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Paper 6. The Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy

J. Timms^{AC} and R.A. Clark^{AC}

^ACooperative Research Centre for Beef Genetic Technologies, Armidale NSW 2351

^C Queensland Department of Primary Industries, Brisbane QLD 4000

Abstract. In the beef industry, as in many agricultural industries in Australia, there is a wealth of high quality capacity building available in topics such as animal breeding, nutrition, grazing land management, record keeping, property planning etc. However there are very few capacity building opportunities targeting (1) the higher level knowledge and skills needed to achieve both rapid and sustainable improvement and innovation, and (2) the knowledge and skills needed to lead and manage sustainable industry improvement and innovation. The BPP Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy is designed to equip all BPP partners, teams and networkers with the knowledge, skills, resources and support to achieve and sustain beef business and industry improvement and innovation, and to fulfil their functions and roles in the BPP project. A secondary focus targets other beef industry participants i.e. those not directly involved in the BPP project.

Keywords: Capacity; capability; competency.

Background

The rationale for developing the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy area was that:

- in the beef industry, as in many agricultural industries in Australia, there is a wealth of high quality capacity building available in topics such as animal breeding, nutrition, grazing land management, record keeping, property planning, etc. However there are very few programs targeting the following significant gaps: (1) the higher level knowledge and skills needed to achieve sustainable business improvement and innovation; and (2) the knowledge and skills needed to lead and manage industry improvement and innovation. Continuous improvement and innovation tools and technologies have been used successfully in many sectors throughout the world but have not previously been offered to beef businesses in Australia and New Zealand on a larger scale;
- continuing to use existing thinking and tools is unlikely to produce different outcomes (i.e. think the same, do the same, get the same). 'Business as usual' is not likely to result in accelerated and sustained business and industry improvement and innovation. Continuing to use existing terms and language when these do not accurately represent the concepts, principles and mechanisms required for sustainable improvement and innovation, is a significant obstacle to success;
- therefore to achieve rapid improvement and innovation and so assist in meeting the CRC's overall targets, the BPP project must equip people with relevant concepts,

principles, processes, tools and language to enable them to think differently, do things differently (or do different things), and therefore achieve different outcomes;

- experience from other sectors and industries in which rapid continuous improvement and innovation is more common and overtly used, emphasises the importance of capacity building and support; and
- 'balanced score card' approaches to performance measurement and management generally incorporate capacity as a key component necessary for effective and efficient performance.

Applying the Underpinning Science

As detailed in Paper 2, there is a large literature that discusses and promotes the importance of capacity in achieving CI&I and SI&I, and the specific areas of capacity required to achieve these types of outcomes. Some of the key references are Feigenbaum (1961), Ishikawa (1985), Crosby (1989), Bank (1992), Oakland (1993), Jha, Noori and Michela (1996), Ovretveit (1997, 2002, 2005), Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt (1997), Plsek (1998), Shortell, Bennett and Byck (1998), Bessant and Francis (1999), Marginson (2000), Gonzalez and Guillen (2002), Smith et al. (2002), Hemmati and Whitfield (2003), Wilson, Berwick and Cleary (2003), Hyland and Boer (2006) and Fryer, Antony and Douglas (2007).

There is also a very large literature on the design, implementation, measurement and evaluation of learning, instruction, training and education approaches and materials. Some key references are Miller (1956), Kirkpatrick (1959), Foxon (1989), Thiagarajan and Zairi (1997), Gage and

Berliner (1998), Liedtka, Weber and Weber (1999), Blandy et al. (2000), Clark and Harrelson (2002), Maurer (2002), Smith et al. (2002), Kirschner, Sweller and Clark (2006), Clark (2008). Another related body of literature focuses on the concepts of capacity, capability, competency and capacity building or enhancement. Some of the key references are Gargan (1981), Cohen (1993), Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997), Gieskes and Langenberg (2000), Davison and Hyland (2002), Macadam et al. (2003), Mizrahi (2004), Finch-Lees, Mabey and Liefoghe (2005), and Hyland and Boer (2006).

There are two associated areas of literature that focus on concepts such as cognition and meta-cognition, and on concepts such as collaborative learning, cooperative learning and co-learning. Some key references in the first of these areas are Kitchener (1983), Scardamalia, Bereiter and Steinbach (1984), Mayer and Wittrock (1996), Gage and Berlina (1998), Wilson (2000), King and Kitchener (2004). Key references in the second area include Jongsma (1990), Department of Education (1992), Smith and MacGregor (1992), Gaillet (1994), Gerlach (1994), Rockwood (1995), Lawrence (1996), Panitz (1996), and Curry and Cunningham (2000).

One of the key features in relation to capacity in the BPP project is the belief that all partners can be proactive, self-making and empowered individuals who strive for self-improvement and collective wellbeing. This belief is in line with the intent of concepts like the 'enabling state' (Botsman and Latham 2001) and 'enterprising state' (Considine 2001). Several implications flow from this belief, including an expectation that all partners will be CI&I practitioners in relation to their own roles in the partnership, and capacity enhancement opportunities be widely available to all partners, including public servants (Gilbertson 2002; Albury 2005; Bessant 2005; Hartley 2005; Moore 2005).

Since different partners have different roles in the BPP project, it is also important to offer capacity building opportunities and support in three key functions: (1) 'achieving' rapid and sustained improvement in profit, efficiency and sustainability; (2) 'leading' BPP teams and regional networks; and (3) 'managing' regional, national and international partnerships and networks, and the project as a whole. Another key feature of this strategy is the intent to ensure that the capacity support available to all partners in BPP is progressive and evolutionary, since it needs to respond to the changing needs of the BPP networks and partners.

Clark (2008) offers a very useful summary and discussion of the literature in all these areas.

Strategy Focus and Target Outcomes

The primary focus of this strategy is to equip all BPP partners, teams and networkers with the knowledge, skills, resources and support to achieve and sustain beef business and industry improvement and innovation for impact on profit, productivity and growth year by year, and to fulfil their functions and roles in the BPP project. A secondary focus targets other beef industry participants, i.e. those not directly involved in the BPP project.

Different types of capacity are required for BPP partners to fulfil their specific functions within the project, and for other beef industry participants to fulfil their industry roles. The target outcomes for this strategy are directly related to these different functions and roles, and are presented below:

- BPP team and network members with the capacity to (1) achieve, accelerate and sustain improvements in business productivity, profit and growth, and (2) establish and work in partnerships that enhance business profit and industry growth;
- BPP team and network leaders with the capacity to (1) mobilise BPP teams, networks and partnerships, and maintain their value and momentum; (2) equip and support team and network members to achieve, accelerate and sustain improvement and innovation; and (3) achieve evidence-based practice and critically reflexive praxis;
- Technical specialists with the capacity to (1) comprehend the relationships of technologies and information, to beef business system performance, and (2) support the thinking and understanding of BPP partners in relation to key concepts and principles;
- BPP R&D team with the capacity to (1) develop theory and mechanisms that impact on the rate and scale of improvement in profit and growth; (2) deliver critically reflexive theory that rapidly and directly supports improved praxis and policy; and (3) establish and work in partnerships that enhance the quality and impact of BPP R&D;
- BPP project leaders with the capacity to (1) design and lead project strategies, and measure and manage the project as a

whole, so that it achieves its targeted outcomes and impacts, and (2) ensure the project itself is continuously improving and innovating so as to meet changing contexts and the needs of project partners; and

- Beef industry leaders, industry policy and strategy managers with the capacity to (1) design and lead policies, systems and strategies to achieve, accelerate and sustain regional and national beef industry profit and growth, and (2) design and lead policies and strategies to support beef business managers to achieve, accelerate and sustain improvements in business productivity, profit and growth.

Implementation in the BPP Project

At a more operational level there are several components to the strategy including: (1) training and support for facilitators and leaders of BPP teams and networks; (2) training and support for beef business managers in sustainable improvement and innovation processes and tools; (3) training and support for beef industry leaders (including public servants) who are interested in or involved with leading and supporting industry improvement and innovation; (4) an interactive website with information and support relating to key concepts, processes, tools and technologies for sustainable beef business improvement and innovation; (5) evidence-based tools and technology assessment database to support decisions about which tools and technologies to use; (6) links to the BPP R&D Strategy (Paper 8) to ensure access to the latest results from research; (7) facilitated links to other networks involved in improvement and innovation in agriculture and other industries and sectors throughout the world; and (8) facilitated access to specialists in areas relevant to BPP.

To date a range of activities and mechanisms have been designed and implemented in relation to several of these components:

- Capacity building and support for beef business managers has occurred primarily through the participation of these people in BPP teams and networks. In BPP team sessions the concepts and principles behind rapid continuous improvement and innovation are introduced, along with the steps of the CI&I process and tools that support the application of this process. Formal training opportunities in rapid continuous improvement and innovation for beef business managers have not as yet been implemented;
- A project concept has been developed for a capacity program focused on 'Managing and Leading Business and Industry Improvement and Innovation'. The project aims to design, pilot and assess a competency-based, accredited training program that equips business managers, and current and potential industry leaders with the knowledge, tools, technologies and skills to achieve rapid improvement and innovation in businesses and industries. The training program would be a 'real time, real world' program. That is, participants would be supported to use knowledge, skills, technologies and tools to achieve real world improvements in their own businesses and industry sectors during the project;
- Two 5-day university-accredited training programs involving 31 facilitators, leaders and technical specialists associated with BPP teams and networks in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New Zealand have been designed, conducted and evaluated. Shorter one to three day introductory workshops about the BPP project and the core process and tools underpinning the project have been attended by more than 50 project participants from Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and New Zealand. A one day 'refresher' workshop focusing on factors critical to the success of BPP was conducted involving 20 BPP project participants;
- Data to support an evidence-based tools and technology assessment database is being collected through the R&D Strategy and MME Strategy; however a fully functioning evidence-based database is not yet available;
- Information and tools to support the application of the CI&I process have been included on the Beef CRC website, however there is significant potential to improve this resource and support base; and
- Preliminary linkages between the BPP network and other improvement and innovation networks and specialists have been created, however these could be significantly strengthened.

Issues and Opportunities in Implementation to Date

Two of the key issues in implementing the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy can best be described as issues of cultural change — primarily cultural change in the agencies supporting the beef business partners in BPP. Mention was made above of two key features of the BPP project: (1) the belief that all BPP partners can be proactive, self-making and empowered individuals who strive for self-improvement, innovation and collective wellbeing; and (2) an expectation that all partners will practise CI&I in relation to their own functions and roles in the partnership. Many of the agencies associated with the BPP project have cultures based on linear models of innovation which assume that science and research, and scientists and researchers, are primarily responsible for innovation. BPP requires a more contemporary perspective on innovation which emphasises and highlights the innovation potential of all participants in business and industry systems, and therefore supports capacity enhancement for all partners in the types of knowledge, skills and support that will help realise this potential.

The other 'cultural change' issue is associated with the expectation that all partners will practice CI&I in relation to their own functions and roles in the partnership. There is no better capacity building opportunity than actively, rigorously and overtly applying CI&I to one's own performance. The understanding that comes with practice has significant benefits for both the individual and the other BPP partners with whom that individual interacts. One of these benefits is a willingness to be open about, and emphasise the use of the CI&I process, thereby breaking away from any tendency to encourage passive, dependent and information-fed use of the process. There is a significant opportunity for improving self-practice of CI&I within the BPP team, and this will be a focus for the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy over the next 12 to 18 months.

There are three other key opportunities for improving the performance of the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy over the next one to two years:

- Developing partnerships with registered training organisations such as agricultural colleges and universities to design, deliver and accredit training programs in CI&I and SI&I for the beef industry;
- Improving the level and access to 'real-time' support from CI&I and SI&I specialists for beef business managers involved in BPP and those supporting BPP teams and networks; and
- Improving the amount and range of resource materials and support available through electronic means, including exploring the use of mechanisms such as webinars to improve accessibility to specialist support.

These specific opportunities will need to be implemented in addition to maintaining and enhancing the capacity of BPP partners who have already been involved in capacity building activities.

Conclusion

While significant effort has been given to the Capacity, Capability and Competency Strategy in the first three years of the project, there is still much that needs to be implemented and measured to ensure adequate capacity to ensure effective performance during the life of the project, and sustainable improvement and innovation beyond the life of the project. This strategy requires ongoing effort because of the need to ensure the capacity support available is progressive and evolutionary, and continues to meet the changing needs of the BPP networks and partnerships. In a project such as BPP it is also necessary to ensure that any capacity strategy takes into account project partner and staff movement, attrition and succession.

There are very few capacity building opportunities for the Australian and New Zealand agricultural sectors targeting the higher level knowledge and skills needed to achieve both rapid and sustainable improvement and innovation, and the knowledge and skills needed to lead and manage sustainable industry improvement and innovation. Therefore, this strategy has the potential to provide a foundation for the ongoing development of these skills in the beef industry in these countries.