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Evaluation of the  
Sino-Swiss Management Training Program  
Public Service Training and Western China Extended Programs  
2009-2012

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**不積跬步、無以致千里**

*"It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop."*

**孔子**

*Confucius*

*"Frankly speaking, it is not as practical as it could have been, but it is inspiring. We need more two-way communication. We can learn from you, and you can also learn from us." (Participant of SSMTTP)*

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

AEx	Academic Exchange Group
AL	Action Learning
ALCQ	Action Learning Chongqing
ALHN	Action Learning Hainan
ALJS	Action Learning Jiangsu
COD	Central Organization Department
CPC	Communist Party of China
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CTCSPMO	China Training Centre for Senior Personnel Management Officials, Beijing
EYC	Excellent Young Cadres Group
FTS	Follow-up Training Seminars
HRD	Human Resources Development
IMP-HSG	Institute for Systemic Management and Public Governance of the University of St. Gallen
ME	Mid-Level Personnel Management Executives Group
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
OSEC	Business Network Switzerland
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SOE	State-owned enterprise
SE	Senior Executives Training Group
SSMTP	Sino-Swiss Management Training Programme
SV	Senior Study Visit Group
TM	Training of Managers Group
TOT	Training-of-Trainers Group

## Executive Summary

The joint team carried out the evaluation of SSMTTP from December 2012 to February 2013. The timeframe evaluated covers the period from January 2009 to December 2012, during which SDC has allocated approx. 14 Million CHF, and the Chinese contribution is estimated to be an additional 30% of this amount. The project is divided into two components: (i) Public Services Training, and (ii) Western China Action Learning Programme.

The evaluation methods consisted of a review of documents of the project's planning, monitoring reports and publications, as well as interviews of various stakeholders including IMP-HSG, lecturers, SDC and officials of other administrative services, officials of CTCSPMO, 16 participants, the Swiss Embassy, and Credit Suisse Beijing. According to the TOR and as far as applicable, the OECD criteria for project evaluation have been used. The evaluation team would like to claim that views on opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team alone.

The assessments of the **relevance** of the interviewees showed an unusual wide range of understanding. Many characterized SSMTTP as a "special, atypical, unusual and unique cooperation programme". The more they refer to the explicit goals, the more negative the judgment. The project's relevance is judged more positive the more the focus is not on explicit results, but on creating trust and fostering Sino-Swiss relations. It is evident that the *direct* mode of delivery has limited the relevance and outreach of the project.

In general, the **AL training cycles** in the Western China Extended Programme is considered to have produced more impact, given that the training is more context-related, interactive, problem-oriented and closer to the transfer into practice. The feedbacks of participants show that the program has enhanced their capacities in decision making and problem solving. In contrast, the **Public Services Training** is assessed by the participants and lecturers rather cautiously due to their general topics and classroom-type of lecturing. Although they reported eye-opening experiences and promotion after the program, there is no strong evidence that the trainings have contributed to the on-going public sector reforms in China. This is, first of all, a problem of magnitude – trainings for relatively few officials compared to the scope and complexity of the reforms. In addition, most of the trainings' topics are considered too general, too basic, and not closely related to the contexts in China.

In terms of the **effectiveness** of the project, the topics covered in the training were reportedly disseminated and used as an inspiring source for participants. The interviews yield some examples for transferred contents and methods like mind mapping, SWOT, brainstorming, and AL approach.

Again, AL is seen as more innovative in dealing with current issues prioritized by the participants. However, since the AL approach presupposes continuous sequences, the very design of the project could not sufficiently facilitate a solid implementation of the AL cycle. The international experts provided training to the participants only once at the beginning of the project, thus a lack of enough support for the participants in the action learning process. Besides, the participants came from different administrative institutions which are not closely related with each other in their joint efforts in solving the problem at hand.

Regarding CTCSPMO's capacity development to deliver innovative HRD to senior officials, CTCSPMO officials mentioned HRD planning, selection and assessment procedures as well as

the AL approach as fruitful. However, the interviewees gave no indication of an overall and continuous organizational capacity building process in CTCSPMO, based on key competencies, e.g. in curricula development and methodological innovation.

With regard to the **efficiency** of the project, participants of the Public Services Training see the relation between travel time and time effectively used for training sessions unbalanced, and too much time is spent on not directly training-related issues. They would like more interactive discussion related to the Chinese contexts and longer visits to companies and public administrations. Actual cost per day per person varies between 500 and 880 CHF. It is relatively high if this was about purely training events, compared to staff training in Switzerland. Given that there are no benchmark figures for comparable training courses, SDC should make clear specifications in advance, e.g. regarding maximum fees for lecturers, training costs per participant/day, accommodation and travel costs/participant.

In terms of **sustainability**, many participants reported that inspiring ideas have been integrated into their work. Due to the direct mode of delivery, sustainability in terms of institutional innovation and change in CTCSPMO is rather limited. However, participants express positive emotional experience, which is conducive to the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship. In view of sustainable results, the partnership management should be deepened, so that CTCSPMO can take over a stronger role with a committed leadership. So far, the planning documents and reports were not established in a joint process and that the ownership of the project is more on the side of IMP-HSG.

Based on the above results evaluation, the evaluation team makes the following recommendations:

- 1) Continuation focused on sustainable results: Strengthening the capacities of CTCSPMO in its HRD mission in the context of public service reforms. The overall objective of this *capacity development* project would be *to improve and strengthen the capacity of CTCSPMO and its affiliated training providers to design and deliver effective HRD measures to Chinese policy makers and senior HRD officials.*
- 2) Improving relevance: Transforming the project into a partnership cooperation: (i) Link to the mandate and the implementation capacity of the main partner CTCSPMO (capacity development focused on ownership and appropriation), (ii) thematic focus on the Chinese public sector reform process, including SOEs (alignment), as well as (iii) focus on innovation (consulting on specific topics, policy dialogues on HRD, joint research and pilot projects should complement the capacity development of CTCSPMO).
- 3) Capacity development: Focusing on the required capacities for CTCSPMO's HRD activities, identifying clear objectives and indicators for different dimensions of competence, with regular monitoring and evaluation.
- 4) Thematic focus: Identifying urgent issues of the public sector reforms (e.g. strengthening sustainable development issues) and related key competencies of senior public servants as the centre of the capacity development of CTCSPMO. Thematic options should be explored during the joint planning exercise.
- 5) Research on Innovation: Enhancing applied HRD research in close cooperation with CTCSPMO. This can be best achieved through case studies, expert consulting on specific topics, policy dialogues, and joint pilot projects on central and provincial levels.
- 6) Design, implementation and monitoring: Strengthening joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project. The alumni network and the internet platform can be used effectively to facilitate follow-up of participants, interactive collaborative work of participant groups and improve project monitoring.

7) Partnership management and outreach: A more balanced partnership, including joint planning, management, reporting and monitoring, setting up some guidelines and basic procedures for joint decision-making.

## **1. Preliminary remarks: The evaluation in its context**

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The China Training Centre for Senior Personnel Management Officials (CTCSPMO) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) have cooperated since 1994 for the promotion of advanced human resource management to contribute to public sector reforms in China.<sup>1</sup> CTCSPMO is mandated by the Government of the PRC (Organization Department) to provide training to senior government and Party officials and to conduct research in the field of personnel management and management development. As agreed in the respective Memorandums of Understanding<sup>2</sup>, the project's overall purpose is to contribute to China's public administrative reforms by enhancing capacities of human resources in public management. From its outset, the partnership was not conceived like a classic SDC project, but as a project where the partnership dimension was at least as important as the results orientation dimension.

Against this background, a joint external evaluation was agreed upon, in order to assess the project's progress and results, and to give recommendations concerning a possible continuation of the project. According to international best practice in evaluations, the questions addressed by the evaluation first and foremost concern the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.<sup>3</sup> The timeframe evaluated covers the period from January 2009 to December 2012, during which SDC has allocated approx. 14 Million CHF. The Chinese contribution in this period is estimated to be an additional 30% of this amount.

SDC has entrusted the Institute for Systemic Management and Public Governance of the University of St. Gallen (IMP-HSG) with the implementation of the project. CTCSPMO is responsible for the project activities in China, whereas IMP-HSG assumes the responsibility of implementing and coordinating project activities in Switzerland and other European countries.

The evaluation was carried out jointly, by two experts: Prof. Xiangming Chen, Peking University, and Dr. Arthur Zimmermann, Director of odcp consultant, Switzerland. Accordingly, the review was designed as a joint reflection process with the project's major stakeholders.

## **2. Evaluation approach and methodology**

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Methodologically, the joint evaluation consisted of a thorough review of documentation with respect to the project's planning, objectives and activities, and the review of the course and monitoring reports on training activities. In a series of structured bilateral and group interviews, a number of key stakeholders were interviewed about the project's scope, procedures and results. During the mission in Switzerland (December 17<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>), meetings were held with IMP-HSG, a group of experienced lecturers, SDC and officials of other administrative services. During the mission in China (January 21<sup>st</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>), the following partners and resource persons were involved in the meetings: officials of CTCSPMO directly involved with the project

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. project document of the component Public Services Training, p. 4ff. Brief history of the project.

<sup>2</sup> MoU of 23.12.1993, 28.04.1998, 02.07.2002 and 02.04.2008.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Annex 1, Terms of Reference

management, 16 officials from different levels of the respective Organization Departments who participated in the project, the Swiss Embassy, and Credit Suisse Beijing.<sup>4</sup>

It is acknowledged that the partnership project has been steered by annual Joint Advisory Board meetings, for which no minutes were taken, but where issues like the demand by CTCSPMO for capacity building and the need to strengthen outcome monitoring were addressed repeatedly. With regards to outcome monitoring, a series of additional measures were planned but could not be realized (partly due to capacity constraints).

Mainly due to time constraints, the evaluation team had to concentrate on a selected number of leading questions, and consequently could not consider the entire efforts and activities of both partners. The team is conscious of these limitations, and would like to apologize for not having taken into account all facets of each training event. The team would also like to thank all those who generously contributed to this exercise with their capacity of dialogue and professional frankness. In particular, we would like to extend our acknowledgements to the CTCSPMO officials, IMP-HSG team, SDC officials and all the participants and lecturers, who provided great insight throughout the process. As we know, an open dialogue towards the plurality of voices and ideas is a sound pre-requisite of successful reforms. In addition, we would like to claim that views on opinions expressed in this report are those of the evaluation team alone.

### 3. Results

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#### 3.1 Data sources and data quality

For each of the two components of SSMTTP and according to SDC standards project documents were prepared, presenting brief background information (e.g. about the reforms in the Western Provinces), overall objectives and main activities, supported by annexed general logframes<sup>5</sup>, and detailed budget information. According to CTCSPMO and SDC officials, these basic documents and summarizing reports on training events were never shared with the Chinese partners. Besides summarizing annual reports, the contracted operator IMP-HSG set up training schedules for each course and individual reports on each training and study visit group. The IMP-HSG also prepared several outcome reports on the AL in the Western Provinces (ALQH, ALSC, and Inner Mongolia).

With the exception of outcome reports on the AL and compared to applied standards of SDC project cycle management, these documents provide a broad, but rather general picture, focusing more on the activities than on the results of SSMTTP. This is due to the basic quality of the planning documents and consequently, the absence of a results-based monitoring system. In search for evidence, the evaluation team noted a lack of coherence between activities (training delivered) and objectives, as well as a rather low quality of reporting on results. Regarding training and study tours, no tracing studies are available. The alumni network – asked for by CTCSPMO officials and SDC - was never established. The internet platform provides mainly general information on the project and access to input presentations of lecturers.

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Annex 2, Mission Agendas in Bern and in Beijing with interviewed persons

<sup>5</sup> The quality of the logframes does not comply with the results-oriented standards of SDC. Levels of objectives, outcomes, activities, indicators are mixed up. Therefore, the logframes could be hardly used as a base for project monitoring.

However, it was never upgraded to an interactive mode, facilitating follow-up of participants or collaborative work of participant groups.

Before the implementation of the project, there was no baseline data processed concerning the capacity development of public servants and the level of performance of the CTCSPMO as a training organizer and provider. A solid and specific capacity needs assessment was never done. Consequently, only to some extent the training events could be focused on specific target competencies related to the Chinese reform context<sup>6</sup>, and monitoring remained limited to rather general reports on delivered training events and activities. These circumstances are even more surprising when the evaluation team takes into account SSMTTP's long duration and the fact that HRD, training systems and organizational development are a key topic in SSMTTP's own training activities.

Regarding the monitoring and evaluation of capacity development measures, the evaluation team found two major problems:

First, in both components, the reports on the training events and related expert talks/workshops (i.e. Lucerne Forum, 21./22.06.2012) do not consider basic *monitoring and evaluation criteria* such as those of D. Kirkpatrick et al.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of the outcome reports on AL (Chongqing, Hainan, Inner Mongolia), set up 3 years after concluding the AL cycle, SSMTTP reporting sticks mainly to the first level of evaluation, i.e. how trainees reacted to the training immediately after a training course. Obviously, measuring reaction immediately after the delivery of training is important to understand how the training was received by the audience; it helps to improve the shape of future trainings, including identifying more relevant topics and more effective interactive training methods. However, a results-based monitoring system would also produce relevant data on the other levels of evaluation.<sup>8</sup>

Second, there was a wide *attribution gap* between reported activities on training events and studies on the one hand and the results attributed to these activities on the other. For example, the outcome monitoring reports on ALSC, ALQH, ALHN, ALJS and Inner Mongolia (September of 2012) link the results of wide, overall and large scale provincial reforms to the relatively modest contribution of SSMTTP, e.g. training a group of 30 officials.

There is acknowledged evidence that the topics in AL were discussed and defined jointly between the IMP-HSG and the Chinese officials. There is also reported evidence about the training events and the numerous studies produced in the context of AL. These studies cover a surprisingly broad range of topics – such as regional development, SME development, social security, public health economics and services management, land use planning, urban-rural

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Annex 3, Note on context and framework conditions

<sup>7</sup> See: Donald Kirkpatrick's et al. model of monitoring & evaluation: The model helps to analyse the design, and to evaluate immediate results, effectiveness and impact of training processes on four interdependent levels.

<sup>8</sup> Kirkpatrick et al. differentiate between different monitoring methods (e.g. feedback, tests, tracing studies) on at least four levels: (i) Immediate reaction / feedback of participants after having received a training measure, e.g. on training topics, methods, lecturer's performance. (ii) Competency based learning results in terms of knowledge and skills measured against explicit and specific learning objectives, e.g. done by tests and assessments. (iii) Job impact, i.e. the extent to which the training participants use and apply knowledge and skills acquired through training and what effect this has had on their work performance. (iv) Results on organizational / institutional level in terms of increased performance to fulfil its legal mandate or to reach targets in terms of evidence of changes that can be attributed to training. This would imply a so-called conducive environment for the transfer of individually acquired knowledge and skills to the work place and highlights the relevance to combine training with organizational development to produce this conducive or enabling environment.



development, tourism infrastructure, eco-tourism, environmental management, financial services, HRD in public administration – and refer to huge management tasks on city and provincial level in a complex and changing institutional and economical setting. It can be assumed that the established studies on the above mentioned topics were disseminated and used as an inspiring source of different development options to be discussed among stakeholders and decision-makers of the sector reforms.

However, in a result-based perspective, it would be interesting to know, how these studies were used beyond the small circle of participants. This means that obviously – in some cases and to some extent – SSMTTP “has contributed greatly to the sustainable development of economy, society and ecology”<sup>9</sup>, but on the basis of the available data sources it is impossible to underlay with hard facts that SSMTTP was one of the primary causes of these effects.<sup>10</sup>

### **3.2 Applied methodological approach in both project components**

The project is divided into two components: (i) Public Services Training, focusing on the public sector reforms, and the (ii) Western China Action Learning Programme, aimed at supporting the sustainable development in economically and socially backward regions in western China. Each of the two components of the project follows a distinctive methodological approach that is directly reflected in the design and in the activities of the training events. In the component Public Services Training, a study tour to Switzerland and to other European countries is undertaken after a short, 2 to 3 day preparation in Beijing. In AL cycles the preparation before visiting European countries is only 1 day. Follow-up measures were not envisioned and did not take place. The interviewed former participants expressed dissatisfaction with the short preparation and would prefer for it to be more thorough, so as to be more familiar with the contents of the study tour to Europe in advance. In their majority, they also commented on the too-general topics and the insufficient room for interaction and dialogue critically.<sup>11</sup>

*“Instead of lecturing on the very basics of a wide range of topics, presented by a large number of professors, we would prefer to address the issues in depth and discuss the applicability of the solutions.” (Participant of SSMTTP)*

With regards to the Public Services Training, the former participants see the relation between travel time and time effectively used for training sessions to be unbalanced. From their perspective, too much time is spent on not directly training-related issues, even if – of course – all former participants praise the visits to picturesque sites. Instead of PowerPoint front presentations, the participants would like more discussion related to the Chinese contexts rather than just abstract theories or cases about European countries. They would have preferred longer visits to companies and public administrations as well as more discussions with public servants and managers. Some former participants also pointed out that they were presented with a slightly idealized image of Switzerland.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Report on the Outcome Monitoring Visit to Inner Mongolia, Sept. 2012, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> This opinion is shared by IMP-HSG in its complementary report on the OECD-DAC criteria and costs, January 2013.

<sup>11</sup> For example, visits to some public institutions and companies were limited to a lecture. The Chinese participants would have liked to have more time for an in-depth discussion with officials and managers as well as visits to production sites of companies.

<sup>12</sup> Even if the differences in scale and history between Switzerland and China do not allow for direct comparison, Switzerland may offer insight on interesting problem-orientated topics to the Chinese participants, e.g. approaches to regional policies, fiscal transfers among regions, role of civil society organisations in policy-making, systemic

In contrast, the Action Learning (AL) approach is seen as more innovative. The provincial AL cycles deal with current issues prioritized by the participants. Applying the AL methodology to those programmes leads to a practice-oriented design of the training content, which in turn enables the participants to transfer acquired knowledge and skills into their work practice, organizations and specific reforms. A number of participants come from the same province and work together as a team for an extended period of time, usually one year, on the same topic, e.g. public transportation, tourism management, environmental protection, etc. The Action Learning cycle comprises also a study tour of Chinese officials to Switzerland and other European countries as a source of inspiration for the development of innovative solutions, e.g. in environmental management and eco-tourism.

However, the AL approach presupposes continuous sequences in a problem-solving cycle, in which senior officials (both from the public sector and state-owned enterprises) can hardly take part due to time constraints. The very design of the project could not sufficiently facilitate a solid implementation of the AL cycle. Although IMP-HSG collected questions for inquiry from the participants, these questions were usually too broad to be the focus for action learning. The international experts provided training to the participants only once for all at the beginning of the project, thus a lack of enough support for the participants in the action learning process. Besides, the participants came from different administrative institutions which are not closely related with each other in their joint efforts in solving the problem at hand. Despite these weaknesses, one should recognize that the AL approach is seen by both CTCSPMO and participants as an important innovation which can be applied – due to time constraints - less to senior officials than to mid-level staff.

In general, it catches one's eye with regards to a partnership project that from the start, the project did not make full use of the usual standard and capacity development instruments, such as strong alignment to public sector reforms, capacity needs assessments, competency-based targets for learning, gender-balanced access to training, focus on transfer and sustainable results.

### **3.3 Assessment according to OECD-DAC criteria**

#### **3.3.1 Assessing relevance: Are we doing the right things?**

In general, the project's relevance can be gauged according to the following guiding questions:

- To what extent do the explicit objectives of the project match the needs of public sector reforms and the strengthening needs of the partner institution CTCSPMO?
- Are the achieved results relevant for the ability of CTCSPMO to fulfil its mandate?
- What is the relevance of transmitted specific competencies for the Chinese public sector reforms?
- To what extent is SSMTF fostering mutual trust and understanding between Chinese and Swiss actors involved in the project?

Given that the very numerous objectives are wide-ranging, vague and generic, and cannot be broken down to key competencies of CTCSPMO and the target groups of public officials, an assessment against stated objectives is hardly possible.

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failures with regards to agricultural subsidies and federal decision-making, management of environmentally contaminated sites, rivers and lakes, financial sector compliance with international standards, etc.

The assessments of the relevance of the resource persons interviewed in China and in Switzerland showed an unusual wide range of understanding of SSMTTP's purpose, objectives, modes of delivery and results. Many interviewees characterized SSMTTP as a "special, atypical, unusual and unique cooperation programme" with strengths and weaknesses. The wide-ranging spectrum of assessments is closely correlated with the specific interest in the project of the respective interviewees. The more the resource persons refer to the explicit goals and the modes of delivery, the more negative the judgment. In contrast, the project's relevance is judged positive the more the focus is not on explicit results, but on creating trust and fostering Sino-Swiss relations.

Regarding less tangible results, there is no doubt that on this backdrop, SSMTTP has created a most valuable relation capital that could be used in the case of a continuation of the cooperation between SDC and the CTCSPMO playing a key role in public sector reforms. In any case, due to the project's long duration and the multiple contacts and connections created in its framework, it is credited with contributing to the implicit objective of creating trust and friendship for all parties, given that it has provided opportunities to access and share information, and foster overall intercultural understanding and friendship.

In general, the AL training cycles in the framework of the Western China Extended Programme is considered to be more important and with more impact, given that the training is seen as more context-related, interactive, problem-oriented and closer to the transfer into practice. The feedbacks of participants of the outcome reports show that the linking of preparation, study tour to Switzerland and to other European destinations and debriefing as well as the focus on a chosen sector (e.g. urban forestry, health services in 2009/2011, ALCQ Chongqing; urban-rural linkages, tourism, roads in 2010/2011, ALHN Hainan; public transportation in 2011/2012, ALJS Jiangsu) have given the participants the possibility to deepen comparison between different solution approaches. In other words, the choice of options of decision-makers was enhanced and the systemic flexibility was strengthened.

Some former participants of AL point out that the approach is of interest both to the CTCSPMO and the Western provinces and is being carried on- at least rudimentarily - in their provinces. The approach is quite consistent with the general political guideline for public sector reforms, namely that Party officials are to listen more to the population and should decide more in dialogue with different stakeholders. In conclusion; in the case of the AL the relevance is thus high because the alignment with Chinese reforms has been successful and the methodological innovation has been adopted.

In contrast, the trainings of the component Public Services Training are assessed rather cautiously and considered to be less relevant. Three arguments are primarily advanced by participants and lecturers:

(i) There is hardly strong evidence that the offered trainings have contributed to the on-going public sector reforms in China. This is, first of all, a problem of magnitude – trainings for relatively few officials compared to the scope and complexity of the reforms. Although the trainings tried to gear towards key competencies applicable to the reform process, their direct inter-linkage to the on-going programmes of the reforms at various administrative levels is rather weak. This results in a general *attribution gap* between the activities and the results, leading to a blurring in the assessment of the project's relevance.

(ii) Most of the trainings' topics are considered by the former participants and even by some lecturers to be too general and too basic.<sup>13</sup> In particular, the topics are hardly or not explicitly enough related to the dynamics of the on-going reform process in the public sector in China and CTCSPMO's mandate. In order to create this link, key competencies would have to be identified that in public sector management or in individual thematic key sectors (e.g. environmental management, urban transportation, green economy, etc.) are determinant for the capacity for transformation. Such key competencies relate not only to personal knowledge and skills, but also to the implementation and cooperation capacity of individual organizations. This means that the answer to such an analysis would be not only training, but also organizational and network development as well as joint research projects to identify and evaluate different options for effective reforms.

(iii) The training methods for the Public Services Training component are rather traditional as they centre on classroom presentations with limited interaction. The preparation of the participants for the respective training subjects is rudimentary, as they usually did not receive relevant materials or introduction of the lecturers beforehand for translation into Chinese.

Relevant and tangible results require a more realistic and robust goal setting and a strong focus that is shared and agreed upon among both partners. Looking at the broad spectrum of on-going and far-reaching Chinese reform experiments, a circumspect and smart choice of issues related to institutional reform dynamics has to be made. Regarding the overall public sector reform process and specific experiments in Chinese provinces, a pathway to balanced development and a new role of government are at stake.

Regarding the *mode of delivery*, a cool, realistic view on the relevance also allows for the question of what can be at all expected from individual training courses (for 30 senior officials) applying a more traditional classroom teaching approach and AL cycles (for 25 to 30 mid-management provincial Party cadres) in view of the order of magnitude. Continuing in this line of *direct* mode of delivery would rather limit the relevance and outreach of the project. Compared to an innovative strengthening of the Chinese HRD system, e.g. improving methodologies and curricula of the main partner CTCSPMO, would certainly produce much more relevance and impact than the direct mode of delivery chosen by the project.

### **3.3.2 Assessing effectiveness: To what extent is SSMTTP achieving its objectives?**

The guiding questions of effectiveness refer to the extent to which the intended direct results of the project are being achieved:

- To what degree have the programmes achieved their intended qualitative and quantitative objectives (outcomes)?
- How well have the achieved results been captured by the monitoring and self-evaluation measures put in place by the programme?
- What are the decisive reasons for which objectives are or are not being achieved?

SSMTTP's overall goal is *to contribute to public administration reforms*, mainly by improving the personnel performance and competencies in the Chinese public sector. One focus of SSMTTP

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<sup>13</sup> One has to take into consideration that officials both in the Party structure and in the SOE dispose of more and more experience through upgrading in highly qualified Chinese universities and abroad, having studied at top-ranking European and U.S. universities. This leads to even non-Party members being selected for top-level executive posts through a merits-based assessment.

lies in facilitating the modernization of HRD by promoting *modern training methodologies and strengthening the management of CTCSPMO in its mandate to upgrade knowledge and skills with regards to senior personnel management*. SSMTTP's second focus lies on the special provincial programs in Western China aimed at supporting sustainable development in various sectors.

Concrete objectives that can be underpinned with simple, measurable and plausible indicators are helpful for each project. In this regard, the quality of SSMTTP's objective-setting negatively affects a clear orientation and monitoring of the project, and some of the objectives were either too ambitious, too fuzzy or too general, for example:

- To make contributions to policy-making in the Chinese public sector.
- To introduce modern human resources management and training techniques in the public sector.
- To strengthen CTCSPMO's capacity to promote human resources management methods and to deepen the skills of training & management research of ToT graduates.
- To help CTCSPMO establish itself as a leading research and training institution in transformational management of the Chinese public sector by means of strong international collaboration.

First, since SSMTTP has mainly delivered training, there is no palpable evidence for results regarding policy-making in public sector reforms. However, regarding AL cycles, there are several feedbacks in the outcome reports and from interviewees indicating, that specific development options have been picked up and were integrated into a wider sector reform context. Second, regarding CTCSPMO's capacity development to deliver innovative HRD to senior officials, CTCSPMO officials mention HRD planning, selection and assessment procedures as well as the AL approach as fruitful. It is also acknowledged, that all the professionals of the academy have SSMTTP background in terms of participating to study tours and trainings. This is in alignment with the objective of capacity building stipulated in the project document. CTCSPMO has established "the guideline for the capacity building of the academy" and is formulating "the 5 year planning of the development of the academy". However, the interviewees have given no indication of an overall and continuous organizational capacity building process in CTCSPMO, based on key competencies, e.g. in curricula development and methodological innovation.

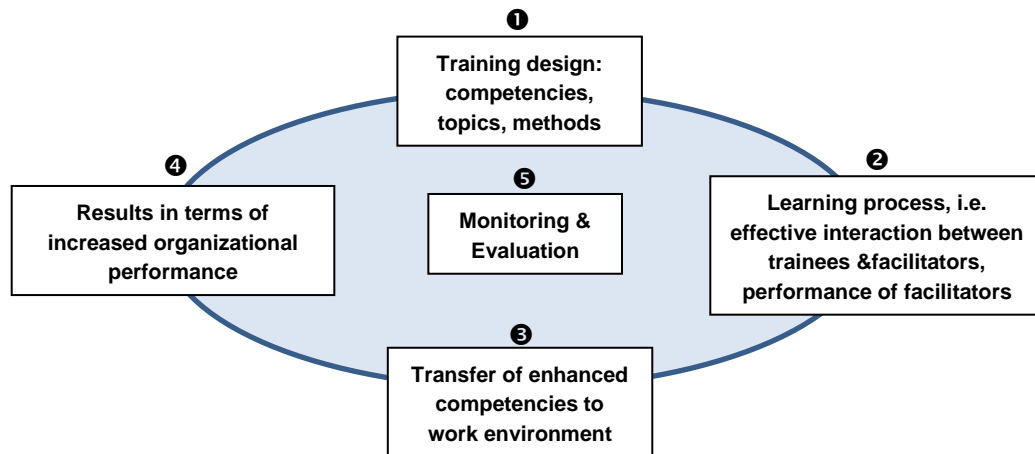
Regarding training, by and large, reporting and the voices of former participants lead to the conclusion that the trainings using the AL approach are more effective than the trainings organized under the component Public Services Training. Some CTCSPMO-selected participants seem to perceive the study tours to Switzerland and at least two other European destinations<sup>14</sup> more as an incentive and recognition of their efforts in their duty than as a training opportunity.<sup>15</sup> Obviously, former participants unanimously appreciated the opportunity to get inspiring insights on different topics during these study tours. As already mentioned, some participants criticize the ratio between time for training and time for travelling.

According to the evaluation team, applying a systemic view and the value each of the system elements adds to the overall results, in a nutshell training can be best understood as a dynamic interaction between at least five elements:

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<sup>14</sup> Germany, France and Finland, Spain and UK, France and The Netherlands.

<sup>15</sup> In the respective group reports, commitment to learning varies from highly motivated and problem-oriented to low interest and lack of commitment.



In a summary assessment of these elements, the evaluation team comes to the following conclusions:

### **(1) Training design**

Although a capacity needs assessment is not thoroughly administered and no target competencies were formulated, SSMTTP has succeeded in implementing training events that were positively assessed by the participants on the level of immediate feedbacks. The AL's outcome reports are also in their majority positive.

Although the small proportion of women in the training is an accurate reflection of the status quo in the Chinese administration, more balanced participation of women could help promote people's awareness of gender equity and capacity building of women leaders. The topic of gender equality was not explicitly addressed in the training courses.

The majority of former participants see the content of most training courses as too general. With regards to the multitude of the lecturers' PowerPoint presentations, the evaluation team concurs in this assessment. In many cases these are very general, simple, partially a bit outdated thematic introductions without a specific link to Chinese reforms that might under challenge the participants, which have also studied at foreign universities. Additionally, individual former participants criticize that the presentations were partially incomplete and that a resuming report on the different content elements would be helpful. A participant that took part in several trainings and study tours was surprised that the same lecturers appeared in thematically different trainings.

### **(2) Learning process**

With the exception of the AL cycles, the learning process corresponds to a more traditional pattern of classroom lecturing followed by answer-and-question sessions. Innovative learning forms that imply a stronger engagement from participants were hardly applied (e.g. participatory workshops, communities of practice).

The former participants assess the lecturers' performance as average to good. They miss a more practical orientation, up-to-date concepts, and a stronger link to the Chinese reforms and the specific problem setting. In order to cover a wide a range of topics, for a three-week course up to 27 lecturers were employed. To the participants this has given the impression that the training consists of a series of relatively unconnected presentations of general topics. The lecturers themselves stated that they do not know the contents and methods of the other training

sequences. There have been only very few meetings for horizontal exchange of experience among the lecturers to capitalize and share their experience, expanding and improving their methodological repertoire and the fit to the Chinese audience and context.<sup>16</sup>

With regards to the innovative and praxis-orientated character of training topics, there is the opinion that there is definitely no need for rather general and elementary introductions to these subjects: *“We are less interested in university-like knowledge and lecturing, a lot of the younger generation has studied in foreign countries (EU and US) and is well familiar with these concepts.”*

### **(3) Transfer to work environment**

The outcome reports of AL in Western Provinces give examples of transferred contents and methods, although this is tainted – as mentioned above – with the attribution gap. Reports point out concrete outcomes of the Western China AL programs in the various regions, as those programs are mostly project-specific in the actual environment (in terms of knowledge fed into projects on waste water treatment, tourism development, social security systems, etc.).<sup>17</sup> No tracing studies were undertaken, although CTCSPMO has certain access to the necessary data regarding assignments, assessments, promotion and turnover of the trained officials. Some former participants attribute promotion after the training to their participation in a training course.

Although it seems more difficult to measure transfer of the Public Services Training programs, the interviews with former participants yield some examples for transferred contents and methods: Mind mapping, SWOT, brainstorming, design of training modules, team building for organizing Party members, tourism capacity analysis, linkage between training and job performance, scientific methods of assessments of officials, IMD management model, problem-solving method, AL approach.

The interviewed participants and CTCSPMO officials point out that they are very much aware of the transfer gap between training and use in the organizational context. The following measures for transfer support were mentioned in the discussions:

- Before closing a training, give the participants time to reflect on their own transfer strategy. Organize peer-to-peer arrangements for following up these individual strategies.
- Foster transformational leadership and increase adaptive performance<sup>18</sup>.
- Discuss organizational and behavioral path dependency how to ensure support from peer and line management.
- Follow-up with working groups on the Internet/intranet to support adoption and transfer of knowledge and skills.
- Creation and use of alumni networks, formation of communities of practice.

### **(4) Results in terms of organizational performance**

The outcome reports on the AL in the Western Chinese provinces provide individual hints on the improved organizational performance after the project. Two older examples may illustrate this: In the context of ALQH, one project team from Xining (metropolitan population of 2.2

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<sup>16</sup> Continuous upgrading of Swiss lecturers and facilitators is seen as key for quality management of a program such as SSMTF. E.g. there are case studies of Chinese public sector reforms available which could be a source of inspiration for knowledge management with the lecturer's group.

<sup>17</sup> See the reports on Qinghai, Sichuan, Hainan, Chongqing, Inner Mongolia.

<sup>18</sup> See a variety of articles in the internet: Bernard M. Bass, Dong I. Jung, Audrey Charbonnier-Voirin, Liao Hui, Athena Xenikou et al.

millions) created a Human Talents Exchange Centre inspired by Swiss examples. With this institution, equilibrium of labour-market supply and demand is reached in a pragmatic and practical way. According to the reports, the Human Talents Exchange Centre is well established, works successfully, and is an important provider of employment services. It considerably contributes to the social stability and the economic development of Qinghai Province.

In the context of AL Inner Mongolia, since the implementation of AL, the A'ershan Communist Party and Government have put increased emphasis on ecological protection and improvement, and take this as an important index in evaluating the local government's performance. In addition, various natural reserves and national forest parks have been built, which play an important role in protecting biodiversity and keeping ecological balance.

Although numerous studies prepared in AL have contributed to widen the access to new knowledge and to integrate new development options into decision-making on reforms, it is unknown how far these studies were disseminated, shared and used by the involved stakeholders. Given that these studies were strongly related to the specific contexts and urgent problems, and therefore facilitated the transfer into practice, it can be assumed that their results in terms of impact are quite high in comparison to single training courses.

As already mentioned, referring to the objectives related to increased performance of CTCSPMO, there are some hints of increased effectiveness in providing training for senior personnel officials. The elements named were HRD planning, incitation for the development of selection and assessment procedures as well as the AL approach.

### **(5) Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of progress not only serves accountability, but also provides steering information so as to be able to undertake early-on strategic changes, and provides important learning opportunities in partnership cooperation. In spite of its importance, however, SSMTP does not dispose of a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system. This is rather surprising to the evaluation team, given that SDC in general expects projects to have a monitoring system based on a realistic results-oriented logframe.

However, SSMTP has tried to close this gap through the feedbacks at the end of training courses (which corresponds to the immediate reaction level of evaluation; see footnote 14), and with the outcome visits and reports on the AL programs in the Western Provinces.

Regarding effectiveness, three side aspects may also merit a short comment:

(i) **Intranet:** The intranet platform, to some extent not always updated, only served for the presentation of the project and for one-way-communication. Given that this is a capacity development project and learning in general constitutes a special form of communication, it would be useful and effective for the intranet to be developed so as to test the following learning opportunities: individual learning on specific topics supported by an effective learning architecture; moderated, results-oriented group discussions; collaborative work groups.

(ii) **Alumni network:** Various reports talk about a still-to-be-created alumni network, and it seems that various attempts have been undertaken. CTCSPMO officials have explicitly welcomed the creation of such a network, in order to strengthen the follow-up on trainings, e.g. through the formation of communities of practice on the internet platform, and ease the formation and cooperation of Sino-Swiss research groups.

(iii) **Partnership management:** The current project relies on a division of labour between the Chinese team, established by CTCSPMO, and the team of IMP-HSG. The role of CTCSPMO



tends to be more of an operational support in competition-based recruitment of participants and Chinese experts in academic activities, contact with respective Chinese institutions, communication with the execution team of AL programs, organizing outcome monitoring trips. There is no joint steering committee in place to periodically review the project progress. However, the cooperation between CTCSPMO and IMP-HSG seems to work without major obstacles and mutual understanding is good enough.

On closer examination, the prevailing impressions of project management can be summed up like this: The current partnership could be better balanced. IMP-HSG is perceived as the protagonist and main operating partner, deciding on resources, topics and methods. CTCSPMO exercises its influence by selecting the participants and is also present through delegated participants at the training events. In the eyes of IMP-HSG, it has demonstrated great performance in the operation of AL, working professionally and efficiently. On both sides, the willingness to compromise is notable, which facilitates smooth coordination.

Nevertheless, the impression prevails that CTCSPMO is only consulted when necessary, that planning documents and reports were not established in a joint process and that the ownership of the project is more on the side of IMP-HSG. Although since 2012, there is a new liaison officer at the Swiss Embassy in Beijing, facilitating communication with CTCSPMO directly, currently, SDC is perceived as a partner with little presence and voice. If SDC is going to decide to contract an operational partner, it is advisable to consult with CTCSPMO before decision-making.

### 3.3.3 Assessing efficiency: Do we get the value for money?

The guiding question for efficiency is: Are the costs appropriated compared to the activities and the achieved results?<sup>19</sup>

For each of the two components of SSMTTP, IMP-HSG draws up a detailed budget. The breakdown of the actual cost of each group (financial statement on each group passed to SDC) vs. budgeted costs provides the following picture<sup>20</sup>:

<b>PublicServices Training</b>		
<b>Group</b>	<b>Actual cost per day per person (CHF)<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>Deviation to budget (%)</b>
SV (senior study visit)	887.04	-53.82
SE (senior executives)	576.02	17.78
TM (train of managers)	542.31	14.02
EYC (excellent young cadres)	515.59	11.91
<b>Western China Extended Program</b>		
<b>Group</b>	<b>Actual cost per day per person (CHF)</b>	<b>Deviation (%)</b>
Action Learning groups	552.39	9.57

<sup>19</sup> See: Activities and results more specifically defined in the project documents and the contracts between SDC and the University of St. Gallen established for the two programs separately for the years 2009 - 2013.

<sup>20</sup> These figures do not include the costs for staff & expenses of IMP-HSG for the overall period 2009-2013 estimated to be CHF 794'000.00

<sup>21</sup> Figures include accommodation (Switzerland and other European countries); food and beverage; all fares (daily coach, etc.); lecture costs (fees, hotel, f&b, misc.); seminar fees; running costs (weekend sightseeing, etc.). All costs in China (return flights to Europe, costs for Western China program, etc.) are covered by the Chinese side.

CTCSPMO officials estimate that the Chinese financial contribution is around 30% of the Swiss costs. IMP-HSG, entrusted by SDC to manage the partnership project on the Swiss side, comments these relatively high costs as follows: “SSMTP is a highly complex program which requires specialized resources on the Swiss side, e.g. specialists in training in an intercultural context, the need to be able to speak Chinese, to accompany the groups, and to organize travel and training.”

The breakdown of the costs of four different courses are as follows:

Event	SE2 2010	ALCQ 2011 CH/CN	EYC 2011	SE2 2012
Participants	21	26	25	19
Days	22.5	34	38	22
<b>Cost structure</b>				
Lecturers	39'000.00	98'054.00	214'353.00	39'000.00
Travel & Accommodation	115'226.00	111'827.00	217'800.00	112'669.00
Training <sup>22</sup>	49'870.00	110'070.00	225'677.00	46'567.00
Overall Costs <sup>23</sup>	222'968.00	285'417.00	571'019.00	204'726.00
Costs /Training Day / Participant	158.32	151.20	161.20	188.53

Estimated time allocation in days/group (examples):

Event	Training (CH&CN)	Excursions /Visits	Travelling	Other
SE2 2010	15	4.5	3	
ALCQ 2011 CH/CN	28	3	3	
EYC 2011	56	9	6	2
SE2 2012	13	6.5	1.5	1

The figures permit the following preliminary conclusions:

- Deviations from budget are within the cost frame and usual order of magnitude.
- Actual cost per day per person: In both components the costs vary between 500 and 880 CHF. This figure is relatively high if this was about purely training events. Given that substantial travelling costs and costs of IMP-HSG for staff and expenses come on top of this and that several courses are replicated, compared to staff training in Switzerland, the costs seem to be remarkably high.
- The costs for travel and accommodation per participant as well as for lecturers are in part rather high. In the words of many participants: *“Too much time is spent on the road. It would be more cost effective to spend more time to talk with Swiss people on site in their organizations, or even visit Swiss companies in China.”*
- In general, fees for lecturers and project coordination personnel should comply with current SDC regulations. Given that there are no benchmark figures for comparable training courses<sup>24</sup>, SDC should make clear specifications in advance, e.g. regarding maximum fees for lecturers, training costs per participant/day, accommodation and travel costs/participant.

<sup>22</sup> Costs consisting of: Lecturer fee, seminar fee, food & beverage; for seminars in China: fees, fares, hotels, food of lecturers.

<sup>23</sup> The amount does not include IMP-HSG overhead costs.

<sup>24</sup> Comparable elements would be other study tours to Switzerland in the context of SDC programs.

### 3.3.4 Assessing sustainability: How durable are the results over time?

The guiding questions for sustainability are:

- How sustainable are the increased competencies of the participants in their institutions? Will the results of the partnership last over time?
- Can the cooperation continue with less financial contributions from SDC in the foreseeable future?
- What measures can increase programmatic and financial sustainability?

First, CTCSPMO officials and participants make the clear qualitative statement that the programme is useful and many inspiring thoughts and ideas have been integrated into their work. Second, due to the direct mode of delivery, sustainability regarding institutional innovation and change in CTCSPMO (.g. in curricula development and methodological innovation of HRD) is rather limited. In the third place, sustainability linked to persons can be asserted. Interviewed participants combine particular methods and skills acquired in SSMTTP trainings and during AL with a positively correlated emotional experience. This emotional linkage should not be underestimated, given that the programme apart from the capacity development goals also contributes to promoting mutual understanding and the establishment of a lasting network based on friendship and common interests.

However, the shaky data fundament hardly permits any clear conclusions. Tracing studies are missing that are focused right on the transfer gap. Presumably, the sustainability of results does not reach the level of a significant contribution to the Chinese public sector reforms.

The partnership cooperation can without doubt also be undertaken with fewer financial means. As the AL example highlights, the essential element for results and impact is less the number of trainings and study tours than the mode of delivery, the methodological approach and the institutional anchoring with the partner CTCSPMO. Shaping the partnership cooperation is paramount for sustainable results.

In view of sustainable results, the partnership management should therefore be deepened, so that CTCSPMO can take over a stronger role with a committed leadership. CTCSPMO also wishes for more SDC presence and a regular exchange on the project's progress, and would like to be consulted on the selection of an operator.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

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The evaluation team recommends taking fundamental decisions first. Primarily, the two partners CTCSPMO and SDC have to take the basic decision whether they want to continue the partnership cooperation in the light of the recommendations of this joint evaluation.

Secondly, the partners should decide whether the future project would be a new phase of the current SSMTTP, or if the prospects of a sound results-based cooperation provide the opportunity to agree on the first phase of a new project. If the cooperation project is to be continued, the following recommendations should be understood as an open list of considerations and options to be taken up in a dialogue between both partners.

## R-1: Continuation focused on sustainable results

The evaluation team perceives that SSMTF, due to its long duration, has created strengthened and trustful work relations that constitute a unique opportunity for the continuation of the cooperation.

CTCSPMO is an influential partner of HRD innovation and research in public sector reforms, organizing tailor-made, innovative and practice-oriented training to Chinese officials in the context of current public sector reforms. CTCSPMO's institutional position and the created inter-linkages have created a considerable potential to provide a visible and significant contribution to the deep-going Chinese reform efforts in the public sector.

At the same time the evaluation team is convinced that there is a sizeable space for improvement of the current SSMTF. In particular, to orient the cooperation to *sustainable results*, the project should be aimed at strengthening the capacities of the staff of the CTCSPMO and its affiliated training providers. The overall objective of this *capacity development* project would be *to improve and strengthen the capacity of CTCSPMO and its affiliated training providers to design and deliver effective HRD measures to Chinese policy makers and senior HRD officials*. In this way the project can contribute to the development of a modern, efficient, powerful and transparent administration in the PRC through effective HRD in the public sector.<sup>25</sup>

## R-2: Improving Relevance

The evaluation team recommends transforming the current project into a partnership cooperation with increased relevance through a three-fold strengthening: (i) Link to the mandate and the implementation capacity of the main partner CTCSPMO (capacity development focused on ownership and appropriation), (ii) thematic focus on the Chinese public sector reform process, including SOEs (alignment), as well as (iii) focus on innovation (consulting on specific topics, policy dialogues on HRD, joint research and pilot projects should complement the capacity development of CTCSPMO).

*“We face huge challenges in the public sector reforms on all levels. Lots of officials are not well prepared to communicate constructively and to enable people’s participation. There is a lack of awareness for different options of reforms. It could be of great interest to know what are the steering mechanisms applied in public sector reforms and how does HRD work in international Swiss firms in China. We are interested in cases of substantial success in reforms and change management.” (Participant of SSMTF training)*

One of the weaknesses of the current project is due to objectives that are too general and too ambitious. In order to increase relevance, the cooperation has to be defined less from the side of the Swiss offer<sup>26</sup> than from the concrete capacity development needs of CTCSPMO and the new emerging role concept of the Chinese public servant.

<sup>25</sup> Specific fields of cooperation need to be identified, e.g. strengthening the capacity of CTCSPMO to design, implement and evaluate effective and innovative training of senior officials and leadership development in HRD issues, promoting interactive and participatory training methods in CTCSPMO, designing innovative pilot courses operated jointly with CTCSPMO.

<sup>26</sup> At large, Swiss experience does not fit to the political setup and scope of Chinese reforms. Given the magnitude of scales, the different history and institutional landscape, the question of comparative Swiss advantages is secondary. E.g. Switzerland has no tangible experience available in urban management of mega-cities and does not act upon a 5-years plan. Even in sectors such as health it has to be carefully considered, if there is relevant

Relevance requires focus. In the Chinese panorama one should at least consider the main constraints and challenges in the force field between economic growth, sustainable development, social justice and stability, a field of tensions that it is lively felt by the Chinese public servants. The transition to a more balanced development pattern requires from a public servant new competencies to be explored more closely during a joint planning exercise.<sup>27</sup>

### **R-3: Capacity development**

The evaluation team recommends applying the concept of capacity development along its different dimensions, according to SDC standards.<sup>28</sup> The interest focuses on the required capacities for CTCSPMO's HRD activities as well as the competencies of the senior HRD officials in those topics or sectors that are selected. On this basis, clear objectives and indicators have to be defined, which can only succeed through joint planning. Regular monitoring and evaluation are to be agreed-upon as a joint task as well.

In order to centre capacity development on leverage and sustainability, the cooperation should refrain from working in a direct mode of delivery, but rather strengthen the implementation and cooperation capacity of the main partner CTCSPMO. The required capacities for CTCSPMO's HRD activities are to be identified at staff and organizational level, and a comprehensive organizational development plan of CTCSPMO should be set up.

The institutional *capacity development* of CTCSPMO and its main partners leads to sustainable results and uses a variety of resources and modes of delivery: advisory services, coaching and training as well as policy dialogues on HRD issues, expert consulting to specific topics and study tours (exposure) in China and to Switzerland. In this context, Swiss consultants, lecturers, trainers, facilitators should get more familiar with the real situation in China and be able to combine topics and methodologies with a model of cultural diversity.

### **R-4: Thematic focus**

To sharpen the thematic focus, the evaluation team recommends identifying urgent issues of the public sector reforms and related key competencies of senior public servants that should be set to the centre of the capacity development of CTCSPMO and its affiliated training providers. The clear thematic focus has to be agreed-upon in an open dialogue between CTCSPMO and SDC; possibly a study should be undertaken regarding thematic options.

*“Switzerland should cooperate with China not on the basis of grand and abstract principles of good governance or rather general and basic topics, but on concrete cases in which there is convergence between Chinese HRD needs and Swiss experience in public sector reforms.”*  
(Participant of SSMTTP training)

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Swiss experience a hand that would be meaningful to and applicable in the Chinese context. However, Switzerland seems to have experience in some fields of interest; see footnote 12.

<sup>27</sup> Guiding questions could be: (i) Taking advantage of public-private partnerships, what is the space for improvement of public services to ensure equal access? (ii) Attention given to different voices is a broad issue of Chinese reforms. What specific competencies will a public servant need to perform to ensure transparency, accountability and equal opportunity? (iii) Looking at the rise of thousands of CSOs and the transition towards more dialogue and participation, what cooperation capacities does a public servant need to perform well in this dialogue?

<sup>28</sup> The concept links, in a best-fit, the capacities of persons with those of organisations and cooperation systems.

The concentration on HRD of senior officials makes sense, given that it corresponds to CTCSPMO's core mandate. The Central Organization Department and the affiliated CTCSPMO play a key role in public sector reforms. On the other side and beyond specific sector issues, there are other topics present that are closely linked to the Chinese public sector reforms, such as strengthening urban-rural linkages and regional structural policy-making, sustainable energy and resources management, and fostering cooperation with CSO in the provision of public services.

In addition, it complies with the Party declarations that the public sector reforms should consider a *results-oriented approach* and the *political economy of these reforms*, i.e. ex-ante evaluations of the distributional effects of the reforms, improved equality of access to basic services, sound environmental management, and the improvement of participatory procedures in decision-making ("listening to grassroots organizations"). Selected topics, key competencies for public sector reforms on different levels – from counties, municipalities, cities and provinces up to the central level – should be identified.

The thematic focus should, however, take into account that in China leading Swiss companies<sup>29</sup> are present that have multiple experiences with HRD, cooperation with public institutions and in diversity management. The Swiss Business Hub (OSEC) has created a network of Chinese consultants that could also be used for the cooperation as resource persons, consultants and trainers.

#### **R-5: Research on Innovation**

The evaluation team recommends enhancing applied joint HRD research. This can be best achieved through case studies, expert consulting on specific topics, policy dialogues, and joint pilot projects on central and provincial levels.

Since research on innovative training in HRD is already part of CTCSPMO's agenda, innovation can be focused, in close cooperation with CTCSPMO's research division, on the topic of HRD in public management. There is a large diversity of untapped approaches and methods. In general, horizontal and interactive forms ought to be strengthened and tested through pilot projects.<sup>30</sup>

These pilot projects need longitudinal follow-up to ensure on-site timely assistance from the Chinese and Swiss experts. This would allow carrying out praxis-oriented joint research projects that could e.g. assess or spread successful models of public management or come up with new training methods for specific target groups. In addition, awareness for diversity and the issue of diversity management may be used as a topic in joint research projects. In close collaboration with CTCSPMO and its training providers, knowledge management, linked up to research projects, has to be strengthened.

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<sup>29</sup> OSEC Business network, Swiss Business Hub China: At present, about 400 Swiss firms with over 900 branches are represented in China, employing several tens of thousands of employees. According to Chinese statistics, Swiss direct investments in China in 2010 amounted to 260 million USD, a decrease of 13% from 300 million USD in 2009. As of October 2012, the cumulative Swiss direct investments amounted to 809 million USD, putting Switzerland on the 4th rank among European countries and 10th overall.

<sup>30</sup> Examples: Blended learning with internet platforms, facilitation in a workshop format, team lecturing, panel discussions, peer-to-peer-learning, moderation of communities of practice, case teaching, search groups in a workshop environment.

## **R-6: Design, implementation and monitoring**

The evaluation team recommends strengthening joint planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project, in order to promote common understanding, appropriation, and continuous learning on both sides.

A strong results-oriented capacity development approach, competency-based HRD and practice-oriented joint research require an investment in sound joint planning. Besides the already mentioned issues under R-1 (*fields of cooperation*), the project should start from a capacity development plan of CTCSPMO.

Secondly, it is advisable to base the strengthening of HRD on specified target groups (senior executive officials, managers of SOEs, mid-level officials, young cadres, etc.) as well as on clear competency-based objectives that ease the design of HRD measures in terms of key topics, methodology, sequences and locations. The alumni network and the internet platform can be used effectively to facilitate follow-up of participants, interactive collaborative work of participant groups and improve project monitoring.

## **R-7: Partnership management and outreach**

The evaluation team advocates a more balanced partnership, including joint planning, management, reporting and monitoring. Joint planning should include the setup of partnership governance which provides the guidelines and defines basic procedures for joint decision-making.

In a results-oriented perspective, the evaluation team recommends to examine, if the partnership between CTCSPMO and SDC may be expanded to other Chinese institutions.

Partnerships are not a quick fix. Both negotiation of objectives and process management pose formidable challenges and require trust and openness, role clarification, more or less symmetric commitment and continuous dialogue about diverging perceptions, expectations, work styles and time management. Therefore, partnerships need to agree on purpose, results and sound basic management guidelines. On the other hand it is critical that strict rules, beyond the minimum necessary, may hamper the operational flexibility. Thus, the strategic orientation should ensure flexibility and allow an evolution of the partnership governance.

CTCSPMO is highly interlinked with training providers and, through its affiliation to the Central Organization Department, with other recognized Party institutions on all levels. According to the agreed results, CTCSPMO and SDC should evaluate, to what extent specific components or tasks (e.g. sustainable development issues) may be the starting point for an expanded cooperation with other partners.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. The Chinese Academy of Governance, located in Beijing, established in 1994, a training centre for middle and senior government officials, owned by the State Council, the Chinese Academy of Governance (CAG), the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) or the China Institute for Reform and Development (CIRD). This outreach may also examine the possible integration with other international organizations that CTCSPMO is having collaboration with and would certainly increase leverage of results and the sustainability of the project.