

PUTTING PDIA INTO PRACTICE - LESSONS FROM COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Peter Grant

Visiting Professor, Richmond University

Senior Fellow, Agulhas

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PDIA sounds plausible but does it work?

- Problem Driven Iterative Adaptation involves locally appropriate solutions to clearly defined problems by mobilising teams, specifying necessary actions and learning rapidly from setbacks
- A strong critique of existing theory (Pritchett, Woolcock, Andrews)
- Increasing number of country case studies for “politically-smart” local programming
 - DRC: DDR in North Kivu and Kisantu Health Reform (Belgium)
 - Asia Foundation tobacco tax and land rights in the Philippines
 - Pyou Pin in Burma – rice education HIV
 - Kenya: DFID-funded legal assistance programme (PDIA)
- Limited performance data for pure PDIA

Harvard support for Albania

- Harvard's CID (Matt Andrews) implemented PDIA approaches in Albania from 2014-2017
- One of two major CID PDIA programs (the other is Sri Lanka)
- Strong support from the Government
- PDIA teams in a range of Ministries
- Five key themes emerged from our review

1. Ownership and replicability

- The role of outside agents –is it locally led?
 - “(PDIA) actively engages broad sets of agents to ensure that reforms are viable, legitimate, relevant, and supportable (as opposed to a narrow set of external experts promoting the top-down diffusion of innovation)”
- Impact on people involved
 - 88% rating by 15 staff interviewed on personal development; 92% on innovation
- Harvard was widely respected and admired
- Intensity of Harvard inputs, (including Matt Andrews) mean that they could only run 2-3 programs
- Potential of online training (800 people in 75 countries)

2. Authorising environment

- The country context matters: Albania is very positive towards external advice
- Teams are formed at working level
- Implementation depends on positive response from senior decision makers; some blocked it
- Need for better prior checks on vertical alignment
- Forces working against PDIA, especially from competing approaches

3. Measuring impact

- Imagine an average civil service.....
- No initial targets or objectives
- The capacity development and mindset changes for individuals involved were very positive
- The direct impact of PDIA on problems addressed:
 - **Export-processing (“Fason”) sector saw an increase in exports of 24.6% or \$165m, with 5,000 new jobs created**
 - **Agriculture/Tourism - lots of ideas; little action**
- M&E is a contested area
- “Indicators and targets would have inhibited the program”

4. Big or small problems?

- Who chooses the problems to address?
- How important is success to the process?
- The value of failure and learning
- “success builds institutions much more than changing institutions can build success”
- Evolved to a broader training-based approach

5. Programme or culture change

- The importance of leadership
- The need for a critical mass
- Learning process within Harvard but less evidence in Government
- Little local academic engagement
- No evidence of systemic change within the civil service

Conclusions

- Very positive intervention with high value for money
- Dependent on unique factors – not replicable
- Look for solvable problems and a positive authorising environment
- Clearer baseline mapping of capacities and relationships
- Jury is still out on PDIA...