CAPACITY FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
The contrasting reality between the recognition of the effectiveness of capacity development as a path to achieving development and the apparent ineffectiveness of many capacity development interventions brings into question the ability of organisations to take on their envisaged role as external partners. Through interviews with informants from eleven different organisations, the study generates empirical insights into which challenges organisations encounter in their efforts to strengthen their capacities for capacity development, and how these challenges can be overcome. Based on a theoretical foundation that brings together the two concepts of capacity and change management, the study finds that the challenges organisations encounter reside in the external environment, at the organisational level and at the individual level. The challenges include a cultural practice in the wider sector that favours short-term interventions; lack of sufficient knowledge-based resources; lack of leadership buy-in; imbedding the change into the organisational culture; staff not internalising learning; and resistance to change. To overcome the challenges in the external environment, the study finds that organisations need to strengthen their influential capacities. To overcome challenges at the organisational level, the study finds that organisations need to develop a strong evidence-based case for change and develop a better understanding of the implication of organisational culture on change efforts. Finally, to overcome challenges at the individual level, the study suggests that organisations should change their approach to learning in favour of creating a psychologically safe learning environment that enables staff to learn with and through others and from experience.

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1. Introduction

While international development paradigms have changed and evolved over time, capacity development has come to be widely recognised as a necessary path for achieving development (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 1). The idea of strengthening national and local capacities to achieve development objectives is not a new concept but traces back to the start of organised international development cooperation in the 1950s (Becker, 2014, p. 207). Since then, the concept has evolved substantially, from the provision of input-based technical assistance towards a systems-oriented approach, placing local ownership in its core (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 2; Degnbol-Martinussen & Engberg-Pedersen, 2003, p. 51).

Today, capacity development has nearly as many definitions as there are organisations working with it, which according to Hagelsteen and Becker (2013) has led to a Babylonian confusion amongst practitioners. This becomes clear, when capacity development is understood both as an objective, an approach, a process, a means and an outcome in itself (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 22). In its broadest sense, capacity development refers to "*the achievement of a goal over time*" (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 21). In this study, capacity development is understood as "*the process by which people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain their capacity over time, in order to achieve development results*" (adapted from UNDG 2017, p. 2; UNISDR in CADRI, 2011, p. 9). This definition has been chosen because it encompasses three important elements in capacity development:

1) Capacity resides at various levels.

2) Capacity development is an endogenous process.

3) Capacity develops over time.

The acknowledgement that capacity development is an endogenous process implies a shift in the distribution of roles and responsibilities within development cooperation, inasmuch as it requires external partners[1] to move away from leading development projects to instead supporting locally-owned and led processes (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 27). This shift in the distribution of roles and responsibilities becomes evident in the first principle of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which places local governments in the driving seat of their

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[1] External partners are in this study understood as organisations that implement capacity development interventions.

own development and commits donor countries to "[r]*espect partner country leadership and help strengthen their capacity to exercise it*" (OECD, 2008, p. 4). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015, para 41) builds on the same principle, recognising "*that each country has primary responsibility for its own economic and social development*". Accordingly, the new role for external partners in capacity development interventions revolves around facilitation, advisory, coaching and mentoring for local or national long-term development (Bolger, 2000, p. 5; Armstrong, 2013, p. 4).

The growing recognition of capacity development has been accompanied by large sums of donor funding, and yet the success rate of capacity development interventions remains very low (OECD, 2006a, p. 11; Armstrong, 2013, p. 4). A lack of local ownership has long been regarded as a key cause for many failed capacity development interventions (Lopes & Theisohn, 2003, p. 29). Despite recognising that capacity development is an endogenous process, experience shows that many capacity development interventions still appear to follow an outside-in, top-down approach (Armstrong, 2013, p. 6). Reportedly, international organisations often take the lead in assessing and planning capacity development interventions, challenging local ownership leaving limited room for adjustments during implementation (Armstrong, 2013, p. 5). Hagelsteen and Burke (2016, p. 48) have found that in practice, international organisations engaging in capacity development for disaster risk reduction in practice still predominantly provide North-South technical assistance, with mentoring, coaching and advisory roles being almost non-existent. Accordingly, it would appear that within capacity development, "'*knowing' and 'doing' diverge many times*" (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 2). In recent years, a high-tempered debate on the performance of development organisations has been spurred (see e.g. Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015, p. 707; Green, 2012). Armstrong (2013, p. 5) argues that recommendations for how to improve performance in capacity development interventions are easy to come about, however, they are rarely implemented. There is therefore a need to understand what hinders the implementation of changes that would enable external partners to engage successfully in capacity development interventions.

1.1 Scope of the Research

The contrasting reality between the growing recognition of the effectiveness of capacity development as an approach, and the apparent ineffectiveness of many capacity development interventions has inspired this paper, by bringing into question the ability of organisations to take on their envisaged role as external partners in capacity development. With the obvious exception of scholars such as Lusthaus, Adrien, Anderson and Perstinger[2], the topic of how external partners can enhance their own capacity to engage in capacity development still appears to be rather unexplored within academia. To help close this gap, the purpose of this study is to generate empirical insights into how organisations enable themselves to engage in capacity development. More specifically, the study sets out to answer the following research question:

Which challenges do organisations encounter in their efforts to strengthen their capacities to be able to engage in international capacity development interventions, and how can these challenges be overcome?

1.2 Outline

To answer the research question stated above, the paper will first present the reader with the theoretical foundation upon which the research is based. This includes a presentation of capacity and change management that will be guide the analysis of the data, which are the two concepts that will help generate an understanding of which capacities external partners identify as necessary to strengthen; which challenges they encounter in doing so; and how these challenges can be overcome. Subsequently, chapter three will proceed with outlaying the research design and the methodological considerations that have guided the study. More specifically, the chapter will present the rationale for deploying a qualitative research strategy that uses semi-structured interviews for the data collection. In chapter four, the findings will be presented and elevated into a broader discussion, drawing on the theoretical foundation and pulling in additional literature from academia to gain a deeper understanding of the capacities organisations strengthen to be able to engage in capacity development; the challenges they encounter when doing so; and how these challenges can be overcome. A conclusion will complete the research and offer an answer to the stated research question. To ensure the research contributes to academia and practitioners alike, the conclusion is finally translated

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[2] See e.g. Lusthaus, Adrien, & Perstinger, 1999; and Lusthaus, Adrien, & Anderson, 2002

into a set of recommendations that can help guide organisations in their efforts to strengthen their capacities to be able to engage successfully in international capacity development interventions.

2. Theoretical Foundation

This chapter discusses the concepts of capacity and organisational change management, which forms the theoretical foundation for the study. Organisations today operate in a complex environment, characterised by uncertainty and ambiguity (Becker, 2014, p. 1). This means that organisations not only have to demonstrate good performance in the present but also be able to maintain their future relevance through innovation and adaptation (Horton, 2003, p. 42; Lusthaus, Adrien, & Anderson, 2002, pp. 10-11; Coffey, 2009, p. 5). It is with this recognition that issues of capacity and change management are increasingly being viewed as important managerial responsibilities (Todnem By, 2005, p. 369).

2.1 Strengthening Capacity for Current and Future Performance

The two concepts of capacity and performance are closely intertwined, inasmuch as capacity in the simplest terms can be defined as the *"potential to perform"* (Horton, et al., 2003, p. 19). What this "potential" exactly entails is still subject to debate, as there appears to be a plethora of different definitions of capacity (Brinkerhoff & Morgan, 2010, p. 2). The debate appears to largely revolve around whether capacity refers to the conditions that need to be in place, or the ability to utilise said conditions (Schulz, 2005, p. 12).

Perhaps one of the most important features of the contemporary understanding of capacity is the recognition that capacity resides at different levels that influence one-another (Bolger, 2000, p. 3). One framework which is commonly used in development cooperation today is proposed by UNDP (2009, p. 11), and entails a distinction between three levels: the enabling environment, the organisational, and the individual. The term 'enabling environment' may however be misleading, as conditions in the external environment can indeed also be constraining (Lusthaus, Adrien, & Anderson, 2002, p. 12). For this reason, the study instead prefers the term external environment to enabling environment, as the conditions determine whether the external environment is enabling or constraining to organisations' ability to engage successfully in capacity development.

Based on the above, this study understands capacity as *the ability to develop and utilise conducive conditions at the individual level, the organisational level and in the external environment for present and future performance*. Capacity here takes the shape of a sensitising concept, which provides "*a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances*" (Blumer, 1954 in Bryman, 2012, p. 388). As prevails from this understanding of capacity (and illustrated in figure 1) organisational performance in capacity development can be influenced by internal capacities (individual and organisational) as well as external conditions (Bolger, 2000, p. 3), whilst organisations are simultaneously able to influence the environment in which they operate (Kaplan, 2000, p. 518). Accordingly, problems and solutions related to organisations' capacity must be approached from a systems perspective, which views organisations as part of a greater whole, rather than as isolated entities (Bolger, 2000, p. 3).

Figure 1 Factors influencing organisational performance. Inspired by Lusthaus, Adrien, & Anderson, 2002, p. 10.
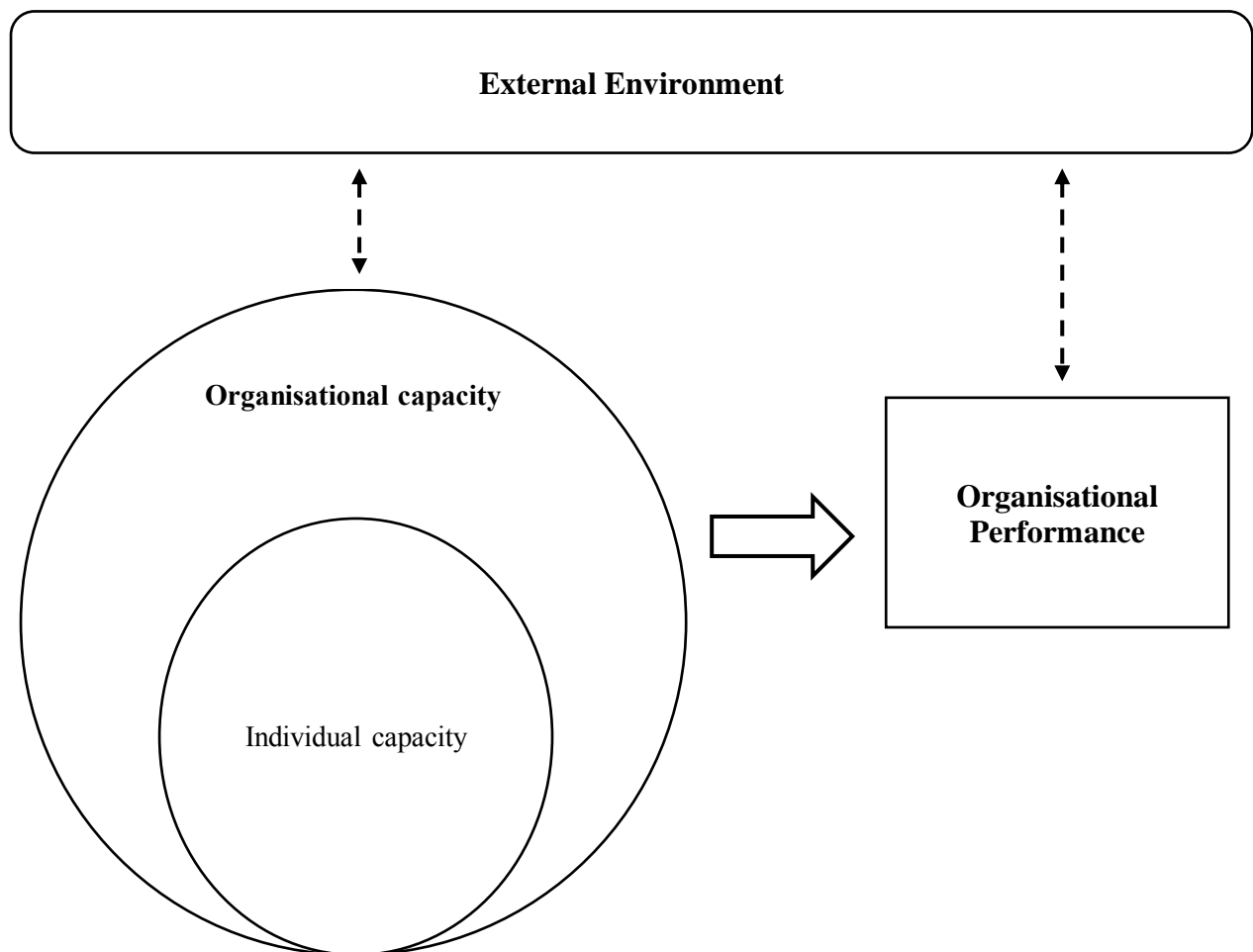
Capacities can broadly be classified as either hard or soft (Pearson, 2011). Hard capacities, as the name suggests, are more tangible and encompass technical and functional conditions and capabilities (Pearson, 2011). Soft capacities on the other hand, are more impalpable (Pearson, 2011). Table 1 below presents examples of hard and soft capacities.

Table 1 Examples of different types of capacities. (Based on Pearson, 2011; Horton et al., 2003; Lusthaus, Adrien & Anderson, 2002; UNDP, 2009)

	Hard capacities	**Soft capacities**
External environment (enabling or constraining conditions)	Laws, policies, technology, systems, labour market pools	Culture, social norms, power-relations
Organisational	Structures, systems, policies, procedures, strategies, resources,	Organisational culture, values, leadership, collective experience, change readiness and change management
Individual	Technical skills, explicit knowledge, methodologies	Experience, relational skills (e.g. negotiation, teamwork, conflict resolution, facilitation, etc.), problem-solving skills, ability and willingness to self-reflect and learn from experience

Horton et al. (2003, p. 26) and Pearson (2011) suggest making a further distinction between operational capacities, i.e. the capacities that enable an organisation to perform in the present, and adaptive capacities, i.e. the capacities that enable an organisation to learn and respond to changes in the external environment. The capacities presented in table 1 above can contain varying degrees of both operational and adaptive elements (Pearson, 2011; Horton, et al., 2003, p. 26).

2.2 Challenges to Change

The issues of capacity and change management are closely linked, inasmuch as change management can be defined as "*the process of continually renewing an organization's* [capacities] *to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal* [stakeholders]" (adapted from Moran & Brightman, 2000, p. 66). Whilst the field has gotten increased attention over the years (Todnem By, 2005, p. 370), studies however show that the majority of organisational change initiatives fail (Balogun & Hailey, 2008, p. 1). This section sets out to explore what is known about the challenges organisations may encounter in their efforts to strengthen internal capacities. Firstly, the works of some of the leading scholars within the field of organisational change management will be compared, before presenting and summarising the challenges each of these foresee in table 2.

John Kotter, Edgar Schein and William Bridges stand out as three leading and most frequently cited scholars, when it comes to organisations' efforts to implement change, and the challenges they face in doing so (Heckelman, 2017, p. 14; Stragalas, 2010, p. 31). These three scholars approach the topic from different angles. Kotter (1995) outlays a model for implementing change at the organisational level, whilst Schein's (2010) work revolves around culture, and approaches change through the interplay between individuals and groups. Bridges, meanwhile, focuses on transition, i.e. the psychological process, in which individuals internalise, accept and modify their behaviours in accordance to the proposed change (Bridges, 2017, p. 233).

After having observed changing organisations over several decades, Kotter concludes that successful organisational change processes go through eight distinct steps: (1) establish a sense of urgency; (2) form a powerful guiding coalition; (3) create a vision; (4) communicate the vision; (5) empower others to act on the vision; (6) plan for and create short-term wins; (7) consolidate improvements and produce more change; (8) institutionalise new approaches (Kotter, 1995, p. 61). Kotter postulates that skipping any or several steps will lead to nothing but dissatisfying results for an organisation's change efforts (Kotter, 1995, p. 59), and lists a number of challenges to each step, which are summarised in table 2.

Building on the original works of Kurt Lewin (1947), Schein lays forth a three-stage process to change: (1) unfreezing; (2) learning; (3) internalising (Schein, 2010, p. 300). The model deploys an understanding of change as the efforts of a human system (in this case an organisation) to maintain its integrity and autonomy in the face of changes in the external environment (ibid). As such, the perceived integrity of an organisation in the eyes of its

members forms an equilibrium, which is maintained through the development of a set of shared basic assumptions that forms the system's identity and guides the behaviour of its members (Schein, 2010, pp. 18, 300). Accordingly, for any change to take place the organisation must encounter a disequilibrium that illuminates a disconnect between how the organisation currently operates and the achievement of the organisation's goals and objectives (Schein, 2010, p. 301). Paramount for change is to create a survival anxiety that surpasses what Schein (2010, pp. 301-304) refers to as *learning anxiety,* i.e. the anxiety that arises when an individual has to unlearn something previously known, because he or she by doing so risks losing his or her position, competency, identity, or membership in a group. Each of these anxieties may result in what is commonly known as *resistance to change* (ibid).

The success of any organisational change process ultimately depends on whether or not things are done differently by the people who are affected by the change (Bridges, 2017, p. 274). According to Bridges (2017, p. 233), this outcome is contingent upon the *transition* of individuals. In a successful transition, individuals go through three stages: (1) ending / loosing / letting go; (2) the neutral zone; (3) the new beginning (Bridges, 2017, p. 257). During the first stage, the individual experiences an initial feeling of pain and loss, which if left unaddressed may result in anxiety or create a transition deficit, materialising as overreactions to seemingly insignificant changes in the future (Bridges, 2017, p. 695). The second phase is where "*psychological realignments and repatternings take place*" (Bridges, 2017, p. 269). Here, people are reoriented and prepared for the new beginning (Bridges, 2017, p. 1827). However, it is also a no-man's-land, where anxiety and uncertainty thrive (Bridges, 2017, p. 994). The new beginning marks the time when the change begins to work (Bridges, 2017, p. 264). It is during this final stage that individuals emerge with renewed energy and discover the purpose and success of the change (Bridges, 2017, pp. 264, 269). Table 2 below lists the challenges organisations may encounter in their efforts to implement changes, as postulated by the three scholars presented above.

Table 2 Challenges to change

Scholar	Level	Stages	Challenges
Kotter	Organisational	Establish a sense of urgency.	Underestimating the challenge of getting people out of their comfort zones (Kotter, 1995, p. 60).
			Lack of patience (Ibid).
			Executives become paralyzed by the risks (Ibid).
			Lack of leadership buy in (Ibid).
			Leaders do not champion the change (Ibid).
		Form a powerful guiding coalition.	Underestimating the importance of a guiding coalition (Kotter, 1995, p. 62).
			Underestimating the difficulties of establishing a powerful guiding coalition (Kotter, 1995, p. 62).
			Underestimating the importance of teamwork (Kotter, 1995, p. 62).
			The coalition is not led by a key line manager (Kotter, 1995, p. 62).
		Create a vision.	The vision is too complicated (Kotter, 1995, p. 63).
			Focus on details instead of the big picture. E.g. developing plans, directives, and programmes instead of a vision statement (Ibid).
		Communicate the vision.	Vision is under-communicated (Kotter, 1995, p. 63).
			The leadership's behaviour contradicts the communicated vision, hence limiting the credibility of the change communication (Kotter, 1995, p. 64).
		Empower others to act on the vision.	Inability to remove obstacles to change, such as an unfit organisational structure, job profiles, performance review systems, powerful individuals who resist the change etc. (Kotter, 1995, p. 64).
		Plan for and create short- term wins.	Passively hoping for short term wins instead of actively planning for short term wins (Kotter, 1995, p. 65).
			Momentum diminishes and resistance to the change grows (Kotter, 1995, p. 65).
		Consolidate improvements and produce more change.	Declaring victory before the change has become part of the organisational culture (Kotter, 1995, p. 66).

		Institutionalise new approaches.	Without adequate guidance, people draw flawed conclusions on the causation of change in performance (Kotter, 1995, p. 66).
			Succession plans and decisions do not prioritise change champions (Kotter, 1995, p. 66).
Schein	Groups	Unfreezing	Learning anxiety surpasses survival anxiety, leading to resistance to change (Schein, 2010, p. 304).
		Cognitive restructuring	The learning is not internalised, and staff returns to former behaviour after the coercive pressure for change diminishes (Schein, 2010, p. 310).
		Internalising	Inability to produce and demonstrate positive results will result in a new change process (Schein, 2010, p. 311).
Bridges	Individual	Ending / losing / letting go	No clear definition and sufficient communication of what is ending, leading to three possible scenarios of confusion:
			People try to do both all the old things and the new things at the same time (Bridges, 2017, p. 841) .
			People draw their own conclusions of what to keep and what to disregard, leading to inconsistency (Bridges, 2017, p. 841).
			People stop doing all the things they did in the past, hence running the risk of discarding beneficial practices (Bridges, 2017, p. 855).
		The neutral zone	Priorities are unclear (Bridges, 2017, p. 1010).
			Information is miscommunicated (Ibid).
			Frustration and loss of confidence in the organisation's future (Ibid).
			Staff becomes polarised between the change champions and the opponents (Ibid).
		The new beginning	Anxiety re-emerges (Bridges, 2017, p. 1356).
			Fear of the risk of failure (Ibid).
			Lower confidence (Bridges, 2017, p. 1369).

3. Research Design

The study deploys a qualitative research strategy, relying on semi-structured interviews for the data collection. This approach was chosen due to its ability to generate an understanding of organisations' efforts to strengthen their capacity for capacity development, through the interpretation and reflections of informants, who have been directly involved in these processes. A pre-developed interview guide ensured that certain questions were covered in the data collection, which enabled a comparison of the answers provided during different interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 472). This was increasingly important for generating an understanding of which type of capacities the organisations identify as necessary to strengthen. Meanwhile, as empirical evidence on the topic is scarce within existing literature, it was important to simultaneously remain flexible enough to accommodate for matters that had not been anticipated (Bryman, 2012, p. 472). This flexibility was particularly useful for exploring which challenges the organisations had encountered during these processes. Lastly, the qualitative research strategy's ability to cater for the informants' opinions and hind-sight reflections was highly beneficial for generating insights into how organisations can overcome challenges to strengthening their capacities for capacity development. The following sections present the tools and methodological rationale behind how the data was collected and analysed.

3.1 Sampling Strategy

The data collection was carried out with informants representing different organisations that engage as external partners in international capacity development interventions. The physical location of the informants was deemed less important, given the international nature of the included organisations, and the fact that the study centres on the corporate efforts to strengthen internal capacities.

The study took a purposive sampling approach to the identification of informants, inasmuch as it focused on obtaining access to people with direct relevance to the research question (Bryman, 2012, p. 418). As such, the selection of informants was based on the following criterion:

  – The informant must be a focal point or have (had) a strong involvement in a given organisation's efforts to strengthen capacities for capacity development.

The study deployed a snowball sampling technique (Bryman, 2012, p. 424), in which the researcher and the supervisor pre-identified two informants that matched the criterion above. As the supervisor and researcher have previously worked with the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) it was convenient to approach informants from these two organisations first. The informants subsequently helped identify additional informants, and so forth. The snowball sampling technique appeared to be the most practical solution to gaining access to a group of professionals, who have many competing demands. In addition, it also appeared the 'easiest' way to identify informants who fitted the criterion above, as the informants themselves often know who their counterparts are in other organisations. The snowballing technique, however, also presented a number of challenges. Firstly, the researcher remained highly dependent on the availability and ability of the two initial informants to provide contact information for further informants, which caused some delays to the initial timeline for the data collection. Secondly, as the two informants provided access to their professional networks, these were in the first instance limited to Swedish Government agencies and UN agencies. In an effort to overcome both these challenges, the researcher attempted to open up additional snowballing chains by reaching out to potential informants outside these networks, whose contact information was available either publicly or through personal contacts. These efforts led to an additional two interviews and helped broaden the representativeness of the data collection. Table 3 Data collectionbelow illustrates the organisations represented in the data collection.

Table 3 Data collection

Organisations
The World Food Programme
The Food and Agriculture Organization
The International Fund for Agricultural Development
The United Nations Development Programme
The World Bank
Save the Children UK
The Swedish Civil Contingency Agency
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Swedish Police
The Swedish National Financial Management Authority
Danida Fellowship Center

The initial goal for the data collection was to conduct 10-12 interviews. This goal was identified as a feasible sample size to obtain in the one and a half month that had been allocated for the data collection process, whilst taking into consideration the likelihood of encountering the problem of non-response (Bryman, 2012, p. 199). The final data collection encompasses interviews with 11 informants. In total, 26 people were contacted. Out of these, two people declined, stating they were not relevant to the research. Two people initially came back positively but after e-mail and skype correspondence it was realised that the persons did not fit the selection criterion. One of these instead brokered contact with the appropriate person within that organisation, whilst the other organisation was excluded from the data collection all together. One person initially agreed to conduct the interview but was unable to in the end due to competing demands. Ten people never responded. In total, this adds up to a response rate of 42 percent. Additional issues that may have contributed to the low response rate include (1) email ending up in the spam folder; (2) competing demands on the targeted informant; (3) inability to successfully convince the participants of the importance of the study; (4) sensitivity regarding the topic.

Of the eleven informants, two referred to experiences from the same organisation. In addition, one informant referred to experiences from two different organisations. Accordingly, the data collection encompasses experiences from eleven different organisations through interviews with eleven different informants, although with some overlaps. When these overlaps have any implication on the presentation of findings, a footnote will provide a clarification.

3.2 Interviews

The following sections present the interview guide and how the interviews were conducted and treated.

Interview Guide

The interview guide is structured into four main parts. The first part is the introductory part, which serves the purpose of opening up the interview and make the interviewee feel comfortable. Here, the informant is asked to present themselves and provide some background information on how the organisation engages in capacity development. The second part serves to create an understanding of which types of capacities the organisation has strengthened or still needs to strengthen to be able to engage successfully in capacity development. As all the informants had been made aware of the purpose of the study prior to the interview, this question would in some cases already be covered in the informant's answer to the first question. The third part is contingent upon the second question, inasmuch as it focuses on the challenges the organisation or informant has encountered in implementing these changes and how these

challenges have been / can be overcome. In the final part the informant is invited to share any final remarks or reflections to close the interview. The full interview guide is included in Table 4 Interview Guidebelow.

Table 4 Interview Guide

Part 1: Introduction
Purpose: To open up the interview and make the interviewee feel comfortable.

Question 1	Can you please introduce yourself and briefly explain how your organisation engages in capacity development?

Part 2: Organisational Changes
Purpose: To generate a better understanding of which type of capacities the organisation prioritised / focused on strengthening.

Question 2:	Would you say your organisation has had to make certain changes, to be able to successfully carry out capacity development interventions?
Probing Q 2a:	Can you elaborate on that?
Probing Q 2b:	Can you give some examples of what the organisation has needed to change?

Part 3: Challenges to change
Purpose: To get a better understanding of which challenges the organisations have encountered and how they have been overcome.

Question 3:	Have you encountered any challenges in implementing these changes?
Probing Q 3a:	What impact did this challenge have on the change process?
Question 4:	What did the organisation do to overcome these challenges?
Probing Q 4a:	In your opinion, what should the organisation have done to overcome these challenges?

Part 4: Finalizing the interview
Purpose: To finalize the interview and give the participant a chance to express anything he/she feels is important.

Question 5	Do you have any final thoughts or reflections you would like to share?

Conducting Interviews

The interviews were scheduled to take approximately 30 – 40 minutes. However, as a number of informants had put aside a whole hour in their calendars, several of the interviews went over time. In addition to availability, several of the informants also found the topic interesting and appeared eager to extend the discussions beyond what had initially been agreed. In average, the interviews took 45 minutes, with the longest lasting one hour and 11 minutes and the shortest lasting 30 minutes. Ten of the interviews for the study were conducted over Skype and one interview was conducted via WhatsApp (voice over IP). Skype and WhatsApp were paramount for the data collection, inasmuch as they enabled the inclusion of informants that would otherwise not have been feasible to include due to their geographical location. However, vital as these technologies may have been, they also posed a number of challenges to the research. According to Bryman (2012, p. 669), Skype limits the personal interaction that otherwise characterises qualitative interviews, which could influence the willingness of the participants to share openly. Moreover, several of the interviews suffered from technical challenges, such as delayed or sudden loss of sound. This influenced not only the flow of the conversation but also the quality of the transcriptions. In two instances, issues to connect delayed the interviews. In one instance, connection was lost completely after 30 minutes and it was not possible to re-establish contact. However, despite only asking the opening question, the informant was well informed of the purpose and objective of the study and had therefore managed to cover all the themes in the interview guide within this time, meaning that the loss of connection as such did not have a big impact on the final output of the interview.

Transcribing interviews

All interviews were transcribed, in order to allow for a repeated and more thorough examination of the data (Bryman, 2012, p. 482). The researcher transcribed the interviews herself. This made the subsequent analysis easier, as the researcher had obtained a comprehensive overview of the data through the transcription. No special programme was used during this process. The quality of some of the recordings suffered under the use of Skype and WhatsApp, which challenged the transcription process and the final output. To provide anonymity to the informants, transcripts are not made publicly available with this thesis, although may be shared with peers upon securing the prior consent of informants.

3.3 Analysis

To analyse the data, the researcher made use of the program NVivo. NVivo facilitates a coding process using 'nodes', i.e. "*a collection of references about a specific theme*" (Bryman, 2012, p. 596). In the programme, it is possible to organise data in hierarchies of connected nodes (ibid).

The data analysis was an iterative process. To get an overview of the complete data collection, the data from the eleven interviews was firstly organised in accordance to the different elements of the research question (as also reflected in the interview guide), yielding three broad themes: (1) which changes organisations seek to make; (2) which challenges they encounter when seeking to make these changes; and (3) how these challenges can be overcome. These broad themes were subsequently organised under the three capacity levels presented in the theoretical framework: external environment, organisational level and individual level. Thus, under the research question three node hierarchies emerged, as illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 1 Node Hierarchies
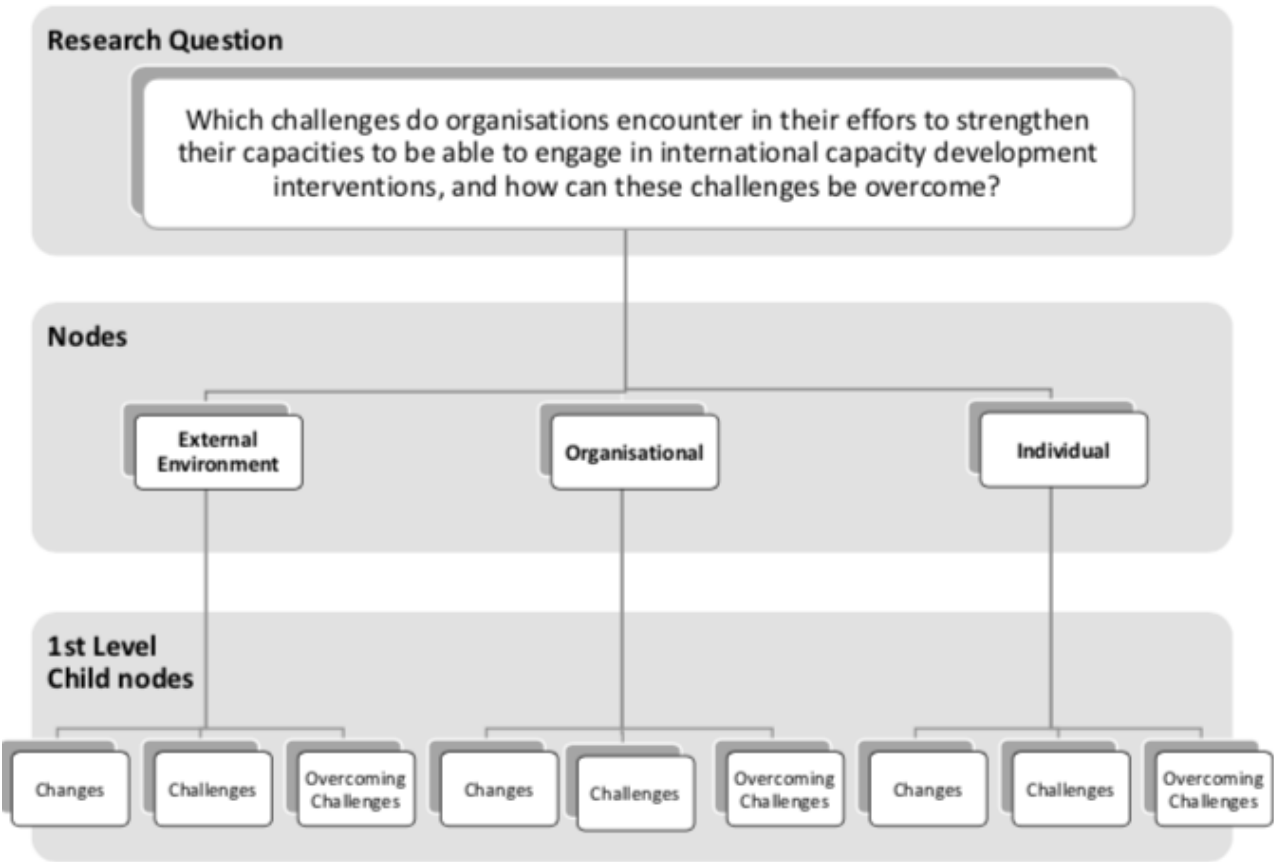
For each of these three hierarchies, the data under the 1st level child node 'Changes' was organised under the two types of capacities presented in the theoretical foundation chapter - *hard* and *soft* capacities. Subsequently, the data was hereunder coded under specific capacities, inspired by the examples presented in Table 1 Examples of Different Types of Capacities.

The data under the 1st level child node 'Challenges" was organised in accordance to the challenges to change foreseen by the leading literature on change management presented in Table 2 (see figure 4 and "Appendix 1: Challenges to Change Appearing During Interviews"). During this step in the coding process two issues emerged. Firstly, the coding process illuminated that certain challenges brought up by the informants did not feature in the literature on change management, and accordingly the researcher had to develop their own nodes for these challenges. This related exclusively to challenges encountered in the external environment. Secondly, during the coding process it became clear that some of the challenges to change presented in Table 2 are so inter-related it was impossible to clearly determine which node the data belonged under. Therefore, the following nodes were merged: challenges related to executives becoming paralysed by risks, fear of the risk of failure and lack of patience (in the data, the time it would take for the organisation to change was considered one of the paralysing risks); challenges related to lack of leadership buy-in and leaders not championing the change (in the data, lack of championship was viewed as a lack of leadership support); and challenges related to anxiety and resistance to change (according to the theoretical framework and the findings, anxieties materialise as resistance to change).

The final 1st level child node 'Overcoming Challenges to Change' adopted the same coding as 'Challenges to Change'. Accordingly, when the data featured a solution to a given challenge, this solution's node was given the same name as the corresponding challenge. When presenting the results, the findings related to the challenges organisations encounter when strengthening their capacities for capacity development and how these challenges can be overcome are therefore presented together. The three complete node hierarchies are presented below in figures 4, 5 and 6.

Figure 2 Node Hierarchy for External Environment
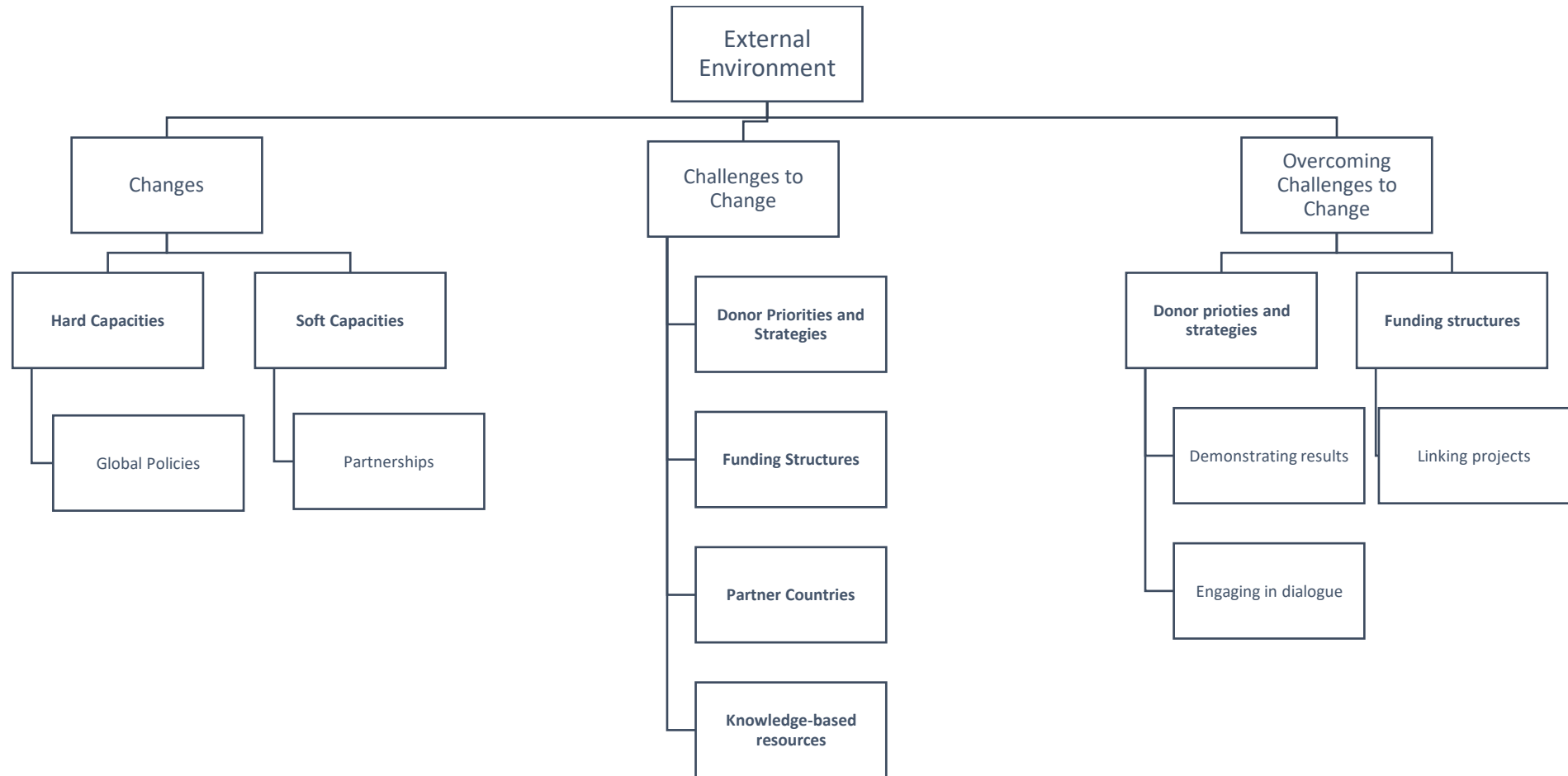
Figure 3 Node Hierarchy for Organisational Level

Organisational

Changes

- **Soft Capacities**
  - Org. Culture
  - Ability to analyse and adapt
- **Hard Capacities**
  - Strategy and policy
  - Structure
    - Financing structure
    - HR
    - Project Cycle Management
      - Assessment
      - Planning
      - M&E
  - Systems and processes
    - Resource mobilisation

Challenges to Change
- Executive become paralysed by risk and lack of patience
- Lack of leadership buy-in and championship
- Underestminating the importance of a powerful guiding coalition
- Inability to remove obstacles to change
- Delcaring victory before the change has become part of the org. culture.
- Succession plans and decisions do not prioritise change champions
- Inability to produce and demonstrate positive results
- Staff becomes polarised between change champions and opponents

Overcoming Challenges to Change
- Lack of leadership buyin and championship
  - Develop a strong evidence-based case for change
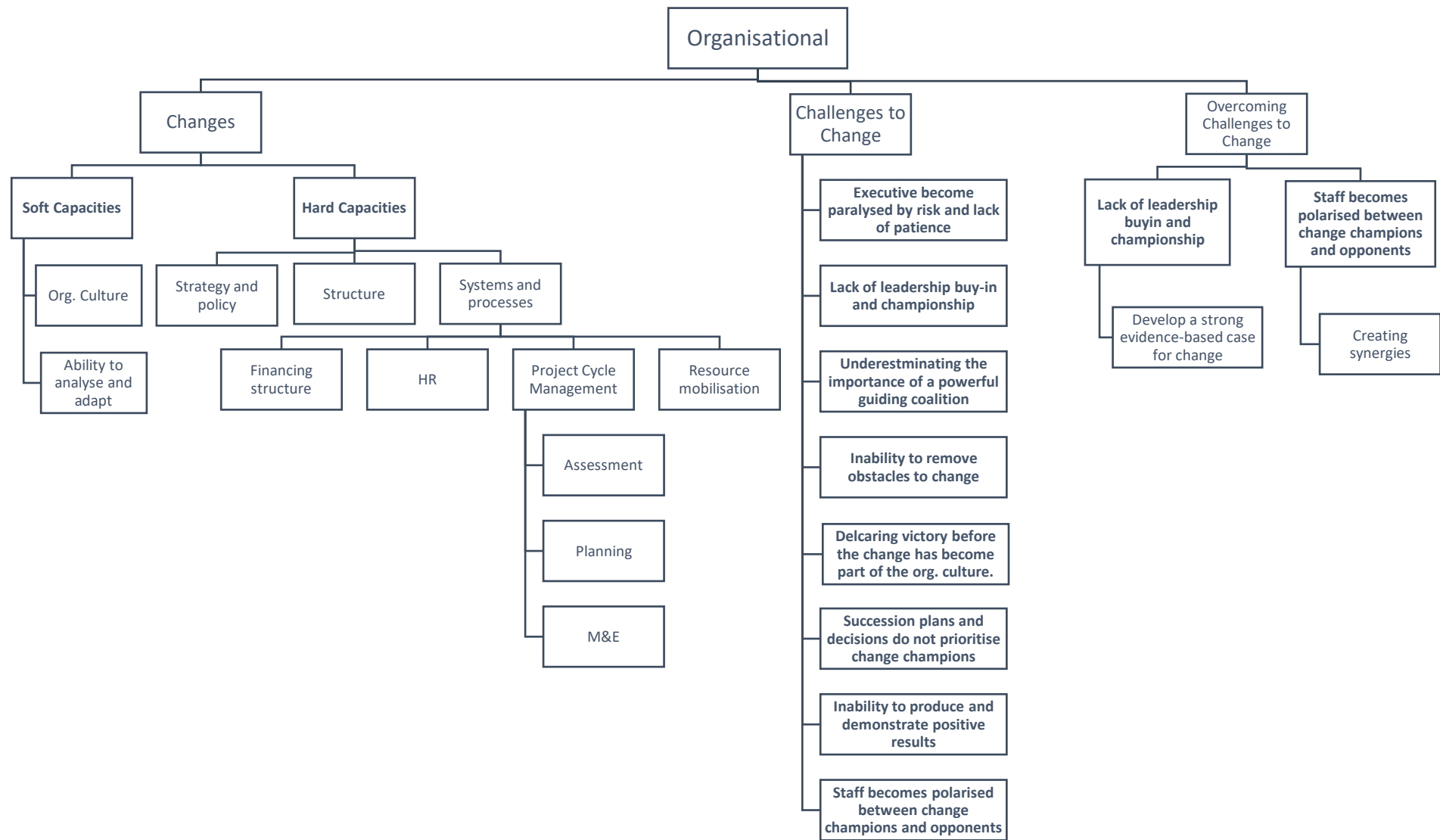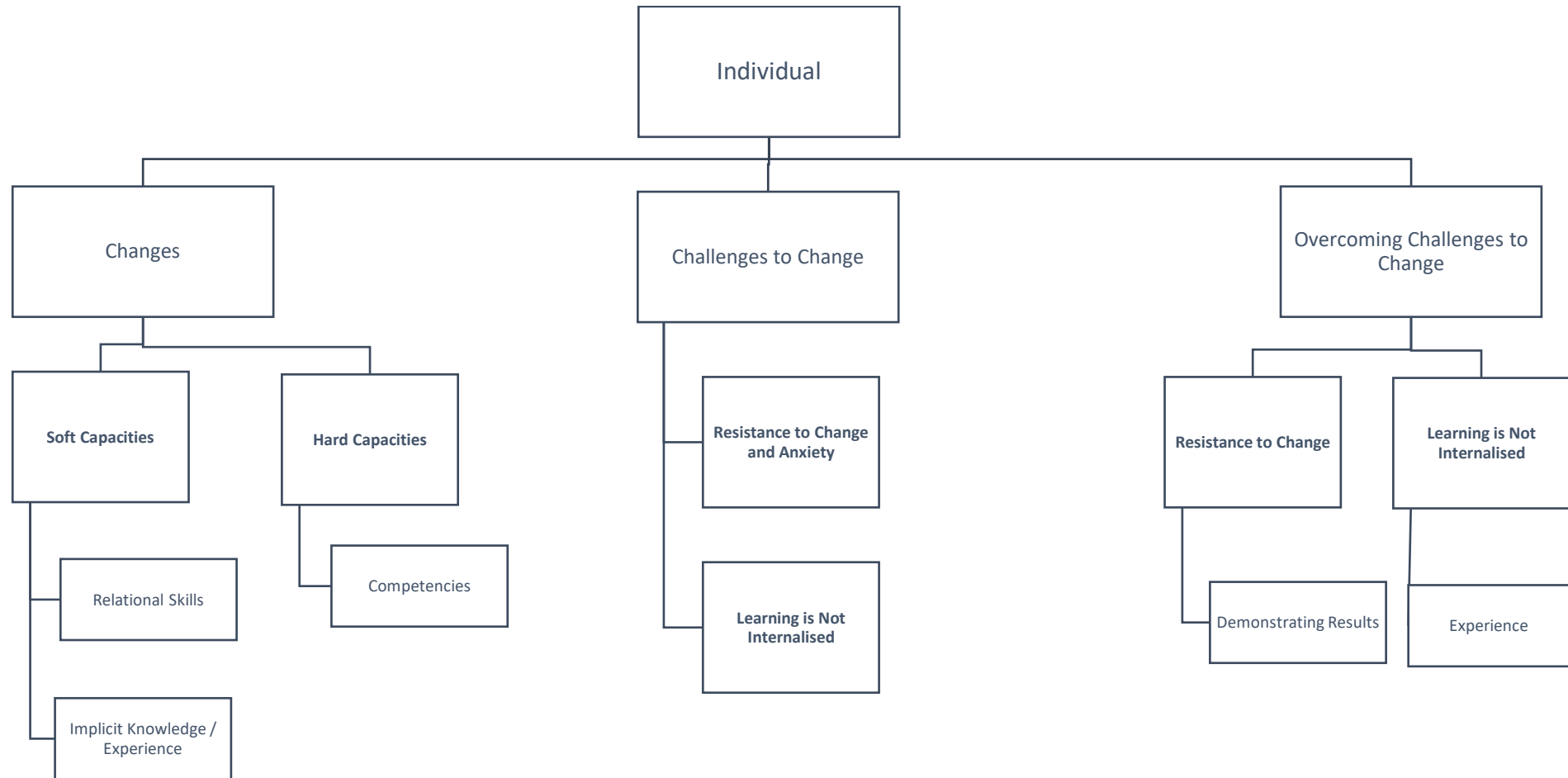- Staff becomes polarised between change champions and opponents
  - Creating synergies

Figure 4 Node Hierarchy for Individual Level

3.4 Validity of Results

To enhance the validity of the research, all steps in the process were documented. The sections above present key methodological considerations, including the selection of participants and development of the interview guide. All transcripts may be accessed by peers with the prior consent of the informants, to enable verification of the data and analysis. The data collection includes one agency the researcher has previously worked for and was hence in particular risk of being subject to preformed ideas and conclusions. However, the researcher remained highly aware of this risk and attempted to avoid the use of interpretative questions during the interview, in an effort not to let any personal inclinations influence the research. A weakness of the qualitative approach is that the informants determine what is important to mention during the interviews, which means there is a chance that the organisations have implemented some changes or encountered some challenges, which are not mentioned during the interview, and will therefore not feature in the data collection. Moreover, as prevails in Table 3 Data collection, the final data collection is largely made up by informants from UN agencies and Swedish Government agencies, which poses some questions about the extent to which the findings can be generalised across other organisations. As mentioned prior, empirical evidence on this topic is still scarce, and the number of insights generated by this study provides a good stepping stone for further research into how organisations enable themselves to engage in capacity development, which could help verify the applicability of the findings in this study to other organisations.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results

The following chapter has been structured in accordance to the node hierarchies presented in figures 4, 5 and 6. The results are presented under the three capacity levels i.e. external environment, organisational and individual, followed by a disucssion after each capacity level. As mentioned prior, the findings related to the challenges to change and how to overcome them have been merged under the same sub-heading for each of the three levels. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings on the theoretical foundation upon which the study is built.

4.1 External Environment

4.1.1 Presentation of Results

Changes for Capacity Development

Hard Capacities.

Five of the eleven informants made reference to how global policy changes in the external environment had contributed to creating a more conducive environment for capacity development cooperation. In particular, the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005), the Paris Declaration for Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015) were highlighted in this regard. One informant explained the importance of changes in such global fora: "*Because those principles and frameworks serve to balance the accountability frameworks: accountability to the donor nation, accountability to the host nation and the host population. This act of balancing is very, very crucial*". Another informant highlighted the connection between changes in the external environment and funding for capacity development: "*Donor interest and funding for these kind of things […] they shift depending on […] what is happening in the external systems*". One informant stressed the role of organisations in influencing the external environment: "*We are very active* [in the sector]*, whether it is chairing or involvement in broader groups to make sure we, as a collective, are strengthening that argument.*"

Soft Capacities.

Four informants emphasised how partnerships have come to play a key role in generating biggest possible impact of their interventions. One informant stated that it is necessary to "*ask partners to take care of some of the gaps*". Echoing this, another informant explained "*Because we simply do not have all the solutions ourselves*".

Challenges to Change and How to Overcome Them

Donor priorities and strategies.

Nine of the eleven informants mentioned donor or donor government conditions as challenging organisations' ability to strengthen their capacities for capacity development. One informant stated: "*I think it always come down to money, by the end of the day (…) Donors predominantly tell you where to put the money in order to be funded in the first place*". Echoing this, another informant explained: "[the donors] *usually condition how resources are being used. So, I think* [the organisation] *is also pulled back by some of the conditions placed on the funding*". A third informant explained how changes in funding due to the financial crisis had resulted in the organisation revoking otherwise positive changes to the organisational structure. To overcome this challenge, one informant explained how collecting evidence to be able to measure and demonstrate the return on investment had been a turning point for securing donor support: "*So we are beginning to do a lot more work in looking into the return of investment of (…) capacity building work* (…) *Because it is only by being able to have that data at hand that you can actually have that argument properly*". Another informant explained that through dialogues they had been able to convince their donors of the need for introducing a change to the organisation's financial framework, which would enable the organisation to better work with capacity development.

Two other informants highlighted how frequent changes in donor or government strategies put great pressure on the organisations to adapt. As one of them explained: "*when you do what we do, it is a little bit like a super tanker – it takes some time to change the course*". The same informant further explained how demonstrating results can be an effective tool for influencing government priorities: "*It is very much the results that count. So, when we were able to demonstrate results within the areas we wanted to work in, we were able to steer the focus more in that direction*".

Funding Structures.

Three out of the eleven informants stressed how current funding frameworks are not conducive for programming for sustainable capacity development. As one informant stated: "*We need multiple year funding for capacity strengthening. We need some stability and continuity*". In agreement with this, another informant further explained "*The funding frameworks that we operate under are not very supportive of long term changes. The donors would like to see results, and for them if we talk about long term projects (…) it would be two years, three years. I mean if you are lucky you can have something over four years. Whereas the change they would*

like to see is something (...) that takes place over five, ten, fifteen years. And it is really a major challenge for [the organisation] *to be the partner we would like to be"*. To overcome the challenge of short-term funding for capacity development, two informants suggested taking a programmatic approach by linking short-term projects. One informant explained: "*Well, what we teach people is to link projects and to take a programmatic approach* (…) *So in any case, do a capacity assessment and repeat it, even if you are linking projects together*". Both informants, however, stated that it remains a big challenge, and the second informant stressed that what is really needed is a structural change in the "*funding for capacity development projects*".

Two informants highlighted the difficulty of securing funding for capacity development interventions aimed at addressing the humanitarian-development nexus. One of these explained: "*If you have a transition between humanitarian and long-term support there is always kind of a gap or a point where it is very fussy*". Tracing the cause of this issue back to the internal culture of many donor agencies, the other informant explained: "*There is an emergency division and there is a development division. They rarely speak to each other. So, financing often come from this highly stockpiled, segregated divisions*".

Partner countries.

Four of the eleven informants brought up socio-political factors in partner countries as a challenge to the organisations' efforts to enable themselves to engage successfully in capacity development. One informant explained the implication such factors has on the organisation's ability to take on its envisioned role in capacity development "*Do we fill gaps, or do we facilitate the country filling their own gaps? (…) Some institutions are ready. Some are not. And it is a mentality. It is also a mind-set - a development mind-set*". Another informant highlighted how such factors challenge the organisation's ability to partner with local governments: "*But I also think that there has been a lot of issues, both with corruption and with lack of trust between (…) partners. Maybe, that's because of issues of corruption or maybe we don't share always the same values or the same objectives*". A third informant expressed how socio-political factors in partner countries may also hinder the ability of some staff to engage in capacity development: "*unfortunately by the virtue of many of the politics and social constructs in these countries*, [national staff] *are never going to be in the position to be influencing government counterparts*".

Knowledge-based resources.

Two informants highlighted the need for more knowledge-based resources in the enabling environment. One informant called upon academia to focus more on capacity development: "*Academia hasn't really focused on capacity development. We do not really have the theoretical pieces (...) I think it needs a research base*". Another informant highlighted the lack of knowledge that can support the design of monitoring and evaluation frameworks for capacity development, and the limitations of the staffing pool, when it comes to finding skilled and experienced people within this area: "*If you look around for standard indicators for capacity development projects you will find very little. Or almost nothing (…) It is a difficult thing and there are only very few people who are very skilled at it*".

4.1.2 Discussion of results

The findings show that the attention given to capacity development in a number of global fora and a growing recognition of the importance of partnering for results have created some conducive conditions for capacity development. However, it simultaneously becomes clear that organisations' efforts to enable themselves to engage in capacity development are still hindered by a number of challenges in the external conditions. Furthermore, it prevails from the findings that identified challenges to change supersede suggestions for how challenges can be overcome.

As explained in the introduction, the current development paradigm allegedly revisits roles and responsibilities in development cooperation, in favour of equal partnerships and local ownership. This is echoed by several informants, who point to global foras as having created more conducive conditions for capacity development cooperation. However, the question of whether this agenda in reality promotes equal partnerships, or whether it is just old wine in new bottles remains deeply contested (Abrahamsen, 2004, p. 1454). The findings related to donor priorities and funding structures appear indicate the latter may be true, as will be outlaid in the following.

The findings make clear that since donors hold the funding, they determine what, when and how organisations' can engage in capacity development. Accordingly, it would appear that "*asymmetries in resources employed*" (Giddens, 1979, p. 93), influence the power dynamics and accountability frameworks that dominate capacity development cooperation today. This becomes truly problematic, as the findings further show that that donors expect organisations to be able to demonstrate progress in the short-term. This expectation of short-term results appears contradictory to the important conceptual understanding that capacity development

happens over time, as highlighted in the introduction. Accordingly, the findings indicate that whereas efforts have been made to strengthen the hard capacities in the external environment through various different global foras, these changes may not have led to any cultural manifestation within the sector. These issues are also echoed by Vallejo and Wehn (2016, p. 6), who argue that the results agenda and the value for money debate lead to a prioritisation of short-term capacity development projects, focusing on achieving tangible and quantifiable results. Consequently, attention to processes and transformation is pushed aside, and indicators outlaid in project frameworks "*often become the objective itself and not a proxy for evaluating the CD* [capacity development] *goal set forth for the interventions*" (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 7). This absorption with demonstrating short-term results can jeopardize the achievement of long-term capacity development (Theison & Lopes, 2013, p. 1), and in the quest for demonstrating 'value for money' to the donors, external partners may end up sacrificing the very goal of ensuring interventions actually have value (Eyben, 2011). This indicates that the cultural practices in the external environment contradict what is known about successful capacity development, and thus create an unconducive environment for organisations' efforts to enable themselves to engage in capacity development.

One finding, which had not been expected but was nonetheless brought up by a number of informants, relate to how unconducive conditions in the partner countries, such as corruption or socio-political factors, hinder organisations' ability to engage successfully in capacity development. This finding was surprising because theoretically capacity development interventions should contribute towards generating change in the intervention's external environment, or at the very least be sensitive of how conducive and constraining external conditions influence the intervention (Bolger, 2000, p. 3). Accordingly, it was expected that these issues would be perceived as operating conditions rather than as hindering the organisations' ability to strengthen their own capacities. The theoretical foundation, however, postulates that it may be difficult to clearly distinguish operating conditions from internal change efforts, as the production and demonstration of results is vital for change efforts. Accordingly, if issues of corruption influence the success of a partnership, or socio-political factors hinder individuals' ability to produce results it may result in diminishing momentum and growing resistance to change (Kotter, 1995, p. 65), thus challenging the organisation's change efforts.

The challenges discussed above appear also connected to the final challenge brought up by the informants – a lack of adequate knowledge resources in the external environment. According to the findings, there is not enough existing knowledge about how to produce, monitor and evaluate lasting change in capacity. This gap in knowledge may explain why organisations often tend to fall back in their old roles as leading interventions instead of supporting (Armstrong, 2013, p. 6), or find themselves compelled to build their projects around tangible, measurable results in a bid to respond to the requirements imposed by the results agenda and value for money debate (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 7). More knowledge in the field of capacity development is accordingly needed for organisations to be able to align capacity development efforts with the need for demonstrating results and value for money. According to Vallejo and Wehn (2016, p. 4), international organisations, donors and NGOs have come to be the main producers of knowledge in the field of capacity development, instead of the more traditional knowledge institutions, such as research centres and universities. This is echoed in the findings, as one informants voiced a concern about the limited engagement from academia in the field and presents two big challenges to the creation of a sufficient knowledge-base. Firstly, as the findings also show, organisations' engagement in capacity development is conditioned by short-term funding cycles, which means that once the project ends, so does the organisations' engagement. As a result, research related to the long-term impact and sustainability of capacity development interventions is nearly non-existent, as such studies would have to take place after the intervention has come to its completion (Vallejo & Wehn, 2016, p. 2). Secondly, individual organisations taking on the knowledge production runs the risk of creating a scattered knowledge base (Hagelsteen & Burke, 2016, p. 43), leaving the sector-wide applicability of findings generated from one organisation's interventions open for questioning.

Organisations attempting to link humanitarian interventions with long-term development through capacity development are according to the findings challenged by an aggregated funding structure that makes it difficult to secure funding for these types of interventions. This indicates that while efforts have been made in external environment towards addressing the humanitarian development nexus, for example through the 2030 Agenda (2015) or the Grand Bargain (2016), these changes have yet to be imbedded into donor agencies' structures and cultures. While this study did not allow for a more in-depth analysis of the influence of donor agencies' organisational cultures on capacity development cooperation, more research on this issue would certainly be of great interest to the field.

4.2 Organisational Level

4.2.1 Presentation of Results
Changes for Capacity Development
Hard capacities.

Nine of the eleven informants[3] explained that changes to the organisational structure are necessary for engaging successfully in capacity development. Four of these highlighted the importance of having a structure that strengthens the presence and capacity in the countries within which the organisations implement capacity development interventions. In six of the organisations, the informants explained that specific units or teams dedicated to the discipline had been set up at headquarter/main office level. Echoing two other informants, one explained that the capacity development unit's role is *"advocacy, developing new tools and instruments and ensure that it cooperates and functions across multi-sectors within* [the organisation]*"*.

Nine of the eleven informants spoke directly of changes to their organisations' systems, procedures and processes for mobilising and managing resources. Seven of these informants[4] mentioned the need for changes in the organisations' human resource management. Four of these seven highlighted a need for new profiles. As one explained: *"There was a lot of work done. We even looked at staffing profiles and* [the organisation's] *competencies framework. So, for [the organisation's] staff, you need to have certain competencies, and we were looking at the competencies to be able to do good capacity development in member countries"*. Another two informants explained that they had set up rosters in their organisations for externals with various profiles and skillsets that can be brought in, depending on the needs of the intervention. Three of the nine informants mentioned changes to financial systems within their organisations. In one of these cases, the informant explained how their organisation had taken big steps to accommodate capacity development into the financial architecture. Another informant explained that changes in their organisation had been more related to optimising internal financial controls. Two of the nine informants expressed that their organisations had implemented changes to how they mobilise financial resources.

Five out of the eleven informants mentioned strategy and policy changes. One of these informants explained the importance of imbedding capacity development into wider organisational strategies: *"funding will start to come to it because it is a priority* [and] *we get*

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[3] Referring to experiences from eight organisations.

[4] Referring to experiences from six organisations.

much more of a voice, which means that it is much clearer to the wider organisation what is needed and why it is important". Two informants made reference to specific capacity development strategies within their organisations. Furthermore, two informants mentioned the development of capacity development policies within their organisations.

Two out of the eleven informants highlighted the importance of implementing changes to the strategic programming processes. As one of them stressed: *"I would say one of the most important things we did was to incorporate capacity development in our programming processes. So that means our project approval processes and in our country programming processes, which comes before the project cycle"*. Nine informants made reference to changes to the project cycle. In four of the organisations[5], new instruments, frameworks, methodologies and tools had been developed for capacity assessments. Six of the nine informants highlighted the importance of changes to monitoring and evaluation frameworks. *"The emphasis and the shift has really changed* (…) *a lot"* one informant said, referring to the current understanding in their organisation *"that sustainable results cannot be measured by outputs. It is easy to achieve but it is not sustainable"*. The informant continued to explain: *"So we use other ways of measuring and monitoring results. We use outcome mapping, we use alternative ways of mapping,* [e.g.] *strategy testing"*.

Soft capacities.

Four informants[6] highlighted changes in the organisational culture as important for enhanced engagement in capacity development. One informant stressed the magnitude of this type of change: *"getting the team to realize that they are networking in an entirely different way and they would no longer be doing direct delivery themselves and actually advising instead, (...) that is a very big shift in terms of culture"*. Another informant explained how they are currently attempting to influence the organisational culture: *"Something we are trying to do, but it is very difficult, it is to pull out capacity strengthening elements of humanitarian results and show people that they live side by side and they only serve to make the first one stronger"*.

One informant explained how efforts have been made to introduce a more analytical and adaptive approach to programme management within their organisation: *"There is in general a*

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[5] Referring to experiences from four organisations.

[6] Referring to experiences from three organisations.

lot more acceptance of the need for adaptive management and that we have to adapt to the changing circumstances".

Challenges to Change and How to Overcome Them
Executives become paralysed by the risk and lack of patience.

One informant referred to how the risks associated with moving into capacity development cooperation influences the support for the change at the executive level: "*(…) we do still need that immediate funding and that immediate focus and that immediate reputation, and we don't know how to balance the two because we have no reputation in capacity strengthening. So, it is very hard for an executive director to speak to that (…)".* The same informant explained that this challenge is also related to a lack of patience when it comes to seeing the results of the changes*: "And you can't be sure of the results as well because we don't have the systems and structures in place to allow that little fish in the big pond to get big quickly".*

Lack of leadership buy in and championship.

Five out of the eleven informants highlighted lack of leadership buy-in and championship as a challenge to organisations' efforts to strengthen their capacities for capacity development. One informant highlighted the consequences of a lack of leadership buy in: "*The senior executive sphere (…) is where the ultimate decision on investments and resourcing comes from. So, until that sphere is penetrated the situation is a very, very challenging one, because there is a demand for which there is no supply*".

One of the eleven informants highlighted that to mobilise support and secure leadership buy-in, it is very important to develop a strong, evidence-based case that can back the narrative of capacity development up with concrete facts and figures for why the organisation needs to engage in capacity development; which changes it needs to implement to be able to engage successfully in capacity development; and how these changes should be implemented.

Succession plans and decisions do not prioritise change champions.

Reflecting on how succession plans and decisions do not necessarily prioritise change champions, three informants stressed that change in leadership always puts the sustainability of organisational change at risk. According to one informant, capacity development championship is not an influencing factor in decisions around change in leadership. Another informant stated: "*When there are changes in senior management, all the priorities change*".

Underestimating the importance of establishing a guiding coalition.

Two out of the eleven informants referred to how their organisational efforts had been challenged by a lack of dedicated resources to the team dedicated to the discipline. One of these informants had mentioned such a team a number of times, and when asked to elaborate, the informant replied "*It is a non-entity at this point in time. For the past two years it has been a floating position. It did not have a unit (...) This means [it] is pretty much the lowest end of a ladder in a corporate structure*".

Vision is under communicated.

Two informants spoke of challenges related to communicating the change and vision. In both instances this challenge appeared to be related to competition with other organisational priorities. As one of them proclaimed: "*Of course! Private sector, gender, governance. You name it! We are in competition with them*". After listing the organisation's strategic objectives, functional objectives and cross-cutting themes, the informant proceeded to explain "So *we are fighting to get airtime. You know, if you are a technical officer* (…) *there is only so much you can read about how you are going to implement your* (…) *projects*". The other informant stated: "[the communication unit's] *focus is on whatever the executive director is talking about and other key* […] *issues. Now it may be that as* [another priority] *sort of winds down that we may actually have more space in the coming year or two (...)*".

Inability to remove obstacles to change.

Six of the eleven informants brought up challenges related to removing obstacles to change. In all these instances, the inability to remove obstacles to change appeared to be directly attributed to a lack of allocated resources. Two of these informants explained that a lack of financial resources had influenced efforts to set up and sustain an organisational structure for capacity development. Two informants highlighted how a lack of human resources had challenged the ability of their organisations to change their systems and procedures related to human resource management in a way that could better cater for the needs of the discipline. Two informants highlighted how efforts to develop and culturally imbed monitoring and evaluation frameworks for capacity development had been challenged by a lack of human and financial resources. Finally, one of these also explained how a lack of human and financial resources had challenged the dedicated capacity development team's ability to support the institutionalisation of capacity development in the organisation's capacities.

Declaring victory before the change has become part of the organisational culture.

One informant highlighted the challenge of declaring victory before the changes had become imbedded into the organisational culture. Reflecting on how the organisation had set up a number of capacity development units at the regional level, which around the time of the financial crisis were dismantled with the assumption that "*they would have now learned how to do and carry on doing it themselves*", the informant explained: "*Unfortunately capacity strengthening is one of those things people think is dispensable. Because they think that the actual project should be implemented, and the capacity strengthening part is strictly an ad-on*".

Inability to produce and demonstrate positive results.

Four informants highlighted challenges related to demonstrating clear impact of capacity development interventions. One informant stated: "*I think because it is much more of an intangible impact that we have. It is much more difficult to clearly state without any ambiguity how, by supporting people's capacity and capability, you end up with a lot more effective response*". As one informant explained, this inability to clearly demonstrate results challenge the case for further investments in advancing the discipline: "*It is a bit the chicken and the egg. Because if you cannot really make a case for something, why should you invest in it? But you need to invest in it to be able to make the case for it. And that is precisely the problem*".

Staff becomes polarised between change champions and opponents.

Three informants mentioned challenges related to certain groups within the organisation champion the change, whilst other groups either do not support it or do not think it applies to them. For all these three organisations, the divide appeared to be drawn up between different working areas. One informant explained how staff within some working areas are interested in the new way of working, and others are not. Another informant gave the following example: "*And if you talk to the policy people, they think that their policy work is not capacity development. They think that they are above capacity development.*".

Seven of the eleven informants explained that it is important to create synergies between capacity development and other functional and programmatic areas within the organisation, and to demonstrate how capacity development contributes to the achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives. Three of these seven informants suggested making capacity development a vertical discipline within the organisation. As one of these explained: "*Where capacity strengthening (…) stands alone or* [is] *not within the bigger canvas, it then sometimes suffers from both* [a] *lack of resources, as well as a lack of focus. That is what I have found*". Another

informant offered the following opinion on the role of a capacity development unit: "*The unit (…) called capacity development should not have a function in itself (…). Their role should be understood as a link between the various divisions within* [the organisation], *rather than identifying themselves as a unique platform*".

4.2.2 Discussion of Results

The findings show that organisations face a number of challenges to their change efforts at the organisational level, which had been foreseen by the leading literature on change management (see also appendix 1). Once again, the interviews identified many more challenges than proposed solutions to how these challenges can be overcome. A number of the challenges organisations face when trying to strengthen their capacities for capacity development appear to revolve around leadership. This issue is not limited to a specific group of organisations but rather seem to cut across the board. Most interestingly, the findings bring out a number of causalities between lack of leadership buy-in and several other challenges. Firstly, the findings show that the leadership ultimately determines how resources are allocated. And according to the findings a lack of resources has negatively influenced the strength of the guiding coalition, hindered organisations' ability to remove obstacles to change (such as unfit structure, systems, frameworks etc.), and challenged the organisation's ability to produce positive results. Secondly, the findings show that the leadership also influences the change communication, which, as prevails from the theoretical foundation, is important for mobilising wider support in the organisation. Accordingly, leadership buy in stands out in the findings as a key prerequisite for successful organisational change processes.

During the interviews, it also became clear that leadership is not viewed amongst the informants as something that can easily be influenced. Only one of the informants explained how efforts had been taken to win the support and buy-in from the leadership. In this organisation, a strong evidence-based case had been developed, which went beyond the mere narrative of capacity development and outlaid facts and figures for why the organisation should engage in capacity development, which changes are necessary for the organisation to get there, and how those changes could be implemented. This approach resonates with Bridges, who argues that "*people aren't in the market for solutions to problems they don't see, acknowledge, and understand*" (2017, p. 510), and describes how articulating the purpose, the outcome and the plan for how to get there enable individuals to transition (2017, p. 1382).

The aforementioned informant further explained how showing return on investment had been key for convincing internal and external stakeholders alike to support the organisation's efforts to enhance its capacities for capacity development. Whilst laying forth predictions for return on investment and calculations of cost-efficiency may be a strong tool to ensure buy-in and support, organisations have to be mindful that this reinforces the results-driven, value for money agenda, which as outlaid in the above (4.1) contributes to creating a non-conducive external environment for capacity development.

The role of organisational culture in organisational change efforts appeared to only preoccupy informants from organisations who have traditionally been associated with humanitarian response. While it is difficult to pinpoint further commonalities between the informants' explanations of their organisational culture, it did become clear that there is an understanding of how certain cultural aspects hinder an organisation's ability to engage in capacity development interventions, and how certain aspects of the organisational culture can be leveraged from to enable the organisation to engage successfully in capacity development. Meanwhile, the same reflections did not emerge from the interviews with informants from development organisations, which could indicate that organisational culture has less of an influence of change processes in this type of organisations. However, a number of other findings in this study points towards the opposite, as informants from development organisations mentioned challenges related to leadership succession decisions, declaring victory to soon, and polarisation amongst staff. These challenges can arguably be viewed as materialisations of a challenge to imbed changes for capacity development into the organisational culture. Adding to this, the literature presented in the introduction makes clear that capacity development interventions often follow an outside-in, top-down approach, which indicates that organisations' culture very much still revolves around a leading rather than supporting role in their interventions. Whilst the findings in this study are not strong enough to ascertain whether this is true, one informant from a development organisation did explain that capacity development is still viewed as something additional, even dispensable, which does indeed point to a leading culture rather than supportive. Accordingly, a question emerges for further research, of whether organisational culture only hinders change efforts in organisations who have a history in humanitarian response, or whether these organisations have merely manifested a better understanding of how organisational culture influences organisational change efforts.

4.3 Individual Level
4.3.1 Presentation of Results
Changes for Capacity Development

Hard capacities.

Eight informants[7] explained that efforts have been made to enhance the competencies of staff, i.e. technical skills, explicit knowledge and methodologies. Three of these informants highlighted the need for increasing the explicit knowledge and understanding of capacity development. One informant highlighted efforts to enhance knowledge of organisational change. Another informant highlighted enhanced competencies in monitoring and evaluation for capacity development. Yet another informant referred to strengthening competencies in result-based management. Together, the informants mentioned various tools that had been used in this regard, including developing and circulating different communication products, trainings, e-learning, seminars, webinars etc.

Soft capacities.

Two informants explained how their organisations had taken concrete steps to strengthen relational skills amongst their staff. As one informant stressed: *"You cannot really do capacity development without good facilitation, because you need to involve many stakeholders (...) To get good country ownership, you really need to engage with people, so you need good facilitation skills. So, we actually (...) teach people facilitation".* The other informant in addition to facilitation skills also highlighted coaching and mentoring as important skills the organisation had sought to strengthen.

Emphasising the importance of sharing practical experience, one informant explained there had been a lot of focus on creating a space for staff to reflect on and share experiences through targeted seminars: *"It was the actual people working* (…) *who would tell their stories. That is an effective way of sharing* (…) *The idea was to extract potential lessons for other* (…) *colleagues".* The informant further explained how the sharing of experience also helped motivate staff to engage in capacity development: *"We want people to leave the room thinking 'should I be doing that?'".*

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[7] Referring to experiences from seven organisations

Challenges to Change and How to Overcome Them
Internalising Learning.

Six informants highlighted the challenge of ensuring learning is internalised by staff. One of these mentioned an example of strengthening competencies related to conducting capacity assessments: "*There are a lot of experts who come in to help* [the organisation] *to do that. But how much of it gets internalized within those subject matter specialists or the programme team leaders? - that has always been a question*". Another informant explained how after even the most highly commended workshop comes to an end, staff are quick to return to their former behaviour and forget how committed they were to changes during the workshop.

Four of the six informants explained that internalisation of learning necessitates a practical application of the knowledge. One informant referred to the importance of establishing forums for sharing practical experience amongst staff engaged in capacity development projects, which that particular organisation had done through dedicated seminars: "*Sustainable capacity development is very difficult.* (…) *We would always ask* [the presenters*] to tell the story briefly, and focus on capacity development: (...) how they assessed the context; how they assessed capacities; (...) what the successes were; and what the challenges are. Because we do not want people to just sit there and listen to someone else's sectors. They need to be able to apply it to their own sector*". Two informants highlighted how they have increasingly taken up games in their organisations as a learning tool.

Resistance to Change and Anxiety.

Another six informants mentioned how they had met varying levels of resistance to change within their organisations. As one informant explained, moving from direct implementation to capacity development "*is a very threatening discourse for some*". Three of the six informants attributed resistance to change to certain professional groups within the organisation. Two of the six informants described resistance as being linked to a feeling of restricted freedom: "*If you have your way of working and the organisation is moving to more coherent approaches it means some people will have to change the way they work. It means less freedom, if you would like*". One informant explained how resistance is often overcome, when the individuals see that the change starts to work in practice: "*It was the results that convinced the sceptics*".

4.3.2 Discussion of results

As outlaid in the introduction and confirmed by two informants, relational skills such as facilitation, coaching and mentoring are vital capacities for organisations engaging in capacity development. However, at the individual level, findings show that focus amongst organisations is predominantly on developing the hard capacities of staff, such as explicit knowledge, specific tools, methodologies etc., whilst fewer informants referred to efforts targeted at strengthening soft, relational skills. This adds weight to the problem identified by Hagelsteen and Becker (2013, pp. 9-10) that recruitment in international organisations tends to prioritise technical expertise over relational skills, inasmuch as it becomes clear from the findings that this gap is often not sought closed by the organisations post-recruitment. Accordingly, one is let to suspect that many organisations today might not even have the appropriate skillsets in-house to take on their envisaged role in capacity development.

Equally problematic is the challenge raised by a number of informants that learning is not internalised. While this challenge was described by informants as being related to individuals, the solution may be found at the organisational level. Ensuring learning is internalised by staff is a complex matter for international organisations today, as a scattered and mobile workforce requires new approaches to strengthening individual capacities (Jennings & Wargnier, 2015, p. 6). This may explain why distribution of communication products, e-learning and webinars appeared as favoured approaches for strengthening individual capacities amongst the organisations included in this study. Meanwhile, the findings indicated a lack of focus on developing opportunities for staff to first-handedly deploy their learning in practice. Translated into Eichinger and Lombardo's (1996) famous 70:20:10 model, this would imply that organisations attempt to strengthen individual capacities predominantly through formal learning channels (e.g. trainings, workshops, seminars), which as an approach only makes up roughly 10% of how people learn. Simultaneously, there appeared to be limited focus on creating opportunities for staff to learn through others (which makes up 20% of how people learn) and learning through experience (which makes up the remaining 70%) (Jennings & Wargnier, 2015, p. 16). This prioritisation of formal learning over informal learning may explain why internalising learning remains a challenge amongst many organisations in this study. To quote Kolb (2015, p. 49): "*learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience*". In other words, if staff is not presented with the opportunity to bring theoretical knowledge generated through e.g. an e-learning course into the realm of practice, learning is not likely to be internalised. The result of this challenge, as

postulated by Schein (see table 2) and confirmed by some of the findings, is that staff returns to former behaviour after the pressure for change (training, seminar, communication etc.) comes to an end. By putting greater emphasis on creating opportunities to deploy the learning in practice, staff will have a greater opportunity to internalise the learning (Schein, 2010) and help individuals embark on the new beginning (Bridges, 2017, pp. 1617, 1631).

Closely related to the challenge of internalising learning is resistance to change, which was another challenge encountered by a number of organisations. This resistance was frequently described in relation to anxieties, e.g. fear of loss of competency or restricted freedom. These findings correspond with the work of Schein, who argues that resistance to change can indeed be built on a fear of incompetence or fear of loss of power (Schein, 2010, p. 304). According to Schein (2010, p. 306), resistance to change can be overcome by reducing the learning anxiety through the creation of a physiologically safe learning environment. To do so, the learner must be involved in the development of the learning process (Ibid). As Schein (2010) writes: "*the goals of learning are non-negotiable, but the method of learning can be highly individualized*" (p. 306). Schein (2010, p. 306) also emphasises the importance of learning in groups because the underlying assumptions that influence the organisational culture are shaped in groups. Groups should also be set up to enable people to air their frustrations and openly discuss the difficulties related to learning (ibid). Such a space could in addition address the feelings of loss, anger, anxiety, sadness and disorientation, which are emotions people often feel in the first stage of transition (Bridges, 2017, pp. 750, 764). According to Bridges (2017, pp. 750, 764), it is important to provide staff with an opportunity to share their emotions and ensure they feel heard and acknowledged. Accordingly, by creating a psychologically safe learning environment that enable people to learn with and through others and learn from experience, it may be possible to overcome both challenges of internalising learning and resistance to change.

4.4 Discussion of Theoretical Foundation

4.4.1 Integrating Capacity Development and Change Management

From the literature search and review that led to the development of the introduction and theoretical foundation for this study, it became clear that capacity development and change management are often treated as two different fields with two different target groups. The leading literature on change management appear to be written by and for organisations in the global north, while capacity development as a concept appear to be aimed at organisations in the global south. The reasons for this apparent distinction are neither clear nor convincing, as capacity development "*is fundamentally about change and transformation*" (Bolger, 2000, p. 2).

In the study's theoretical foundation, it stood out that while capacity development deploys a systems-oriented approach to change, the leading literature on change management does not appear to deploy the same understanding. For this reason, it became necessary to combine the works of several change management scholars in the theoretical foundation, to allow for a more holistic understanding of the challenges to change organisations may encounter when seeking to strengthen their capacities for capacity development. While Schein's (2010) work does capture the interplay between organisations and individuals, neither him, Kotter (1995) nor Bridges (2017) manage to offer any insights into how the external environment may influence organisations' ability to change. Meanwhile, this study makes clear that conditions in the external environment play a key role in hindering or enabling organisations' ability to change, thus illuminating a gap in the leading literature on change management.

Accordingly, the findings from this study point towards a need for integrating the two fields of capacity development and change management. Such an integration would facilitate a more holistic understanding of not only the challenges to change organisations may encounter in the external environment, at the organisational level and at the individual level but also create a broader knowledge- and experience base to help guide organisations in how these challenges can be overcome.

4.4.2 Introducing a Third Typology of Capacity

While the above makes clear that an integration of the two fields of capacity development and change management would facilitate a more holistic understanding of how the external environment influences organisations' ability to change, the study shows that the two fields have not dedicated sufficient attention to how organisations can overcome challenges to change in the external environment. Instead, the theoretical foundation upon which the study is built paints a picture that limits the role of organisations to operation and adaptation.

Meanwhile, the findings show that the external environment holds a number of unconducive conditions for capacity development cooperation. This leads the study to argue that for organisations to enable themselves to engage successfully in capacity development, their only role should not be to operate and adapt but also to influence. Following Kaplan's blunt words, organisations have "*to shift from 'playing the victim' to exerting some control, to believing in its own capacity to affect its circumstances*" (2000, p. 518). Only one informant highlighted the role of organisations in influencing the external environment, which indicates a lack of focus within organisations on how they can contribute actively to developing the conducive conditions that would turn the external environment into an enabling environment for capacity development. Accordingly, it appears that while many organisations understand the necessity of deploying a systems-oriented approach in their capacity development interventions, they fail to practice what they preach and deploy the same understanding to their efforts to strengthen own capacities.

Based on the above, this study proposes a new capacity typology to be added to operational and adaptive capacities - *influential capacity*. Arguably, partnership, networks and linkages are essential means through which organisations can influence the external environment (OECD, 2006b, p. 12), as also explained by the aforementioned informant. However, whilst organisations may depend on linkages with other stakeholders to be able to influence the external environment, these linkages also depend on the capacities of the organisations (ibid). This means that networks are not influential by the mere token of their membership but rather through the collective capacity such a network can foster. Influential capacities that would contribute to the collective capacity of networks may include research and analysis, advocacy and various relational skills that could enable effective dialogue, such as negotiation, conflict resolution and intercultural communication (CCIC, 2006, p. 3-3; Pearson, 2011).

5. Conclusion

The degree project set out to understand which challenges organisations encounter in their efforts to strengthen their capacities for capacity development, and how these challenges can be overcome. In doing so, the study has been able to contribute to the field of capacity development and change management, by generating empirical insights into how organisations enable themselves to take on their envisaged role as external partners. The findings are based on interviews with eleven informants representing eleven different organisations.

In the external environment, the study finds that although informants express that a number of global policies have created a more conducive environment for capacity development cooperation, these changes have yet to manifest themselves culturally in the sector. Therefore, organisations still encounter a number of challenges in the external environment to their efforts to strengthen their capacities for capacity development. These challenges materialise as short-term funding cycles which force organisations to deploy a short-term project approach to capacity development instead of a long-term programme approach. This contradicts the element of time that signifies change in capacity and hinder organisations' ability to successfully support long-term change. Identifying ways to change these conditions is challenged by the fact that there is not sufficient knowledge about capacity development cooperation. The short-term funding cycles hinder organisations' ability to monitor and measure the long-term impact of their interventions, which means knowledge related to how to produce and measure lasting change in capacity is very scarce. Meanwhile, the findings suggest that academia has not contributed sufficiently to closing this gap in knowledge. Accordingly, while a short-term project-oriented approach may not lead to lasting change, organisations are still challenged in their ability to develop viable alternatives.

At the organisational level, the findings show that organisations encounter a number of the same challenges foreseen by the leading literature on change management. The findings illuminate that certain causalities exist between these challenges, many of which lead back to issues around leadership support for the change. A lack of leadership support influences the allocation of resources, which amongst others can lead to the guiding coalition not being empowered and an inability to remove obstacles to change. The findings showed that leadership is perceived as highly difficult to influence. However, the study also found that by backing up the narrative of capacity development with a strong evidence base for why the individual organisation should engage in capacity development, and which changes need to be made and how, it may be

possible to generate leadership buy-in for capacity development. The findings also showed that organisations encounter a number of challenges related to ensuring sustainability of changes by imbedding these into the organisational culture. This includes issues related to succession planning, declaring victory too soon or polarisation amongst staff. Whilst these challenges can influence organisations across the board, humanitarian organisations appear to have manifested a better understanding than development organisations of how some aspects of organisational culture may hinder the change efforts whilst others can be leveraged from to drive the change forward.

Finally, the findings show that organisations' efforts to strengthen capacities at the individual level are predominantly focused on strengthening hard capacities, whilst less attention is given to needed relational skills. Meanwhile, a number of organisations encounter challenges related to learning not being internalised and resistance to change. These two challenges are closely related, as different anxieties related to un-learning and learning, such as fear of incompetence or fear of loss of power, result in resistance to change. One cause of these challenges can be the approach to learning seemingly taken by these organisations, which focuses mainly on establishing formal learning channels and less (if any) on creating opportunities for staff to learn through others and learn through experience. This is not aligned with the current understanding of how people learn and may also keep staff from experiencing the results of the change in practice, which the findings suggest is a way to overcome resistance to change.

Based on the findings, the study identified two gaps in the theoretical foundation. Firstly, the leading literature on change management does not adopt a systems-oriented approach to change and fails to identify or address the challenges to change organisations encounter in the external environment. The study therefore suggests integrating the fields of capacity development and change management, in order to generate a more holistic approach to understanding challenges to change. Secondly, the study found that the concepts of capacity and change management preoccupy themselves with how organisations can operate in and adapt to changes in the external environment but offers no guidance in terms of what organisations can do to overcome challenges to change in the external environment. The study therefore coins a third typology of capacity – *influential capacity* – which can enable organisations to contribute more actively in turning the external environment into an enabling environment for capacity development.

5.1 Recommendations

Overcoming Challenges to Change in the External Environment

The study finds that there is a need for organisations to engage more actively in creating an enabling environment for capacity development. This starts with creating a better understanding of what constitutes an enabling environment for capacity development, i.e. identifying which conditions in the current external environment are conducive for organisations' ability to engage successfully in capacity development, and which conditions hinder the achievement of this objective. When these conditions have been mapped out, organisations can embark on identifying paths for creating an enabling environment for capacity development. The findings in this study indicate a need for imbedding capacity development into the sector's culture, which includes revisiting the underlying power dynamics and accountability frameworks that steer today's development cooperation. To contribute to this change, organisations may need to strengthen their influential capacities, such as networking, research and analysis, advocacy, negotiation, intercultural communication and conflict resolution. Moreover, the study indicates that efforts to change these unconducive conditions are currently hindered by a lack of knowledge of how to produce and measure lasting change in capacity development interventions. Organisations may therefore engage in closer collaboration with research institutions and universities to develop a deeper knowledge-base for capacity development and ensure the next generation of capacity development workers have the individual capacities needed in the field. Examples of the latter may include informing the development of university programme curriculums and guest-lecturing.

Overcoming Challenges to Change at the Organisational Level

As mentioned above, many of the challenges to change encountered at the organisational level traces back to leadership buy-in and support. Drawing on the lessons learned from one of the featured organisations, a strong evidence-based case is more likely to generate the internal support and leadership buy-in needed to drive the change forward. A convincing case may clearly lay forth the needed narrative, facts and figures to address the following questions: (1) why does the organisation need to engage in capacity development? (2) which changes are necessary to make for the organisation to be able to engage successfully in capacity development; (3) how can these changes be implemented; (4) what resources would these changes require; (5) what are the benefits of the change in the short-term, medium-term and the long term.

Moreover, the findings indicate a need for a greater understanding of the influence of organisational culture on organisations' ability to change. Therefore, organisations may develop this understanding by carrying out assessments of their organisational culture with the aim of identifying which cultural elements can be leveraged from during this change process, and which elements hinder the organisation's efforts to enable themselves to engage successfully in capacity development cooperation.

Overcoming Challenges at the Individual Level

The findings indicate that there is a need for organisations to better align their approach to learning and development with what is currently known about how individuals learn. This may involve revisiting their approach to learning and development in favour of creating a psychologically safe learning environment following the 70:20:10 approach. Such an approach may provide a better environment for internalising learning and mitigate resistance to change by supporting staff through their transition. Moreover, the learning approach would ideally put a greater focus on developing both the hard capacities and soft capacities needed for staff to engage successfully in capacity development interventions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Challenges to Change Appearing During Interviews

Challenges	Appeared
Underestimating the challenge of getting people out of their comfort zones.	
Lack of patience.	√
Executives become paralyzed by the risks.	√
Lack of leadership buy in.	√
Leaders do not champion the change.	√
Underestimating the importance of a powerful guiding coalition.	√
Underestimating the difficulties of establishing a powerful guiding coalition.	
Underestimating the importance of teamwork.	
The coalition is not led by a key line manager.	
The vision is too complicated.	
Focus on details instead of the big picture. E.g. developing plans, directives, and programmes instead of a vision statement.	
Vision is under-communicated.	√
The leadership's behaviour contradicts the communicated vision, hence limiting the credibility of the change communication.	
Inability to remove obstacles to change, such as an unfit organisational structure, job profiles, performance review systems, powerful individuals who resist the change etc.	√
Passively hoping for short term wins instead of actively planning for short term wins.	
Momentum diminishes and resistance to the change grows.	
Declaring victory before the change has become part of the organisational culture.	√
People draw flawed conclusions on the causation of changed in performance.	

Succession plans and decisions do not prioritise change champions.	√
Resistance to change.	√
The learning is not internalised, and the staff returns to former behaviour after the coercive pressure for change diminishes.	√
Inability to produce and demonstrate positive results.	√
No clear definition and sufficient communication of what is ending.	
Priorities are unclear.	√
Information is miscommunicated.	
Frustration and loss of confidence in the organisation's future.	
Staff becomes polarised between the change champions and opponents.	√
Anxiety.	√
Fear of the risk of failure.	√
Lower confidence.	