



Complexities in individual capacity in interagency collaboration: The case of law enforcement in marine environment protection in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Individual capacity is a critical component of interagency collaboration and it encompasses many variables and elements common to any collaborative effort, as well as purpose-specific individual capacity unique to a particular context, which need to be explored in-depth to capture embedded complexities. The existence of several public agencies, needing myriad of qualified personnel for law enforcement in marine environment protection in Sri Lanka provides a unique context for an empirical investigation. The paper focuses on capturing complexities embedded in purpose-specific individual capacity of interagency collaboration in the context of law enforcement in marine environment protection.

The case study method in qualitative approach was used in the research. The representatives from six mandated public agencies in marine environment in Sri Lanka were selected through purposive sampling and primary data were collected from March to September 2014, through in-depth interviews. The themes were identified through coding and content analysis was used to examine and capture the complexities embedded in individual capacity, and to





ascertain how and why such complexities are formed. The trustworthiness of the research was established through reliability procedures, and data and theory triangulation.

Results of the research revealed inequalities in individual capacities of members in mandated public agencies in both maritime and marine environment protection perspectives. The findings shows the complexities embedded in purpose-specific individual capacity and extensiveness of such complexities are distinguishable in six facets of individual capacity; legitimacy, operational, technical, logistic, training, and development. The paper finally enlightens how and why such complexities had been formed, and what options are available to overcome those complexities.

Keywords: Interagency collaboration, Individual capacity, Law enforcement, Marine environment

JEL Classification: F64, K49

Introduction

Many forms of inter-organizational collaborative arrangements are being taking place around the world today and it has now become a commonplace part of institutional life (Huxham and Vaugen 2000, p 772). The scope of interagency collaboration extends to many different contexts such as law enforcement, the veteran's health administration, department of homeland security, child and family service delivery, local economic policy, crisis management, environmental issues and natural resources management (Emerson et al., p 2011). The collaborative capacity has been identified as a critical factor in interagency collaboration and many researchers have stressed the significance of collaborative capacity in interagency collaboration (Weber et al., 2007; Thomas, Hocevar and Jansen, 2006; Thomas et.al., 2008; Bardach, 2001; Huxham, 1993; Gray, 1985). Though many studies have been conducted on collaborations already exist, there is lack of research on potential collaborations. This implies the significance of focusing researches on collaborative capacity in different contexts, and to make an epistemological contribution. The literature on collaborative capacity reveals that individual capacity is a critical factor of interagency collaborative capacity, and adequate effort has not been taken to disintegrate and investigate the individual capacity to capture the unseen complexities prevails in different contexts. The research context was marine environment protection in Sri Lanka and the preliminary study

