six highly distributed / network organisations provide two or more instances of the best and next best fitting methods / approaches.

Table 2: Fit Between Methods and Approaches and Influential Theories and Models of Learning

Theory/Model Method/Approach	Learning Cycles	Critical and Social Learning	Knowledge Sharing	Organisational Learning	Capacity Development
Networking	■		■		
Training		■			
Capturing Experience	■				
Sharing Own Learning	■	■	■	■	■
Communities of Practice	■	■	■	■	■
Development & Validation of Principles				■	
Open Innovation		■	■	■	■
Expert Groups			■		
Reflection / Reflexivity	■	■		■	■
Socialisation		■	■	■	■
Story and Narrative		■		■	

2.9.   Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning Networks

In a recent paper published by INTRAC, Rick James[5] (2010) argues that the impact of learning networks is under assessed and goes on to offer suggestions on how this could be improved. James' evidence is drawn from his experience in three different settings/projects: as project manager for the HIV Workplace Learning Group (INTRAC), facilitator for Churches and Organisation Development (SMC) and evaluator for the Competence Sharing Network Project (PYM). James argues that learning networks' impacts should be understood more like the ripples emanating from a pebble thrown into a pool of water than a linear cause and effect relationship - "Different pebbles will generate different ripples, depending on the shape, size and weight of the pebble and how it is thrown"[6]. Elements which should be looked at in any monitoring and evaluation exercise of learning networks should therefore include learning activities, members' engagement in activities, learning outputs, learning outcomes and impact, relationships developed between members and learning for others outside the network. In summary he concludes that:

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[5]   James, Rick (2010) Monitoring and Evaluating Learning Networks, International NGO Training and Research Centre (INTRAC), Oxford

[6]   James, Rick, op.cit. pg.4

- The impact of learning networks is function of the learning strategies put in place as well as the influence of other social factors. These should therefore be taken into consideration when designing and evaluating learning networks
- Impacts/learning outcomes should be assessed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. This is because learning networks can have enormous impact not just on the number of people registering or visiting the network but on their behaviour and attitudes
- Planning plays an important role in the success of initiatives. Poor planning may lead to poor design and consequently limit possibilities to implement efficient monitoring and evaluation

For the impact of the proposed learning hub to be sustainable it needs to be planned with an appropriate M&E system built in so that managers, funders and users have the information they need to make decisions about their participation in the hub.

3. Successful Components of Learning in Highly Distributed/Network Organisations

Our review of how comparable learning hubs have operated and recent feedback from DFID staff on their experience with learning suggests that seven components have shown greater success in supporting learning in highly distributed/network organisations (HD/NOs). In most instances these successful components are mirrored by less successful ways of meeting the same learning demand and these are mentioned towards the end of each sub-section below.

3.1. Spontaneous Group Conversation

One of the most successful components of HD/NO learning is the spontaneous group conversations that are a common feature of networks, staff sharing their own learning and open communities of practice. Typically these occur through email list serves when one person puts out a comment and a thread of discussion takes off with whoever on the list responds, or through regular email when a message to one or more contacts starts to snowball as new people get copied in or reply to all when forwarded the message. Our familiarity with this effect can tend to mean it gets overlooked as a learning strategy to invest in, however the fact that it is often the first and last approach left standing when less familiar and robust approaches with higher barriers to use have fallen aside tells us a lot. Moreover, the power of spontaneous group conversations in highly distributed/networked organisations in development may also be drawing on the fact that the complexity of the issues faced is more amenable to emergent learning strategies than in sectors which are merely complicated.

The less successful counterpart of spontaneous group conversations as a way to meet the demand for learning about complex issues is perhaps the internal or closed community of practice. Communities of practice can be very successful, but when limited to just those staff within the organisation they have tended to fail more often than not in the development sector. Whilst there is not research at hand to explain this failure, plausible reasons can be given. Firstly, internal communities of practice may fail because of the artificiality of the strict organisational boundary effectively excluding key partners from learning (e.g. SDC's experience of failing to accept that it was a network organisation and so excluding boundary partners). Secondly, that the assumption of trust existing just because staff sharing the same employer leads to low investment in the facilitation of confidence building when in fact in highly distributed organisations trust may not span the geographic divides. The stresses and relative autonomy of many country based practitioners in international development may even predispose them to have an allergic reaction to attempts to convene them in the name of corporate togetherness. If this is true than open communities of practice may partly

succeed because greater diversity of participants helps to dilute the mistrust and bridge internal gaps.

3.2. Face to Face Interaction

A recurring feature of many of the successful elements of HD/NO learning is face to face interaction. This is a key feature of trust building within networks and communities of practice, and the socialisation of knowledge to build shared meaning in knowledge fairs and blended learning approaches to training. What is perhaps not so obvious is that a key ingredient in making such face to face interaction valuable for learning is through improvisation around the content of what is exchanged. From a learning point of view we might naturally assume that structured delivery of topical content should be the focus of face to face interactions. However, experience suggests that for HD/NO learning it is better to simply facilitate some simple rules for interaction and then allow people the freedom to co-define and share whatever content they find valuable. Retreats, workshops and conferences organised using Open Space and related facilitation techniques have inverted the traditional disappointments of too many speakers and not enough time for chats in the breaks. This kind of improvised interaction seems to be better at building the social capital and shared narratives needed for people and groups to then function effectively at a distance in more structured training, networking and peer support activities. The web has made information highly mobile but non-verbal communication remains stubbornly tied to earth. Innovations in immersive virtual environments like Second Life and high definition videoconferencing such as Cisco's Telepresence are making non-verbal communication at a distance more possible but the high bandwidth and infrastructure required make this much less viable in the international development context (especially when as above we recognise that excluding boundary partners can undermine learning for the group as a whole).

Capturing practitioner experience in written case studies, best practice guides, and knowledge databases are the less successful counterpart to face to face interaction's contribution to learning from peers at a distance. Although in the comparator experience reviewed activities to capture experience are the most frequently represented method / approach there are significant limitations and caveats to be highlighted. The process of capturing experience invariably limits the value of the original experience and potentially risks creating unhelpful blueprints for others action (See Annex C Section III). But this is not the whole story. Anecdotal experience from the Livelihoods Connect example suggest that experienced practitioners use case studies and best practice guides not primarily as sources of learning in their own right, but rather treat them as billboards that help them to decide whether it will be worthwhile following up with the organisation and ideally the people featured so as to get the real story of what happened then and since. This function may explain the enduring appeal of commissioning case studies and the like despite their limitations This then suggests that capturing experience may not be entirely without purpose if the effort put in is significantly redirected to mapping out the constellation of actors involved, with as many ways to contact them listed as possible.

3.3. Open Networks and Communities

We have already begun suggesting that communities of practice that are open (as opposed to internal to the organisation) can be successful for learning in HD/NOs. The same can be said for open networks. So it is worth saying in more detail what openness means in this context, and because communities are a form of network it is easiest to explain using network concepts. True networks are open not just in the literal sense that anyone can join, but in the practical sense that as they grow they do not become more centralised but rather scale out freely with more linkages creating more nodal hubs. This is leads to a very helpful property if we accept the premise about the complexity of the issues that HD/NO face in development and likelihood of problems and mistakes in the face of unpredictability. This is

the property of a high degree of tolerance to faults, meaning that if one linkage is broken or hub removed there will be a number of other efficient pathways by which the connection can still be made within the network. Bringing the focus back to learning, open networks and communities of practice are much more successful at connecting those with questions to those with experience and motivation to share it in complex situations because they do not artificially populate or bound membership. Another way of putting this is to say that openness builds in resilience to the learning support mechanism. The example of the open innovation approach that characterises the helpdesk service of the GSDRC is a good example. Rather than relying on a closed set of top experts in particular topics, it cultivates an open and growing network of people with expertise and then acts as an intermediary between the learning needs coming from DFID staff and experience offered by the network by refining questions and synthesising answers to balance recognised expertise and new insights from less heard voices. The UN India Solution Exchange follows a similar model. The more spontaneous sharing of experience within open communities of practice such as KM4Dev and Aid Workers Network illustrate how the need for an intermediary can be offset by increasing levels of social capital.

Less successful counterparts that also seek to meet the demand for real time access to advice and support from peers are expertise directories and signposting helpdesks. Expertise directories, sometimes called yellow pages after the business phone directory, provide searchable biographies of staff with the aim of help those in need of advice and support to find experienced colleagues. In principle this would be useful but to make such a system work people need to create profiles that describe their expertise and then keep them updated. In practice although people are happy to respond to concrete calls for help, too few feel motivated to populate or update their profile just in case someone might ask for their help. This reflects the truism that knowledge sharing within peer networks is that it is driven by the existence of questions rather than answers. Turning to helpdesk services that merely signpost potentially helpful documented experience, rather than tap into tacit knowledge and unpublished documents, these have been superseded by Google. Although Google is still presenting documented experience, it is usually doing it much more quickly than a signposting helpdesk. Essentially Google has raised the bar such that a helpdesk needs to add a lot of value to even be worth the effort of consulting, hence the success of open innovation helpdesks.

3.4.   Responsive Technical Training and Practical Operational Guidelines
Training that is tailored to meet organisations' specific technical learning needs, rather than driven by research priorities or received curricula, is re-establishing itself as a successful way to support learning in HD/NOs, but from a low base. The online and in-country training provided by the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre is a good example. Similarly guidelines of practical use in the operation of programs are still valued. Global development knowledge portals like Eldis that summarise and organise wide bodies of evidence, although not reviewed here, can play a part in underpinning this kind of training to the extent that they refer to technical and operational material. More specialised collections such as MicroLINKS and the Global Libraries Toolkit do this to but require dedicated funding and may be less sustainable as a result. The objectivity and tangibility of technical and operational matters may be somewhat illusory from a social constructivists perspective on knowledge, however there is demand for learning about them that training and guidelines are meeting. This seeming contradiction can perhaps been addressed in training and guidance by encouraging learners to see themselves as agents who then feel empowered to critique and adapt technical and operational knowledge.

The counterpart to this kind of training which has less success and may account for the low representation of training among the HD/NOs reviewed is around more theoretical

knowledge taught in the abstract. It may be that increased pressures faced by staff mean that there is literally too little time to step back from technical and operational matters and reconnect them to the wider normative and framing ideas addressed by theory. It could also be the fact the carer trajectory of many staff in HD/NOs has explicitly been toward a more instrumental use of knowledge to achieve change in the world and that as such theory only becomes of interest at moments when a change in career direction may be emerging (so a minority demand at any one time).

3.5. Bespoke Synthesis

Syntheses of published knowledge (research, reports, evaluations, reviews and other grey literature) can be valuable when they have are designed to meet immediate demands associated with a particular event or process. In circumstances such as the run up to an inter-agency policy dialogue or governmental negotiation process the pressure on staff for learning in the midst of a rapidly evolving terrain of ideas can be immense. Competing organisations and interest groups can tend to focus the publication of new knowledge just before the event of process and create a bottleneck of new evidence and opinion that anyone individual would find it almost impossible to encompass. Here the standing capacity of a third party organisation to bring to bear the resources of experienced knowledge intermediaries to assess, summarise, organise and introduce a large body of knowledge can be invaluable. This activity can be made even more relevant if the process is informed by an ongoing dialogue with the ultimate users of the learning resources to co-create the bespoke syntheses.

The more traditional approach of producing a series of research based policy briefs or a growing online library with summaries of research only loosely informed by rapidly emerging learner needs and interests is much less successful. Such series and collections can quite quickly become unfocused from the learners point of view and end up not being consulted.

3.6. Critical Friends

The ability of a HD/NO to draw on the knowledge of researchers and consultants as critical friends to bring additional perspectives into the mix can help to backstop practitioner learning. Their ability to contribute latest analytical findings and theories and comparative technical experience can help to counteract the path dependency that can arise when practitioners become ever more specialised in their particular domain. This path dependency can also be reinforced by co-learning from researchers and consultants delivering programs of work for staff because they are hesitant to offer critical feedback that fear may damage future funding opportunities. In these circumstances co-opting experts through sufficient rewards to legitimise their critical role and guaranteeing their responsive participation in backstopping learning can be successful.

The less successful counterpart to this individualised and co-opted model of critical engagement by researchers and consultants is the expert group. As noted in Annex C a competitive dynamic can arise with expert groups, undermining trust and knowledge sharing. Particularly when people are ostensibly gathering to produce public goods but there is a significant amount of potential or current funding for individuals at stake which is controlled by the HD/NO playing the group convening role.

3.7. Stories and Neighbourhood Visits

Because of the actual and cognitive distance that exists between learners in HD/NOs, approaches that draw on the power of stories, with their metaphorical, personal and emotional language, can be more successful in engaging and influencing learners. Africa Adapt, Global Libraries Toolkit and MicroLINKS all show how stories told through video, narrative and photo essays can communicate experience in ways that more analytical forms

struggle to for those not already convinced of the underlying arguments/premises. The power critique of storytelling though should remind us of the need to not let the success of these approaches be taken too lightly. A positive bias towards a diversity of storytellers, especially privileging little heard voices and critical perspectives should be adopted. Where the distance between learners is not so great, for example in sub-regional groups, the success of reciprocal learning visits to neighbouring offices to see, hear and validate stories first hand should also be considered.

News and events listings are the less successful counterpart in this case, because although they have the potential to offer much of the real life feel of stories, they are often too general and biased towards international or northern agendas. This is not an intrinsic weakness, but rather a consequence of the resource constraint imposed on learning hubs compiling these lists. For a hub to rival the first hand knowledge of staff in any location as to what is happening in their back yard and then aggregate this into a macro knowledge service usually outstrips the funds available. Consequently news and events listings do not usually pass the lower threshold of credibility of reflecting what a staff member already knows is coming up in their location and so quickly get disregarded.

3.8.   Incentives and Disincentives

The issue of what motivates staff and those supporting learning is touched on a number of times in reviewing experience in Annexes B and C. It is worth expanding on this topic a little to pull the threads together and link it into the more specific topic of incentives and disincentives. The kind of motivations seen in learning tend to be more behavioural and social than normative (e.g. peers providing advice and support in response to a question more often than writing up and distribution of case studies because it is the right thing to do). This means that exhortations from managers and policies from the centre setting out responsibilities to share knowledge and learn actively find little traction. One way of responding to this situation is often framed in terms of setting incentives that reward appropriate behaviour and minimize as many disincentives as possible. On the incentive side this can mean offering public commendation and awards for good learning and, on the clearing disincentives side, can mean ensuring that staff know that appraisal processes will pick up those not collaborating in learning activities. The downside of such incentive based approaches is that they can feel very clunky and not a little patronising in professional organisations and by association make organisational learning initiatives feel counter-cultural (like they had been blueprinted from experience in the fast food sector). A more effective approach, mentioned Annex C Section V in relation to communities of practice, is to amend or relaxing institutional norms and rules that could frustrate the self-direction and enthusiasm of individuals and groups for learning. This can be as simple as amending an IT policy to allow access to commercial social media tools at work or adopting a more permissive approach to where staff can organise official meetings so boundary partners and staff can mix more freely. A similar approach would be to take what on face value seems like a negative behaviour and turn it to the advantage of learning. For example there may be levels of rivalry between geographic offices in an HD/NO to be seen as leading in a policy area by being the first to show local innovations to headquarters. Rivalry can be seen as a barrier to knowledge sharing if it is highly individualised (competitive). But by promoting the idea that collaboration in certain areas where neither has a niche advantage and legitimising rivalry in areas where they do learning and innovation can sit side by side in a form of organisation behaviour referred to as co-opertition[7].

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[7]   For a definition of Co-opertition see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coopetition, accessed on 28 Mar 2010

3.9.   Two Further Areas of Less Successful Learning Support

Many learning hubs have sought to enable staff in HD/NO to collaborate virtually in the co-creation of documents. Typically this has either been using wiki platforms, which allow multiple editors of a single webpage text document, or file synchronisation platforms, that enable sequentially updated versions of a Word document, Excel spreadsheet or PowerPoint presentation to be accessed by different editors. The main reason these attempts at virtual co-creation have been unsuccessful is that the technology is not yet mature enough to be user-friendly to most users. As their interfaces and protocols are sufficiently unfamiliar it only takes one or two people in a group of collaborators to drop out of the loop for the joint endeavour to fall apart and not be relied on in future. Should such tools get better they could become a valuable means to support joint learning through actions to co-create knowledge (e.g. a bespoke synthesis to inform a negotiation process, or a collection of stories).

The other and much more general are of less successful learning support is where solutions to learning demands framed at the headquarters of the highly distributed / networked organisation are globalised. This does sound like a catch all and glib statement, but it does need to be emphasised because it happens all too frequently. A kind of institutionalisation of low expectations can build up where country offices do not prioritise the time to engage in consultations from head quarters on new systems and approaches to learning and head quarters teams end up taking a low response rate as tacit acceptance. These dynamics within large HD/NOs can't be turned around by learning support initiatives because they are systemic and would require wider organisational development interventions. Learning support initiatives can though be creative and opportunistic within these parameters, for example by building out a global approach from an entry point in one or two enthusiastic country offices with headquarters staff involvement, or by engaging in a process of remixing a number of less successful head quarters support approaches in a novel configuration inspired by country office challenges. For example, building capacity in using corporate electronic document management systems and RSS feeds to create a live stream of documents added anywhere in the organisation with a combination of key words/tags relevant to an individual or team). Or for instance by taking a more administrative process like environmental screening and weaving in a practice step like an open innovation helpdesk request for comparative impact studies.

4. Lessons for Learning Support in HD/NOs

Distilling experience from successful components of learning and in light of the context for the proposed learning hub, seven lessons for supporting learning in HD/NOs should be considered in relation to: complexity; trust and access; learning journeys; co-creation and improvisation; time for learning; existing learning processes; and risks from learning.

4.1.   Complexity

Our review of experience has highlighted how highly distributed / network organisations in development are fundamentally complex entities. We have seen how some approaches to supporting learning, such as spontaneity and openness, are particularly suited to complex organisations. However, it would be a mistake to assume that demand is complex in the same way throughout the organisation (i.e. learning demand isn't written through organisations like the letters in a stick of rock candy). A matrix from Accenture presented at an ODI seminar and quoted in Hovland (2003)[8] can be helpfully adapted to illustrate this

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[8]   Hovland, Ingie, 2003, 'Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning: An International Development Perspective – an annotated bibliography', Overseas Development Institute, London

point. Accenture's matrix sets out a typology of work settings that seeks to identify the circumstances of an organisation along two axes: level of interdependence required; and the complexity of work. Within each work setting four different knowledge models are seen to operate with corresponding knowledge management methodologies:

- Process Model (systemic repeatable work, highly reliant on formal processes, methodologies and standards, dependent on tight integration across functional boundaries)
- Systems Model (routine work, highly reliant on formal procedures and training, depending on individual workers and enforcement of strict rules)
- Network Model (improvisational work, highly reliant on deep expertise across multiple functions, dependent on fluid deployment of flexible teams)
- Competence Model (judgement orientated work, highly reliant on individual expertise and experience, dependent on star performers)

A highly distributed / networked organisation such as DFID seen through this lens probably can't be seen a falling squarely in one place on the axes, but rather different aspects may fall in different places – See Figure 1. The purpose of this illustration is not to suggest that we already fully understand the circumstances at DFID but to promote a conversation about how its complexity calls for a multimodal response with options for people in different circumstances rather than a monolithic or catchall response (the bounded pluralism of methods and approaches dynamically selected over time).
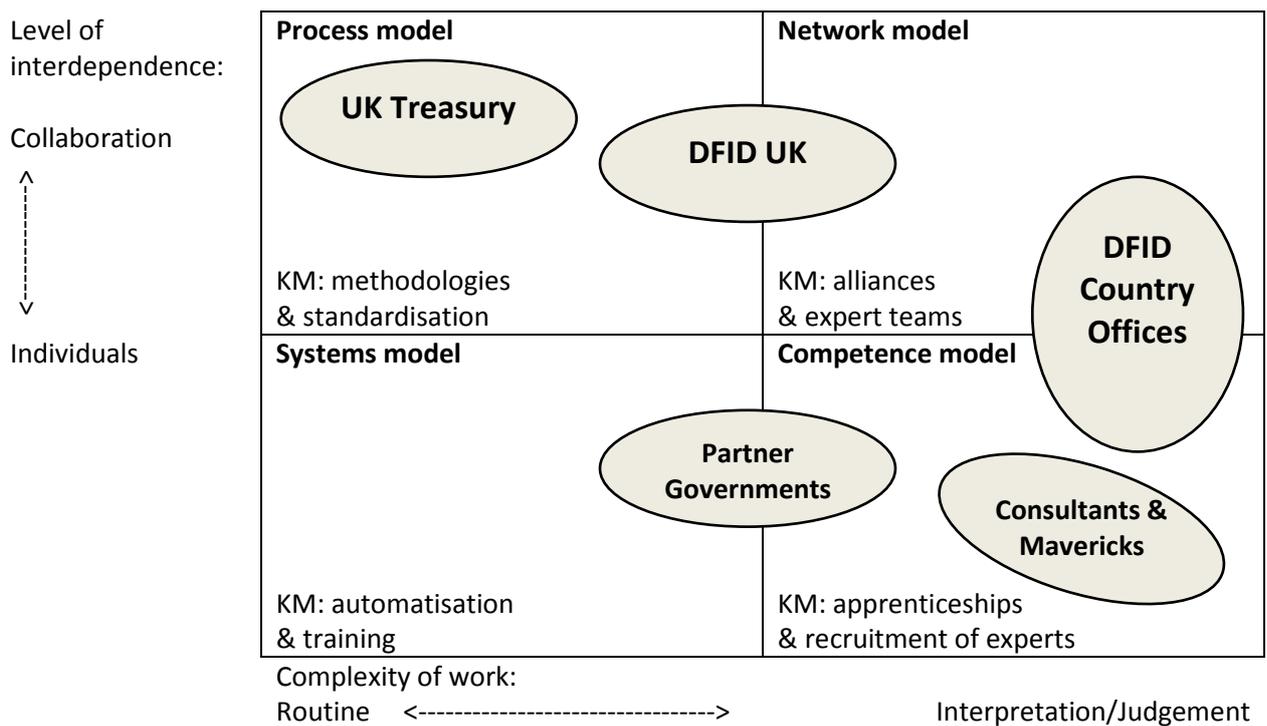

Figure 1. DFID Work Circumstances as a Complex Highly Distributed / Networked Organisation (adapted from Accenture 2002 quoted in Hoveland, 2003)

4.2.　　　Trust and Access

We have already touched on the experience of internal communities of practice in HD/NOs where the assumption that trust exists just because staff share the same employer does not hold. In practice because of the geographically distributed and dynamic nature of international development organisations the links between individuals are loose and vulnerable to external shocks (e.g. sudden re-posting or program changes). Greater diversity of participants in learning activities through opening up communities of practice and other spaces can help to dilute internal mistrust and bridge internal gaps. But fully public spaces can reduce confidence if there is a sense of knowledge sharing under the eyes of an unknown and potentially large secondary audience. The answer is perhaps not to conflate open learning spaces with the public sphere and recognise the need to transparently facilitate a range of spaces for learning with managed access (which can change over time). The risk is perhaps to commit to full public access to all spaces from the outset as a principle which is then hard to stand back from. Gaventa's power cube[9] has potential use here in understanding how to deal with power issues responsibly in the context of learning within HD/NOs.

4.3.　　　Learning Journeys

Successful learning is neither a journey with a clear destination nor with a fixed group of travellers. Learning support can face tensions, which can grow over time and with success rather than diminish. For example as early learners become experienced and hungry to push and test the boundaries of knowledge in their area of expertise, the ranks of new and inexperienced learners will continue to grow anchoring demand at the novice level. Responding to these diversifying and growing needs for support can put a strain on resources which if stretched too far will start to fall short of meeting everyone's expectations and potentially undermine the credibility of the associated body of knowledge. Public budgets usually cannot grow exponentially in response to demand and so foresight is needed in thinking though how the learning support response can be distributed through mainstream channels and increasing levels of community self-reliance over time.

4.4.　　　Co-Creation and Improvisation

Across a wide range of learning support activities (whether that is training, syntheses, workshops or helpdesks) experience has shown how the model of learning where content is created and delivered by experts in isolation from practitioners and co-learns no longer works, particularly for complex entities such as HD/NOs. Staff and their partners need to be agents in the co-creation of content as early, as often, as deeply and as locally as they are able to. In many instances this can mean that the role of external content experts is no greater or less than that of learners. Experts' role in content creation and delivery may be replaced by expertise in facilitation of processes for the co-creation of content or focused on helping to frame macro topics in collaboration with the champions for the learning activity drawing on comparative global experience. Applied improvisational approaches, which draw on the norms of stand up comedy and musicianship, have described this kind of process as freedom within structure. The structure being a set of simple rules (such as those used in Open Space facilitation methods) and the freedom being to co-create knowledge and learning processes.

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[9]　　　For information about Powercube analysis for organisations see: http://www.powercube.net/

4.5. Time for Learning

Whilst not a unique condition within HD/NOs, the very limited discretionary time available to staff is a major factor restricting learning. However, recent anecdotal experience is showing that as time pressures increase it can become easier set aside five days for training, reflection or action learning than one hour for reading. This may be because of related changes in working cultures where flexible working is normalising the practice of taking blocks of days out of work. In this context one of the most valuable functions of learning support can therefore be providing prospective participants in multi-day activities with a strong narrative that enables them to justify and defend their investment in learning to peers, managers and family. This narrative needs to have strands that can connect with the interests of the different stakeholder groups mentioned, rather than just repeating the learning outcome which may well make little sense to those outside of the practice area.

4.6. Existing Learning Processes

It is too easy to assume that learning is something that an initiative like a learning hub can bring to an organisation, without stopping to consider existing learning processes that it must relate to. Even in organisations where formal learning initiatives have not been successful, individual learning will be taking place and informal small group activities may have been sustained. Organisations that are quite dysfunctional can in practice have more guerilla learning actions taking place under the management radar than those that say they are learning organisations. In HD/NOs there will be quite different institutional arrangements and possibilities for learning in each country office with unexpected levels of innovation and entrepreneurship. Those working to support organisational learning therefore need to first follow the Hippocratic maxim of do no harm. Those who have been struggling to learn and share knowledge with little support need neither unintentional competition from new initiatives nor to be showered with more resources than they have the capacity to absorb. People may have had their fingers burnt in previous initiatives and have a legitimate right to defend autonomous space for continued guerilla activity. So beyond doing no harm, organisational learning supporters should seek build very flexible and responsive capacity strengthening windows into larger initiatives so that catalysts of existing learning processes can access support if they wish. Guerilla and country based learning initiatives that wish to could even become the catalyst for broader organisational learning and change.

In other instances learning initiatives may have been started in different parts of the same organisation around the same time. This can be particularly likely in large HD/NOs where multiple/parallel drivers for learning can be in play at the same time. One way to look at this is as a case of unnecessary duplication, leading to a situation where learning initiatives responding to legitimate drivers are put into a position of having to compete over the policy middle ground to justify their existence at the expense of the others. Another way to look at this is to see initiatives as potentially mutually supportive and using the co-opertition model mentioned above see where areas of collaboration and legitimate rivalry should co-exist. What we have already said about complexity and advantages of fault tolerance in open networks also suggests that multiple hubs within a larger network of organisational learning may be essential for HD/NOs in development.

4.7. Risks from Learning

There are several risks from learning in HD/NOs that we have identified from experience. Learning in isolation that has limited value for wider collaboration or coordination, learning for instrumental reasons with too little reflection or reflexivity on why or who it benefits, and learning that can't be applied again because staff roles change to quickly with implications for incremental and adaptive knowledge creation. Learning support initiatives can't by themselves eliminate the systemic organisational factors that can make learning risky in these ways, but they can seek to minimise the downsides. Encouraging staff to take

responsibility for their learning by including material about the organisational and societal dimensions of learning within interventions is one way of doing this. Material within the information literacy[10] approach can be adapted for this purpose (within IDS the experience of the IDS Library and MA Participation is relevant). Another way to minimise the downside risks of learning is to promote positive cultures around creativity that embrace innovation through experimentation and learning through false starts. In the information and communication for development field, which has its own history of initiative overload, the recent idea of holding FAILFares[11] to create a supportive space for sharing and exploring initiatives that didn't work out as intended and learn some more. In HD/NOs such spaces can help to bridge the gaps created by isolation of learners from their peers and rapid turnover in roles.

5. Recommendations for Learning Hub Scoping Report

In this final section we set out eight recommendations that could be proposed in the IDS Scoping Report for further exploration in a design phase of the Learning Hub. This is not in itself a complete recipe for the functions and services to be offered by the hub.

- Explore the complexity of work circumstances and learning demands in DFID as a highly distributed / network organisation which calls for a multimodal (bounded pluralism) response in terms of learning methods and approaches with about four options for people in different circumstances.
- Build a very flexible and responsive capacity strengthening window into the hub so that catalysts of existing guerilla and country based learning processes can access support if they wish. Otherwise do no harm and do not compete with or smother what is already working informally.
- Offer professional facilitation and logistics for large face to face events of staff and boundary partners (60-80 people) using simple rules for interaction and allowing people the freedom to co-define, share and socialise whatever content they find valuable
- Open and moderate an email list serve linked to monthly teleconferences for spontaneous conversations where practitioners can share their own questions and learning. Start from existing country champions in DFID and building out to an open network/community of practice
- Produce a small number of very high quality co-created knowledge products linked to external process (relevance and timeliness are key). These should synthesize practical experience, research, indigenous knowledge and other evidence with an emphasis on sharing contact information and using reflexive storytelling approaches as well as analytical findings.
- Pre-purchase blocks of individual expert's time to allow them to be co-opted into the hub as critical friends and then engineer collaboration between experts as necessary rather than in a group.
- Staff an open innovation help desk team with an experienced team leader to crowd source knowledge from networks of expertise (including but not limited to individual subject experts) to meet complex policy innovation challenges

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[10]   For a definition of information literacy and links see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Information_literacy, accessed on 28 Mar 2010

[11]   The first FAILFare will be held by Mobile Active in April 2010: http://failfaire.org/blog-2/, accessed on 28 Mar 2010

- Always use low cost, established commercial and public Web 2.0/social media and mobile tools in preference to bespoke or private ones (email list serve, social bookmarking, teleconference, social networks). Carefully manage subscriptions to modulate trust and access in different spaces for participation.
- Plan and design learning support in ways that will enable qualitative and quantitative monitoring and evaluation of the complex impacts and outcomes of learning, rather than bolting on linear methods after the fact.

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Annex A: How Comparable Learning Hubs Operate

A. Introduction

In this annex we review practical examples of learning support initiatives in Highly Distributed / Network Organisations (HD/NOs) to illustrate how they work, highlighting examples of successful and less successful operation.

A.I. ALNAP – Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

ALNAP members have collectively established its mission as "improving the quality and accountability of humanitarian action, by sharing lessons, identifying common problems and, where appropriate, building consensus on approaches". The network was established following the multi-agency evaluation of the humanitarian sector's response to the genocide in Rwanda. It has core membership of 63 organisations representing donor organisations, Red Cross/Crescent movement, UN agencies, non-governmental organisations, and independent academic organisations and experts. It also has an observer membership of individuals and organisations outside but interested in the humanitarian sector. Issue and thematic based initiatives are conducted by the ALNAP community to drive performance through collaborative learning and accountability processes. ALNAP was founded in 1997 and its secretariat is hosted by the ODI with funding from over 35 organisations of around half a million pounds a year. The depth and breadth of its published resources and the growing ranks of full funding members suggest that in its own terms ALNAP has developed a valued and sustainable learning support operation. By implication it is not unreasonable to assume that it is having a positive impact on learning by staff in its member organisations. Its five-year strategy 2008-2013 emphasised that in this phase to achieve its mission ALNAP members would need to be more open to learning and that Secretariat facilitated outputs needed to have real practical utility[12].
www.alnap.org

A.II. GSDRC – Governance and Social Development Resource Centre

The GSDRC was established by DFID to provide it advisers in governance, social development and conflict with access to knowledge services to support policy development and operations in country programs. It builds on the model of the Governance Resource Centre and is delivered by a consortium headed by the International Development Department (University of Birmingham) with IDS and Social Development Direct. The GSDRC summarises and contextualises research literatures and offers a rapid desk study research service, but at its heart is a responsive helpdesk that has pioneered an open innovation like approach to drawing down on the tacit knowledge of experts in the field. The GSDRC is online and as such provides public goods to people outside DFID interested in the topics it covers. Lately the GSDRC has begun to widen its funding base by also providing knowledge services to AusAID. It does not engaging support of networks or training, but is probably complimenting these activities in other spaces by meeting a need for knowledge gap filling as part of on the job learning by those who use its services. In its earlier GRC incarnation community of practice and capturing experience approaches were tried through an email peer assist group and a yellow pages directory of advisor expertise. Both were dropped because of competition for resources with the helpdesk service, which

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12   ALNAP Strategy 2008-2013: http://www.alnap.org/pool/files/alnap_strategy_2008-2013.pdf, accessed on 25 Mar 2010

was seen as having immediate value, compared to the less tangible value of investing in the facilitation needed to catalyse and guide the peer assist group and yellow pages directory. The yellow pages directory was also seen to be superseded by the DFID wide expertise locator service DFID Connect.
www.gsdrc.org

A.III. U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

The U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre assists donor practitioners in more effectively addressing corruption challenges through their development support. U4 serves eight development agencies: Norad (Norway), DFID (UK), CIDA (Canada), GTZ (Germany), MinBuZa (the Netherlands), Sida (Sweden), BTC (Belgium) and AusAID (Australia) by providing resources and services. The U4 Resource Centre is operated by the Chr. Michelsen Institute (CMI), Bergen, Norway. The Transparency International Secretariat in Berlin is responsible for the U4 Help Desk. The Resource Centre was initially established in 2002 as a result of the so-called 'Utstein-partnership' which begun in 1999 with an initiative taken by the ministers of international development from the Netherlands, Germany, Norway and the UK to formalise their cooperation. High on the priority list was anti-corruption. Sweden (Sida) and Canada (CIDA) joined as U4 partners in 2005, and since then the U4 Resource Centre has outlived the original political-level 'Utstein-cooperation', and continues to provide focused, donor relevant information and services to its partner agencies. BTC (Belgium) and AusAid (Australia) became funding U4 partners in 2008 and 2009 respectively. U4's core service is online and in-country training on anti-corruption measures and strategies for partner agencies and their counterparts. The online courses run over several weeks (between 3 and six) using a virtual training room and online course texts. U4 has arranged in-country workshops in 20 countries since 2003. The in country workshops are tailor-made for a donor audience and their development partners. Background papers, presentations and related readings from a selection of previous in-country training events are shared online. Access to the online and in country training is free at the point of use to staff from funding partner agencies. Staff from their counterparts and consultants can participate for a fee. Arrangements to ensure equal access to the training by all partners and to coordinate the location of in-country training is governed by policies agreed through U4's governance and administered by the U4 team.
www.un.no

A.IV. LC/LN – Livelihoods Connect / Livelihoods Network

Livelihoods Connect, and the Livelihoods Network that evolved from it, was initially established as a learning platform for the work of DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office. The first for Livelihoods Connect driver was SLSO's learning that a recent period of policy drift had been exacerbated by being cut-off from external feedback, particularly the critical voices of partners and beneficiaries. Having just gone through an intensive period of reflection and feedback with external partners, the need to support and keep open two way channels for knowledge sharing was a priority by DFID. The second driver was the sense that the traditional privileging of research based knowledge had tended to crowd out insights and lessons from policy and practitioner communities. Not only was this seen to have unnecessarily limited the pool of available knowledge, but was thought to be contributing to a growing gulf between research priorities and policy-maker / practitioner needs. Livelihoods Connect actively sought out and disseminated ideas for practitioners, policy-makers and researchers through an extensive network of contacts. It identified current thinking, developed relevant thematic areas and anticipated future directions in sustainable livelihoods approaches. Livelihoods Connect packaged information in formats to suit different user needs. These include: selected key documents; practical lessons from experience; syntheses of projects and current thinking; distance learning materials, tools;

audio/video materials; guides to key organisations; post-it board for sharing news and views; events and training; and hot topics on emerging themes. As the user group grew beyond DFID and its immediate partners the opportunity and need emerged for a more autonomous vehicle for practitioners to drive livelihoods approaches beyond the boundary of DFID policy. In 2006 the Livelihoods Network was established to enable researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to exchange international experience and understanding of livelihoods approaches by stimulating discussion and debate, supporting peer learning, and facilitating collaboration and co-creation of new knowledge. The Network secretariat is managed by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Sussex and is governed by an international Steering Committee of development researchers and practitioners. In 2009 Livelihoods Connect was merged into the Eldis development gateway to become one of its thematic dossiers. The Livelihoods Network continues to grow and has an active seminar series sponsored by the ESRC and has a social network on the Eldis Community.
www.eldis.org/go/topics/dossiers/livelihoods-connect
http://community.eldis.org/.59bfe511

A.V. AWN – Aid Workers Network

Aid Workers Network is a self-help community formed to share practical advice and resources and currently has over twenty-thousand members. Its raison d'être is to provide access to solutions to common problems and situations by giving a forum for members to share questions that stimulate discussions based on experience of potential solutions. The community also aggregates and synthesises discussions in to an extensive collection of advice pages. Aid Workers Network is primarily run by volunteers but also gets support from the British Red Cross and Oxfam. In 2006 it operated with a budget of less than £15,000, but clearly relies on substantial resources in kind through volunteers' time.
www.aidworkers.net

A.VI. KM4Dev – Knowledge Management for Development

Knowledge Management for Development is community of development practitioners interested in knowledge management and knowledge sharing. KM4Dev arose out of two inter-agency workshops in 2000 that identified a gap in support for learning around these emerging issues. IDRC's Bellanet program was asked to provide an email list serve where discussions could continue to take place and a website. The community is currently comprised of over 800 development professionals, from bilateral and multilateral agencies, NGOs and CBOs, as well as research institutes and the private sector. Currently, about 40% of the members are Southern-based. All continents are represented in the membership, with growing chapters in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and a new Francaphone language chapter, SAGE (Savoirs-Gestion). Some of the 300 organizations involved in KM4Dev are: CIDA, DFID, DGIS and SDC; FAO, IFAD, IFC, UNDP, WHO and World Bank; Care, ICCO, Christian Aid, Helvetas, ICIMOD/ Mountain Forum Nepal, Oxfam and Pact Peru; IDS (Univ. of Sussex), IDRC, ODI and many CGIAR institutes (CIAT, IFPRI, ILRI, ICARDA). In subsequent years the community added a KM4Dev wiki space for co-creation of documents (FAQs, Tips, etc), inaugurated the KM4Dev journal, migrated the community website to the Web 2.0 Ning platform to provide an array of sophisticated social media tools, and developed a substantial presence on Twitter. KM4Dev members' sharing of ideas and experience builds capacity, explores new techniques, provides inspiration and practical assistance beyond the community and promotes the value of knowledge sharing and learning in development.
www.km4dev.org

A.VII. AA – Africa Adapt

Africa Adapt is an independent bilingual network (French/English) focused exclusively on Africa. The Network's aim is to facilitate the flow of climate change adaptation knowledge for sustainable livelihoods between researchers, policy makers, civil society organisations and communities who are vulnerable to climate variability and change across the continent. It is part of the Climate Change Adaptation in Africa programme (CCAA), a research and capacity development initiative by IDRC and DFID. It's design is built around the need to first link the twenty plus CCAA participatory action research projects being conducted by African academic consortia across the continent and secondly connect this more widely to mainstream policy, civil society and community networks who are not yet engaged on climate adaptation issues. At the heart of the Africa Adapt network are a virtual team of four full-time Knowledge Sharing Officers (KSOs) who facilitate knowledge sharing and learning across the network. One KSO is embedded at each of the Africa Adapt partner organisations (ENDA - Senegal, FARA - Ghana, ICPAC - Kenya, IDS - UK). Africa Adapt has found most traction in its knowledge sharing and learning work through its convening of cross-cutting African groups in the wings of mainstream climate change events which has the effect of catalysing new network links and in using storytelling approaches through print and video to share concrete experience of adaptation innovations between research, policy, civil society and community groups (e.g. Joto Africa print briefings and the Africa Adapt Blip.tv and YouTube channels[13]).
www.africa-adapt.net

A.VIII. SE – Solutions Exchange

The UN Country Team in India created Solutions Exchange Solution Exchange as a platform for thematic communities where staff and partners (government, NGOs, development partners, private sector, academia) can "provide and benefit from each other's solutions to the day-to-day challenges they face [...] as a member of one of our communities, you can proceed with the confidence that you are not reinventing the wheel." Solution Exchange also aims to build trust amongst members of each community of practice through the experience of ongoing interaction. Thirteen sectoral community spaces have been created reflecting MDG and Govt of India priorities, including one on climate change. The primary means of exchange is through an email list serve for each community, which is moderated by a senior domain specialist. The moderator receives and circulates calls for help. Responses then go directly to the requester and the moderator also synthesizes the discussions after two weeks into a consolidated reply that is circulated to the Community. The Solutions-Exchange website is currently undergoing maintenance but the email lists are still active. This may suggest that the later have been more successful than web based fora.
www.solutionexchange-un.net.in

A.IX. SDC – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation established Information Resources with the NGO Intercooperation and other Swiss and Southern partners as a development information service on natural resources, environment and agriculture. Information Resources offered included research synthesis products, news updates, expert forecasting and a responsive research service to SDC staff. Information Resources ran for six and a half years but was mothballed at the end of 2009 when restructuring with SDC led to a withdrawal of funding. This change in direction reflects the recent evaluation of knowledge

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[13]   Africa Adapt video on bringing together traditional and formal climate forecasting on You Tube: http://www.africa-adapt.net/AA/ProjectResources.aspx?PID=1C1Wav0LaMU%3d, accessed on 26 Mar 2010

management and institutional at SDC (PWC 2009[14]) which found that "Institutional learning is not managed systematically and occurs informally and incidentally – e.g. learning 'on the ground' is not fed back into policies, procedures or processes." Significantly this weakness was not attributed so much at the knowledge and learning initiatives, but at the failure of management to recognise SDC as a network organisation and managing it accordingly, leading to impossible expectations. The evaluation also found that "External partners, representing a core element of SDC's partnership network, are currently left out of the sphere of influence of KM and IL. This results in an uncertain and probably restricted impact of the work in the partner countries." The report's top two recommendations for future successes were that knowledge and learning should focus on relationships with boundary partners (country and multilateral) through facilitated knowledge networks focusing on the needs of SDC staff working in boundary partner relationships. This evaluation report is the most current review of learning in a highly decentralised development organisation.

Since 2009 SDC's thematic units have been folded back into operations to bring thematic issues closer to country programs. To support what were now seen as dispersed thematic knowledge holders, institution wide thematic networks are being established (e.g. the Rural Development Network). The facilitation of thematic networking is being backstopped by an external partnership of Agridea and Helvetas, with the purpose of knowledge sharing and learning. SDC describes the learning function within the Rural Development network as happening "through both electronic and face to face interaction among peers on ARD and food security related topics (sharing one's knowledge with others in making it understandable and useful to them, picking up knowledge from others and using it). Learning also happens through self-study (reading, consulting web sites, using and processing information, creating links between received information).[15]" It also sees advocacy around the knowledge shared as an important function of the network.
http://www.inforesources.ch/
http://www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch

A.X.   GLT – Global Libraries Toolkit

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Global Libraries Program provides support to public library systems in Latin America, Eastern Europe, South East Asia and Southern Africa to increase access to internet based resources. As part of its grant management process, the program established a collaborative workspace, the GL Toolkit, to enable grant-makers and the core staff of grant receiving organisations to access, organise and share their knowledge within and across the GL program. The GL Toolkit provides discussion, profile, file sharing, guidelines, announcements and calendaring. The Toolkit is also linked to global and regional face to face convening of staff and partners and has recently responded to partners interest in further live interaction by facilitating thematic Skype Chat sessions. Whilst the facility to collaborate around the creation of documents and calendars could not add value to existing email based file sharing and coordination, the opportunity to for partners to learn from each other has been valued. This learning has arisen informally through bilateral follow-up to announcements and through exchanges in the web/email discussion space. Often learning has focused on the practicalities of working with a new

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[14]   Knechtli, Beat (et.al), 2009, 'Evaluation of Knowledge Management and Institutional Learning at SDC', Price Waterhouse Coopers, Bern, Switzerland

[15]   For a full description see the concept note of the SDC Agricultural and Rural Development Network: http://www.sdc-ruraldevelopment.ch/en/Home/media/Introduction%20RD-NW.pdf, accessed on 26 Mar 2010

funder as much as on the technical issues of Library 2.0, but both are mutually supportive of greater effectiveness. Value has also been found in the topical guidance and principles shared by technical experts commissioned by the Global Libraries Program to host areas of the GL Toolkit focusing on operational issues (impact assessment, advocacy, partnerships, etc). The GL Toolkit is not a public space but there is information about the program online. www.gatesfoundation.org/libraries/Pages/global-libraries.aspx

A.XI. WB – World Bank

For an overview of World Bank organisational learning practices we can turn to a desk study by Sarah Cummings[16] prepared in 2006 for the Dutch Ministry for Development Cooperation on KM in large development organisations. Cummings' summary points out that in 1996 under James Wolfensohn the World Bank famously announced its intention to evolve in the Knowledge Bank. Resources were put into communities, knowledge databases, helpdesks, expertise directories, and space for staff and partners to reflect. However, by 2005 there were indications that its investment was not working out. Cummings, drawing on reviews by the Bank's own staff, attributes this shortfall to "the fact that the knowledge initiative was not linked to core processes, both lending and non-lending, weakened its institutional impact". This lack of impact coupled to a change in leadership lead to significant scaling back of the Bank's knowledge and learning work and ambitions. Today the knowledge and learning agenda at the World Bank is being lead by the World Bank Institute (the Bank's training arm) which from 2008 realigned its mandate to support a wide range of partners in and beyond government in capacity development. The areas of focus for the WBI are now structured learning, knowledge exchanges, leadership and change management, and practitioner innovations. World Bank staff are involved in these activities but it is unclear what role they now play in supporting internal learning and knowledge sharing. http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi

A.XII. UNDP – United Nations Development Program Bureau for Development Policy

UNDP's Bureau for Development Policy has until very recently placed a lot of emphasis on the role of communities of practice in learning and knowledge management. Sarah Cummings[17] 2006 study of knowledge management in large development organisations is again insightful. She reports how from 1999 communities of practice were allowed to emerge in a bottom up fashion, cutting across UNDP structures and flattening hierarchies. In 2004 a formal knowledge strategy sought to mainstream communities by linking participation to human resources and performance monitoring processes. The aim was to achieve a more systematic approach which could respond more directly to management needs. Each community was facilitated by a thematic specialist. As the UNDP's community manager Kim Henderson (2005) notes the approach focused on "connecting people who have knowledge and want to share it [as opposed to] compiling knowledge in online repositories"[18] Henderson's snapshot of UNDP in 2005 revealed:

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[16]   Cummings, S, 2006, 'Knowledge management in large development organizations: With a focus on bilateral donor organizations', Royal Tropical Institute Amsterdam

[17]   Cummings, 2006, op.cit

[18]   Henderson, K. 2005 The knowledge sharing approach of the United Nations Development Programme, KM4D Journal 1(2): 19-30

- 20 knowledge networks, including six practice networks (five development practices and one functional practice – management); four knowledge networks open to other UN agencies and external partners; two cross-cutting networks and seven sub-practice networks
- 21,000 people subscribed to 20 knowledge networks
- the combination of virtual and face to face networking as essential to the success of communities

UNDP's networks have played an important role in the changes and learning processes operating within the organisation. Indeed, according to Henderson, a qualitative evaluation of these network strategies showed that "92% of staff members surveyed … [found the Model to be beneficial to their office and]… 86% 'believed it to have boosted their professional development."[19] By 2009 UNDP was further systematising its approach by deciding to roll out an US$7 million organisation wide enterprise 2.0 collaboration tool 'Teamworks'. This is expected to offer a Facebook like environment linking files, etc to people plus status updates, follows, and groups. This move to systematise communities of practice so fundamentally within the corporate structures of UNDP was at the time of writing being viewed with some concern by the networks and by other UN agencies who saw a drive to centralise and control knowledge and learning in UNDP.

A.XIII.   SIDA – Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SIDA has a long history of support for organisational learning dating back over twenty years or more. Anna Krohwinkle-Karlson[20] (2007) notes that in 1988 the Swedish National Audit Office reported that the "seemingly paradoxical relationship between qualitative and quantitative targets ('disbursement pressure'). [...] was a possible source of severe learning blocks, and even cynicism, among the otherwise highly ambitious staff"[21] of SIDA. Krohwinkle-Karlson (2007) goes on to quote a report ten years later by Forss et. al[22] (1998). This noted a failure to act on lessons due to information overload, a lack of time for the generation and application of new knowledge, a reluctance to learn from failures, the imposition of best practices by powerful external actors (government and IFIs) and undue emphasis on the reinforcement of existing competencies. She concludes that the picture painted is one where "The risk is that aid agencies get increasingly better at implementing projects and programmes that are of successively decreasing relevance."[23] Quoting Andrea Cornwall et.al's (2004) study of participatory learning groups at SDIS, Krohwinkle-Karlson notes the need to balance "creativity and flexibility with structure. Strong leadership as well as a clear specification of learning output targets are seen as crucial to the 'success' of a learning initiative, not at least to gain legitimacy for these kind of 'fuzzy' activities within the

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[19]   Henderson, K (op.cit), pg.22

[20]   Krohwinkle-Karlson, A. (2007), Knowledge and Learning in Aid Organizations – A literature review with suggestions for further studies, SADEV Report 2007-3, Karlstad, Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation

[21]   Krohwinkle-Karlson, A. (op.cit), pg.15

[22]   Forss, K., Cracknell, B. and Strömquist, N. 1998. Organisational learning in development co-operation: How knowledge is generated and used. EDGI Working Paper 1998:3. Stockholm: Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

[23]   Krohwinkle-Karlson, A. (op.cit), pg.16

organization as a whole"[24]. The most recent information we have comes from the 2008 policy brief by the Swiss Agency for Development Evaluation[25]. Drawing on a re-survey of SIDA staff twenty years after the 1987 survey by Swiss National Audit Office, SADEV finds SIDA has formalised organisational learning, raised staff awareness of its value and staff themselves are now more aware of the work of other donor agencies. However, time pressure and weak incentives restrict the amount of learning staff can engage in. There are also challenges due to weak learning linkages between HQ and country based staff and because of over specialisation by staff in technical areas. SADEV makes several recommendations for SIDA, of which the most important are to allocate time for every day learning; to increase incentives for individual learning initiatives (e.g. permitting study during working hours); improving exchange of information and knowledge between headquarters and field offices (e.g. through initiating more direct cooperation activities across units) and improving continuity of knowledge through procedures for staff handover and a mentoring system (Nb. SIDA has since been restructured).

A.XIV.   ML – MicroLINKS USAID

USAID's MicroLINKS[26] program supports learning, information and knowledge sharing for USAID's microenterprise program. It recently funded four interagency projects aimed at strengthening learning at Freedom from Hunger, CARE-US, Practical Action, and WOCCU. It also directly supports USAID staff and partners through a helpdesk (the hotline) and briefing notes capturing experience from the field. MicroLINKS is also demonstrating other innovative social media approaches to supporting learning and knowledge sharing (e.g. social bookmarking, online conferences, webinars, communities of practice, etc) and won the E-Gov Knowledge Management Award in 2007. Beyond Microenterprise USAID's Knowledge Management approach focuses on promoting best practices and lessons learned, enriching collaborative partnerships and, assisting decision-making through research and information sharing. Externally accessible resources include a searchable databases of USAID documents, data and other publications, collaboration tools and methods, and summaries of seminars by visiting speakers to USAID. The KM program states its purpose as 'to connect people with what and who they need to know to work smarter in concert with others to accomplish USAID's mission.[27]' The approach is essentially quite traditionally KM in seeking to provide just in time access to captured information and experience. Figure 2 below shows the formal picture of knowledge management at USAID. There are though less formal and traditional activities. For instance

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[24]   Krohwinkle-Karlson, A. (op.cit)

[25]   SADEV, 2008, 'Organisational learning at Sida – a twenty-year perspective': http://www.sadev.se/Uploads/Files/183.pdf, accessed on 26 Mar 2010

[26]   Innovative use of online social media for learning and knowledge sharing by the USAID MicroLINKS program: www.microlinks.org, accessed on 26 Mar 2010

[27]   USAID Knowledge Management Program overview: http://www.usaid.gov/km/km.html, accessed on 26 Mar 2010
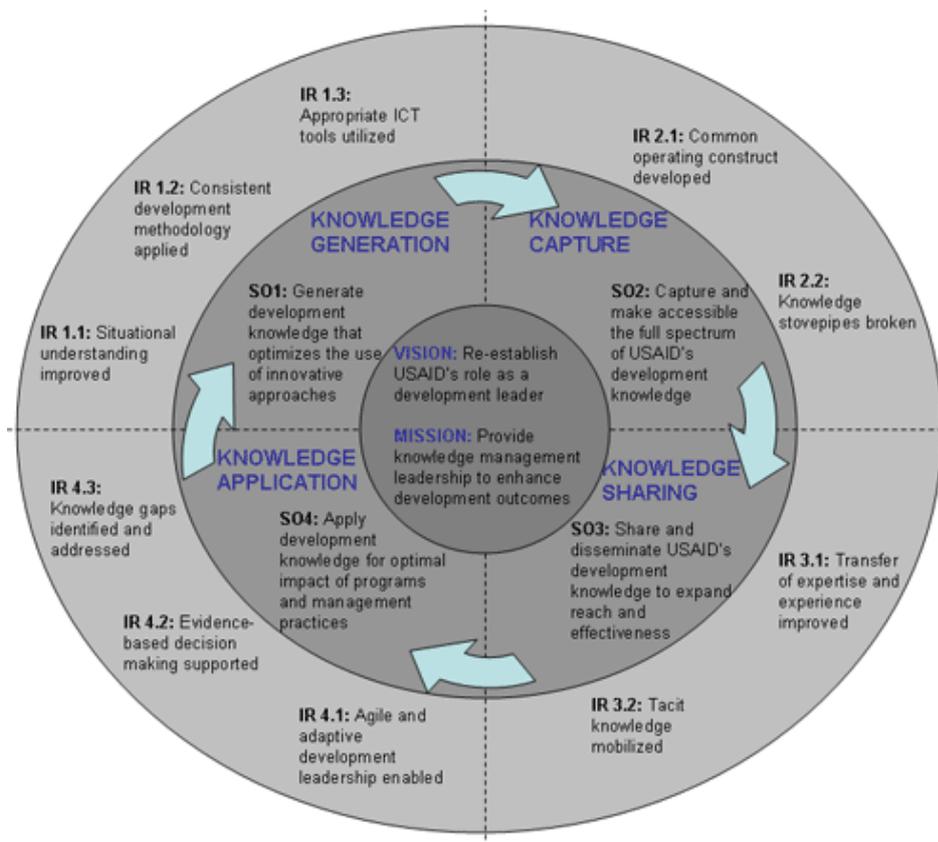
Figure 2. USAID KM Strategic Framework

A.XV.   World Health Organisation (WHO)

Although WHO has not invested systematically in knowledge sharing approaches and tools, such as communities of practice, its ongoing role in setting global standards presents a valuable case study of the tension between local and global knowledges. Writing in the KM4Dev Journal Barret et.al[28] (2005) highlight how the exclusion of local knowledges from the construction of global norms tends to undercut its ability to influence when dissemination from the centre seeks purchase at the country and field level. In practice WHO country reps are "managing these tensions between global and local knowledge in their work [and a] key challenge for WHO representatives is therefore to work across these boundaries as knowledge brokers to facilitate inter-communal negotiations."[29] Another important finding in this article is the language challenge faced by WHO in knowledge sharing. The article highlights that while "…global knowledge is generally codified using the language of those places where its generation is financed… there has been little effort to translate the local storage of knowledge … into global languages"[30]. This highlights the dichotomy between local and global knowledge, and the power relation experienced in knowledge management

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[28]   Barrett, M., Fryatt, B., Walsham G. and Joshi, S. (2005) 'Building bridges between local and global knowledge: new ways of working at the World Health Organisation, KM4D Journal 1(2): 31-46.

[29]   Barret, M, et.al (op.cit), pg.41

[30]   Barret, M, et.al (op.cit), pg.39

and sharing in organisations in general. Changing the mindsets and structures (ICT, human resource and managerial) that sustain this dichotomy and reproduce these tensions is set out as the main challenge.

A.XVI.   Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR)

Drawing on experience at the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), Simone Stagier, et. al (2005)[31] discuss two knowledge sharing projects implemented at the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT). These pilot projects address challenges faced with managing information flows and capturing knowledge from agricultural research in an increasingly complex environment. To this effect, CGIAR experimented in 2004-2005, with a new approach which aimed to reinforce knowledge sharing amongst scientists and dissemination in the wider community. The approach incorporated Open Space, Peer Assists, After Action Reviews, Knowledge Fairs and collaborative tools (specifically Dgroups and an online meeting planner) to facilitate change and collaboration between researchers in and out of the Consortium. In addition, the pilot project also involved complementary training in facilitation, complimentary human resources policies and practices; and a knowledge sharing toolkit. The pilot projects chose to focus on the organisation of annual professional staff meetings. This strategic event brings together hundred of researchers with the aim of sharing experience and reporting on the status of projects. In the past these events have been high criticized for being time consuming and for failing to address 'burning issues' of interest to all. The use of alternative or unconventional knowledge shearing approaches was generally seen as having offered a "new way for the centre to organise and conduct its annual staff meeting [and supported] the formation of a well-integrated team of scientists who share knowledge and information, and work towards common goals."[32] The value of open and inclusive methods and approaches in creating new spaces for learning within existing organisations and relationships with a history of time-consuming and less interesting meetings is clearly demonstrated.

A.XVII.   CARE

In 2003 CARE began to pilot a story telling approach to communities of practice that if successful, would reinforce the capacity for CARE offices in Asia to create, manage and share successful field practices amongst its staff as well as with partners and the larger community. Ramaswamy, Storer, and Van Zeyl (2005)[33] describe how CARE designed a 5-D Model where implementation takes place at five levels starting from discover, to dream, design, document and lastly disseminate. This model is adapted from the Appreciative Inquiry approach developed by Cooperrider and Srivastava (1987)[34]. A feature of CARE's 5 D Model is its focus on social relations as opposed to technology. In effect, the use of

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[31]   Staiger, S., Hewlitt, A. Horton, D. Russell N. and Toomey, G. (2005) Major meetings as entry points for knowledge sharing: a case from the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, KM4D Journal 1(2): 47-60

[32]   Staiger, S. et. al (op.cit), pg.48

[33]   Ramaswamy, R., Storer, G. and Van Zeyl, R. (2005) Designing sustainable communities of practice at CARE, KM4D Journal 1(1): p.79-93

[34]   Cooperrider, D.L. and S. Srivastava (1987) 'Appreciative inquiry in organizational life' *Research in Organizational Change and Development* Vol.1, 129-169

electronic components intervenes only at the documentation and dissemination stages. The first three levels are developed through an Appreciative Inquiry technique that enables self-discovery and the building of social bonds between actors through personal contact. Technology is often assumed to be the main tool through which learning occurs in organizations. CARE's experience challenges this assumption and puts forth a strong argument that face-to-face social relationships/connections are equally important. Appreciative Inquiry is a useful approach to create social connection as it builds on personality to achieve self realisation and transformation.

A.XVIII.   Development Practitioners / Info Spring

Founded in 2009 with the mission of empowering practitioners to produce better development results, the Development Practitioners is an e-forum built on the premise that field experiences tend not to be shared with other development practitioners. Using Web 2.0 technology, the e-forum stands aims to be user-driven and democratic, tackling issues such as sustainable agriculture, food security, climate change and natural resource management. It has 'built-in translation feature for 60 languages', a monthly newsletter, links to social media (Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin) and country chapter hubs. In twelve months only two country hubs have been established (Liberia and Kenya) and not many documents have been uploaded. However, the associated Q&A forum InfoSpring is much more active. This forum is democratic in terms of participation and user-friendly owing to its Web 2.0 features. Questions can be asked and answers provided by peers on the forum. Furthermore, comments can be made on issues, important words tagged and the best questions and answers rated (gold, silver, bronze).

www.devprac.org

http://infospring.org

A.XIX.   e-Agriculture

Established in 2009 by FAO, e-Agriculture is a community of practice on ways to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the rural domain, with a primary focus on agriculture. The objective for creating this platform was to 'enable members to exchange opinions, experiences, good practices and resources. Twitter, Delicious, Flikr and YouTube and podcasting are also used. This website provides access to relevant online Learning resources such as: Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK)35, to e-Agriculture Action Groups, List of Community Members by Country, Add Yourself to our Interactive Maps and a newsletter. A general observation is that this website active in the sense that there are recent posts (in the last twelve months).

www.e-agriculture.org

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[35] Information Management Resource Kit, www.e-agriculture.org/153.html, accessed on 30 April 2010

A.XX.   Practitioners Network for European Development Cooperation

This website is a network of European development practitioners created in 2007, which aims to achieve collaboration between European development organisations. It is hosted by EuropeAid and the EIB and has more than 30 bilateral organisations as members. The Practitioners' Network is an informal open-platform for exchange, coordination and harmonisation. Its thematic groups include: institutional development and human resources; climate change, energy efficiency and renewal; division of labour and modes of delivery; and quality management. Annual meetings are held in thematic groups, of all members and the core group with coordinates and faciliates the network. Practitioners Network is a mature product and up-to-date in terms of uploaded information. The website is very rich in reports, information and links to partners' websites as well as other useful development agencies. It is interesting to see how European organisations come together for a common goal: the fight against poverty amongst others. But based on the assumption that "decision-making processes in aid agencies involve establishing common 'narratives' that fit the priorities of the agency and donor alike" (Ramalingam, 2010:3) one wonders what African organisations think of such network? What difference would such a network make if it were African-based or a consortium of developing countries development institutions?

www.dev-practitioners.eu

Annex B: Theories and Models of Learning

B. Introduction

In this annex we review the main theories and models that have influenced the way organisations understand and support learning as a way of framing the experience presented in Annex C. This review covers the theory of learning cycles associated with David Kolb, adult learning approaches associated with Paolo Frère, knowledge management / knowledge sharing approaches, organisational learning approaches and capacity development approaches.

B.I. Learning Cycles

Linear and deficit models of learning have many problems that are addressed by the experiential model of learning most associated with the work of David Kolb[36]. Whereas earlier models of learning assumed that the acquisition of knowledge was a process with a clear beginning and end point that filled in gaps in understanding, learning cycle theory sees the learner as an agent with existing knowledge who collaborates in exploring, creating and revising understanding. Like all theories, the learning cycle presented below in Figure 3 will vary greatly in practice. There may often be gaps in the cycle that need to be bridged for the cycle to move forward. There will sometimes be one actor or a group of actors who are present at all points around the cycle, but more often there will be different actors dropping in and out of the cycle as it progresses (a little more like a relay race). And hopefully there will be other cycles that intersect with each other, picking up intermediate insights and conclusions and sending them in new directions (e.g. a really powerful lesson highlighted by one person that sets off a chain reaction of innovation in multiple sites). However, the general idea of learning as a cycle is valuable because it validates our everyday experiences of informal learning where new knowledge often seems to emerge through little reinforcements of insight and understanding repeated through conversations, trial and error that link together in unexpected ways.

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[36] Kolb, David 1984, Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development, Prentice-Hall
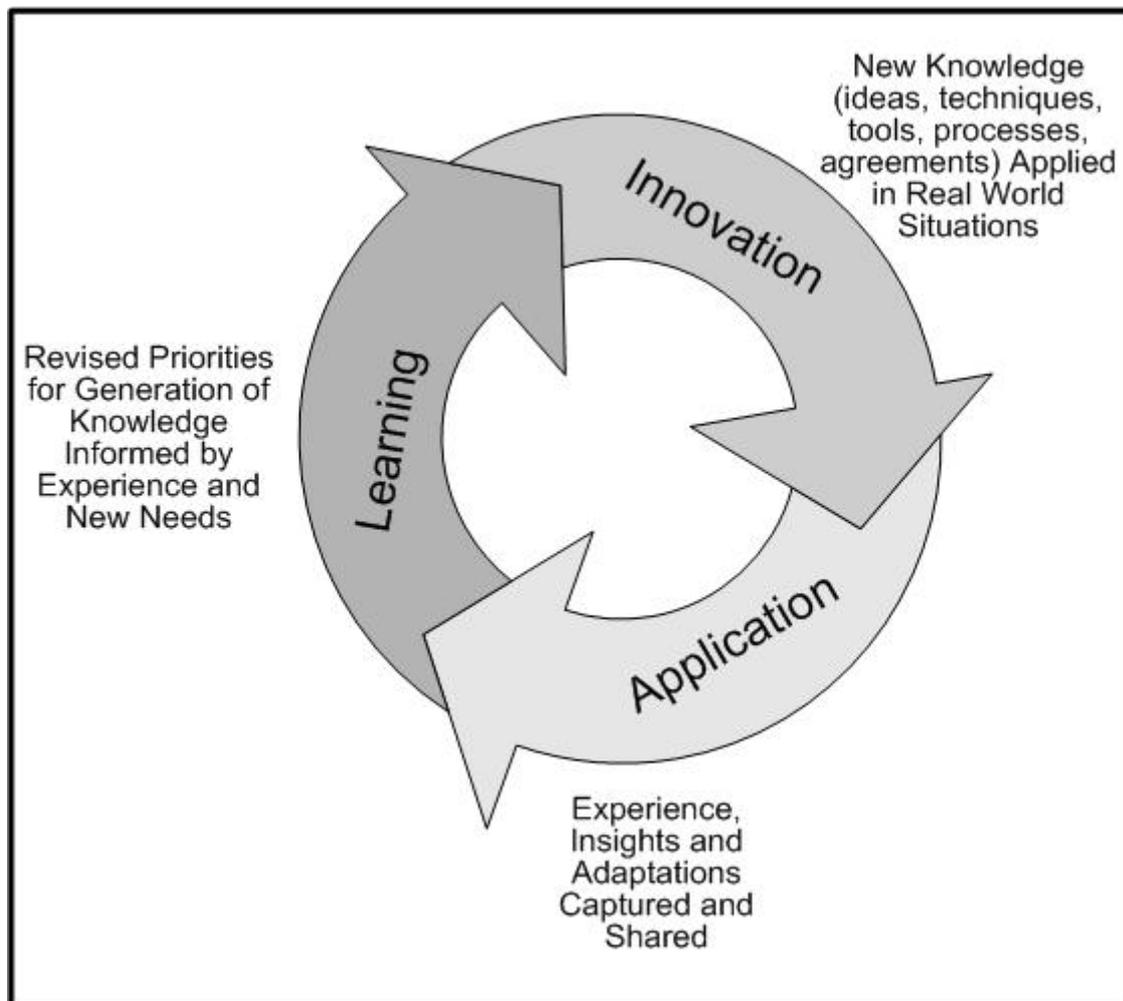
Figure 3: Cycles of Learning

A concrete example of a cycle of knowledge innovation, application and learning is the Community Lead Total Sanitation Approach. The CLTS approach is an innovation first developed in Bangladesh in 1999 by Dr Kamal Kar, a consultant working with Village Education Resource Centre (VERC) and supported by Water Aid. CLTS is an innovative methodology for mobilising communities to completely eliminate open defecation. CLTS is characterised by participatory facilitation, community analysis and action, and no hardware subsidy. Insights captured from early CLTS application in Bangladesh has seen the approach shared and adapted in at least six different countries in Asia and three in Africa. Recent experience has highlighted challenges as larger organisations and governments have scaled up the approach. This learning has sparked a new cycle of innovation around how to shift donor mind sets away from sanitation subsidy and preserve the values of participatory community action core to success stories so far. For more information see: http://www.communityledtotalsanitation.org

B.II. Adult Learning as a Critical and Social Practice

Theories of adult learning influenced by the work of Paolo Freire[37] emphasise the co-creation of knowledge by learners and teachers as a principle of education by which people become actors in society able to challenge the power vested in dominant streams of knowledge by bringing their critical consciousness reflection to bear on issues. Freire was advocating forms of adult education that consciously sought to empower citizens through the acquisition of literacy as a political act in the context of highly unequal social relations in South America. More widely, Freire's work sees learning as social practice where knowledge is part of a dialogue that is continuously formed by and informs social relationships. . Facts, truths or views about the world are not seen as wholly external to or independent of any process of learning, but as simultaneously constituted and changed by the process of engagement between learners, their domains of exploration and teacher / mentor figures. Moreover, the particular values, beliefs and objectives that people bring to learning processes are seen as integral to the knowledge that is generated, such that two people engaged in the same learning process would actually generate different kinds of knowledge. Therefore, with the learning as social practice view, change in the world outside the learner is seen at minimum as a inevitable result of learning processes (i.e. the learner subtly changes what knowledge exists and what the teacher and other learners themselves understand) and in a stronger sense learning processes have the potential to be powerful and transformative processes for wider social change. Learning is seen as happening as much in informal settings / indirectly as in formal training or capacity building.

B.III. Knowledge Management / Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge Management in the later part of the twentieth century took an asset based and managerial approach that concerned itself with the stock and flow of ideas, information and experience. For many private sector organisations and latterly the public sector, knowledge management offered gains in efficiency and effectiveness by capturing, organising and making accessible a larger proportion of the knowledge already held by staff and in paper based systems. The classical KM approach involved investments in web enabled databases that could warehouse all this newly captured knowledge and make it available to solve problems anywhere in the organisation just in time. In the last ten years, partly because of changes in the way Web 2.0 has enabled staff to co-create and co-manage knowledge and partly because of the realisation that amassing larger and larger stocks of knowledge assets was creating coordination and accessibility challenges, knowledge sharing approaches have come to the fore. Knowledge sharing has retained a focus on organisational investment in knowledge as an asset, but has shifted focus onto revealing the actors that hold knowledge and encouraging the behaviours that lead to its wider circulation and application. People are now the focus of most knowledge sharing approaches and support is given to networks, collaboration spaces (online and face to face), social media and more permissive approaches to the publishing and sharing of documents, videos, podcasts across departments and beyond the organisation boundary. Learning in this context is much more likely to be self-directed and collaborative than driven by formal curricula and individualised reward and accreditation systems managed by a central human resources or continuing professional development team. The challenge in such situations though is perhaps how HR and CPD can help to keep learning sufficiently contributing to the higher level outcomes organisations are responsible for achieving.

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[37] Freire, P, 1974, Education for Critical Consciousness,

B.IV.   Organisational Learning Approaches

Having a lot more in common with knowledge sharing, the approaches associated with organisational learning use systems thinking and a strong cultural / behavioural lens that seeks to understand and support learning as a whole. Strongly linked to the work of Peter Senge[38] (1999) organisational learning seeks to look at learning as a evolving process where the context for and feedback between individual acts of learning take on wider emergent properties that have the potential for profound, transformative changes at the organisational and individual level. Interventions that seek to create and sustain learning organisations have typically focused much less on creating IT infrastructures or on enabling the capture and acquisition of knowledge. Rather, as Pasteur, Pettit and van Schagen (2006) note, organisational learning concentrates on "enhancing organisations ability to reflect on and reframing its own experiences, and has a stronger focus on allowing individual and collective creativity to flourish"[39]. In practice though the complexity of development organisations and staff fear of questions fundamental corporate assumptions can make this kind of organisational learning hard to implement and sustain. As Ben Ramalingam[40] (2010) in his review of ECDPM, SNV and UNDP argues, development organisations should move away from transferability to reinvention; a local product based on experience which is inspired by global learning and not the opposite.

B.V.   Capacity Development

Capacity development might be said to be less a theory or approach than a catch all for a wide range of interventions and ideas about how to enable people and organisations to do more or differently. Capacity development is certainly a broad enough umbrella to include organisational learning, adult learning, knowledge sharing and ideas about cycles of learning. However, particularly in the development context, it is often associated with a particularly technical or managerial slant on the inputs, process and goals of learning – it is very much about learning for a clear purpose. At one end of the spectrum capacity development has a lot in common with the deficit / linear models of learning criticised by Kolb and pays little attention to the critical and social practice views of learning advocated by Freire. Increasingly though, capacity development is being recast further along the spectrum as a practice that is concerned with the building capability within systems at the individual, organisational and societal levels and engages with issues of relationships and power as much as with specific technical or managerial goals. The work of the Capacity Collective in collating and framing perspectives towards this end is informative[41], as is the work of Peter Morgan[42] (2006). From the perspective of learning within development organisations the

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[38]   Senge, P, 1999 The Dance of Change: The challenges of sustaining momentum in learning organizations, New York: Doubleday

[39]   Pasteur, K, Pettit, J and van Schagen, B, (2006) Knowledge Management and Organisational Learning for Development, KM4Dev Workshop 2006 Background Paper, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies

[40]   B. Ramalingam (2010) Organisational learning for aid and learning aid organisations, ECDPM, SNV, UNDP

[41]   Taylor, P and Clarke, P (2008), Capacity for a change: Document based on outcomes of the 'Capacity Collective' workshop, Dunford House,25-27 September,2007, Brighton, Institute of Development Studies

[42]   Morgan, P. (2006). The Concept of Capacity. Draft version. Maastrict: ECDPM

influence of and debates within capacity development will remain relevant because as a program modality capacity development has great potential to support and be supported by the more administratively located activities of learning.

B.VI. Conclusions

Our review of the main theories and models that have influenced the way organisations understand and support learning shows that:

- there are patterns behind our individual experiences of informal learning through practice, reflection and sharing (Kolb's collaborative cycles of learning) that can be amplified and sustained through support at the organisational level
- learning is a process and learners are agents who cannot be separated from the world, which both changes and is changed by learning acts (Freire's critical and social adult literacies). This co-construction effect can be harnessed to drive powerful and transformative organisational change.
- as self-directed and collaborative learning within organisations becomes the norm (knowledge sharing in people centred Web 2.0 environments) the new challenge for human resource management and professional development leadership is networking decentralised micro learning activity around macro organisational outcomes.
- the reflexive and creative power of learning uncovers the transformative potential of whole systems approaches (Senge's organisational learning) and poses the question of when an organisation should set in train learning processes whose outcome could lead to profound changes to its values and goals.
- the purposes and outcomes of learning within development organisations should be in creative dialogue with those program modalities supporting learning for change in development (capacity development re-imagined by the Capacity Collective and Morgan) or risk creating gaps in attitudes, behaviours and mindset that will undercut trust and legitimacy.

Annex C: Methods and Approaches Highly Distributed / Network Organisations use for Effective Learning

C. Introduction

In this annex we review some of the primary methods and approaches to delivering learning support in highly distributed / network organisations represented in the practical examples from comparable hubs in Annex A. Informed by the review of theories and models of learning in Annex B, in each case we explore what takes place, how tools and other processes are used and how this links into wider aspects of organisational learning and change.

C.I.   Knowledge Networks

Because of the relative isolation of practitioners in a particular specialism within a highly distributed organisation, knowledge networks have become a very popular approach to locating and pursuing peer learning opportunities. A knowledge network can be understood as an arrangement where multidirectional and intersecting relationships are taken as the norm. Roles played out are not determined entirely by the nature of any one relationship. Each actor (person or organisation) may have different roles in different relationships and change roles overtime within a relationship. Within a knowledge network there may be clusters of knowledge sharing relationships around people or organizations keen to facilitate a topic (nodes). Any network is itself part of larger scale networks (dashed lines in the figure below) and this means that the network has an open and scale-free boundary. All links don't have to flow through the nodes, and in fact many actors are only linked to one node through other actors (connectors). However the nodal facilitators tend to be highly active and strongly linked to each other (dotted lines) helping to link clusters of relationships on the periphery that might have otherwise remained weakly tied to one another. Figure 2 below models the AfricaAdapt network, with KSOs (knowledge sharing officers) as the nodal facilitators.
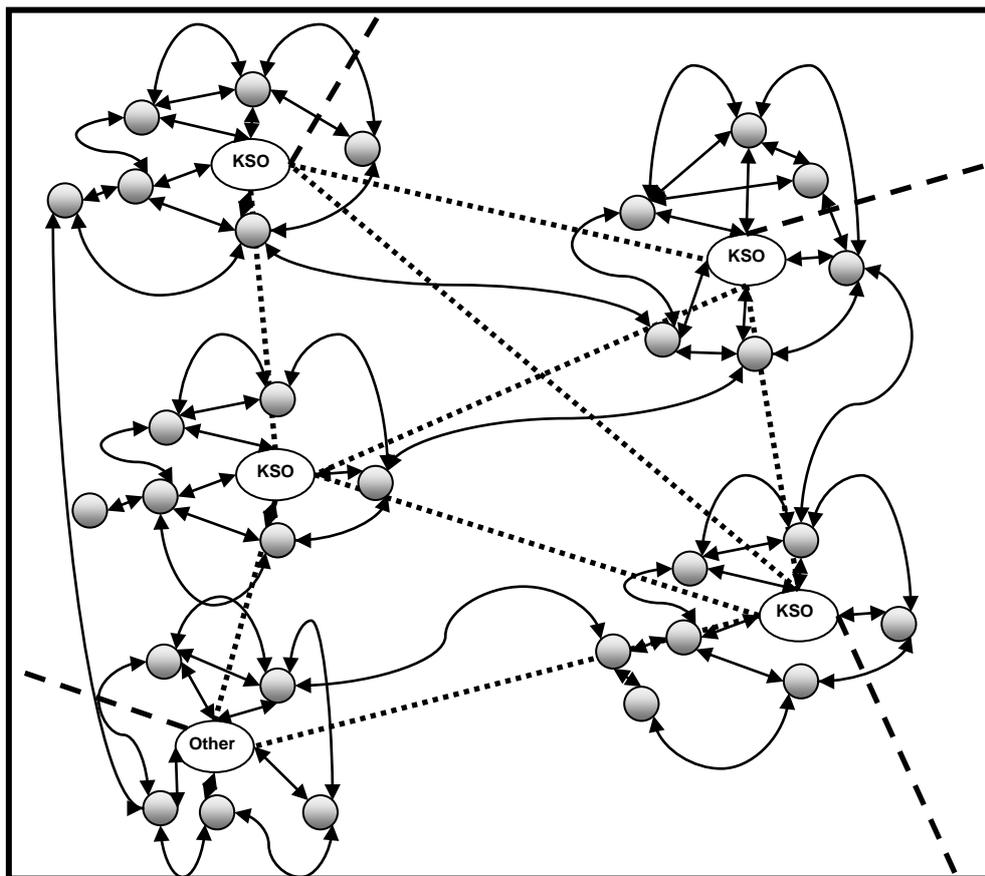
Figure 4 AfricaAdapt Network Model

The assumption is that each actor within the network is a site for cycles of knowledge innovation, application and learning in their own right. It follows that, one of the key support roles that the nodal facilitators play is to become aware of these knowledge cycles in different locations, to encourage and assist actors to capture and share their insights and ideas, and to help other actors across the network to be aware of these knowledge networking opportunities as they arise. In particular these knowledge cycles are able to share tacit knowledge (the ideas and experiences that are held by people and not often formally written down) by making people to people connections.

In the context of highly distributed organisations, because of the open and multidirectional character of networks, some form of permissive group communication tool is a requited. Typically an email list server[43] forms the backbone of group communication and joining the list involves minimal bureaucracy and an active email address. Website centric social

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[43]   Email list servers manage user subscriptions and distribution of emails to a group across the internet. The development sector has a bespoke tool Dgroups (www.drgroups.org) with around 1,500 lists. Other tools include Lyris (www.lyris.com) and Yahoo Groups (www.groups.yahoo.com). Additional access to the list via a webmail interface is common.

networking platforms are gaining a foothold with development networks[44] but because of the higher bandwidth demands (due embedded applications and rich media) are not as accessible. This is changing though as broadband becomes more financially and technically viable in more countries and as social networks exploit mobile platforms (e.g. Facebook Zero which is a text only interface for mobile users in countries with limited GPRS or 3G mobile data services[45]).

C.II.   Training

Formal training opportunities, in contrast to on the job or opportunistic acquisition of skills and experience, are perhaps the most traditional and desirable form of learning for many practitioners. Especially when delivered and accredited by highly regarded organisations and featuring renowned experts, training courses and qualifications were long seen as the gold standard. In the 1960s, '70s and '80s significant investments were made by donors in specialist training courses and degrees for staff and partners across all sectors[46]. Budget constraints and questions around the validity of training in northern centres shielded from development realities led to a significant decline in provision. This decline has started to turn with a renewed interest in capacity development and improved tools and pedagogies now available. Formal training opportunities today for staff of highly distributed organisations and their partners are much more likely to offer a blended learning experience (combining focused face to face opportunities, distance study online or by CD/DVD, and self-directed action research and reflection). Training is also much more likely to be tailored to the needs of the organisation, with courses commissioned to meet pragmatic learning outcomes rather than driven by research priorities or received curricula[47].

Even in this more responsive / participatory mode, formal training opportunities still rely significantly on being able to guide learners towards documentary resources that are free at the point of use (either open public goods, or access to copyright materials subsidised by course fees). In this regard the foundational role that curated repositories of documents and other evidence (data, video, maps, etc) should not be forgotten. The scale of physical library

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[44]   Development Social Network's include on Facebook 'DFID Livelihoods News': http://www.facebook.com/pages/DFID-Livelihoods-News/113890010249?sid=ddff698a234893b299e6e71806845fb7&ref=search; on Ning 'Business Fights Poverty': http://businessfightspoverty.ning.com/; and on Eldis Community 'Community Based Adaptation Exchange': http://community.eldis.org/.59b70e3d/

[45]   Facebook Zero was announced in Feb 2010 at the Mobile World Congress: http://www.v3.co.uk/v3/news/2258017/facebook-goes-lite, accessed on 23 Mar 2010

[46]   Until the mid 1990s the Institute of Development Studies Short-Course Program provided 3 month formal training opportunities for agency, NGO and government staff in areas such as food security, public administration, etc.

[47]   IMA are a leading UK provider of tailored development courses: http://www.imainternational.com/; the Institute of Development Study runs organisation specific training, for example for UNICEF in social protection: www.ids.ac.uk/go/research-teams/vulnerability-and-poverty-reduction-team/centre-for-social-protection/training; the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre provides highly regarded online and in-country training in response to demand identified by its eight donor funding consortium: www.u4.no/training/main.cfm

collections and many libraries themselves have declined over the last ten years (especially organisations' own in house collections). This trend has been tempered though by the coming together of librarianship, IT and communications practices in information intermediary / literacy services through the internet and through web enabled libraries. Global development knowledge portals that summarise and organise wide bodies of evidence, particularly Eldis and SciDev,[48] are widely used by learners to access documents. To a certain extent organisational intranets are also playing this hybrid function of online repositories that can support learning. Because the main function of intranets is to support internal corporate communication and reference to key procedures/policies and directories of assets content needs to be adapted to provide a learning support function, and often this is expensive to resource to rival web based resources.

C.III.   Capturing Experience

Much of the focus of organisational learning falls on the goal of making good use of the informal or tacit knowledge known to individuals or groups but not easily accessible to others. There are a number of approaches to making good use of such knowledge, but too often these are reduced to the meeting the goal of capturing experience or lessons. The classic approach to capturing experience involves a third party (consultant, journalist, researcher, intern) interviewing staff about lessons, reviewing process documentation and then writing best practice case studies. Best practice case studies can then be disseminated to other staff and referred to in policies and guidance with the aim of supporting learning. The limitations of this classic approach are that it tends to separate one aspect of tacit knowledge (the good event) from the understanding of the wider context and historical process that it is embedded in. This is not entirely a fault of the third party documenting experience, but also a consequence of the natural tendency of people to cut short from sharing the full picture (with its contradictions, frustrations, politics and humour) when what they say will be written down and circulated beyond their control. The other main limitation is that capturing experience tends to cut it off from the ongoing processes that gave rise to it and so the knowledge can soon become out of date or is never refreshed by later hindsight or associated events. In this way even the best case study can in no time become a blueprint for someone else's folly. Consequently efforts to make good use of informal and tacit knowledge increasingly now focus on connecting those who know with those who need to know in real time using networks, social media, and face to face large group gatherings to cross pollinate ideas[49]

C.IV.   Sharing Own Learning

One of the pleasant seeming contradictions of learning is that an individual's knowledge can be lost quite easily (either shortly after it is acquired or much later when it has been overlain with newer experiences), but that sharing that knowledge with others is one of the best ways to reinforce our learning in memory. There is another more publicly spirited reason to communicate personal knowledge of course, the desire to enable others to benefit from things we have understood and feel are not widely enough known. The classic way to do

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[48]   Development knowledge portals include Eldis: www.eldis.org and SciDev: www.scidev.net

[49]   Large face to face gatherings to share tacit knowledge have been re-energised by social facilitation approaches such as OpenSpace / UnConference: www.openspaceworld.org/, World Cafe: www.theworldcafe.com and Knowledge Fares: www.kstoolkit.org/Knowledge+Fairs.

this is write about what we know and get it published (books for the few, journal articles and trade magazines for a few more and grey literature for most of us). Development practitioners in agencies, NGOs and governments are by and large too busy and impatient to get their message out to wait for book deals and for many narrative writing is not a skill that got them where they are. So for most development practitioners the preferred ways to communicate personal knowledge are, in roughly descending order, talking about it (face to face, on the phone and in videoconference calls), sharing the books, articles and reports that have inspired them (physically, digitally, or through social bookmarking[50]), or writing brief notes to share that highlight what they would like to share / be helpful to others about (by email mainly, but also in social networks, twitter, blogs or by contributing to wikis). What both these reasons for communicating personal knowledge point to is the opportunity to couple demands for learning with the broader personal motivations and needs of staff within a more holistic/systemic/complex knowledge support intervention to make for a more sustainable and meaningful impact.

C.V.   Communities of Practice

Arising out of research on new forms of informal apprenticeship within businesses in the United States in the 1990's by Etienne Wenger, the communities of practice model has become a mainstream within organisational learning approaches. Communities of practice describe the tendency of social groups to arise within organisations with learning around a passionately shared endeavour at their heart. What Wenger found within these emergent communities were circles of increasing participation with experienced staff stewarding and sharing professional and technical practice and less experience staff being folded into the group to learn and gain experience. These self-directed and self-sustaining peer groups often bridged structural gaps within organisations and reached out to key partners in ways that formal top-down processes could not. Created and sustained by practitioners to meet learning needs that could not easily be responded to within siloed and hierarchical organisations, communities of practice were typically driven by enthusiasm to help peers solve problems or to co-create solutions that demonstrated the best of that practitioner group's capabilities. In the context of highly distributed organisations (especially those with matrix management structures) communities of practice can potentially fill a yawning gap in practitioners' continuous professional development, on-boarding, vocational motivation and load balancing. Over time this model has been taken up as an intentional organisational development approach, with efforts my managers to create communities to drive efficiency, and effectiveness. Richard McDermott (a collaborator of Wenger) reviewing the ten year history of communities of practice has pointed to them becoming even more structurally integrated and mission focused in many organisations. This trend presents a tension to the original understanding of communities as emergent and self-directed entities, one that is partly confirmed in practice by the low sustainability of many communities of practice called into being as part of organisational development and knowledge management strategies. On balance then the helpful role that management can play in regard to communities of practice is sustain or create the conditions that enable practitioner communities to emerge and thrive. This can mean amending or relaxing institutional norms and rules that could frustrate the self-direction and enthusiasm of communities (e.g. reporting, decision making,

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[50]   Social bookmarking is a way to contribute to a growing cloud of your own and other people's tags (keywords) categorizing online resources they want to refer to again. The most popular community is: www.delicious.com

gathering, communicating) whilst at the same time encouraging them to share their successes widely and remain open to new members.

C.VI.   Development and Validation of Principles

Although much of the learning that should take place within organisations is highly contextual and idiomatic, there is demand and a place for general principles derived from this wider body of experience. The value of principles within a body of knowledge is that they can perform several useful functions. Firstly they can provide a container for the communication of important values associated with responsible practice. Second sharing such principles sends out a concise and strong message to others saying what this knowledge domain is all about. Finally, principles can serve as a totem or marker which enables those inside and outside the organisation to navigate by as they approach the associated body of knowledge (e.g. a central point by which to asses how closely related are other bodies of knowledge we use). The development of principles is not something that should be done quickly as it needs to rest on a body of evidence that is both wide and deep enough to support the truth claims the principles make. Principles should also be validated so that they represent a consensus within the community whose knowledge they are derived from. If they have been co-created by the community along the way to validation, success is more likely.

C.VII.   Open Innovation

The knowledge management of research for policy innovation is still a relatively novel approach within the international development sector, where an expert centric model remains common. However, within the private sector the approach of Open Innovation is recognised as best practice and is a clear analogue for the GSDRC. Popularised by Berkley's Henry Chesbrough[51] , Open Innovation has become core to IBM, Eli Lilly and Proctor & Gamble's approaches to accessing research based knowledge through specialist intermediaries like Innocentive and NingSigma. As the Economist said in October 2007 in its report on Open Innovation "For a business that uses open and networked innovation, it matters less where ideas are invented. Managers need to focus on extracting value from ideas, wherever they come from"[52]. The helpdesk service offered by the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre follows this approach. The GSDRC's Research and Information staff work with networks of expertise (including but not limited to individual subject experts) to meet complex policy innovation challenges. From the outset (beginning with the GRC in 2002), the GSDRC has recognised that identifying, assessing and assembling insights and evidence from multiple knowledge sources is crucial to bridging the seeming gulf between on the one hand information overload and on the other supply driven expert narratives. The GSDRC is an advanced intermediary within the global marketplace of governance, social development and conflict knowledges. Independent of particular suppliers, but agile within their networks and maintaining intelligence on future supply and existing capabilities. Highly attuned to the needs and priorities of Helpdesk enquirers, but rigorous in working with them to frame questions and challenge assumptions when necessary.

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[51]   Chesbrough, H (2007) *Open Business Models*, Harvard Business School Press, Boston

[52]   http://www.economist.com/specialreports/PrinterFriendly.cfm?story_id=9928227

C.VIII.   Expert Groups

Practitioner learning is sometimes backstopped and guided by inputs from trusted experts in the field (typically researchers and technical consultants). These experts can bring additional perspectives into the mix because as researchers they are focusing almost exclusively on contributing and responding to the latest analytical findings and theories (something few practitioners have time to do intensively). As consultants they are typically much more mobile and moving laterally between organisations and locations and so can aggregate comparative experience far more quickly than practitioners who may typically stay in one team or location for two to three years at a time. A particular mode of drawing on expert knowledge is to form them into a group with the aim of gaining synergies in terms of effectiveness and creativity in proactively pooling experience and responding to demands for support from learners. However, there are some downsides to bringing experts together in this way unrelated to the knowledge they share or the learning process. This is the fact that to a large extent there is ongoing competition for grants between researchers and for fee paid consultancy between consultants. The expert group can easily become a forum for competitive positioning and this soon undermines trust and willingness to share. This is a general group dynamic problem when people are ostensibly gathering to produce public goods but there is a significant amount of potential or current funding at stake which is controlled by the organization playing the group convening role. Alternative ways of drawing the knowledge of experts to support organisational learning have been tried successfully, with the Open Innovation model already mentioned above. Another is to simply co-opt experts individually with sufficient rewards to guarantee their responsive participation in backstopping learning.

C.IX.   Reflection and Reflexivity

Schön's work 'The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action'[53] has been influential in highlighting the fact that processes of learning through action (learning on the job or during practical training) can be enhanced by stepping back periodically to reflect on the experience of applying new knowledge. The idea that learning from experience is or should be an iterative process (learn, act, reflect, learn, act, reflect) rather than a linear one gives further support to the cycles of learning notion touched on in Section 3 above in relation to the work of Kolb. It is worth distinguishing the notion of reflection from that of reflexivity, with which it is sometimes confused. Associated with social constructivist theories of knowledge, including the work of Pierre Bourdieu[54], in the context of learning reflexivity suggests that understanding is inherently subjective. Consequently we need to self-consciously step back from our actions to check how our assumptions, values and unspoken personal opinions are influencing our learning behaviour. This can provide us with insights into why some knowledge is taken on board and other is not and why a shared experience can have such different meanings within a group of people.

C.X.

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[53]   Schön, David, 1991, 'The Reflective Practitioner: how professionals think in action', Ashgate Publishing

[54]   On reflexivity see Pierre Bourdieu's 'Invitation to Reflexive Sociology', 1992, Polity Press

C.XI.   Socialisation

Within early knowledge management approaches, particularly associated with the work of Nonaka, the notion of the socialisation of knowledge was emphasised. This holds that the capture and sharing of experience and other tacit knowledge is an incomplete process and will only have a wider sustainable impact if that knowledge if folded back into the everyday assumptions of staff across the organisation such that it forms part of their own tacit knowledge. Whilst this view can been criticised for representing an idealised version of the reality of learning within organisations, it is supported by other theories of knowledge associated with Jurgen Habermas (Lifeworld), Ludwig Wittgenstein (Form of Life) and Bruno Latour (Habitus). In their own way, each of these notions point to the underlying truth that knowledge has little social value (e.g. in terms of enabling collaboration or coordinated action) unless it is situated within a more widely shared set of meanings. So in terms of the organisation, this points to the fact that learning by individuals in too much isolation from others ultimately has limited value beyond the benefits which are captured to the person themselves and their close associates. Establishing how wide the boundary of shared meaning needs to be to enable collaboration and coordination is one of the tasks for those supporting organisational learning.

C.XII.   Story and Narrative

One of the criticisms of much technical and academic writing is that by aiming at objectivity almost to the exclusion of other purposes it loses much of its ability to engage and influence people who are not already engaged in the topic being discussed.   Although little practitioner writing is for academic or purely technical purposes there is a tendency for analytical styles appropriate to those domains to be emulated. By the time we come to sharing experience for the purposes of practitioner to practitioner learning, remote and dry writing is not very helpful. Consequently a number of authors have championed storytelling as an antidote. Former World Bank KM leader Steve Denning[55] is prominent within development for advocating storytelling approaches to communication in the context of decision making and leadership. In terms of practitioner learning storytelling approach encourages the use of more metaphorical, personal and emotional language and an attempt to involve readers/listeners in a journey of discovery rather than telling people what they should think (e.g. in terms of weaving first person accounts of concrete situations to communicate for instance the value and substance of a particular approach to a technical challenge). Shawn Callahan of Anecdote emphasises that established stories already shape organisations: "Our stories, collectively and individually, have a profound effect on what we believe is possible. Therefore the challenge for leaders is both to understand the stories affecting individuals and groups and to know how to define and tell (ideally through wide participation) new stories that set the direction for the company."[56] In parallel to storytelling, narrative approaches to sense making have also emerged. Dave Snowden[57] in particular

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[55]   On storytelling see Denning, Steve, 2000, 'The Springboard: How Storytelling Ignites Action in Knowledge-Era Organizations', Butterworth-Heinemann

[56]   Callahan, S. (2009), Why some leaders inspire action while others are mostly forgettable – the vital role of storytelling, Anecdote White Papers, http://www.anecdote.com.au/papers/VitalRoleOfStorytelling_1.pdf, accessed on 29 April 2010

[57]   For a critique of storytelling from a narrative perspective see Dave Snowden's blog on Cognitive Edge: http://www.cognitive-edge.com/blogs/dave/2007/06/confusing_story_telling_with_n.php#more, accessed on 25 March 2010

has championed mining the unstructured raw material contained in narratives (short anecdotes that have not yet become received wisdom) as a way to understand and influence decision-making within complex systems. Snowden's narrative sense making approach goes as far as to critique storytelling as likely to lead to organisational orthodoxies that come laden with a baggage of assumptions and values that are then not open to challenge (staff get locked into the story). In many ways this critique reveals the negative flip side of storytelling's ability to influence. In terms of learning narrative approaches therefore suggest that in adopting storytelling techniques we need to be very conscious of power dimensions in terms of who is telling stories to whom, with what purpose. A positive bias towards a diversity of storytellers, especially privileging little heard voices and critical perspectives is appropriate. Related experience in the field of agricultural extension supports this insight. Digital Green (DG)[58] is an Indian based research project which makes use of participatory video and the assumption that farmers would be more motivated to adopt a farming technique when they see fellow farmers adopting the same technique and experiencing benefits.

Digital Green participatory video approach means that farmers themselves develop their content, produce videos and the later experiences 'minimal' editing before being shared with other using various mediums of communication including laptops, television, DVD players and even cable networks. By getting a diversity of storytellers to communicate extension message Digital Green has achieved a fivefold increase in application of newly learnt farming methods compared to the baseline during its pilot phase.

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[58]   Digital Green: http://research.microsoft.com/en-us/um/india/projects/digitalgreen/default.htm, accessed on 29 April 2010