

# Developing an evaluation tool for health research in Ghana

Governments and external agencies in developing countries are increasingly identifying 'capacity building' as a goal of health research. Management at the Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) in Ghana identified capacity building in health research as essential if the school was to develop into a regional centre of excellence. How was an evidence-based evaluation tool developed for KATH?

In the context of health research, the goal of capacity building is to improve ability to carry out research, use the results effectively and promote demand for research. If health is to be improved and poverty reduced in developing countries, the need for the international community to make a quantum leap in capacity building should be prioritised. For this to happen, an evidence-based tool is urgently needed to identify whether the required infrastructure exists in a given setting. It is also needed for underpinning the design and evaluation of capacity building programmes in health research.

This study by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine and KATH details the development and use of such a tool. An analysis of published models and effective capacity building principles was followed by structured reflection and action on the part of the stakeholders at KATH in Kumasi, Ghana. The aim was to produce a tool that could guide the design, implementation and evaluation of capacity building in health research programmes.

The tool enabled KATH to establish its own priorities, take control over local capacity building and evaluate progress in capacity building from its own perspective. The following lessons were learnt.

- The evaluation tool allowed hospital managers and researchers to work together to improve research capacity at KATH, set standards to monitor progress, and identify and fill gaps in research infrastructure.
- The success of the process for developing the tool confirms the importance of the underlying generic principles of effective capacity building.
- The process included using a phased approach, identifying and strengthening existing processes and building up local resources, including formalising peer-support meetings. It is a good example of a problem-solving partnership built on trust, long-term commitment and shared responsibilities.
- The researchers' motivation, and the strong leadership and commitment of KATH managers were important in the success of the project.
- Motivation and commitment is promoted by allowing all stakeholders to participate in the design of evaluation indicators.

The evaluation tool successfully used principles of effective capacity building not specific to the health sector. However, the report recommends that the following.

- The tool should be flexible enough to allow for changes in the local setting and in the needs of the institution (the researchers plan to re-evaluate the tool within five years).
- The framework used by the tool had all the elements of a research process, such as problem- identification and priority setting. However, the specific components used in

producing the tool would need to be adapted to fit the specific requirements of other institutions.

- The tool was developed for health research at KATH, so whether it can be valuable in other contexts must be assessed.

**Source(s):**

'Evaluating health research capacity building: an evidence-based tool', PLoS Medicine, pages 1224-1229, by Imelda Bates, Alex Yaw Osei Akoto, Daniel Ansong, Patrick Karikari, George Bedu-Addo, Julia Critchley, Tsiri Agbenyega and Anthony Nsiah-Asare, 2006 [Full document](#).

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