

Prospects and Challenges of Capacity Building Projects in Higher Education: University of Dar es Salaam Experience

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Abstract

The development of skills and competences is a fundamental objective of capacity-building projects in order to achieve successful long-lasting outcomes. This study is about factors that influence effective implementation of capacity-building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam. For it is necessary that capacity building projects implemented by higher education institutions achieve a standard of performance that results into better and sustainable outputs. The study was guided by a qualitative research approach and a case study design. It involved five selected capacity-building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam. The sample included respondents from both members of top management, stakeholders and project beneficiaries. The study revealed that among the three successful of the five selected capacity-building initiatives each achieved the majority of its primary objectives. Among the elements that helped these projects succeed were the careful objective-setting and execution that come from committed and qualified leaders. The study learned in order for a project to succeed, dedicated full-time supervisors and operators who are specialized in that field and possess in-depth project management skills are needed. The following are recommended among others: a charter outlining the precise responsibilities of each management entity and participants, better disbursement of cash and decentralisation of responsibilities.

Keywords: Higher education, Capacity building, Projects, Success factors, Challenges,

Introduction

The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) is a government-owned higher education institution from Tanzania –East Africa, founded in July 1970 by the Act of Parliament No. 12 of 1970. Its mission is to "become a respected world-class university that is responsive to national, regional, and global development demands through engagement in dynamic knowledge generation and application." The institution has continuously sought to advance its teaching, research, consulting, and capacity building initiatives (UDSM-Vision, 2061). The donor funding agencies have supported the capacity building initiatives implemented at the University. Research funding, internal short-term training of staff and students about research skills, partnership networks and multilateral partnership programmes that ensure bilateral training of both staff and students are all examples of research capacity building that serve as a catalyst for influencing research activity at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM- Research Policy, 2015).

According to the UDSM-Research Information Management System (RIMS, n.d.), a repository where all the projects are registered, 85 of the 851 Registered projects at the University are for capacity building. Some of these projects are still in progress and some of them have phased out. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) has been serving as a top supervisory authority of all the projects. The Principal Investigators, who are typically UDSM employees from the relevant discipline, oversee these initiatives. According to the established strategic objectives, the total performance is reported to the university and to the funders after every three months.

The United Nations has identified the idea of capacity building as crucial for facilitating the completion of development projects (UN, 2023). All interventional activities that focus on enhancing the capacities of people, organizations, and societies are included in these practices, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998). Building organizational capacity aims at boosting performance by enhancing management, leadership, or administrative skills. With external support, such as from donors, desired achievements and organizational capacity may be accelerated or improved. Now, a large number of funding organizations, foundations, and agencies demand that their partners take part in capacity building activities.

To achieve the intended goals, capacity building projects are to be managed effectively to respond to inherent challenges and those that may arise during implementation. The reasons influencing failure in most capacity building projects are unclear project objectives, a lacklustre project schedule, poor control, ambiguous stakeholder roles, ineffective communication, and insufficient top management support (Stare, 2011). The study suggests taking on board measures to work on corporate culture, project management culture, and project manager characteristics to assure project performance.



The World Bank (WB) and regional development banks, as well as bilateral and multilateral government organizations like the European Union (EU) have all provided funding for capacity building projects in Tanzania (Youker, 2019). Lete (2013) studied capacity building initiatives for institutional development in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and discovered that the factors affecting the performance of these initiatives include the poor strategic approaches for restoring existing infrastructures and mobilizing resources to meet the needs of the populace and other regulatory institutions (Watson and Saxby, 2006).

According to the Department for International Development DFID (2003), inadequate budget allocation and expenditures are the factors that affect the effectiveness of capacity building projects in public institutions. The solution is to develop strategies to increased funding as well as mechanisms to monitor and control the funds in the organization. According to Bolger et al. (2005), most public institutions are unable to meet the demands of the current expanding population and business sectors due to lack of funding for the necessary resources to deliver services effectively. Singh (2015) mentions sustained financial input for developing capacity and support structures are both important to sustain any capacity development initiatives.

The question the study puts forward is why some capacity-building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam succeed while others fail to achieve their objectives even when sufficient funding has been allocated to support them. This study made the assumption that there are internal, context-sensitive, components of the donor funded capacity building projects that are managed by the University of Dar es Salaam that it has to explore. The study is to reveal the issues that have led to the capacity-building initiatives at the University of Dar es Salaam to reach their intended targets. It also identifies the factors that hold back the effective implementation of donor funded projects that are focused on building capacities run by the University of Dar es Salaam.

UDSM and 14 other higher education institutions in the country are at present implementing the HEET project (Higher Education for Economic Transformation Project) with a huge capacity building component (World Bank 2020). Hopefully, this study will shed light on best practices to successful implementation and warn on possible causes of poor performance, especially as it is the first time many of the institutions are implementing a similar World bank supported project.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research approach in examining and interpreting events as they occur in natural settings; qualitative researchers opt to study things in their natural environments (Creswell, 2018). Participant focused groups and in-depth interviews were conducted as part of the qualitative component of the study. One of the main advantages of the qualitative method is that it has the potential to produce detailed descriptions of



participants' mental processes and tends to concentrate on the causes of phenomena. (Yin, 2006).

The population for this study was selected from a range of donor-funded capacity building initiatives. These projects are still in progress and some of them have phased out. The population for these projects is made up of project beneficiaries (students), project operators, and project managers. Five (5) donor-funded capacity building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam that are sponsored by different donor agencies were chosen for this study. The researcher purposefully selected 5 students, 1 from each project, and project managers and operators from each sampled capacity building project. Therefore, there were 25 participants in total. As suggested by Straus and Corbin (1998) and Morse (1995) this sample included project beneficiaries who were students, project operators, and project managers (principal investigators) of which 5 were project managers, 15 were project operators, and 5 were Students.

Qualitative data analysis approaches were employed. This was accomplished by employing audio recording tools, a pen, and a notepad to capture all of the information gathered from the field. In addition, content analysis was used to augment the information from the documentary material in this study so that the research problem could be better understood.

Findings of the Study

The results are reported according to the objectives that guided this study. These were to investigate the reasons that influenced successful capacity building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam to achieve their objectives as planned, and to find out factors that hinder the effective implementation of projects that focuses on building capacities run by the University of Dar es Salaam.

Reasons for Successful Capacity Building Projects to Achieve their Objectives as Planned

The first objective of the study was to investigate the elements that resulted in the capacity building initiatives at the University of Dar es Salaam to reach their intended targets. The analysis found that among the five selected capacity building projects three were the most successful capacity-building initiatives that achieved the majority of their primary objectives before and within the allotted time frame.

The Innovation and Tourism Project was one of the five projects chosen, and it is regarded as one of the successful capacity-building initiatives. Its main objective from 2015 to 2020 was to increase research capacity through training in order to carry out high-quality studies that support innovation and the sustainability of tourism resources for inclusive



development in Tanzania. The project hired four PhD candidates in 2016, and all four successfully finished their programmes in 2020 as scheduled. Establishing a multidisciplinary research centre in tourism as a capacity-building effort was another objective that was accomplished successfully; the mission was completed early in 2018, even though the project was not yet finished (Tourism Project Report, 2020).

Another one is the Interdisciplinary Molecular Biosciences (IMB), whose main objective was to expand the understanding of molecular biology, biotechnology, and mycology, including lichens, in Tanzania from 2015 to 2021. It also aimed to advance technological advancement in the nation. The primary objective was accomplished with the effective completion of the PhD programme development and accreditation up to 2021 as planned. Additionally, an impressive number of Laboratory modern equipment were purchased, a taught PhD in Inter-disciplinary Molecular Biosciences was created, trained human resources with research expertise in molecular biosciences including lichen, and finally technical staff were trained on how to maintain and repair purchased equipment. These objectives were achieved within the time range (IMB 2021).

Additionally, the Engendering Agribusiness project (2015–2020), which aims to contribute to inclusive poverty reduction and broad-based agricultural growth by generating knowledge on gender and agribusiness entrepreneurship, is another effective capacity building project. This was to be accomplished by raising the standard of the postgraduate programme by developing a PhD programme on rural entrepreneurship and agriculture that included gender and other subject courses. This objective was designed, accredited, and successfully completed in due time. It has been in operation since 2015.

Accordingly, the analysis of the interviewees' responses from the successful project showed the following to be among the elements that helped the capacity building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam to succeed:

- *Establishment of strategic objectives with a timeframe*

Strategic objectives should be set at the start of each fiscal year (Audit Management letter, 2021). These objectives should be given to all project managers, even those at lower levels, with a timeline for completion in order to ensure effective execution. One interviewee among respondents made the following claim:

“Most of the donor-funded projects have very clear objectives and milestones to accomplish. The project documents and the initial preparations make it possible for the actors to be familiar with the intended goals and how to reach them. In my project, we, also in every meeting, share progress and go through the individual objectives and timelines and propose changes if needed in implementation approach or adjusting the objectives.” (CPM-01 12th September 2022)

- *A presence of strong control and monitoring system*

The process of project information collection, recording, and reporting to the project manager and other key stakeholders is known as monitoring. Control follows monitoring by using the monitored data and information to ensure that actual performance is in line with the plan (Watson and Saxby 2006). Therefore, monitoring and control have been effectively used in these successful initiatives, especially with regard to budgetary concerns and deadlines. One of the interview respondents made the following argument:

“Actually, in our project, we have been doing monitoring and control every end of the month to make sure that every fund provided has been utilized accordingly and every task provided to operators has been performed within the given deadline.” (CPM-02 12th September 2022)

- *Transparent budget and effective audit process*

These are necessary in order to ensure quality performance of the project. Every year, beginning in March, these donor-funded projects prepare their budgets in order to begin a new fiscal year in June. The budget process takes into account the specified donor-budget line and template, the UDSM financial regulations and policies and UDSM agreements. It also takes into account the results-based Logical Framework of the project.

According to the UDSM-Guidelines and Procedures for Management of Research Projects and Activities Funded from External Sources (2020), the controller and auditor general (CAG) conducts the audit procedure for these projects. The project will follow the guidelines established by the auditors chosen to conduct the general audit at UDSM. So, whenever the project is externally audited, practitioners’ awareness increases during every action they perform. One of the respondents commented that:

“We, accountants of the projects understand much how audit processes are. They are actually scary processes because auditors need to know every money received and how it was utilized with evidence. It has never been a simple process for us in one month or more of audit process. This is more difficult when there are errors made somewhere. So, through audit naturally, we have become very keen in the utilization of funds to implement the required activities so as to have a clean report from auditors.” (CPO-01 13th September 2022)

- *Dedicated operational support like administrative, financial, and procurement sections*

One of the interviewees’ revealed that all successful projects involved task sharing with other qualified authorities, and when necessary, outsourcing. Operating a project with just principal investigators and the co-principals in all the activities is not an easy assignment. Because the majority of them in such positions are academic staff, they have a limited



amount of time to follow up on the activities in these capacity building initiatives. One of the respondents observed that:

“We managers of the project most of us are academic staff, outside the management role we have a teaching role as well as a core function. We do depend on operational staff to work closely with the project because they have administrative tasks only, unlike us. Sometimes we do even outsource to make things moving i.e., training facilitators, system administrators and programming officials. So, you find out that some projects managers mind sharing such responsibilities, the managers overwork themselves with their limited time hence delays and underperformance occurs.” (CPM-03 12th September 2022)

- *The utilization of standardized and quality equipment*

It has been observed from the interviews conducted that the successful capacity building projects have been using very standard equipment for research and training works. With such equipment, students have completed their studies on time because they do not require to travel far seeking for required equipment. Availability of equipment has ensured quality research and successful laboratory performance hence good end results. For instance, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the researchers required effective equipment for testing and production of medicines, which is why UDSM came up with the covid-19 medications known as “Udanol” and “Uzima”. These facts have been emphasized by one of the students as follows:

“My academic journey went smoothly and I managed to complete my PhD studies in time because I had all the necessary equipment on board for all Laboratory tests. To fulfil part of my studies, I had to perform several tests, but fortunately, the project possessed all the equipment. I was also offered a personal Laptop to use in my academic work. Such kind of initiatives by the project influenced my early completion of studies.” (CPB-01 15th September 2022)

- *Effective and prompt communication between operation officers, management, coordinators, and funders so as to avoid delays*

Communication is crucial because it fosters connections with others by enabling the sharing of experiences, needs, and thoughts. These effective capacity-building initiatives have suggested that formal and informal communication be maintained for effective performance (Chaskin, 2001). Managers and lower-level staff hold informal meetings in a cordial manner to get information that cannot be discussed in formal sessions. These discussions help the project to avoid recurring difficulties. Two of the respondents have adequately justified this, stating that:



“We have been conducting several internal meetings with our project staffs, these kinds of employees are the ones who know a lot of information on the ground because they are close to non-project staff. As managers we send quick observations to coordinators and to donors as well when needed so as to avoid obstacles in the performance, hence success in the project ...” (CPM-04 19th September 2022)

“Our supervisors have been working with us in a friendly way. Being friendly with your boss does not mean crossing boundaries and disrespecting him or her. This kind of relationship has helped us to be open and expressive to everything good or bad that is going on with the project. And quick solutions have been made. We have been socializing in different activities like team building activities and joint games.” (CPO-02 13th September, 2022)

- *Commitment, willingness, and personal drive of project beneficiaries*

The success of the capacity building projects in achieving its objectives was influenced by the project beneficiaries’ desire for success. For example, some students such as Masters, PhD, and post-doctoral students have been delaying and extending their studies purposefully for their own interests. This has proven challenge to oversee their completion. However, if the project satisfies a student’s individual desire to finish early, that immediately contributes to the project’s success. The following are some responses from interviewees and their viewpoints:

“As a PhD student, I managed to complete my studies within the time range because I wanted to complete my studies in time and apply it in my career, and get a lecturer rank. I was not ready to lose a single moment, so I strived hard and here I am with a doctorate already.” (CPB-02 16th September, 2022)

“In my case, I was very committed with my school but I got a challenge that I could not abide with my supervisor’s demands, he was acting weird to me and he was not of help to my studies. I came to learn latter that, my supervisor had serious family problems that affected his career and brought him too much negative attitudes that he could not afford to control.” (CPB-03 16th September 2022)

“It is true that commitment of students is very important, we have been observing cases of students purposefully delaying just to get extension and continue to benefit from donor funds.” (CPM-05 19th September 2022)

Moreover, further views were collected from focused group discussions regarding the reasons for the successful completion of projects. Students, project managers and project staff were distributed in groups so as to discuss the observed reasons for successful



capacity building projects and to gain a general understanding. The summary of what was discussed is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Summary of Results from Focused Group Discussions (FGD)

Discussion key point: Reasons for Achievement in Capacity building projects				
Data Collection Method	Sources of Data	Main Objective	Expected Outcome	Focus group Results
Focused Group Discussion	Student #1, 2 & 3	To determine Success factors in capacity building projects	Enhancing PhD and Masters students Early Completion	Requires, Commitment, willingness, and personal drive of students.
	Student# 1, 2& 3		Purchase of standardized and expertized crafted Laboratory equipment	Availability of equipment ensures quality research and successful laboratory performance hence early completion of studies
	Project operators# 1&2		Ensuring Transparent budget and effective audit process.	Openness in budget avoids embezzlement and misuse of funds. Also, audit process provides awareness to operators to be keener in financial control.
	Project Managers # 1,2&3		Establishment of effective communication between operation officers, management, coordinators, and funders	Communication promotes quality working relations by sharing experiences, needs, and thoughts.
	Project Managers # 1& 2			Communication avoids unnecessary delays, by solving issues on immediate action.
	Project Managers # 1,2 & 3		Establishment of strategic objectives with a timeframe	Monthly analysis and assessment promote effective execution.

Factors that Drawback Effective Implementation of Capacity Building Projects

Finding the characteristics that function as roadblocks to the successful performance of capacity building programmes at the University of Dar es Salaam was another objective of the study. Among the five capacity-building projects that were chosen, several objectives of two projects were not met on schedule and as expected, and others even required project extensions to accomplish. To investigate this, interviews were conducted and project documents were reviewed. Audit reports were also consulted: among the Audit teams that conducted the audit reviews are Ernest and Young audit firm (2016 & 2017) and the Price Waterhouse and Coopers (PwC) from 2019 to 2022, done under the supervision of Controller and Audit General (CAG). So, from the data collected several shortcomings that affected performance in the capacity building projects were observed as follows:

- *Long chain of approvals in the disbursement Process*

This is about the whole process of requesting funds from donors and receiving payment for carrying out project operations. The procedures follow a number of guiding principles, including the necessity that all reports from previous year be filed and submitted. For additional requests, at least 70% of prior disbursements must have been used; a bank statement must also be sent with the disbursement request to verify this.

Due to the long process of multiple steps, funds are delayed. Hence, presenting challenges in the completion of the projects' objectives. Additionally, the interviewed respondent offered the following to support this viewpoint:

"...complicated administrative procedures or unnecessary bureaucracies are the reasons for all these delays, but on the other hand all these bureaucracies are set to ensure perfectionism instead they turn out to be causing chaos."
(CPO -01 17th September 2022)

- *Centralization of oversight and management roles*

This refers to the circumstance in which a small group of leaders at the top of the organizational structure hold a disproportionate amount of decision-making authority. Lower-level managers are informed of top-down decisions so they may rely on their implementation (Ayee, 2005). Data collected from the interview observed that centralization of power has made it difficult for these capacity building projects to succeed because low-level managers are supposed to implement changes rather than recommend them, but in reality, they are the ones who work closely with the underprivileged and other beneficiaries and can therefore comprehend the difficulties better than top managers. Two respondents from the administrative department provided the following points of view:

"The decisions in these projects are made by the top management themselves. We employees in a middle level are the implementers of the



principles that are decided and approved by the management. We cannot make any changes without approvals from the top management even if the idea is so productive.” (CPO -02 20th September, 2022)

“Sometimes we operators complete our tasks very early but due to managerial long chain procedures the approval gets delays and increases grievances from our customers.” (CPO -03 20th September, 2022)

- *Excessive controls and weakness in the management of funds retirement process*

This difficulty has been identified as one of the factors contributing to the ineffective execution of capacity building projects. This is due to the reason that, the process is requiring an excessive number of documents. As reported further by the CAG in a documented management letter from the financial statements and compliance audit conducted in 2021, even for the principal investigators, the processes are complex because, they must have a fieldwork budget, a project action plan, a letter of research clearance, the most recent project progress report signed by the dean or principal, and an application letter written to the coordinator in order to submit an imprest (fund request) to implement the strategic goals of the project. All of this paperwork requires extra time to prepare, which causes delays in getting things done.

Likewise, from the interviews made, the observation was that, the project beneficiaries could have avoided dealing with as much paperwork as possible, if these documents had been customized in one form, whether electronic or paper. Additionally, the process of retiring the imprests after the fund has been used is extremely labour-intensive and complicated to handle.

Due to the fact that university imprests are only issued to employees, while the majority of the students in these capacity-building initiatives are not employees of UDSM, they are compelled to ask university staff to submit imprest requests on their behalf, which takes some control away from them. Various students’ sampled reactions to this viewpoint were as follows:

“As a student who is recruited out of UDSM, I have been facing a lot of challenges when requesting for stipend, because I am not a UDSM staff I am forced to ask the UDSM staff to request an imprest on my behalf, who may disagree due to a lot of reasons, some of them you find out that they already hold an imprest and the rules does not allow to take more than one imprest. Also, some of them disagree due to trust, they do not trust the person who has asked them to request on their behalf, or they are avoiding other complications and you cannot just force them. Then it is too difficult process for us students who are not UDSM staff...” (CPB-03 20th September, 2022)



"I have been doing a sandwich programme for my PhD studies; therefore, I was supposed to request fund for my travel support to Sweden as well as Stipend during my studies. Due to a lot of imprest complications and delays I once was late to travel to Sweden to complete my studies and that brought a lot of frustrations to myself and my supervisors." (CPB-05 20th September, 2022)

Two respondents from the operational officers' cadre responded as follows:

"All these procedures are set because we are recruiting students whom we do not know well, you may provide fund to them and can decide to quit school or run with pending financial issues without any notification. Then we get into complications and audit queries. Unlike UDSM staff it is easy for them to be monitored because they are employees. That is why we have been advising the principal investigators to take that responsibility of impress on their behalf because they closely supervise them." (CPO -04 20th September, 2022)

"On my side I find that, there is a need to review this regulation in future so as to find a better way that will favour the project and a student at the same time." (CPO -05 20th September, 2022)

- *Weakness in resources allocation*

The researcher's data from the interviews made revealed that in the budget plans sent to donors the budget is made for all projects as per their requirements. What normally happens is the fund may be released equivalent to or below the budget depending on the nature of the fund requests made and availability of funds. When the fund is equivalent to the budget there will be no problem to the project managers. But when the donors release below budget that means the resources are poorly allocated. Hence failure to implement activities as planned. Some of the activities planned will be eliminated and some will be implemented in a partial way. One respondent from the managerial level explained this as follows:

"It is true that, this has been happening to some of the capacity building projects. It has been due to long term causes like the irresponsibility or unrealistic approach of the principal investigators themselves during formulation of the budget itself. You find out the budget set does not correlate to the needs or the fund to be given or simply called "unrealistic budget". So, when the donors make their evaluation, they approve the budget that was requested. Also, sometimes the donors as per their own interests pass the budget in a minimal way unlike the interest of the project managers hence hindering their performance." (CPM-05 19th September, 2022)

- *Lack of motivation among the project supporting staff*



It has been noted that the majority of workers on these capacity-building projects are not sufficiently motivated by pay and other perks. Three operational staff respondents provided the following feedback:

“We use a lot of phone calls per day to communicate with our customers, unfortunately the office telephones are not satisfactory enough to cover every room. Moreover, there are moments that, the employees work outside the office so it is not easy for us to go back to the office and make calls, hence we find ourselves using our own personal phones by recharging voucher from our own pocket money.” (CPO -06 21st September, 2022)

“We have been working late nights and sometimes until weekends in order to accomplish the project objectives but the project does not pay the extra duty allowances for the extra working hours.” (CPO -07 25th September, 2022)

“As human beings we need sometime for team building activities and mind refreshment. The project does not perform any of such activities to motivate employees i.e., visiting the national parks even once a year, departmental games and competition and so forth. We hear some projects do these but not this one. If such activities were conducted even, we operators could have motives to work more.” (CPO -8 30th September, 2022)

- *Ineffective procurement process*

The researcher’s observation was that the design of the procurement procedures is complex in nature, especially for technical and laboratory equipment. For example, the Molecular Bioscience Project Laboratory tools are said to be entirely novel, therefore the vendors are required to manufacture them from scratch exactly as requested. Suppliers may also mistakenly provide equipment that was not requested in place of that which was. It will take time for the order to be automatically rejected and re-requested. Two of the project managers gave the following explanations:

“I can witness this from our project we once ordered equipment from a certain supplier from Germany. What came after a long while was not same as requested. So, we were supposed to reject and return back to the supplier. The equipment was needed highly by our students to complete their studies in research area but it caused delays.” (CPM-03 21th September, 2022)

“I once requested some of the Laboratory equipment for our students to assist them in completion of their research. Unfortunately, the requested instruments were not available in the industry, so the manufacturers were supposed to make a special order for us to innovate and produce. So, all the



processes took ages for the project to get such instruments leading to delay in completion of our studies.” (CPM-04 22nd September, 2022)

Also, two procurement officers were interviewed to share experience on this concern and said the following:

“These project officers have been thinking that it is us who have been making delays but in reality, you cannot change the official procurement procedures and bureaucracies. Also, the chaos caused by suppliers themselves and other bank procedures to be followed are the cause for delays.” (CPO -10 21st September, 2022)

“There is a need to review the procurement procedures, rules and regulations of the University, the current in practice is old and dated and does not abide with the speed of world development, when the procedures are reviewed even the processes can be smooth.” (CPO -11 21st September, 2022)

- *Inefficiency at the project level*

The views observed from interviews declared that, some of these operators at the project level are not fully involved in the project just because they have multiple roles at university. Mostly have academic roles as well as extra management roles in the projects. So, they have limited time to fully engage in these capacity building projects.

Two project managers and one project operator who have been poorly performing in their projects provided this view:

“It is true that most of us have multiple tasks that makes us too busy. For instance, I am the Senior Lecturer which is my core role as an employee, I have a role to teach and supervise my students, I am also the head of department I have a role to supervise all departmental issues and I am the principal investigator of the project. So, trying to do perfect in all tasks make the assignments delay.” (CPM-03 21th September, 2022)

“For my case I do have a lot of tasks as well. Apart from teaching I was appointed as a board director in one of the government entities. I do attend a lot of meetings per quarter outside Dar es Salaam to handle such tasks. So, by such case, I get limited time to settle and concentrate on the project.” (CPM-04 21th September, 2022)

“Sometimes we operators face the challenge of lack of cooperation with the project managers, we may write reports but the project operators ignore the vetting process hence poor end results.” ((CPO -12 21st September, 2022)



- *Lack of satisfactory level of manpower*

This is one of the factors affecting how well the capacity building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam perform. It was noted that only a few operators were present in 5 selected projects (accountants, administrative officers, procurement officers, office attendants, and system administrators). These officers labour under intense pressure and are frequently overburdened with daily duties, which affects their efficiency and effectiveness and occasionally even results in under performance. It was observed that in some cases, one officer works for more than one project. It would be convenient if each project had its own operational officer to provide closer assistance and reduce needless work stress. The following is how two respondents expanded on this viewpoint:

"I am an accountant who is ought to handle all financial matters of ten capacity building projects. I am supposed to write financial reports for all the projects monthly, handling all the auditing issues, monitoring all the accounts of the projects and handling day to day financial activities. The tasks are overloaded for sure. Most of the time, it happens that, I fail to complete my daily to do list until when I extend the working hours. As you know working more than required hours reduce efficiency and performance. So, there is a high need of hiring more operators for the project." (CPO -13 21st September, 2022)

"As a system administrator I have to make sure that all the projects are well covered with effective systems together with information and communication technologies. So, I find myself sometimes spending the whole day doing maintenance of ICT facilities because the project has not employed the professional maintenance officers." (CPO -14 21st September, 2022)

"I am an office attendant, my major duty in the project is to dispatch letters. I do work for twelve projects. So, what happens is that, we get phone calls throughout the day by the operators and project managers everyone demanding to attend their matters in urgent way. It is difficult for me to handle all the projects matters hence failure to accomplish our targets." (CPO -15 21st September, 2022)

Additionally, more views were collected from focus group discussion regarding reasons for poor performance of projects. The summary of what was discussed is presented in table 2 below:



Table 2: Summary of Results from Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

Discussion key point: Reasons for underperformance in Capacity building projects				
Data Collection Method	Sources of Data	Main Objective	Expected Outcome	Focus group Results
Focused Group Discussion	Student #1, 2 & 3	To determine Setback factors in capacity building projects	Enhancing PhD and Masters students Early Completion	The hindering factor is delay of funds (stipends) due to poor Impress system, also lack of commitment of some students and some personal interest to acquire more project funds through extension of studies.
	Project Manager# 1, 2& 3			The procurement procedures are complex and takes long time to be completed. Some equipment is to be innovated hence takes long time in manufacturing.
	Project operators# 1&2		Purchasing of standardized and expertized crafted Laboratory equipment	Some suppliers are not loyal, they provide equipment with less quality. Some suppliers confuse the orders and bring the unrequested orders hence cause cancellation and pre-ordering.
	Project Managers # 1,2&3		Satisfactory Level of Manpower	Most of the project managers are multi-tasked, they do work in their academic posts as well as administrative posts hence delays to completion of tasks.
	Project Operators # 1& 2			The operators work under pressure due to less number compared to the actual need i.e., one accountant for 10 projects
	Project Operators # 1,2 & 3		Decentralization of Management roles	A lot of bureaucracies' cause delay to completion of tasks. The top management are the only decision makers and the chain is too long for the final decisions.



The aforementioned comments imply that a significant number of capacity building programmes at the University of Dar es Salaam face a variety of obstacles that prevent their efficient implementation. Capacity building initiatives may not succeed in achieving their objectives if these problems are not resolved.

Discussions

Capacity building is a crucial component of organisational effectiveness and maintaining high standards. Development of skills and competences is a fundamental objective of capacity building programmes in order to achieve successful and long-lasting outcomes. The justification for building capacity has changed from a focus on individual training to the strengthening of institutional capacities to execute important duties, define and achieve objectives, solve problems, deal with development demands, and much more complex systems (Milen, 2001). At the institutional level, capacity building is thought to enhance performance of an organization by enhancing its managerial, executive, or administrative skills.

Among the five selected capacity building projects studied, three were the most successful capacity building initiatives. The accomplishment was due as observed earlier to careful objective-setting and implementation, a strong monitoring and control system, and a transparent budgeting and auditing procedure. The use of standard and professional equipment for research and training projects that facilitates the capacity building activities; efficient and prompt communication between operation officers, management, coordinators, and funders, are the additional factors. Technicalities like financial, administrative, and procurement processes that are handled effectively are also included.

Furthermore, strong working relationships between project implementers, careful preparation of the objectives and strategies, and efficient monitoring and control systems were the most important aspects that contributed to the success of these initiatives. According to the World Bank, (1998) the partnerships for capacity building projects must be developed and strengthened in universities that are committed to achieving social and economic development. Mechanisms for funding capacity-building initiatives are essential if universities are to continue to act as a source of intellectual capital, education, and innovation for developing industrial economies in any country. By improving governmental, health care, educational, technological, and other services, community development will be accelerated as a result of the availability of research data and its appropriate use in developing policies, devising development initiatives, and making judgments.

Conversely, there are some shortcomings that prevent the University of Dar es Salaam's capacity building projects from being effectively implemented. These factors include the protracted approval process for disbursements, the centralization of management and



oversight responsibilities, and the ineffective management of labour unrest, the ineffective distribution of resources, the lack of motivation among project support staffs, and the ineffective procurement process. Therefore, if capacity building projects carried out at the University of Dar es Salaam were to achieve the required objectives, these factors must be resolved (UDSM-Sida Charter, 2018).

According to research by Chikwe et al. (2015) on the problems relating to research and the development of human capital in Nigeria, inadequate funding for research activities is a problem. Rarely do funders and the government provide enough funding for research projects in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and other industries. Research is not clearly defined nationally in the development priorities this is according to a study on knowledge generation through collaborative research in sub-Saharan Africa (Onyanha & Maluleka, 2011). As a result, there is little scientific effort in those countries. Some governments of poor countries lack the dedication required to support research activities in HEIs by allocating adequate financing in their budgets. As a result, HEIs still make meagre efforts to increase their research capacity (Chikwe et al., 2015; Onyanha & Maluleka, 2011; Huenneke, Stearns, Martinez & Laurila, 2017).

Conclusion

Building appropriate capabilities is essential for institutional effectiveness. It aids in achieving the projects' specified aims and objectives. A good capacity-building project is a tool for achieving objectives in politics, business, and society. This is made feasible by the effective implementation of capacity building projects. Effective leadership, appropriate plans and procedures, adequate ad skilled human resources are also important, supported by adequate financial resources. However, there are some factors uncovered that prevent capacity building projects from being implemented effectively. These include the protracted approval process for disbursements, the centralization of management and oversight responsibilities, and the ineffective management of labour unrest, the ineffective distribution of resources, the lack of motivation among project support staffs, and the ineffective procurement process. Therefore, if capacity-building projects carried out at the University of Dar es Salaam were to achieve the required objectives, these factors must be resolved. Since other higher education institutions operate within similar national context and are less experienced as the UDSM in implementing donor funded capacity building projects, they are likely to face similar challenges. This study therefore provides the lessons from which the required learning can be achieved to improve the success rate in implementing capacity building projects in higher education.



Limitations and Areas for Further Research

The analysis of the factors that influence the effective implementation of capacity-building projects at the University of Dar es Salaam was the exclusive focus of this study. As a result, generalizing the results could be somewhat challenging as UDSM is an older and more experienced higher education research institution, though the lessons are relevant. Therefore, it would be ideal if future research to involve more higher education institutions.

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