

CAPACITY BUILDING & DEVELOPMENT FOR TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT: ARE WE READY FOR 2010?

A.Z. SOKO

Department of Roads & Transport, Private Bag X0023, BHISHO 5605
Tel: +27 43 604 7571. Fax: +27 43 643 4898. Mobile: +27 82 543 5949
E-mail: al.soko@dot.ecprov.gov.za

ABSTRACT

(An introspective analysis of available technical skills in the Province of the Eastern Cape)

One of the biggest constraints within the Province of the Eastern Cape on the development of multimodal transport and adoption of logistics solutions is the limited number of trained personnel available to the province and the local spheres of government. The provision of a full range of multimodal transport services requires extensive, detailed and up-to-date knowledge of whole range of issues, including generic technical background and applicable international conventions, transport planning, dangerous goods regulations, as well as core management capabilities, including well developed marketing skills and business acumen to run these organisations.

In addition, due to the complexity of the tasks and responsibilities assumed by the transport engineers and planners on behalf of the government, a thorough knowledge of transport, related policies and precedents can help in interpretation and proper implementation of these policies.

The purpose of the paper is to stimulate dialogue, provide direction and guidance so that our capacity building efforts are coordinated, appropriately focused, and efficient. The paper looks at the current state of affairs in the province, identifies transport and infrastructure issues restraining development; emphasis the need for a focused capacity building in transport for 2010 and beyond.

One part of the paper provides a brief description of capacity building and development, various strategies used in capacity building initiatives world-wide; and based on these will try to set standards of practice for the province. It will also present findings from studies carried out in various district and local municipalities in the province. The paper will be limited to the fields of built environment, civil and transport engineering.

1. INTRODUCTION

Capacity, capacity building, and organisational effectiveness are all related, but they are not the same. Therefore, capacity of organisations has to be analysed on three different levels, viz. the individual level (skills, knowledge, qualifications), the entity level (organisational structure, decision-making system, work culture etc.) and the systems level (regulatory framework, supporting policies). However, capacity-building cannot be limited to training, but has to address constraint and support factors on all three levels.

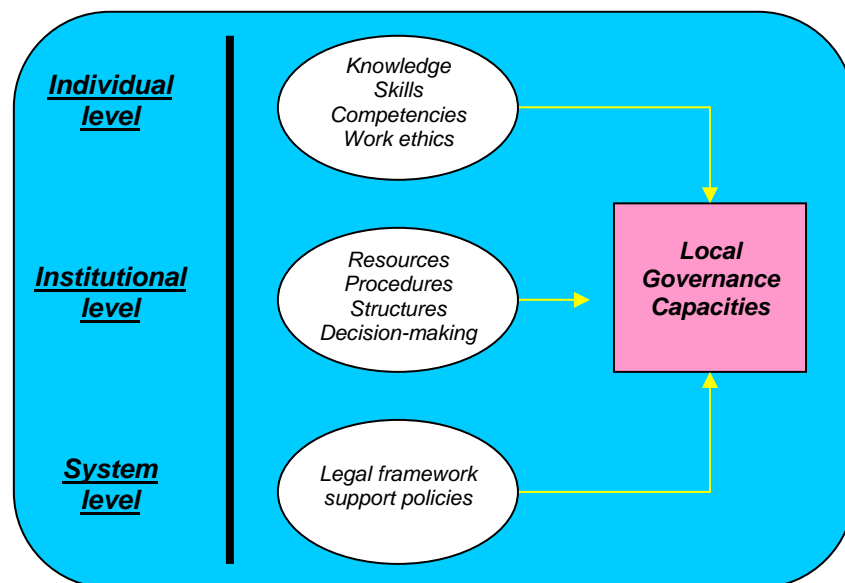


Figure 1. Three Dimensions of Capacity.

Deborah Linnell described **capacity** as an “organisation’s ability to achieve its mission effectively and to sustain itself over the long term”, but capacity also refers to the skills and capabilities of individuals. One of the most widely used new definitions sees *capacity as an ability of individuals, organisations or systems to perform appropriate functions effectively, efficiently and sustainably*. Current thinking links capacity with performance of the defined and appropriate functions and tasks, i.e. they should contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives of the entities. (*What do we know about capacity building? Anneli Milen, June 2001*)

Looking at the definitions of capacity above, **capacity building** can then be defined as those activities that improve an organisation’s ability to achieve its mission or a person’s ability to define and realise his/her goals or to do his/her job more effectively. However as depicted in figure 1 above, there is always two sides in capacity building. On one side we have organisations, wherein, capacity building may relate to almost any aspect of its work: improved governance, leadership, mission and strategy, administration (including human resources, financial management, and legal matters), program development and implementation, fundraising & income generation, diversity, partnerships & collaboration, evaluation, advocacy & policy change, marketing, positioning, planning, etc. On the other hand we have individuals, where capacity building may relate to leadership development, advocacy skills, training/speaking abilities, technical skills, organising skills, and other areas of personal and professional development. The thinking about capacity building has moved from a focus to individual training to development of institutions and further to the complex systems thinking of today. The new definitions emphasise the continuing process of strengthening of abilities to perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives and understand and deal with development needs. The concept overlaps with and includes human resources development and various management approaches and trends. It is broader than just organisational development; it is essentially an internal process, which may only be accelerated by outside assistance. (*What do we know about capacity building?, Anneli Milen, June 2001*)

At the end of the spectrum there is the overarching organisational effectiveness, which relates to the capacity of an organisation to sustain the people, strategies, learning, infrastructure and resources it needs to continue to achieve its mission. This is a long-term

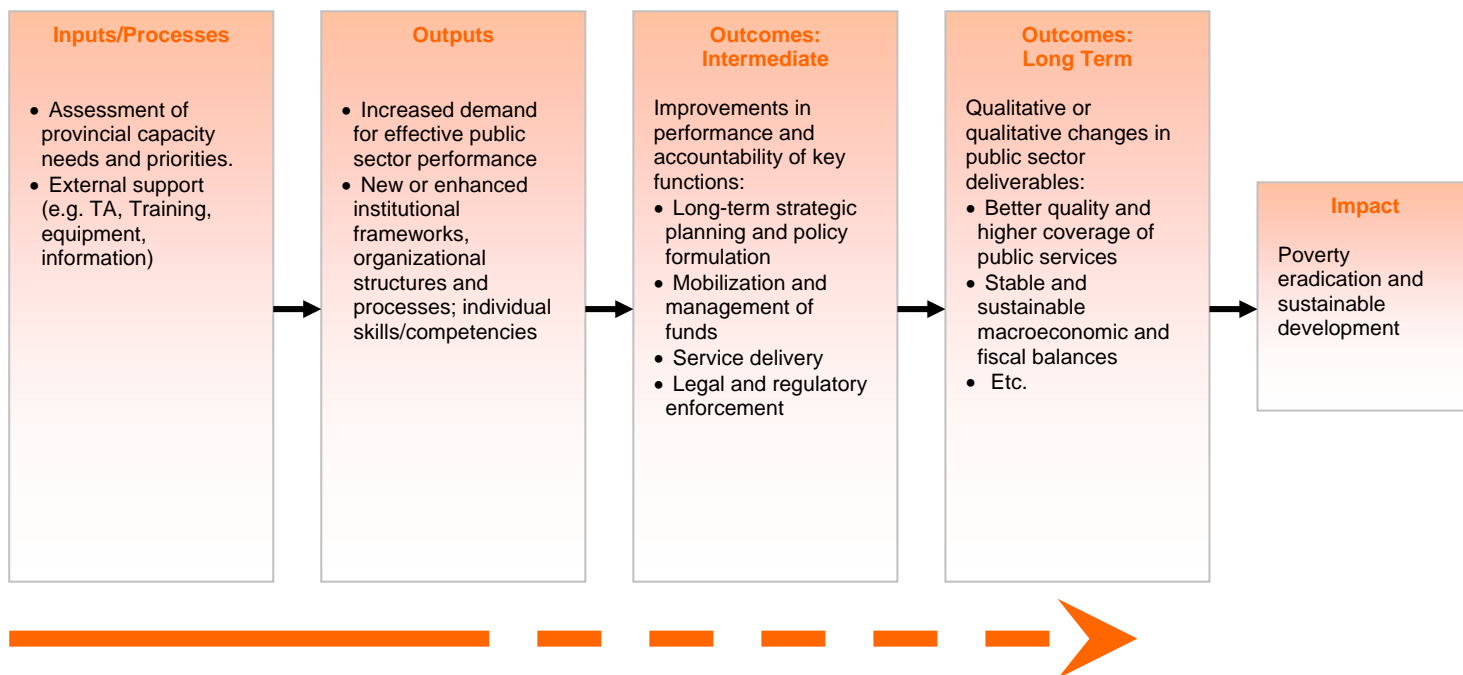
outcome that some capacity building strategies may affect, while others may not (and this is acceptable in the continuum of management support service strategies needed to build capacity). The various frameworks for measuring organisational effectiveness can be helpful in defining indicators for the success of capacity-building initiatives. (*Evaluation of Capacity Building: Lessons from the Field* by Deborah Linnell)

Capacity development programmes consist essentially of three phases. The phases are interlinked and overlap to form a continuous cycle. According to the current thinking they all include the same elements of working in genuine partnerships, involving stakeholders, examining capacity as part of a wider environment, adopting the process thinking and having a long-term perspective and commitment.

The first phase, **needs assessment** for capacity building is a basis for designing a strategic plan. Capacity gaps are identified by first defining the essential capacities at individual, team, organisation and system levels for achievement of policy or organisational or programme goals and objectives. Assessment of existing capacities is then compared with the future needs. In practice, this process may take several rounds. The challenge in capacity assessment is to link the assessment with planning of strategies and tasks, to examine enabling and hindering factors for good performance at all levels, to choose appropriate methods, and to keep in mind that the purpose of the assessment is to lead to improvement of performance.

In the second phase, **strategies and actions** in capacity building are tailor-made for each situation on the basis of identification of capacity gaps. As root causes for capacity gaps occur usually at different levels, several types of activities are required. Some may be more conventional such as workshops, courses, technical assistance, but they need to be planned in a broader context than before. The sector wide approach and twinnings between institutions are examples of promising modalities to promote genuine partnerships.

The last part of a capacity building cycle, **monitoring and evaluation**, has been largely neglected and is now only emerging. It is important to focus on the motivation for the evaluation: the capacity development process itself, the programme management process. General evaluation methodologies can be applied. However, for instance the long time scales in capacity building have to be kept in mind: outcomes may take up to 20 years to show, while processes can be changed in a couple of years. Use of mixed sets of qualitative and quantitative measurements and output, outcome and process indicators are recommended in the recent literature, see Figure 2 below.



Evaluation Scope

Figure 2. Capacity Building Results Chain and Evaluation Scope.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AREA

The Province of the Eastern Cape is very diverse. Geographically, it is characterised by very sparsely populated rural areas and two (2) densely populated metropolis or urban areas (Nelson Mandela Metro and Buffalo City). It also has a very diverse population in terms of other dimensions of difference: race/ethnicity, disability status, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and those who are migrant workers. A transport system to serve this diverse population must be adaptable to many settings.

3. TRANSPORTATION IN THE PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

The province consists of 6 District Municipalities and 38 Local Municipalities. Generally the province is characterized by approximately 55 000 km of roads, of which \pm 8 500 is tarred roads and the remaining \pm 46 500 km is gravel roads (i.e. access, district and minor roads). In terms of systems infrastructure there is approximately 116 number of taxi associations, \pm 11 774 number of operators, \pm 222 number of taxi ranks, where \pm 299 256 number of passengers are dispatched daily and 29 478 number of taxi trips take place on the daily basis.

3.1 The Past - [The Cape Provincial Administration, Transkei and Ciskei]

Prior to 1994, this region was made up of two (2) Bantustans i.e. Ciskei and Transkei with the then Cape Province (CPA) in between. The CPA had its focus on a selected group, which constituted far less than 5% of the present Eastern Cape population. Therefore it would be inequitable to compare the failures of the present government to the selective, limited, no holistic and less broad successes of the past governments – if any. The Bantustans had little or no initiatives at all in terms of transport development as they were mostly dependent on SA for financial support. However they had bus services ferrying passengers across the land, especially rural dwellers without any consideration for integration with other modes.

3.2 The Present - [Ten years into the new dispensation]

In the year 2004, 984 employees of the 4,768 excess staff in the province were placed in various departments. The question is whether these had the skills needed by the receiving departments and whether the departments had development plans to capacitated and re-skill these employees for long-term benefit of the province.

Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) was introduced by all departments in the early months of the 2003/2004 financial year. Whether the systems has or is achieving the desired results is still to be seen. Two years later it seems employees are still struggling to see to rationale behind PMDS and those who do see it, seem to be more interested on the potential financial benefits than anything else. The interest seems to be more on signing of agreements and there is a very absurd monitoring and evaluation systems in place to align the other processes of the system

Transport systems, however are still not integrated and dominated by the minibus taxi industry, with sporadic government subsidized bus services in some areas of the former Bantustans. There is also a huge backlog on roads, especially gravel and access roads.

3.3 The Future - [Where are we going - are we in the right direction?]

The transportation burden faced by rural communities on a daily basis in rural South Africa is real and substantial. Many rural communities are not connected to the main rural network and do not have reliable access to socio-economic development opportunities, goods and services. This lack of mobility and accessibility of goods and persons has limited their participation in economic activities and has further entrenched their isolation and marginalization from the mainstream economy. A clear linkage can therefore be discerned between rural poverty and issues of access, with access to appropriate transportation networks [or rather the lack thereof] being regarded as one of the most significant determinants of rural poverty.

Within the Eastern Cape, these access issues are compounded by the legacy of colonial and apartheid spatial economic planning, with continued bifurcation between the relatively developed western regions of the province [and the urban centres in particular], and the underdeveloped former Bantustan spatial economy in the east. Addressing this uneven development is at the heart of the Provincial Growth and Development Program (PGDP), with its six-fold strategy of rolling out a comprehensive safety net for the poor, transforming the agrarian economy, diversifying and developing manufacturing and tourism, developing human resources, developing infrastructure, and public sector and institutional transformation. (EC Rural Transport Strategic Framework, March 2004).

The PGDP is promising to be but one of the many answers the province might have been looking for, the only question is whether the province does have enough capacity to deliver and realise all these ideals.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

For provinces wishing to encourage transport planners and engineers to move into the public service arena, there is a need to provide not only training and education but also incentives to attract high caliber candidates, with the objective of enhancing capacities and service delivery.

Policy makers also need to develop greater awareness and understanding of transport and development services so that they could facilitate and help the government develop its full potential.

The author also suggests that past imbalances can be corrected by investing in the education and training of the labour market, especially in the transportation and traffic engineering sector. An incentive programme for staff may be implemented whereby they are given the opportunity to participate in training courses and be remunerated for their achievements.

As it is done presently through the Department of Labour and various SETA's; departments can also host learners requiring practical experience as part of their learnership/internship programme. At the end of the learnership period these trainees ought to be employable, however this is not always the case, as the initiative in SA is hampered by lack of proper mentoring as well as coordinated efforts by the SETA's and Labour on follow-up, evaluation and monitoring.

Moreover, the department's and district's technical personnel can be outsourced to undertake work with service providers employed by these organs of state and acquire the skills required of them in the long-term. People investment is the way to go.

Over the years, much international knowledge has accumulated on capacity building. The experience and learning come from different sectors but reinforce each other in a synergistic relationship. Hence, in future capacity building we are better able to avoid falling repeatedly into the same pitfalls than has been the case in capacity building actions for decades. According to the current knowledge, the following principles are key factors for successful capacity building and should be taken into account in developing capacity building in policy making and strategic management:

- Building local ownership and self-reliance.
- Practising genuine partnership.
- Understanding the context specificity of capacity and its development.
- Examining capacities in a context of systems and strategic management.
- Having a long-term commitment of partners.
- Exercising the process thinking in all phases of capacity building: setting objectives, planning strategies, taking actions and evaluating results.

The relationship between the Province of the Eastern Cape and its member districts is different. The province as an intergovernmental/interdepartmental specialised agency of the national government should be, in principle, be in a unique position to support its member districts to build their capacities in equal partnership. How this opportunity is realised depends on clear articulation of needs and demands of the member districts, on the capacity of the province and its partners to respond, and on the commitment of all partners to work together.

Eastern Cape regions/districts must improve the performance of their organisations if they are to achieve their stated goals of reducing poverty, accelerating economic growth, and providing better services to their citizens as depicted in the Provincial Growth and Development Program (PGDP) 2004-2014. The continued weakness of the public sector in most districts in the province reflects deeply rooted conditions that are the legacy of such influences as Apartheid, political conflict, and the underdevelopment of the private and non-governmental sectors. Long-term, systemic approaches are required to build public sector capacity; especially at local level under these conditions. Figure 2 above depicts a long-term strategy, which may be implemented for capacity building with an evaluation mechanism to evaluate results of implemented initiatives.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings accentuate the importance of approaching capacity building in the Eastern Cape as a core objective and ensuring that provincial capacity building support is province-owned, results oriented, and evidence-based. The author recommends that:

- ✓ The Province, at the political level, should strengthen its knowledge base and amplify its framework for public sector capacity building to better help its districts:
 - a) Prioritise capacity building activities and give guidance in this regard;
 - b) Link institutional, organisational, and human capacity developments;
 - c) Transform traditional capacity building tools to improve results
 - d) Ensure that guidelines and processes are in place for self and independent evaluation of the provincial capacity building interventions.
- ✓ The Province should reassess what role training should play in its capacity building support, how it should be provided, and what should be the respective roles of different role players in any future support for this activity.
- ✓ District senior management should ensure that provincial strategies are used effectively to help districts identify and strengthen the capacities they need to plan, implement, and measure the results of their transport planning. They should also ensure that all operations that aim to build public sector capacity are based on adequate assessments of capacity needs and have ways to monitor and evaluate results.
- ✓ As proposed on TV recently (Interface), maybe looking at the retired engineers and calling them back to provide a service, i.e. be coaches and mentors to the aspiring and young future planners and engineers may be the answer. I am told that the then Department of Transport in the province once tried this using retired professionals from Germany, I suppose South Africans can do the same job and perhaps at a cheaper cost to the government. Like Branscombe in the SAICE magazine said, *“Here is a wealth of experience and ability that could easily be tapped for the benefit of South Africa. Why a civil engineer is considered too old at 65 when a politician can become president of a country at 75 is beyond me. I suggest that SAICE should compile a register of the retired engineers who would be available for employment to fill the impending shortage, instead of going overseas to recruit unknowns.”* CJS Branscombe (Civil Engineering, August 2005, Vol. 13 No. 8)
- ✓ Sector leadership should develop sector-specific guidance on diagnosing public sector capacity needs and ways of monitoring and evaluating interventions.
- ✓ The other alternative may be the deployment of personnel from the Department of Transport (DOT) on temporary assignments to enhance and guide both the province and local municipalities for long-term self reliance; the same can be said of provincial personnel.

6. REFERENCES

- [1] Armington, P, September 1997. An integrated approach to the Implementation of capacity building Strategies.
- [2] Linnell, D. Evaluation of Capacity Building: *Lessons from the Field*.
- [3] Milen, A, June 2001. What do we know about capacity building?
- [4] OED, 2005. Capacity building in Africa: *An evaluation of the World Bank Support*.
- [5] Office of the Premier, 2004. First 100 Days Report, Province of the Eastern Cape.
- [6] Succeed, September/October 2005.
- [7] Civil Engineering, August 2005, Vol. 13 No. 8