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Understanding Capacity-Building/ Capacity-Development: A Core Concept of Development Policy

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Author(s)

Ionel, Zamfir

Description / Abstract

'Capacity-building' is a core concept of development policy. The notion that strengthening the capacity of individuals and institutions in developing countries is crucial for the success of development policy emerged gradually, with the theoretical debate reaching its peak between 1995 and 2005. Development approaches based on the notion of capacity-building were introduced to make up for perceived shortcomings in the development aid and technical assistance provided by major international donors since the 1950s. These included lack of ownership by recipients, incapacity to effect sustainable change, lack of inter-sectorial coordination, and insufficiently tailored-made approaches. Although capacity-building is still widely used, a new term has been coined - 'capacity development' - and this has become the favoured choice of the development community. While 'capacity-building' suggests building something new from the ground up, according to a pre-imposed design, 'capacity development' is believed to better express an approach that builds on existing skills and knowledge, driving a dynamic and flexible process of change, borne by local actors.

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