

Study of Government Institutions

EXCHANGE OF STAFF

by Elisabeth Fosseli Olsen



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With contributions from Geir Sundet and Anja Svendsen Østgård,
KPMG International Development Advisory Services.
Oslo, September 2019



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The Report is written by Elisabeth Fosseli Olsen, with contributions from Geir Sundet and Anja Svendsen Østgård, KPMG International Development Advisory Services.
Oslo, September 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this study, we are examining the learning outcomes among public and governmental organisations that are taking part in Norec's professional exchange programme. We are in particular concerned with identifying the specific learning outcomes that characterises public institutions, both at an individual and institutional level.

A core element of exchange programmes is that the exchange activity is perceived as a knowledge transfer process. Norec's assumption is that in particular three key dimensions contribute to learning.¹ These are: 1) the time-frame of the exchange; 2) the duration and depth, and; 3) the reciprocity of the partnerships. In this study we examine the impact (or not) of these dimensions, as well as we have identified other dimensions that contribute to learning.

The question of how to achieve long-term, sustainable improvement at the institutional level, is one of the key issues in international development. This has mostly been conceptualised as capacity building within the development sector, which of course has many definitions, but to put it simply, it is about improving the organisational performance of institutions. In this study we have therefore looked closer at the transfer knowledge processes, and what it takes for individual learning to become part of an organisations' knowledge.

KEY RESULTS

Individual learning results:

When it comes to individual learning we found in particular four strong results. Employees who have participated in Norec's professional exchange programme increase their subject-

matter expertise, cross-cultural sensitivity, creativity and innovative power, and finally their self-esteem. We found that key success dimensions for these learning outcomes were in line with Norec's assumption; if employees are part of long-term, reciprocal and iterative exchanges between partner institutions, their learning outcomes are stronger. In addition, we identified two other success criteria for employees' learning: 1) The participants' learning are highly connected to the relevance of their working tasks during their exchange, and; 2) there is also a need of a certain level of professional experience to ensure increased learning.

Knowledge transfer - from individual to organisational learning

We identified some key criteria for successful knowledge transfer from the individual to the institutional level. Firstly, there must be an interlinkage between the institutions and the partnerships' goals and activities. Secondly, the programme must be anchored within the top and middle management, as it ensures that the programme is developed in line with strategies of the institution. Lastly, reciprocal and long-term partnerships are also important, as they create trust and a mutual understanding of how the exchanges can benefit both parts of the collaboration.

Organisational learning results

The institutional learning differ for the South and North partner institutions. South institutions have three main results: 1) They have integrated new working methodologies; 2) improved routines, structures and systems, and; 3) they have received equipment and achieved skills in operating these. North institutions, on the other hand, have increased their institutional cultural sensitivity, as well as strengthened the institution's internationalisation work and strategies.

¹ Norec, Terms of Reference, Study of Government Institutions Exchange of Staff, 2019

Above we highlighted the unique ways in which Norec's exchange programmes tackle the process from individual to institutional learning. Likewise, there are some barriers hindering the learning outcomes at the institutional level. The most severe obstacle for increased learning is Norec's age restriction of 35 years, as it hinders relevant, experienced and skilled staff in public institutions to participate in the exchanges. Because of this, many participants are recruited externally, which in turn is also a main barrier for institutional learning.

Doctors and nurses have gained an improved methodology for patient care, while teachers have improved their pedagogical skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study is also looking at how Norec's professional exchange programme can be adapted to ensure quality learning among public institutions in the future. Our recommendations in this regard are directed towards the public institutions who are part-taking in the programme, and to Norec, as the facilitator of the exchange programme.

Partner institutions

The areas of improvement for the partner institutions are all related to the knowledge transfer process. A vast majority of Norec partners lack clear strategies and plans for transferring the individual skills and competencies into organisational knowledge. We believe that there is a need to develop more explicit strategies

for becoming (or enhancing their position) as a learning organisation. Secondly, partners need to give room for innovation. Creativity and innovative ideas are important individual learning outcomes, however, employees who have participated in an exchange lack the framework and community to do things differently when returning to their employer, back home. Finally, we identified a need to develop systematic approaches for the institutions internal and external knowledge sharing.

Norec

Norec's key assumptions proves to be key factors for achieving increased learning. The areas of improvement for Norec as a facilitator of the programmes are all minor adjustments of the existing professional exchange programme. Firstly, there is a need to reconsider the criteria of an upper age limit of 35 years for participants that take part in the professional exchange programme, as this places great limitations on institutional learning. The age limit ought to be raised within specialised fields to ensure that relevant staff, competence and learning are a priority within the Norec professional exchange programme. Reciprocity is already a key dimension in the Norec programme, however, we identified a need of further diversifying the content of the reciprocal exchanges within the programme. We also recommend Norec to develop an overall framework that is more agile and less bureaucratic, enabling a more dynamic and flexible execution of the programme. Finally, we saw a significant value added in combining the exchange programme with more traditional programmes of institutional support, and we believe there is an opportunity for Norec in being more pro-active in encouraging or facilitating such bundling of initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND FOCUS

Norec supports collaboration and mutual exchange of employees between institutions in Norway and the Global South. The goal is to embed positive change on individual and organisational level. There is an expectation that Norec's long-term, reciprocal exchange programme will give young people new perspectives, a stronger cultural understanding and develop as leaders and agents for change. At the organisational level, the aim is to contribute to partner organisations gaining new impulses, developing stronger international networks and strengthening their ability to reach their own goal².

Norec has developed, continuously revised and adjusted their exchange programmes based on experiences, evaluations and studies that have been conducted over the last years. The rationale behind this study was for Norec to challenge their own thinking on core issues related to their exchange programmes. Norec wanted in particular to examine what it actually takes to increase learning through the programme, both at an individual and institutional level. This study therefore explores some of the key dimensions that Norec has previously proven, or assumed, will contribute to increased learning. These are: the timeframe for the exchanges, the duration, depth and reciprocity of the partnerships.

Norec wanted to examine further and, if need be, to challenge their following assumptions;

- 1) long-term exchanges provide more sustainable knowledge transfer, compared to short term staff placements;
- 2) long-term exchanges give a better understanding of the culture and facilitate both learning and teaching;

- 3) Several rounds of reciprocal exchanges within a partnership will create trust and understanding and thus better enable individual and institutional learning.

The purpose of this study is both to test Norec's assumptions, and to examine how the exchange programmes can be adapted in order to ensure quality learning on both individual and institutional levels in the future.

In this study, we focus on the individual and institutional learning outcomes. We are in particular interested in the link between the two levels, i.e. to identify the knowledge transfer processes taking place among and within the participants, their institutions and their partners organisation(s). We want to see what it takes to increase knowledge through the Norec programme. What are the results, what are the success criteria and what barriers are hindering learning? Finally, we ask how the future professional exchange programmes should be adapted for reaching its goals and purpose.

Furthermore, the focus of this study is placed on public and governmental institutions that are taking part in Norec's professional exchange programme. The professional programme funds exchange of professionals who contribute to creative and innovative ways of cooperation and sharing of skills and knowledge. Learning is the primary goal of the projects.

The key questions stipulated in the Terms of Reference are answered in this report. A schematic overview of questions and key findings are annexed to this report.

LIMITATIONS IN SAMPLING AND LITERATURE

The selection of partners for interviews and sampling was done together with Norec. The sampling consisted of five institutional partners from Kenya, Tanzania and Malawi and seven institutional partners in Norway. In addition,

² <https://www.norec.no/en/what-is-a-norec-exchange/>

there were interviews conducted with two other institutions – Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate and Statistics Norway – as well as Norad’s Knowledge Bank, which has the responsibility for coordination and learning for institutional capacity building programmes. These were added since they have relevant experiences in the field.

Due to the nature of the exchange programme and the fact that there are not too many public institutions within the Norec-partnerships, there are limitations regarding the findings of unique and/or short staff visits. Several of the interviewed partners have had short staff visits in addition to longer-term exchanges (coordinators, financial staff) but no institution has solely had short staff visits. Consequently, our empirical data is based upon feedback and experiences by participants in the Norec programmes.

Furthermore, there is limited literature on learning effects of short-term staff visits. Our analysis, therefore, heavily relies on our empirical findings. We have in addition analysed our findings in relation to the body of literature exploring and theorising the following key areas of this study; capacity building in development aid, international exchange programmes, voluntarism and organisational learning. By combining these approaches, we have managed to identify what we believe are key learning outcomes due to both long-term exchanges and short-term staff visits/placements.

ANALYTIC APPROACH: KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROCESSES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning at the individual level is the point of departure for Norec’s exchange programmes. There is an expectation that the programmes will give young people new perspectives, a stronger cultural understanding and develop as leaders and agents for change. Further, the individual learning is expected to assist partner organisations to “gain new impulses, develop stronger international networks and strengthen

their ability to reach their own goals.” This, in turn, is expected to contribute to “more tolerant, open and knowledgeable societies.”³

The core element of exchange programmes is that the exchange activity is perceived as a knowledge transfer process. Knowledge transfer implies that each individual / group / organisational unit do not need to learn from scratch, but can rather learn from the experiences of others⁴. This implies that some key elements should be in place for learning to be accomplished. These will of course vary from different types of exchange programmes and sectors, and to identify and elaborate on these elements for learning is a key focus of our study.

In our analysis, we focus on the individual and institutional level. We are in particular interested in the link between the two levels, the knowledge transfer processes, and ask the question of what it takes for individual learning to have an effect at the institutional level as well.

The question of how to achieve long-term, sustainable improvement at the institutional level is one of the key issues in international development. For the last 70 years this has mostly been conceptualised as capacity building, which has many definitions, but to put it simply, it is about improving the organisational performance of institutions. Critics claim that there seem to be limited professional understanding of what capacity building actually is, and much less the reasons for its successes or failures.⁵

The sector’s efforts for reaching successful capacity building is nevertheless continuing, as seen in Norad’s Results Report from 2017⁶, which has capacity building as its main focus. In the

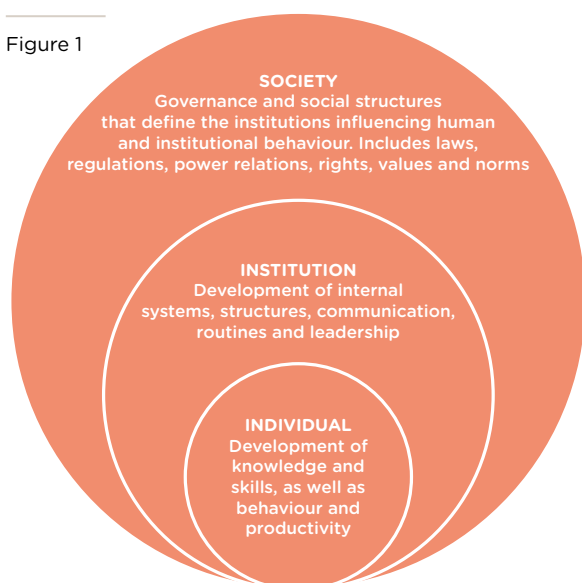
³ Norec website: <https://www.norec.no/en/about-fk/how-do-es-the-fk-model-create-changes/>

⁴ Newell, S.(2005)

⁵ The Guardian (2016)

⁶ Norad (2017)

Figure 1



report, they present a model for, and the different levels of, capacity building (see figure 1); at the individual, institutional and societal levels.

The challenge of translating individual learning to institutional learning is one that is shared by most, if not all, programmes of institutional collaboration.

This study has used Norad's figure as point of starter to explore and to look at the unique ways in which Norec's professional exchange programme tackle the process from individual to organisational learning.

INDIVIDUAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Below we elaborate on individual learning outcomes for public institutions that are taking part in the Norec professional exchange programme. North and South participants achieve several learning outcomes, and all of the key dimensions Norec assume will contribute to learning; long-term timeframe for the exchange, and the duration, depth and reciprocity of the partnerships, are highly important for reaching these results. Below, we elaborate on how these

dimensions affect the learning outcome, and in addition, we introduce other factors that we identified which affect individual learning.

KEY OUTCOMES

The main individual learning outcomes are; increased subject matter expertise, cross-cultural sensitivity, creativity and innovative power and increased self-esteem. The four last mentioned skills are important personal traits for professional job execution, as they contribute to improved resilience, flexibility, openness and personal autonomy.

The Norec programme contribute to improved or new knowledge, competence and skills. North participants are increasing their existing skills through volume training abroad, as well as gaining new skills by being exposed to, and dealing with, new situations and working conditions. South participants, on the other hand, are exposed to new technology, working methodologies, which very often increases their professional skills. Doctors and nurses have i.e. gained an improved methodology for patient care, while teachers have improved their pedagogical skills.

In particular, cross-cultural sensitivity is strongly increased. Participants learn that there are no short cuts in dealing with otherness, and that implementing change and improvement in contexts that differ from your own takes a whole lot of translation work, time, patience and adaptation.

The exchanges also lead to increased creativity and innovation power. North participants are exposed to several situations where solutions have to be solved in new ways – due to lack of technology and equipment that exist at home. Consequently, they are using their existing skills in new and creative ways. For instance, doctors who learn to use their hands in different ways, which in turn improve their usage of existing medical equipment and technology when they return back home. South participants are exposed to different ways of executing relevant work tasks and new technologies. In addition, as they seldom have the same technology at home,

Key outcomes

- Increased subject matter expertise, cross-cultural sensitivity, creativity and innovative power.
- Improved/new knowledge, competence and skills
- Improved resilience, flexibility, openness and personal autonomy

their exposure motivates creative thinking and new ideas on how working methodologies may be improved at home. Professional self-esteem is also increased among North and South participants. North participants experience increased responsibility during the exchange and understand they are able to solve situations differently without technology and equipment normally used at home. South participants' increased self-esteem is achieved in particular through personal challenges and professional exposures related to living and working in a host institution in Norway.

SUCCESS CRITERIA AND BARRIERS FOR INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

The participants' learning outcomes are highly connected to the relevance of their working tasks executed during their exchange. The participants are motivated for learning, and the more their tasks and goals are aligned with their position and role at the home institution, the more they learn from the Norec programme. Several participants highlighted the need of being included in the preparation phase, and flexibility in tailoring exchange goals, in order to ensure that the exchange programme can facilitate for enhancement of skills and competencies, as well as achieving increased learning.

A certain level of experience also ensures that the participants are independent and manage to

be relevant during the un-familiar context and often-cultural challenging working environment during the exchange. Young nurses without work experience are for example overwhelmed with the working conditions in the South and are thus focusing more on dealing with cultural shock and cultural differences, than contributing with skills or increasing professional learning during the exchange. Elder participants seem to be more likely to have professional respect and authority, which simplifies their tasks of conducting relevant work, taking on new and risky tasks, which in turn increases their learning during the exchange.

Further, we identified long-term exchanges as important success criteria for learning. Studies targeting student exchange show that a minimum of two years⁷ immersion is needed to achieve cultural understanding. However, a broad body of literature demonstrates that short-term programmes can assist students in complementing important steps towards this goal.⁸ Norec participants need the first months to settle into their new job and working environment. It takes time to understand routines in a new country, adjust to different ways of communicating and in many cases, further permissions are needed before the participants can legally work in the receiving country. According to the participants, professional learning starts after around four months and the learning process continues throughout their stay. Norec's exchange programme are thus well designed and framed for achieving individual learning.

Reciprocal exchanges are the final key success criteria we identified for successful individual learning. Previous participants pave the way for next generation participants, and gradually they make the host organisation more aware of the differences, challenges, skills and potentials that the exchange participants come with. The

⁷ Bennett (1993) cited in Campbell, K. (2016)

⁸ Campbell (2016)



reciprocal partnerships also create trust and mutual understanding between North and South participants and their respective institutions. For instance, a Norwegian nurse will get assistance, support and advice from her Malawian colleague who has previously been on exchange to Norway, and thus is aware of the obstacles and opportunities for learning and teaching. The previous participants turn into cultural brokers.⁹ By doing so, they ensure efficient learning processes during the exchange.

One of the barriers we identified, is the lacking knowledge of host country language. This is a key obstacle for individual learning. Norec might in this regard consider to support or facilitate for online language courses for South participants – prior to their exchange. Norwegian participants outside Africa also experienced limitation in learning outcome due to the language barrier, but not at the same level as their colleagues from the South. For many North participants

files and systems are in English and thus facilitate the execution of work.

Six months exchanges might, however, in some circumstances be too long. This is perhaps particularly the case for some of the South participants in the health sector. Health workers are only allowed to observe, or at the most perform simple task under direct supervision during their exchange, as they are not licensed to operate as health professionals in Norway. This may lead to frustration among professionals, as they cannot contribute with their skills during their exchange. Some South participants suggested that the Norec programme should consist of 3 months observation in Norway, followed by 3 months (or more) training and execution of professional tasks at a partner institution in the South that are more advanced than their home institution. This would enable the participants to train and carry out the skills they have observed during their stay in the hospitals in Norway.

Another main barrier for learning is generic work tasks that are neither developed for, nor necessary relevant to, the participants recruited for the exchange. This affects in particular South

⁹ Cultural brokers have been identified as important for learning in previous Norec studies, ref: Olsen, E. F and Hernar, O., (2011)

participants and it creates a lot of frustration, as the working tasks during the exchange not necessarily correspond to their needs, skills or professional ambitions. Connected to this, is also the point of access to patients for health workers for South participants since Norwegian regulations are stricter on file, system and patient access.

INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

What are the key institutional learning outcomes for public institutions involved in the Norec professional exchange programme? The learning outcomes of organisations participating in the Norec programme is organisational learning outcomes from participation in the Norec programme are considerable. The degree of learning varies, and we will look at the reasons for this later. Unlike the learning outcomes at the individual level, however, the outcomes at the institutional level are quite different among the North and the South partners.

KEY RESULTS

We identified three main institutional learning outcomes for the South partner institutions. Firstly, they have integrated new working methodologies. Hospitals have for example changed their patient care, by including parents and dependents in conversations with their patients, while schools have adopted more democratic teaching pedagogics, by including children in conversations and facilitating for dialogues during their teaching processes. Secondly, South institutions have also improved routines, structures and systems due to the Norec programme. These have in particular contributed to more efficient and accountable institutions. Mercy James Hospital in Malawi has for example established routines for enabling staff to study and disseminate competence, and in Taveta Municipality, Kenya, they had a component of the exchange programme focusing on waste management and city planning, resulting in a more modern town. They climbed a national

Key results South partner institutions

- Integration of new working methodologies
- Improved routines, structures and systems
- More efficient and accountable institutions
- Improved public services due to new equipment and new knowledge in how to operate it

Key results Norwegian partner institutions

- Increased institutional cultural orientation and sensitivity
- Improved working methodologies
- Strengthened internationalization work and strategies
- Increased expertise and specialization

ranking from the 156th to the 11th place. Finally, the South institutions have received equipment and achieved skills in operating these as a result from the exchange programme. Donations from North partners are common in the partnerships and important contributors for the overall institutional learning outcomes. Oslo University Hospital has for example donated 6 ton of

equipment that was needed in Malawi. The institutional learning results, in sum, combined with equipment and technology donated by Norwegian partners, have contributed to improved public services among several South institutions.

The learning outcomes for the Norwegian partner institutions are different. The programme has first and foremost resulted in *increased institutional cultural orientation and sensitivity*. This has enhanced the institutions engagement for contributing to a more just world, as found at both Flora Vidaregåande skule and Melhus Municipality. It has also contributed to improved working methodologies, as the professionals have increased their competencies in encountering immigrants and people with a different cultural background.¹⁰

The programme have also strengthened the North institution's internationalisation work and strategies. For Melhus Municipality, an interesting institutional outcome has occurred; based on years of reciprocal exchanges the municipality has seen and learned the value and cost efficiency of including volunteers in Norway's public health services. Shortly, they will start implementing a pilot project based on success stories from their collaboration in Taveta, Kenya. For others, such as Haukeland University Hospital, the programme has contributed to building the hospital's expertise and specialisation within specific medical fields such as tropical medicine and trauma.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS FOR INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING

Just as the key success criteria are drivers for increased learning, the absence of them constitute barriers for institutional learning.

The most severe obstacle for increased learning among public institutions, and in particular within the health institutions, is Norec's age

restriction of 35 years. The age limit is a core criteria and a part of Norec's scheme regulation. Simultaneously, it is a huge barrier for institutional learning, as it hinders relevant, experienced and skilled staff in public/governmental institutions to participate in the exchanges. Younger and less experienced personnel are therefore often recruited for the exchanges, and in particular South health institution's often receive less skilled staff than desired. A contributing factor is the educational set-up for instance in Tanzania, where doctors rarely have completed their medical degree by the age of 35. The age limit also leads to external recruitment of participants, as the institutions' staff are too old to participate. This is particularly the case in North institutions, where they therefore miss the opportunity to increase staff's skills and competencies - and in the longer run improved institutions' learnings.

These findings are in line with previous evaluations of Norec. Millard et. al's review of the education sector ¹¹ highlighted that the age requirement was a challenge for vocational training/education, as it was difficult for the partners to identify qualified participants. Carlsen's evaluation of Fredskorpset ¹² also emphasized the age group requirement as an indirectly serious limitation for the fulfilling of the capacity building objective of the Primary and Senior Programme. It is worth mentioning that some institutions highlighted positive aspects of targeting young staff. In sum, however, we do not find any proof of the age limit as important for achieving learning - it is rather the opposite. The age limit ought to be raised within specialised fields to ensure that relevant staff, competence and learning are a priority within the Norec professional exchange programme.

The second main barrier for learning, which we also touched upon above, is the recruitment of external participants for the professional exchanges. Recruiting highly skilled resources for current and future needs is obviously a core priority for any institution, however, we found that several participants were recruited externally, more or less solely due to the age limit. We identified stronger institutional results

¹⁰ Similar findings were presented in Norad's evaluation of FK Norway's Health Programme (ESTHER), 2011

¹¹ Millard, A. S. et al. (2012)

¹² Norad, (2006)



in partnerships where internal staff were recruited, as staff may contribute with relevant skills during the exchange, as well as implement new and increased skills when returning to their organisation. This finding corresponds with recommendations from previous evaluations of Norec¹³, where it was highlighted that the high frequency of recruitment from outside the partner organisation implicate that partner-specific institutional competencies neither are utilised, nor developed.

Finally, we want to highlight that the lack of resources or mandate for implementing newly acquired skills constitute barriers for institutional learning. There might be a need for buying some equipment, or the exchange participants will need support to implement a new solution (such as developing a new routine). For many partners in the South, there is limited or no budget to implement or carry out institutional changes. This is also limiting the scope of the post-exchange implementation of obtained skills. Furthermore, there are rotation on public servants in some countries in the South that can

cause involuntary rotation of returned exchange staff and coordinators, leaving it hard to continue the implementation of new knowledge and skills. A suggestion by participants could be agreements with Norec as the funding party to ensure project team continuity for the period of the exchange programme.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFERS

- FROM INDIVIDUAL TO ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

What are the unique ways in which Norec's professional exchange programme tackle the processes from individual to institutional learning? We identified some key criteria for successful knowledge transfer between the above mentioned learning levels.

¹³ Carlsen (2006:27)

One of the key success criteria for institutional learning lie in the interlinkage between the institutions' and the partnerships' goals and activities. An important reason for Haukeland University Hospital's strong results on institutional learning is that their Norec programme is aligned with their core activities at the hospital, and that the Norec programme is part of the institutions' explicit strategies.

Another key criterion is to anchor the programme within top and middle management. This ensures that the programme is developed in line with the strategies of the organisations. It is also a prerequisite for individual learning outcomes, as management anchoring ensures that new skills and innovative ideas, that are developed during the exchange, are understood and adapted, and hence appreciated when they come back home. The reach of exchange results in Taveta, Kenya, where they have had several exchange programmes in various sectors, for instance, underline the importance of management anchoring. The work done in Kenya also highlights the complementarity of short staff visits from management and coordinators in addition to exchange participants, in sum providing good results. In the longer run, management may be able to better accommodate for integrating new and increased skills, and to follow-up and guide those who have been on exchange.

Reciprocal exchanges is a key value in the Norec exchange programmes, and our finding is that this is also a crucial prerequisite for efficient individual learning, and thus a fundamental dimension for institutional learning. Reciprocity is more decisive for the learning effects among South institutions, however, this is not due to the reciprocal exchanges *as such*, but rather the lack of flexibility in the design, content development and set up in the partnership – a point we will come back to.

¹⁴ Borchgrevink, A. and Skard, T. (2004)

¹⁵ Olsen, E. F. and Hernar, O. (2012)

The final decisive success criterion for institutional learning is another assumed key dimension for learning in Norec; long-term, in-depth partnerships. This is in line with other evaluations and studies of Norec. Borchgrevink and Skard¹⁴, which recognised that experience of hosting exchanges is a prime importance for success. Further, Olsen and Hernar¹⁵ emphasized the importance of conducting several rounds of exchanges in order to create cumulative effects for the organisations. The long-term partnerships create trust and a mutual understanding of how the exchanges can benefit both parts of the collaboration. Each round of exchanges create individual skills and gradually institutional learning. Over time, the skills and learning are transferred between former participants, receiving participants and the institutions' staff as a whole.

FUTURE FACILITATION FOR NOREC PUBLIC SECTOR PROGRAMME

How can Norec's professional exchange programme be adapted in order to ensure quality learning and capacity building among public and governmental institutions in the *future*? We have identified several factors that may improve the relevance and impact of public sector exchanges. In this section we firstly outline areas of improvement among the partner institutions, and thereafter elaborate on how the Norec programme may be set up for further improvement of the learning results within public sector exchanges.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

All organisations learn, whether they consciously choose to or not, as it is a fundamental requirement for their sustained existence. Our analytical approach in this study is that when individual knowledge is made explicit and actively shared, the base of shared knowledge in an organisation expands, and the organisation's capacity for effective coordinated action increases. The

Norec programmes facilitate for *actively sharing knowledge* between organisations in the North and South, and between organisations in the South.

The Norec exchanges successfully facilitate for institutions and their staff to actively share knowledge across institutional and national borders. We have identified, however, three areas of improvement for public institutions. These are all related to the *transfer mechanisms* between individual and institutional knowledge and capacity building.

Include strategies for institutional learning

A vast majority of the Norec partners lack clear strategies and plans for transferring the individual skills and competencies into organisational knowledge. It is our finding that there is, in many instances, an overall missing link between participants' goals and their institution's long-term goals for learning or capacity building. In addition, a frustration over not being able to implement their newly achieved insights and skills when returning to their home organisations, was found among many participants. Either because they were put to execute work tasks where the new knowledge was not relevant, or they were recruited externally and consequently the knowledge left the institution with the participant after having finalised the programs compulsory de-brief work.

We believe that the learning outcome at the organisational level will be improved if Norec and partner institutions put more focus, and develop explicit strategies, to enhance their capabilities to become a learning organisation. We argue that it is not sufficient to assume that individual learning leads to institutional capacity-building solely on the grounds of more participants being part of exchanges. The link between individual to the institutional needs to be actively targeted and shaped. The transfer of learning must not only be part of explicit strategies. Norec partner institutions should also aim for including these strategies in their overall efforts of being – or becoming – a learning

Improvements at partnership level

- Include strategies for organisational learning
- Give room for innovation
- Plan for sharing and upscaling knowledge

Reciprocal exchanges are the final key success criteria for successful individual learning.

organisation. In line with scholars, we argue that these type of learning organisations may be identified as sharing five key traits; collaborative learning culture, lifelong learning mind-set, room for innovation, forward-thinking leadership and knowledge sharing.¹⁶ We will elaborate further on the room for innovation below, as this is identified as another key component that may strengthen the transfer from individual learning to institutional knowledge or capacity building due to the Norec programme.

¹⁶ See amongst others; Sharma, N. (2017)

Give room for innovation

The second identified area of improving institutional learning, is for the partner organisations to give room for innovation. Creativity and innovative ideas are, as stated earlier, important learning outcomes at the participant level. However, innovative ideas are fragile because they are challenging existing ideas and practices, and hence they need a protective space and environment within the organisations that encourage experimentation, trying and even failing.¹⁷ The challenge identified in this study, however, is that the creativity and innovative ideas are lacking the space needed for further development and implementation when participants return to their home organisation. There may be many reasons for this, however, studies often emphasise a risk-averse organisational culture that hampers innovation by preventing experimentation.¹⁸ According to the participants they are lacking framework and a community to do things differently. The participants' innovation process therefore often ends when returning back home.

Plan for sharing and upscaling knowledge

The third area that may enhance institutional learning, is for the partner institutions to develop systematic approaches for internal knowledge sharing. A prerequisite for knowledge sharing is that every member of an organisation are aware of the learning objectives and that they work as a collective problem-solving team to achieve their goals. We found that some organisations had developed systematic approaches for knowledge sharing. These, in turn, had strongly managed to transfer individual learning to the institutions. Mercy James Hospital in Malawi, for instance, has already implemented incentives for individual learning and collective sharing of knowledge at the hospital, as part of the Norec programme.

¹⁷ Olsen, E. F. (2019)

¹⁸ Arundel, A. et. al. (2013)

The next level of increasing knowledge is to share the skills, competencies or insights with other relevant institutions, and the society at large. Institutions in the South labelled this as upscaling of knowledge. The necessity of upscaling knowledge was in particular highlighted by South participants and institutions, but also among some of the Norwegian institutions in the health sector. Queen Elisabeth Central Hospital in Malawi are for example already planning workshops and events for disseminating increased knowledge to nearby hospitals. Haukeland University Hospital are aiming for closer partnership and even maybe including Oslo University Hospital as a partner in their ongoing Norec programme, in order to increase the efficiency of the learning outcomes. Partners in the South addressed a need to establish collaboration with the local, regional or/and national ministries in order to ensure that the public institutions' involvement in, and results from the Norec programme, also could inspire to, and facilitate for, learning processes that were rooted in the governments priorities and strategies.

Improvements at programming level

- Continue reciprocal exchanges, but allow for diversity in its contents
- Introduce agile and more flexible administrative structures for the programme
- Provide opportunities for bundling of aid programmes/incentives

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOREC

We identified three areas of improvement in Norec's set-up of the professional exchange programme that we believe will increase the

organisational learning outcomes for public institutions. These are: Reciprocal exchanges – diversity in content, agile programme cycles and bundling. All areas are minor adjustments of the existing professional exchange programme in Norec, and all of Norec’s dimensions that are assumed to contribute to learning are highly relevant and present. We will present these more in detail below.

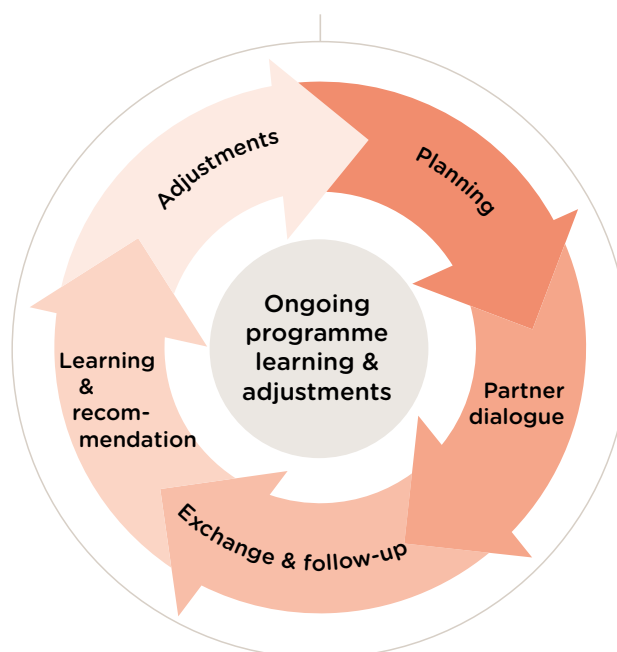
Reciprocal exchanges – diversity in content

The reciprocal exchanges within the Norec programmes are, as already elaborated, important for individual and institutional learning. Notwithstanding, we have also seen that the institutional learning outcomes for the North partners in many instances revolve around solidarity work, and less on capacity building and increased organisational knowledge. Whether the reciprocal exchanges will actually lead to institutional specific goals, the Norec professional exchange programme must also take into consideration that partners in the South and the North have quite different *starting points, contextual challenges, professional needs and institutional goals*. A partnership can (and in many instances should) be based on these differences. Although a partnership have an overall common goal/ vision, their institutional goals will differ, and so will the content and design of the exchanges. One partner may conduct 12 months exchanges, while their counter-partners’ participants only stay for 6 month abroad (which is already a practice in Norec today). In addition, even though the partnership is within the same sector (i.e. health), it should not imply that the partners will need to recruit and send participants with the same professional background. Hence, Haukeland University Hospital may send specialist nurses or doctors to Zanzibar, while Mnazi Mmoja Hospital in Zanzibar might want to send administration staff or management, in order to learn more about administrative routines and hospital management in Norway.

Agile and less bureaucratic programming

Public sector institutions find the administration routines for the Norec programme a little too

Input from all partners troughout cycle



Reciprocity, long-term exchanges and in-depth partnerships are all fundamental factors for enabling public institutions to move forward.

bureaucratic. They desire less micro management and more room for the flexibility they experience as needed for agile implementation of the programme.

We recommend Norec to develop an overall framework for public sector partnerships that enable the partner institutions to implement, adjust and learn throughout the project cycle, for example in line with Problem-Driven Iterative Adaption methodology.¹⁹ Such an approach will assist and enable the partner organisation to carry out strategies and plans for i.e. creativity, innovation and knowledge sharing. The approach also enables a problem-driven positive deviance, and a more dynamic and flexible execution of the programme. We believe such an approach can be more efficient for achieving the institutional learning goals, as the approach is tailored to allow trying, learning, failing, iterating and adapting knowledge, and finally scaling the increased successful learning through diffusion.²⁰

Bundling

One of the key success factors when it comes to translating individual learning to institutional competence and capacity building, is to provide opportunities to practice new learning and to demonstrate results through providing services that are valued by the institution and by society. Findings from this study, demonstrate that multi-year exchanges over a long time, minimum 10 years, are probably needed for strong and sustainable institutional learning.

There is also a significant value added in combining the exchange programme with more traditional programmes of institutional support, so-called "bundling" together different initiatives. This is already done through several of the existing programmes, as we have seen for example with the Oslo University Hospital support to the hospitals in Malawi where they have donated equipment. Another example is

Taveta Municipality, Kenya, where the different exchange and collaboration experiences grew from high school student exchanges, to kindergarten teachers, waste and city planning, and more recently to the health exchange programme. Norec could be more pro-active in encouraging and / or facilitating such "bundling" of initiatives for a broader learning reach.

CONCLUSION

The Norec Exchange programme is an efficient tool for public institutions to increase their subject matter expertise, improve their employees' cultural understanding and to strengthen their internationalisation efforts.

Norec has developed a professional exchange programme that is based on many years of experience and adjustments. During these years, Norec has also developed in-depth competence and know-how on what it takes to facilitate institutions in the North and South to collaborate, move forward together and simultaneously contribute to increased learning.

Reciprocity, long-term exchanges and in-depth partnerships are all fundamental factors for enabling public institutions to move forward. It has resulted in improved internationalisation work and the institutions have become responsible stakeholders and participants, contributing to common global development goals.

In this study, we have touched upon what it takes to achieve individual and institutional learning. Norec is already contributing efficiently in embedding positive change and a more tolerate, open and knowledgeable world. We also recommend a number of adjustments in the strategy further to strengthen the approach and ensure the transfer of knowledge from the individual to the institutional level.

¹⁹ See amongst others, Andrews, M. et al (2015)

²⁰ Andrew, M. et al (2015) Ibid.



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INSTITUTIONS INTERVIEWED

In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Norway, South Africa, Tanzania, Malawi and Kenya. Approximately 80 people from the following institutions took part in the interviews;

Dr. Georg Mukari Academic Hospital	South Africa
Flora Vidaregåande Skule	Norway
Haukeland University Hospital	Norway
Melhus Municipality	Norway
Mercy James Hospital	Malawi
Montfort Special Needs education College	Malawi
Mnazi Mmoja Hospital	Zanzibar, Tanzania
Norad's Knowledge Bank	Norway
Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate	Norway
OsloMet	Norway
Oslo University Hospital	Norway
Statistics Norway	Norway
Sunnaas Rehabilitation Hospital	Norway
Taveta Municipality	Kenya
Trøndertun Folkehøgskole	Norway
Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital	Malawi

TO R QUESTIONS AND KEY STUDY FINDINGS

ToR questions

Findings

Is there a difference in learning in institutions (Norwegian and in Global South) that have received personnel through long-term staff exchange (more than 6 months), compared to those who have received staff visits?

- None of the institutions that were interviewed in this study had only experienced staff visits and there is next to no literature or cases that analysis the outcomes of short-term staff visits only. However, and according to the participants and the partners in the Norec programmes, there is a severe difference in the learning outcome of short and long -term stays. HUH staff in Bergen explained that the health sector in Zanzibar are to a large extent experiencing 'health tourists', who are scholars, students or specialists from abroad, visiting the health sector on the islands for a short while, mostly for collecting data and insights for their own work and not for the benefit of their partners.
- Norec partners and participants emphasized the need of long-term and reciprocal exchanges as an enabler also for staff on short visits which may contribute and support institutional learning.
- Long-term exchanges of minimum 6 months duration may contribute to institutional learning, in particular if the participants have a specialised and relevant task during the professional visit.
- Multiply long-term exchanges over several years gradually contributes gradually to institutional learning.
- Staff visits conducted by staff with specialised and relevant competence contribute to institutional learning in the South as long as the staff visit is part of a multi-year, in-depth partnership.
- Staff visits conducted by management in the Norec partnerships (both North and South partners) contribute to increased individual and institutional learning, as well as anchoring in management.

Is there a difference in what each individual have learned or contributed to on long-term staff exchange (more than 6 months), compared to those who have been on staff visits?

- Staff visits per se is not a component of the Norec programmes, however, several North partners fund selected staff to visit their partners in the South. These visits are equally important, as they contribute to strengthen the institution's internal support and understanding of the exchange programmes. Also, and in particular, but not exclusively, in the health exchanges, they also contribute with specialised competence that may enhance the institutional learning outcome.
- Project coordinators and administration partner visits are the only funded staff visit in the Norec programmes. These are important, as the project coordinators and administrators learn about the programme, its potentials and obstacles. These visits also contribute to create trust and a mutual understanding among the partner institutions, as well as management anchoring and facilitating collaboration.
- Staff who visit partners for a short period will, however, only increase their own skills and competence if they already have a cross-cultural sensitivity and knowledge of local context, including its challenges and hindrances for implementing change.

ToR questions

Findings

To what extent is the duration and depth of partnership (more than 3 years, broad co-operation agreement) a background factor for the quality of institutional and individual learning?

- We have identified long-term partnerships as a key success criterion for both individual and institutional learning.
- Long-term, in-depth partnerships also create trust and mutual understanding of how both partners can benefit from the collaboration.
- Partnerships of more than 10 years are more likely to achieve the strongest learning results.
- Each round of exchanges create individual skills and gradually institutional learning. Over time, the skills and learning can be transferred between former participants, receiving participants and the institutions' staff as a whole.

How does the Norec key value of reciprocity affect the quality of institutional and individual learning, as compared to the one-way traditional knowledge transfer concept?

- Reciprocal exchanges are important for both individual and institutional learning. Previous participants pave the way for next round of participants and by doing so they ensure efficient learning processes for participants that are on exchanges.
- "More exposure = more learning": It takes time to establish a cooperation, shifting of partners would not give the same results.
- Reciprocal exchanges are leading to stronger institutional learning in the South than in the North.
- One-way, long-term exchanges from the North to the South may contribute to learning if the exchange are part of a clearly defined development/capacity building goal.
- On the institutional level, however, it is the institutional learning for North partner revolved around solidarity work, and less on capacity building and organisational learning. Partners in the South and the North have quite different starting points, contextual challenges, professional needs and institutional goals.

Are there other factors relating to long-term, broad, reciprocal partnership vs short term visits/training courses which are relevant to consider for Norec as well as the concerned agencies?

- **Reciprocal exchanges – diversity in content:** Whether the reciprocal exchanges will actually lead to institutional specific goals, the Norec programmes must also take into consideration that partners in the South and the North have quite different starting points, contextual challenges, professional needs and institutional goals. A partnership can (and in many instances should) be based on these differences, and although a partnership have an overall common goal/vision, their institutional goals will differ, and so will the content and design of the exchanges.
- **Agile and less bureaucratic programming:** Partners desire more room for the flexibility they experience as needed for agile implementation of the programmes. Norec is recommended to develop an overall framework for public sector partnerships that enable the partner institutions to implement, adjust and learn throughout the project cycle, for example in line with the Problem-Driven Iterative Adaption (PDIA) methodology.
- **Bundling:** Space for more projects and broader funding: There is also a significant value added in combining the exchange programmes with more traditional programmes of institutional support. This is already done through several of the existing programmes e.g. Melhus and Taveta.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

STUDY OF GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS EXCHANGE OF STAFF

Introduction

Since the year 2000, Norec (fka FK Norway / Fredskorpset) has facilitated the exchange of approx. 10.000 people between workplaces in more than 60 countries. About 25% of the 10 000 participants whom have been on exchange, represents Governmental Institutions such as hospitals, universities and administrative entities such as bureau of statistics and bureau of mapping. (The other 75% engaged in exchange of staff are civil society organisations and private sector).

More than half of all people who have exchanged workplaces between governmental agencies have done so between countries in the global south, aka south-south exchange. Common traits for all exchanges have been that they are reciprocal, ie every agency both send and receive staff; that they consider younger professionals, ie average age about 30 years old; and that the exchange period has a duration of 1 year for each participant.

The modality of exchanging staff is often seen as contrary to sending (only) staff, and normally for a shorter period of time, and normally with the intention of giving away expertise, in contrast to the reciprocal exchange of competencies and knowledge.

Purpose

Norec is preparing a national Conference primo September 2019 in Førde, where we will invite Norwegian public agencies which have an international engagement to share and learn about experiences and possible future initiatives. The overall object for this conference is to motivate these agencies for longer term exchanges within the context of future partnership with Norec. Another object is to develop a fruitful mode of cooperation with institutions working with Norad's Knowledge Bank. During the Conference, we would like to present a paper on the following:

1. Selected experiences of exchange between national agencies, both north-south/south-north and south-south exchange.
2. Theoretical and practical distinctions between 6-12 month exchanges between agencies versus short term sending initiatives from one agency to another.

3. The distinctions between uni-dimensional short-term training courses as compared to broader, deeper and longer term partnerships
4. The results of other studies of staff exchange/ visits, to see if there is any evidence of differences in the quality or sustainability of knowledge transfer between staff exchange / staff visits (literature review).

Scope

The empirical basis for the analysis shall be the following categories of agencies:

1. Norwegian public agencies which have sent and received longer term staff;
2. Norwegian public agencies which have facilitated short term sending of experts to agencies in the Global South;
3. Southern based public agencies which have sent and received longer term staff from Norway and from countries in the global south;
4. Southern based public agencies which have received short term visits by experts from Norway.

Key Questions

Norec has till now been working under a set of assumptions about personnel exchange which we would like to examine further, and, if need be, challenge them. Is it really true that...:

- long term exchanges will provide more sustainable knowledge transfer, compared to short term staff placements?
- long term exchanges will give personnel a better understanding of the culture and facilitate both learning and teaching?
- several rounds of reciprocal exchange within the context of partnership will create understanding and trust between partner institutions and better enable institutional and individual learning?

The key questions will be:

- Is there a difference in learning in institutions (Norwegian and in Global South) that have received personnel through long term staff exchange (more than 6 months), compared to those who have received staff visits?
- Is there a difference in what each individual have learned or contributed to on long term staff exchange (more than 6 months), compared to those who have been on staff visits?
- To what extent is the duration and depth of partnership (more than 3 years, broad cooperation agreement) a background factor

for the quality of institutional and individual learning?

- How does the Norec key value of reciprocity affect the quality of institutional and individual learning, as compared to the one-way traditional knowledge transfer concept.
- Are there other factors relating to long term, broad, reciprocal partnership vs short term visits/training courses which are relevant to consider for Norec as well as the concerned agencies?

Methodology

Methodologically, one foresees in-depth, partly qualitative interviewing of a selection of public institutions in Norway and the Global South based on the 4 categories of agencies (see Scope), in combination with a review of relevant literature.

Norec will select an estimated 12-15 agencies in Norway and 6-8 agencies in the Global South for interviews. However, within the framework of purpose, scope and key questions outlined above, as well as the limitation of 50 working days, Norec will leave to the consultant to propose the final methodological design for the study including interview guide as part of the initial offer.

Deliverables:

1. The primary deliverable shall be a 10-12 pages paper plus Executive Summary responding to the purpose, scope and key questions outlined in these Terms of Reference. The paper shall be written in English.
2. The author shall present the paper in Førde during the Norec conference primo September.

Desired Qualities of the Consultant:

- Track record of published studies and/or papers on international cooperation / staff exchange.
- Knowledge of various international cooperation / exchange modalities, including South - South, North - South, and South-North modalities
- Knowledge of a variety of research within the field of institutional cooperation and international development cooperation.
- Knowledge of the Norwegian public sector
- Full command of the Norwegian language
- A possible partnership with a consultant in the global south will be considered an advantage

Fee and expenses:

The consultancy is estimated to be completed in 50 working days including national and international travel as specified in the offer as well as revisions as required based on feedback. The consultant shall therefore give an offer to NOREC of a fee covering 50 days' work.

Expenses for national and international travel necessary to carry out the study will be reimbursed in accordance with Norwegian travel regulations for Government personnel. Flight tickets shall be economy class. The time and expenses for travel to Førde in order to present the paper at the Conference will also be covered additionally by NOREC.

Timeline

- March 26, 2019: Closing date for offer from interested consultants, including methodological outline
- April 1, 2019: Selection of consultant
- April 5, 2019: Signing of contract and Start-up meeting in Førde
- June 14, 2019: First draft of the paper completed and submitted to NOREC
- June 21, 2019: Feedback on the draft paper from NOREC to the author
- July 5, 2019: Revised draft of the paper completed and submitted to NOREC
- August 9, 2019: Finalization of paper for publishing and distribution
- Primo Sept, 2019: Presentation of the paper in Førde

The consultant's focal point in NOREC is Senior Adviser, Helge Espe.

Upon signing of contract, Norec will provide the list of selected agencies with basic contact information and ensure their cooperation as needed, but not set up interview appointments with them or otherwise provide logistical support.

Interested parties should send a short CV/ documentation of relevant experience, a proposed outline/methodology for the study, and a financial offer to helge.espe@norec.no before or on March 26.

This invitation to bid for the consultancy is sent to a limited number of potential consultants. The final decisions on the bids will be taken by Norec.

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