

My background

I have:

- 10 years full time working in aid and development
- Particularly Indonesia and Timor-Leste, working for
 - Aust Contracting Managers (ACM's) for AusAID
 - Government (Australian and Timorese)
 - Multilateral donors eg World Bank and ADB

Primarily focused on vocational education and training.

Strategic Imperatives- Long Term

Immediate goals.

AusAID has been active in Timor-Leste for the past ten years and will continue to be so for many years to come.

In 2002, the AusAID White Paper on Aid for Timor-Leste stated that 'education' would not be part of AusAID's long term engagement. That was wrong at the time, and is changing now, but it highlights the 'narrowness' of development thinking and donor assistance.

AusAID in Timor-Leste has been focused for many years too narrowly on immediate and 'more pressing' issues of security, water and sanitation, health.

The Government of Timor-Leste (RDTL) has a long term strategic plan to develop the vocational education and training sector by engaging local industry and building and developing a 'community college' (TAFE's) sector. Developing this TVET sector is critical to developing the economy, building a skill base of Timorese to be meaningfully employed in the economy. Reducing the dependence on 'hiring' internationals, even in AusAID funded programs.

AusAID support to TVET has been isolated and sporadic and certainly hasn't embraced the RDTL long term plans. There is a critical need for a 'tafe' type system in Timor-Leste and AusAID could significantly engage in this sector given Australia's international reputation in the vocational education and training field.

Meaningful engagement can only be achieved if;

AusAID gets behind RDTL's long term plans.

AusAID strengthens their support and understanding of vocational education and its impact on development

Institutional memory loss

Institutional memory loss occurs when there is continual staff turnover and this has occurred within AusAID and in particular in the Timor-Leste and Indonesian context, this is a major cause for concern. A serious review of AusAID staff practices and human resource development issues is required examining:

- what motivates people to engage in international development
- joining AusAID as a substitute for a foreign affairs employment
- establishing reporting responsibilities related to career backgrounds
- why have staff moved on after such small periods in country

In addition, access to information about AusAID's 'lessons learnt' is difficult to for external consultants to examine, and given my experience of AusAid's staff lack of understanding of previous work including 'successes and failures' it would appear that AusAID staff do not read these reviews.

I am not referring to the particular 'write ups' of lessons learnt provided by the ACM contractor which seems to always cover the broad issues without detailing specific concerns, self interest and ongoing employment is a stake here. I am referring to the in-country managers reading and interpretation of these 'lessons learnt'. The assessments of their impact upon future plans and directions and would assist in improving aid effectiveness.

- If they are available where are they?
- Who gets access to what information?
- If they are not required, why not?

Reports may be written and filed away, however as the new AusAID staff member takes up an international post, what induction occurs? I know 'inductions' exist but how thorough and detailed are they? The pressure to get someone on the ground and in place at the expense of being well prepared impacts upon aid effectiveness.

Applications of Aid and Practices

Tendering

I have witnessed programs being developed where undue and unnecessary engagement with selected 'host government agencies' have created requests for tenders RFT's that have clearly targeted specific interests of the 'host agencies'

I have been involved in a detailed training needs assessment of the Indonesia Australia Training Project Phase 111 (IASTP) following this review of the TNA we recommended that this program be reviewed and restructured. IASTP does not exist any more, and a human resource development plan is now part of AusAID's Indonesian plans.

However, the three phases of IASTP program over more than 12 years produced:

Over indulgence by Sekretariat Negara (SECNET) The 'host' government bureaucracy involved.

SECNET's selected and favored ministries being engaged.

No link to Indonesian strategic planning for HRD development

ACM's involved with IASTP placating the needs of the selected ministries, so that some ministries continued to get IASTP funds, this was done through dependence upon so called 'IASTP mentors'.

Some degree of favoritism by the ACM's toward certain tendering institutions. Although this is speculative, there has been no definitive analysis of the 'public tendering' processes by the ACM's after the award of the contracts by AusAID to the ACM's.

In the example of IASTP Phase 111, a \$41 million program:

- Which training providers tendered for, and were awarded programs
- What was the criteria used for selecting and how robustly was this applied
- Between IASTP Phases (1,11 and 111) which training providers were selected, what pattern emerges?

I say this is speculative on my part, but what analysis has AusAID conducted in order to determine the 'downstream' activities.

Outcome based measurements

I am not convinced that counting 'training hours' is the best way of measuring skills acquisition, it was certainly used throughout IASTP as a 'measure of success' for that program. It is certainly being used in the Timor Leste context to measure 'contact' that Timorese have with the career reference centres being funded by AusAID.'

- However what qualitative data is being collected such as:
 - How much, and how often.
 - How long, and in what form, country, style and approach
 - What is the impact,
 - Change in attitudes?
 - Change in working style
- What are we measuring from that is the baseline.

Fallacy of capacity building

Roles and Impact

Skills of international partner/consultant. (In many instances of AusAID procurement practices, particularly IASTP, the ACM's demanded and required an 'international' consultant (Preferably from Australia) to be involved.

It was often of little concern if the 'international' had the necessary local language or cultural understanding and/or relevant background. Or, for that matter, any understanding of the cultural context in donor country and relevance to target country. Unless an international trainer/consultant was present in the training room then the training is not international and thus not acceptable.

Having internationally educated and qualified 'local' trainers deliver the international training is questioned by many Indonesians. I have had AusAID ACM's say directly to me that an international person/trainer must be present at every stage of the training delivery. Unless this is the case, and we do not indicate this in our tender proposals then our projects will not pass the Request for Tender RFT process.

This issue was seldom questioned during the period of IASTP Phase 11 in Indonesia, 1999-2004 it remained as relevant and as prevalent during IASTP Phase 11.

Many organizations and managers of training never questioned this particular RFT requirement nor the associated cultural value, this is perhaps easy to understand, as it is so imbedded in the Indonesian attitude toward international training. However it must be questioned and challenged.

Australian Contracting Managers ACM's perpetuate these values by not questioning them, the ACM has no interest in challenging these issues, they have signed contracts to achieve the defined outcomes of the total number of training per contract. (eg 22,000 training hours) If the Indonesian cultural value is to say "International Training requires International Trainers" then this will be the mandate and the mantra for RFT's. Shifting a cultural value is harder than meeting total number of training hours.

Issues worthy of noting:

Consultants Terms of References ToR's are sometimes rewritten whilst the consultant is in country. These are sometimes justified by lack of a counterpart or agenda being changed by the time the consultant is employed. However it is worth noting how widespread this activity process is.

AusAID's contribution to developing a 'donor' wage economy for local/national staff. This has the effect of:

- Skimming quality national staff to work on well paid donor activity
- Grossly inflating the price for labour in country
- National government denied access to skilled and trained staff
- Creating a false economy

Capacity Building National Institutes

There is a growing trend toward program provision associated with capacity building national institutes. The World Bank is involved in reviewing its aid practices in capacity building to institutional building, as this is only just beginning.

Capacity building national 'institutions' develop and meet donors tendering guidelines so that these national institutes can 'tender for' future aid activity is one aspect of this capacity building theme.

As part of a planned contribution to assist local institutes tender for World Bank activities (funded in part by AusAID) the Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) in the MOE-RDTL established a procurement process and assisted TL institutions tender for a \$1 million plus training program.

On the surface everything seems to have a 'desirable' outcome

The following capacity building activities were considered.

- Structures,
- Processes,
- Experience
- Capacity

Issues:

- Expectations placed upon tenderers
- What 'hidden' questions and assumptions are being revealed
- Managing the process and explaining the 'fairness' of the process.
- Changing the approach as desired; ie costs or inputs.
- Paying attention to 'transparency' and 'openness' in practice.

In some instances the investment of the funding source, in this case the World Bank, has more to do with the 'overarching' program goals than the individually tendered program. For example, when the World Bank as the multi-lateral donor institute has coordinated donor investment in excess of 35 million dollars over a 10 year period. One small project of \$1.2 million is seen as a 'project' where money can be 'thrown at the idea' to see if it works, at least the donors can claim that capacity building is being considered.

It is not too long into the project that some concern is raised about process, the idea seems sound...that is allowing local training providers develop the skills to manage and conduct a significant HRD program with the assistance of an international partner.

Problems:

1. Forced relationship (Shot-gun wedding)

The imposition of 'concept ideas' such as enforcing 'international' involvement on the project only serves to increase the costs significantly and contributes very little to the 'internationalization' of the training experience. The relationships are forced, almost like a 'pre-nuptial' and the dominant partner (international partner) asserting their stance (as though that's they're right) on their local partner. I thought 'shot-gun' weddings were a thing of the past, however not so in the international development sector.

2. Unquestioned competence from the international partner.

Having worked for many years in delivering internationally accredited programs in foreign and far flung lands for an international educational institute, I have come to realize that the 'mask' of internationalization lies in the 'quality

assurance' process. Perhaps little to do with the program provision itself, and certainly little to do with capacity building.

Being able to maintain the 'standard' of quality, being foreign nee (not local) improves the 'view' of the standard. This must be challenged.

I am sorry that I did not have enough time to detail some of these thoughts, I only discover the call for comments and review over the past few days from The Age Newspaper whilst on leave and holidays with family in Australia. I would be happy to comment further if requested.

Kind Regards

Brian Fairman