

***Interactive comment on “Enhancing capacities of riparian professionals to address and resolve transboundary issues in international river basins: experiences from the Lower Mekong River Basin” by W. Douven et al.***

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Received and published: 15 June 2012

General comments

This paper discusses the effectiveness of a capacity building programme developed for the Mekong River Commissions (MRC) Flood Management and Mitigation programme. The capacity building programme involved the training of a number of professionals (from a diverse array of institutions in each of the MRC countries), in different aspects

C2207

of IWRM. The training was conducted between 2009 and 2011 and was followed by a post training evaluation of usefulness/effectiveness.

The paper deals with an interesting aspect of IWRM, which is how to build capacity in IWRM: a topic which covers a wide range of actors and necessitates the involvement of professionals from a wide range of disciplines working and cooperating together. As the authors acknowledge this is further complicated in a transnational basin where co-operation not just between disciplines but between countries (with differing capacities) is perceived as essential for successful IWRM. The paper provides a useful review but could be improved with:

- i) More comparison of similar or alternative capacity building programmes in different transnational basins (e.g. the Nile and/or the Zambezi)
- ii) Greater discussion of how the programme was specifically designed to address the three components of professional capacity identified in section 2.1 as being essential for future water managers (i.e. knowledge/cognitive competence; functional competence; and values/ethical competence). Indeed, a question is whether the latter of these competencies can be “built” from a programme of this sort?
- iii) More discussion of what would be done differently if, with hindsight, the programme was to be implemented again

Specific comments

Page 3815 (lines 20-25) Notes that transboundary agreements may be “divorced” from “the local situation” thereby resulting in ecological degradation and increasing risk for human security. This needs a short explanation to indicate how this comes about.

Page 3816 (line 27) “this inevitably will result in more. . .” – not clear what “this” is.

Page 3817 (line 8) “. . . faces many challenges. . .” – it would be useful to highlight a few of these challenges – perhaps not least of which is of course that China is not part of the MRC?

C2208

Page 3817 (line 20/21) – please be clear what exactly are “high level decision- makers” and “mid-level professionals”. One question that should be answered is did it work to include both groups in the same capacity building programme? Were their needs not just so different that it would have been better to have separate programmes?

Page 3818 (line 18-19) mentions that there are several definitions of capacity and that it is used in different ways depending on context but, though several references are given, the paper doesn’t actually provide any definitions. For the reader who doesn’t have time to get the references it would be useful to do so.

Page 3820 (line 9 – 21) – presumably the FMMP capacity building programme was supposed to influence the first two “orders” of management with the intention that this would contribute to change at some point in the future in the second two orders. It would be useful if this was made clear. If so, it would also be useful to know if the evaluation process was explicitly designed to measure changes in both the “enabling environment” and changes in “behaviour” and, how this distinction was made.

Page 3821 (line 24) – for those who don’t know it would be worth mentioning what the other MRC programmes are. It would also perhaps be worthwhile explaining why the capacity building programme on IWRM fell within the remit of FMMP and not one of the other programmes.

Page 3822 (line 25) – earlier in the paper (i.e. page 3820 line 23-25) it is noted that there are complex inter-linkages between capacity, change and performance. Here it says that the evaluation considered only aspects of capacity and change and not performance. It would be useful if the Baser Morgan model was simply described and it was made clear why the “performance” aspect was not considered in the evaluation. On the same way that indicators of capacity and change were utilised is it not possible to include indicators of performance.

Page 3829 (line 10) – was it a realistic expectation of the programme to think that participants would be able to “partly apply” tools (page 3823) by the end of this pro-

C2209

gramme? It might be useful to include, perhaps in a table, a list of the tools to which participants were exposed on the programme.

Page 3832 (line 2 -5) It is interesting that “increases in familiarity” were greatest in those with the least working experience (page 3831 line 11-12) but those with greater working experience found the programme more useful for their work, presumably because, as noted by the authors, they have greater opportunity to put things into practice. Does this say something about how future courses should be designed and targeted at people with different levels of experience?

Page 3832 (line 18) – motivation of participants is mentioned as being important but this was not evaluated in anyway? Could one indicator of motivation be the number of respondents to the questionnaire. If so, was there any group that tended not to respond?

Page 3832 (line 23) – this is the first mention of the capacity building strategy of the MRC. Somewhere earlier in the paper it might be worthwhile briefly describing this strategy and how the FMMP programme fitted within it.

Page 3833 (line 10) – presumably the relatively high “use of knowledge” by the university respondents largely reflects the incorporation of knowledge gained in lectures and teaching programs. Again does this suggest anything for future design of the programme?

Page 3833 (line 15-25) – the next phase of the FMMP programme will focus exclusively on lecturers and is intended to add to university curricula. This indicates a gradual focusing of the programme with high level decision-makers dropping out first and then mid-level professionals who aren’t lecturers. Was this intended at the outset or does it reflect adaption based on experience of where such a programme is best targeted?

Page 3834/3835 – based on experience gained what would be done differently if the programme was redesigned today?

C2210

#### Technical corrections

The English could be tightened somewhat (e.g. the word modalities is used frequently but I think from the context “module” would be better in most instances). There is also room to reduce some repetition in the paper.

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Interactive comment on Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. Discuss., 9, 3813, 2012.