

Mentoring to increase capacity for evidence-informed decision-making in Malawi and South Africa

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Abstract: Based on growing consensus that the availability and utilisation of research enhances the quality of policy discussions and policy outcomes. This paper reflects on the experiences within one approach; mentoring. UJ-BCURE aimed to increase the capacity of decision-makers to use evidence in decision-making processes via four models. The key features of the models that have contributed to the programme's success are comprehensive orientation workshops mentees combined with participatory, problem-based, needs-led and flexible approaches in the delivery of the programme. UJ-BCURE experiences are relevant to the wider field to build capacity EIDM in an African government context.

Introduction

Evidence-Informed Decision-Making (EIDM) is gaining considerable importance in Africa. The growth of the EIDM movement can be linked to an increased understanding that the availability and utilisation of research enhances the quality of policy discussions and potentially also policy outcomes (Datta & Jones, 2011, Court & Young, 2003). According to Miche & van Stralen & West (2011) EIDM hinges on aspects related to behaviour change, albeit more comprehensive and labelled the "behaviour system". In order to effect change in this system, three essential conditions need to interact to generate certain behaviour which in turn interact and changes the behaviour system. In UJ-BCURE's case the behaviour system consists of EIDM. The first essential condition is capability. Capability captures the individual dimensions of the person involved, including the psychological and physical capacity, including knowledge and skills to engage in mentorship activities. The second essential condition is motivation. Motivation includes the person's brain processes that energize and direct behaviour towards the mentorship programme and EIDM, including habits, emotions and analytical decision-making. The third and final essential

condition is opportunity. Opportunity emphasises the importance of factors outside direct sphere of influence of a person that make the behaviour possible or prompt it. Programmes working with decision makers within government to influence the demand for credible evidence are relatively new and also referred to as pull initiatives. These approaches have the potential to complement those that focus on the evidence supply side (or push initiatives) in which the primary focus is on researchers and their research (Landry et al, 2001).

The University of Johannesburg's programme to Build Capacity to Use Research Evidence (UJ-BCURE) is one of the current "pull initiatives". One of the programme's unique features is its considerable investment of effort in its mentorship programme. Mentoring support is pivotal to UJ-BCURE's approach to increase the use of evidence in decision-making. In recognition that workshops cannot always fulfil individual or team requirements for specific and practical EIDM needs and challenges, UJ-BCURE designed a mentorship programme to offer more tailored support. Between 2014 and 2016, UJ-BCURE implemented four models of mentorship: group mentoring of individuals (in Malawi), short-term individual mentoring (in South Africa and Malawi), long-term individual mentoring (in South Africa) and team mentoring (in South Africa). The programme offers a unique position for harnessing emerging opportunities and stimulates south-south learning. It also puts forward a context specific approach to supporting the use of evidence in the broader policy-making contexts in South Africa and Malawi (Stewart, 2015). UJ-BCURE, applying adult learning techniques, recognises that there are various ways to increase the uptake of EIDM and that workshops, combined with various mentorship models, can assist individuals, groups, and teams in government in the adaptation and implementation of learning to their work (Choge et al, 2014).

Methodology

The insights in this paper are based on reflections amongst the UJ-BCURE team, strengthened through a series of team workshops. Routine programme monitoring data have been complemented with views shared by the programme stakeholders and mentors (UJ-BCURE team, 2015, 2016b; Stewart et al *under peer review*). An external evaluation of the programme has been commissioned separately by the programme funder (DFID). UJ-BCURE also conducted an in-depth review of the mentorship component of the project using data from October 2014 to March 2016 (UJ-BCURE Team, 2016c). The primary sources of data consist of pre- and post-evaluation questionnaires that mentors and mentees completed in Malawi and South Africa, as well as key informant interviews with mentees in Malawi. Other data collection tools included workshop attendance registers, team mentorship workshops attendance registers, mentorship-plus agreement forms, mentorship-plus log sheets and focus group discussions at the end of the team mentoring relationships. The data collection process was supplemented by telephonic and email conversations between UJ-BCURE and the mentorship participants in both countries. Close-out workshops also catered for a detailed discussion of the mentorship process and furthermore, outcome diaries on team mentorships have been analysed and their results have been included in the reflection process. Outcome diaries systematically record and track incremental changes influenced by the programme. This article considers all mentorship-related data and activities between October 2014 and August 2016.

Programme description

The UJ-BCURE mentorship programme was an integral part of a comprehensive programme that focused on increasing the use of research in decision-making through capacity building. This capacity-building approach included workshops, networking, mentoring and relationship-building. Under the mentorship, UJ-BCURE has testing an approach to enhance capacity to use evidence in decision-making and support its application in real world contexts. The mentorship activities were closely matched to pre-specified mentee needs. Through offering individuals, and later team-based, dedicated mentorship support, the programme set out to deepen EIDM capacity and support the practical application of these capacities in real world decision-making contexts. Mentorships also offered an extended, in-depth opportunity for relationship-building between mentors and mentees which can provide a real and sustainable shift in the EIDM landscape (Langer et al, 2016). One of the key features of the

programme was its ability to respond flexibly to the changing environment, which led to, inter alia, the redesign of the secondment into the mentorship-plus visits.

The UJ-BCURE programme reached 108 civil servants with its mentorship programme: 85 civil servants were from Malawi, while 23 were from South Africa. There were a number of repeat mentorships in South Africa, resulting in a total number of 46 unique mentorship relationships. A repeat mentorship occurs when the same mentor and mentee repeat or renew their relationship after the initial 6-week periods. UJ-BCURE applied four different models of mentorship in the beneficiary countries. The models included *short-term individual mentoring*, *repeat individual mentoring*, *group mentoring for individuals*, and *team mentoring*. The general 6-week mentorship approach was a-specific to the mentee's workplace setting. This approach was complemented with a mentorship-plus option, which included an arm to extend the mentorship into the actual workplace setting. The main objective of the mentorship-plus programme was to provide practical guidance to civil servants on how to access, appraise, synthesise, and use research evidence in their workplaces. In South Africa, UJ-BCURE mentees included individuals from the Department for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME); the Department of Basic Education (DBE); the Department of Science and Technology (DST); the Department of Social Development (DSD); the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA); the Department of Human Settlements (DHS) as part of the DPME team mentorship; and the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS). In Malawi, UJ-BCURE's mentees were members of the District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinating Committee (DMECC) structures from the districts of Mchinji and Ntchisi. The Malawian mentees were all identified by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) in partnership with the UJ-BCURE local implementing partner.

Model 1: group mentoring of individuals in Malawi

Group mentoring is a type of mentorship in which mentees coordinate their efforts to achieve individual goals whilst being mentored as a group (UJ-BCURE, 2016c). The mentoring model comprised different components of EIDM, including accessing information and assessing quality, the strengthening of data management systems, research synthesis through cases of applied learning at district level on particular policy or implementation issues and mentoring around greater evidence use during the annual review of District Development Plans (Citizens' Health, 2015). The recruitment of mentees was preceded by four introductory workshops on EIDM in which 70 civil servants participated (84% male and 16% female). The mentorship support commenced with a mapping of desired outcomes, which included improved knowledge of EIDM, improved research and data management skills and knowledge on how to develop sectoral databases. A total of 17 group mentoring sessions were completed over the course of 10 months in which 85 civil servants participated (76% male and 24% female), only 32% of these participants had attended the introductory workshop. As the mentorships took place after the introductory workshops, new civil servants became part of the process afterwards through the mentorships.

Results from model 1

The post-mentorship evaluation indicated that the model has been effective at increasing EIDM awareness and knowledge among mentees (Citizens' Health, 2015). Other positive outcomes included: acquisition of skills in accessing, managing, and using research data; and improved monitoring skills and problem formulation. Most of the desired programme outcomes were achieved to some extent, except for one outcome – the acquisition of knowledge on how to develop sectoral databases. The model did interface with certain challenges:

DMECCs are by nature intersectoral committees consisting of representatives from the fields of health, education, agriculture (etc.) working at local government level and brought together by this committee structure set up by the MLGRD. Although such intersectoral learning is useful, mentees expressed in the post-evaluation that they need more specific and extensive sectoral mentoring. Furthermore, some mentees experienced challenges related to working in as inter-sectoral group and it was highlighted that some mentees are more comfortable with individual mentoring. Consistent attendance was another challenging area as this mentorship model stretched over a couple

of months. The sub-optimal attendance can be partially clarified by the absence within the UJ-BCURE programme of monetary incentives to encourage workshop attendance in Malawi. Instead, the programme implemented a different approach to ensure participants do not experience possible opportunity costs and hosted the events in the district to shorten travelling distances to the sessions and provided food for participants. Mediating measures to improve inconsistent attendance were not as successful as had been hoped. An analysis of the mentees' attendance shows that only 20% of the mentees in Mchinji attended at least 50% of the mentoring sessions, while in Ntchisi only 30% of the mentees attended at least 50% of the mentoring sessions offered. Lastly, in certain cases, there was an expressed lack of equipment and infrastructure through which to access research evidence. However, this was not a consistent challenges across all the mentorship and furthermore, it was not part the remit of the UJ-BCURE programme to provide equipment to enable the process.

In conclusion, the group mentoring of individuals in Malawi was, to a significant extent, productive vis-à-vis achieving positive outcomes. Outcomes can be enhanced by more frequent introductory workshops, balancing group mentoring with sectoral mentoring, ensuring the availability of mentors with wide ranging technical expertise, consistent attendance by designing context specific incentives, an increase in the number of group mentoring sessions and an undertaking by institutions that mentees are allowed time to attend the sessions.

Model 2: short term individual mentoring in South Africa and Malawi

The model involves capacity-building in EIDM among civil servants in the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in a one-on-one environment, within a once-off period of six weeks. Mentoring model 2 is complemented, where feasible, with workplace visits (called mentorship plus visits in the UJ-BCURE programme). At the start of the mentorship process, all mentees identified a specific output or outcomes, which included, amongst others, increased use of evidence, or development of a new policy framework, implementation plan, or policy white paper. Mentors were contracted by UJ-BCURE based on the skills and expertise in the EIDM environment. The matching of mentee and mentor is based on the understanding of the particular needs of the mentee and the skills and expertise of the mentor (UJ-BCURE, 2015). A total of fifteen civil servants (13 women and 2 men) were mentored in South Africa through once-off individual mentoring. Eight of these mentees were from Department of Basic Education, three from Department of Science and Technology, three from Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, and one from the Department of Social Development (DSD). Some mentorship relationships start as soon as the introduction between mentor and mentee had taken place; others took more time to get started. The programme also had 6 individual mentorships in Malawi to ensure the application of learning.

Results from model 2

Mentoring model 2 had mixed outcomes. During the pilot phase of the mentorship process the programme did not consistently ensure proper matching between the mentor and mentee. The programme also did not track the mentorship relationships during the pilot phase. This oversight was rectified with the appointment of a dedicated mentorship manager. Two mentees had two short-term individual mentorship relationships, but with different mentors, which was due to the shift in the mentor's availability. The mentee expressed the need to continue with the mentorship, which was supported by the programme. This is an indication that the mentees experience a benefit in participating in the mentorship programme. Eight short-term mentorship relationships started late in the programme, and their effect has not been measured or included in this article. However, the likelihood that some of these will be renewed to become long-term individual mentorship relationships is high. The programme observed a trends indicating that often mentors committed more time to the relationships than mentees. Mentees regularly mention that work pressure prevented them from allocating adequate time to the relationship. In cases where the mentee allocated sufficient time for the relationship, the mentorship achieved the desired outcome as defined at the start of the relationship. It is pivotal that mentees have support from their line-managers in order to allocate adequate time for the relationship. During the pilot phase of the mentorship programme the mentor and mentee

did not consistently define specific outputs or outcomes to work towards. In the absence of mentorship goals the relationship maintenance is affected negatively, but the UJ-BCURE programme had an opportunity within the lifespan of the programme to rectify this. The most common methods of communication between mentor and mentee include telephone calls, emails, and Skype. A total of eight short-term relationships included a mentorship-plus visit. The mentorship-plus visits provided a personal context to the mentoring relationships and ensured that the mentor and mentee work towards a specific outcome as identified at the start of the mentorship relationship. Visits also assisted the mentors to better understand the situational context of the mentee, creating an opportunity for mentors and mentees to have an in-depth discussion face-to-face about the outcomes they were working towards. The short-term individual mentees come from various management levels. More junior staff members have been included when requested by their line managers. The high level of seniority of mentees (54 per cent of all mentees came from the director or deputy director level) highlighted the need for support at a senior government level in a trusted environment. Importantly it suggests model 2 is a key mechanism for supporting applied adult learning on EIDM by more senior government officials.

In conclusion, model 2, i.e. the once-off relationships, can be very successful if designed and conceived appropriately from the outset. In the UJ-BCURE programme only few of the relationships managed to achieve the desired outcomes. Results can be enhanced by providing orientation workshops, careful mentor and mentee matching, a systematic process that defines mentorship goals at the beginning, mutual commitment and interest and institutional support, continuous communication, mentorship-plus visits, flexibility in the approach to the length of the mentorship relation, underpinned by solid monitoring the progress to allow for adaptation and real time learning

Model 3: long term individual mentoring in South Africa

Model 3 is a variation of the short-term individual mentoring model, and involves the renewal of a mentorship relationship where the involved mentor-mentee pair has had prior short term mentoring engagement (model 2). This model and approach blossomed and resulted in numerous requests from mentorship participants to have their mentoring relationships extended beyond the initial six-week mentorship period. The option of renewal was entirely the decision of the mentor and mentee and was occasionally recommended by the mentorship manager. Repeat individual mentorships are complemented with at least one workplace visit per mentoring period where possible. Specific mentorship goals are defined and agreed upon at the beginning of the renewal process and matching of a mentor with a mentee is based on the needs of the mentee and takes into account the suitability of the experience and expertise of the mentor for those needs. A total of 11 individual civil servants (five women and six men) were mentored through repeat individual mentoring. Three mentees were from the Department of Basic Education, two were from the Department of Science and Technology, two from the Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation, one was from the Department of Social Development, one from the Department of Environmental Affairs, and one was from the Department of Water and Sanitation. One mentee had 2 long-term mentorship relationships with different mentors.

Results from model 3

The long-term individual mentorship relationships are one of the most successful models implemented in South Africa based on the EIDM outcomes achieved. The success can be linked to the fact that renewals are demand driven and indicate commitment and ownership. Most mentorship relations had at least one repeat relationship, but many extended to a relationship of at least a year. Mentorship relationships are renewed to ensure that the mentoring support in the EIDM work environment is still available. Renewals also ensure that EIDM identified outcomes are met as, often, the original outcomes were not achieved in full or new outcomes were added by the mentee and mentor over the course of the relationship. UJ-BCURE programme responded flexibly in the setting up of renewal mentorship relationships. Equal to model 2 the most common methods of communication included telephone calls, emails, Skype, Whatsapp messaging and text messages. Proper matching of mentees and

mentors is an important element of success. Depending on the needs of the mentee, the mentor might need to be a subject expert or a methods expert. Furthermore, success is dependent on context specific timeframes and policy cycles within the government department (Lindquist, 2001). The programme found that the most important contributing factor to success is the definition of specific goals and outcomes, even if this agreement remains flexible. The majority of mentees were senior government officials (44 per cent Directors and 18 per cent Chief Directors), with sufficient authority to change work processes to foster the use of evidence during decision-making. The mentorship-plus visits provided a personal context and ensured a longer-term basis of these mentorships as face-to-face visits led to deeper relationships. Both mentors and mentees have reported on the benefits of these visits in developing trust and transparency. In some cases the visits have led to institutional relationships. While valuable, mentorship-plus visits are not without challenges. When the mentor and mentee were based in the same province, there was a natural opportunity to meet more frequently. Some mentor-mentee pairs had up to four visits per six-week period. Out-of-province visits requiring notable investments in time and travel posed bigger challenges. The success of this model has opened up discussions around the Institutionalisation of relationship as an important legacy as it assists with the sustainability of the UJ-BCURE programme beyond the scope of donor funding.

In conclusion, the success of model 3 can be attributed to the opportunity to fine-tune mentorship relationships over time in order to achieve better results. Model 3 allows for more time to exchange skills and to understand the mentees' work processes and identify opportunities for change. To cement the success, several conditions should exist. Firstly, commitment and responsive communication are important. Secondly, orientation about the mentorship programme and proper matching of the professional fields, methodological needs and shared interests between the mentor and the mentee are essential. Furthermore, mutual goal-setting by mentor and mentee, institutional support and sufficient time to engage in the mentorship processes are important for overall success. Provision should be made for mentorship-plus visits to extend the learning into the mentees' workplace environment. Lastly the length of the mentorship should be guided by sound monitoring practices and tailored according to needs and availability of mentees

Model 4: team mentoring in South Africa

Model 4 comprises a type of mentorship in which the team leader realises and expresses the need to support the EIDM capacity of the team and brings in a mentor to extend the reach of individual mentoring to the wider team. It involved mentoring a team of people in a specific organisational setting, working towards achieving specific departmental outcome within a pre-agreed time frame (UJ-BCURE, 2016a). Model 4 is a variation of model 1, taking the sectoral context into account. The lead mentor for the team mentorship model is a UJ-BCURE team member and additional mentors are contracted by UJ-BCURE based on the skills and expertise they have that can assist in addressing the specific EIDM needs of the team members (UJ-BCURE, 2016a). Mentor-mentee matching was based on the understanding of particular needs of the team leader, the EIDM capacity of the team and the skills and expertise of the mentor. Model 4 includes tailored workshops, focussed clinics and sustained interaction via Skype calls, emails and social networks.

Results from model 4

Teams under model 4 have all had prior interaction with the UJ-BURE programme before the start of the team mentorship. The setup of model 4 has been demand driven and all three team leaders approached UJ-BCURE requesting team mentorship upon realising that wider EIDM capacity needs within their teams. The teams' mentorship centred around different workplace relevant EIDM tasks. One of the teams conducted a systematic evidence map and developed an interactive evidence interface to engage decision-makers. Trust, co-production and close relationship have been pointed out as the main elements of success. As a result of the mentorship, the team has access to in-house tools and capacity to conduct evidence maps themselves going forward. The success has resulted in further demands for evidence synthesis by other government departments. Another team based its

approach on a careful and rigorous process of identifying key themes and topics for the team mentorship. Based on this process the team tailored the mentorship around outcome-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems in government. Most of the mentoring was conducted during workshops designed specifically for the team. It was agreed that the first of these workshops ought to be broad in scope and that the team and the mentor would define follow-up work that needed to be done at the end of the workshop. Feedback from the team indicated that more time was needed to link EIDM concepts to the practical reality, including the dissection of a theory of change, outcome interrogation and indicator setting which will strengthen the overall departmental system. The last team's mentorship founds its origins in individual mentorship. The format of the team mentorship consisted of three workshops covering various steps in the EIDM cycle with email communication between workshops. The focus of the team mentorship was to enhance a specific policy currently being developed by the team. The mentorship enabled learning from colleagues with different work roles and perspectives. The team's success highlights the importance of closely relating the mentorship to work being undertaken at present, the importance of identifying specific objectives, the need for all team members to have agreed to the objectives of the mentorship, and the challenge of being mentored on a topic that is tied to larger institutional timeframes.

In conclusion, model 4 has shown that one of the major vehicles of change was the ability to design a strong of activities to target and build up to the outcomes that the team was working towards. The mentoring activities, albeit resource and time intensive, allowed for an enhancement of the most relevant EIDM skills, in an applied manner. Model 4 has worked well because it is designed around the needs of the specific team and enabled mentees to work towards a common goal. To institutionalise the success, the following conditions should exist: commitment, processes that are tailor made to the needs of the team, care should be taken to guard the distinction between mentoring and consultancy or technical assistance, correct matching of skills and personality, consistency in participation and face-to-face interaction, understanding of the political environment, practical application of the EIDM methodology to real world settings.

Discussion

Lessons learnt and presented in this article are relevant to two distinctly different academic fields: the field interested in the impact and effects of mentoring and the field interested in the enhancing evidence-informed decision-making. The uniqueness of the UJ-BCURE experience comes from the ability to create linkages between the two fields. UJ-BCURE's mentorship model is part of a wider approach to capacity building that included inception activities, landscaping review, needs assessment, resource development, and the development of networks. Separating the individual contribution of the mentorship models to the overall results of the UJ-BCURE programme is difficult and the findings of this paper should be considered in the wider context of the programme (Stewart, R. et al. *Under review*). The relevance of the lessons learned within the mentorship models stem from the fact that the mentorship models were implemented with a very specific goal; to increase the use of evidence in decision-making.

The key factors of success included the use of orientation workshops, investment in relationships as a fertile mechanism to facilitate change, the needs-driven nature of the mentorships, the careful matching of mentee and mentor, the length of the mentorships, and the flexibility within the programme to adapt the approach to each specific circumstance. Each of these factors are expanded further below.

Importance of orientation workshops: EIDM capacity building orientation workshops enhanced awareness and demand for EIDM. Workshops have been conceived as a first step in the longer causal chain of how the evidence use of decision makers could be supported by external actors. Workshops have been instrumental in starting the mentorship relationships and UJ-BCURE programme has shown that there is considerable overlap between workshops and mentorships. In the case of team mentorships, the team leader had prior engagement through the workshop programme, which provided the starting point for negotiating and designing the team mentorship support.

The expansion from individual mentorship to team mentorship represent a significant spill over effect from the UJ-BCURE programme.

Relationships as the fertile mechanism to facilitate change: Relationships are paramount in setting up mentorships as well as in maintaining them. Pre-existing relationship contributed to the implementation of the various mentorship models.

Mentorships are needs driven: Mentorship models are dependent on addressing the specific identified needs of mentees in the mentorship, which included the need to create common goals at the start of any mentorship model.

Importance of the right mentor and mentee match: Matching of the mentor and mentee is critically important. Matching should extend beyond skills and expertise and should consider personalities as well. Furthermore, matching a good team leader and mentor is important. Good mentors possess warm and open personalities, have a balance between softer and technical skills and the ability to build relationships and understand expectation of the mentee. The use of internal mentors should be given consideration in future mentorship programmes.

Length of mentorship relationships: Knowing when to start a mentoring relationship and for how long it should last is challenging. Lengthy mentorship can lead to procrastination and become unproductive. General guidance from UJ-BCURE recommends that the focus of the mentorship should be on achieving the goals and objectives set out at the start and not on the timing. Furthermore, mentor and mentee should be mindful of each other's time and time constraints.

Importance of varying the approach of match circumstances: Having processes in place that provide mentors and mentees with structure and guidance is essential. However, the mentorship approach should be adapted to varying circumstances.

The UJ-BCURE programme has been donor-funded and this poses challenges to sustainability and limits the institutionalisation potential. The programme has proactively tracked early signs of sustainable change and sustainability of the mentorship programme. In this light, UJ-BCURE has made concerted efforts to embed the various mentorship models in a collection of government departments, including an option for mentored government officials to provide mentorship (internal capacity) to different departments. Furthermore, the early signs of growing independence in EIDM are noticeable and mentees have become less likely to need a third party to support their efforts to increase their use of evidence in decision-making. UJ-BCURE's experience has highlighted that there is a large demand for evidence maps in additional government departments. Under the guidance of the team mentorship, the team has successfully adapted the methodology developed by 3ie to a South African context and possess practical tools, process and management knowledge, as well as an internal information technology platform to produce evidence maps going forward. The team is in a well-established position to develop evidence maps without external expert support and carries a natural mandate to provide these services to other departments. The learnings within the programme have pointed out that there are various options for institutionalising mentorships. Different formats of coaching, mentoring and employee career development are already taking place in various departments. The mentorships can be an extension of current activities, providing that there is leadership within departments to support this. However, it is important to note that mentorship models can only be sustainable if they are costed and budgeted for. Mentors need some type of incentive to be involved in a mentorship relationship. Furthermore, practical aspects such as transport costs, Skype calls, and data usage need to be considered. Departments could explore their professional development budgets for this purpose.

Understanding causality and attribution

UJ-BCURE's mentorships have been purposeful and were aimed to deepen EIDM capacity, through the support of the direct application of learning. It is not possible to entirely separate the impacts of mentorships from the impact of workshops attended by mentees. However, through the linked mentorship programme it is possible to better understand the extent to which UJ-BCURE capacity-building is making a difference.

The mentorships have been popular and the number of mentorships has increased drastically over the last year. Mentees have also become more diverse in terms of their departmental affiliation as the programme progressed. This, together with the growing demand for capacity-building for the use of evidence in decision-making, created the opportunity for UJ-BCURE to expand offers of mentorships to different government departments. The UJ-BCURE programme has documented incremental changes in the capability of mentees. Mentees have consistently demonstrated capacity to run formal searches on academic databases to find evidence. Furthermore, mentees have the knowledge and skills to co-produce evidence maps employing formal evidence synthesis methods. Because of the strengthened capabilities, there is an increased use of evidence in new policies, development plans and in implementation plans for new policies and the established wider EIDM provide an opportunity to further institutionalise relationships with existing mentor organisations.

Factors that have contributed to the success of the various mentorship models include flexibility in our programme implementation, UJ-BCURE's expertise, and the way in which the mentorship partnerships were engineered. Each factor is explained further below.

Flexibility. The flexibility of the programme has allowed the mentorships to evolve according to the needs of the mentees. The initial piloted timeframe of six weeks could be adopted as a starting point. Furthermore, the tools used to facilitate, guide and structure the mentorship broad have been kept broad. This flexibility to adapt to various factors supports successful mentorship relationships. The development of guidelines assisted in ensuring that all mentors and mentees understood what was expected of them. Willingness to restructure these guidelines and reduce the bureaucratic burden on participants for pre-and post-mentorship paperwork was also important.

Leading Institutional expertise. The UJ-BCURE team had extensive experience in evidence synthesis and systematic reviews before the start of the programme and from July 2015, the mentorship programme had a dedicated manager, which ensured that the mentorship relationships were successfully integrated. UJ-BCURE's reputation, experience and expertise contributed to the acceptability of the mentorship programme and lead to trust, which is pivotal to build relationships.

Engineered mentorship partnerships. UJ-BCURE's mentorship models have been designed by careful matching between the mentor and the mentee, taking various attributes into account including backgrounds, availability, and seniority of position into account. The programme emphasises the importance of one-to-one mentoring, mentorship plus visits and team mentoring for supporting senior civil servants to deepen and apply learning. The engineering of the mentorship has been accomplished through establishing specific outcomes from the outset of a mentorship. This does not only assisted in ensuring that the needs of the mentee were met, but also in ensuring that the relationship still complied with the remit of the UJ-BCURE programme to build-capacity in EIDM and support the application of that capacity. Lastly, mentees' commitment to the mentorship process is critical and this needs to be supported by the institution to ensure there is adequate time available for the mentorship.

In general, the longevity of individual relationships grown in mentorships seems to support the sustainable application of EIDM in a number of ways. As trust deepens in the relationships between mentors and mentees, opportunities for establishing new mentorships, piloting team mentorships, and submitting joint funding proposals for future work has snowballed from these existing relationships. Additionally, these mentorship relationships are leading to institutional connections between the mentor's organisation and the mentee's department. The

Mentorships have led to new, value adding opportunities for applied learning, including a chance to explore more technical issues in evidence-use.

Conclusion

The depth and quality of evidence used by decision-makers influences the effectiveness of policies. The uptake of evidence in policy-making processes is a priority on the global development agenda. Despite the growing momentum around evidence use, there is a counterbalancing view that research evidence is a relatively minor factor in most policy makers' decision making (Newman et al, 2013). UJ-BCURE's experience with capacity building through mentorship provides a bridge between these seemingly contradictory viewpoints. The assumption made is that if capacity is built for evidence informed decision-making, the importance of evidence will be elevated leading to an increase in the demand for credible evidence. The overall success of the UJ-BURE approach to mentorship programmes can be associated with the fact that the mentorships build EIDM capacity is an evidence pull initiative, instead of an evidence push initiative. UJ-BCURE's findings are in line with the overall findings from Langer et al (2016) systematic review on the Science of Science Use. There is reliable evidence that interventions, like the mentorship programme, that build decision-makers' skills to access and make sense of evidence are effective ways to increase research use by decision-makers (Langer et al 2016). To be effective, these interventions need to simultaneously enhance both the capability and motivation to use research evidence. In UJ-BURE's case this was accomplished through the mentorship plus visits, the practical orientation workshops and the application of skills on evidence synthesis and real-world policy tasks

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