

Capacity Development in International Party Assistance – The Case of KASYP

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INTRODUCTION

Political parties are the building blocks of democracy. They perform four elementary and interrelated functions for modern, representative democracy: they aggregate the population's interests and channel their demands and proposals from the grassroots to governments and parliaments; they train, select and propose leaders for elections and government roles; through parliaments and elections they supervise government; they develop and evaluate policy alternatives.¹ However, in young democracies, parties' performance of these functions is often weak. Parties fail to link citizens with the state because they lack internal party democracy, they have an electoral instead of programmatic party orientation, and their institutionalisation is marred by patronage and personalistic structures built around strong leaders.²

Asian political parties are no strangers to these challenges. The record electoral year of 2019, with five massive and vibrant national elections in the region, masks a worrying trend: the consolidation process of Asian democracies is floundering. A bouquet of formal requirements such as constitutions that prescribe separation of powers, institutional checks and balances, multi-party systems and legal recognition of civil liberties are largely in place throughout the region. But underneath the

¹ Catón, Matthias. 2007. *Effective party assistance: Stronger parties for better democracies. Policy paper*. Stockholm: IDEA International. http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/effective_party_pol_paper_final_lowres.pdf.

² i) Wild, Leni, Marta Foresti, and Pilar Domingo. 2011. *International assistance to political party and party system development*. London: Overseas Development Institute. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6869.pdf>. ii) Svåsand, Lars. 2014. *International party assistance – What do we know about the effects?* Stockholm: EBA Expert Group for Aid Studies. Accessed 25 July 2019. <https://eba.se/en/rapporter/international-party-assistance-what-do-we-know-about-the-effects/1830/>. iii) Catón 2007.

formalities, structures of power co-optation, clientelism, corruption, exclusion and sectarianism persist; illiberal and authoritarian forces remain strong.³

International development cooperation has long engaged in strengthening young democracies and their party systems through international party assistance (IPA). It can be defined as:

“The organisational effort [by international development cooperation] to support democratic political parties, to promote a peaceful interaction between parties, and to strengthen the democratic political and legal environment for political parties.”⁴

IPA efforts date back to the 1960s and underwent little change until the mid-2010s when diversified modes of interventions, strategies and donor stakeholders arose.⁵ The most common IPA intervention mode remains capacity development (CD) in the shape of training, academic and non-academic courses and exchange visits for party members.⁶ These programmes increasingly seek to involve civil society organisations to enable the development of political leadership from outside the established elites, and they aim to strengthen the participation of underrepresented groups such as youth and women.⁷

Developing the democratic capacities of young party members is a focal point of IPA. The expectation behind it is that trained members will assume party

³ Pepinsky, Thomas. 2017. *Democracy isn't receding in Southeast Asia, authoritarianism is enduring*. 4 November. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2017/11/04/democracy-isnt-receding-in-southeast-asia-authoritarianism-is-enduring/>.

⁴ Burnell and Gerrits 2010 in Svåsand 2014.

⁵ The first phase was dominated by German political foundations and US American political institutes affiliated with both countries' leading parties. The most relevant German foundations providing IPA are the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. See Carothers, Thomas. 2014. "Principles for political party assistance." In *Accountability and democratic governance: Orientations and principles for development*, by OECD, 85-96. Paris: OECD. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264183636-en>.

⁶ Direct IPA also includes other modes such as providing advisory, consultants, political polls (see Carothers 2014) and financial or in-kind grants (see Catón 2007). Indirect support involves indirect or pooled funding to multi-party or multi-stakeholder dialogues and brokering or negotiation (see Wild, Foresti and Domingo 2011).

⁷ Carothers 2014.

leadership positions after the generational change and that they will exert a more democratic leadership, thereby bringing about change in their parties.⁸

Despite its long history, IPA continues to face important challenges. As with all interventions for consolidating democracy, the effectiveness of IPA is limited in the face of local structural and circumstantial factors and dynamics which lie beyond its influence.⁹ Additionally, the field of IPA lacks a systematic methodological framework of what it can achieve and how to do so.¹⁰ There is scarce empirical evidence on IPA's transformative effects on political parties; little progress in party development has been found, and even when there is, the causal attribution across existing evaluations is weak.¹¹ IPA evaluations also display inconsistencies in what outcomes they assess and the availability of project data, and results measurement is often restricted to output level, e.g., number of events held, number of trained politicians, etc.¹²

Even less attention has been paid to empirically gauging the transformative effects of CD. IPA's theorised impacts often hinge on the success of CD programmes in achieving outcomes on the individual level, that is, enhancing party members' knowledge and skills. These are then expected to expand from individuals to their organisations through procedures and knowledge management.¹³ But there is little empirical evidence confirming the first link in this results chain – the effectiveness

⁸ Svåsand 2014. Youth-oriented CD programmes are now implemented by numerous donors, prominent examples are the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)'s regional Fora of Young Politicians, the Programme for Young Politicians in Africa (PYPA), implemented jointly by four Swedish party-affiliated organisations and local partners, and the Young Leaders Programme in South Africa, implemented by the South African Democratic Alliance affiliated with the British Liberal Democratic Party and supported by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. In Asia, the largest multi-party programme is the Konrad Adenauer School for Young Politicians (KASYP) followed by the Political Management Training for Young Progressives, implemented jointly by German, Swedish and Asian member parties of the Progressive Alliance.

⁹ Stern, Elliot, Nicoletta Stame, John Mayne, Kim Forss, Rick Davies, and Barbara Befani. 2012. Broadening the range of designs and methods for impact evaluations. Working Paper 38, London: DFID. <https://www.oecd.org/derec/50399683.pdf>.

¹⁰ Catón 2007.

¹¹ Carothers 2014.

¹² i) Svåsand 2014. ii) Wild, Foresti and Domingo 2011.

¹³ Vallejo, Bertha, and Uta Wehn. 2016. "Capacity Development Evaluation: The Challenge of the Results Agenda and Measuring Return on Investment in the Global South." *World Development* 79: 1–13. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.10.044>.

of CD in enhancing knowledge and skills for democracy and party consolidation. Without evaluating these learning outcomes, CD will remain a black box in IPA.

This article, therefore, aims to contribute to building an empirical basis for understanding how CD delivers results for IPA. It seeks to provide answers to the questions: to what extent do CD programmes enhance knowledge and skills for democratic party performance among individuals and what are the contributing factors? To this end, it proposes an analytic framework for understanding and assessing the effectiveness of CD. It then reports findings obtained from evaluating the KASYP programme with this framework.

UNDERSTANDING AND EVALUATING CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR IPA

CD for IPA aims to enhance parties' and members' knowledge and skills for democratic performance and successful party operations (programme development, recruiting, campaigning, etc.).¹⁴ But there are multiple challenges in evaluating the achievement of this objective. First, evaluations of CD face the same difficulties regarding causal attribution as with all IPA interventions. There is growing acknowledgement that in IPA, a given cause is not exclusively responsible for a given impact but only contributes to it.¹⁵ This is even more so for CD because of the intangible nature of capacities and the complex processes by which individuals and organisations develop them.¹⁶ Completing a CD programme does not guarantee that individuals have enhanced their capacities because CD is not simply the delivery of information. Rather, it is a

“process through which individuals, groups, organisations, institutions, and societies increase their abilities to: (i) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (ii) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner.”¹⁷

In sum, the outcomes of CD on individuals comprise changes in how they think and act.¹⁸ This article thus conceptualises results from CD programmes not as output but as outcomes on the level of individuals. It further disaggregates them into

¹⁴ Wild, Foresti and Domingo 2011.

¹⁵ i) Carothers 2014. ii) Stern, et al. 2012.

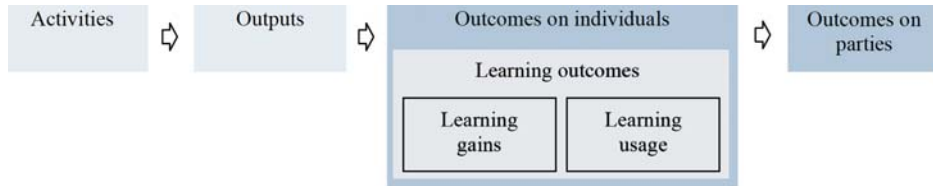
¹⁶ Vallejo and Wehn 2016.

¹⁷ Vallejo and Wehn 2016.

¹⁸ Vallejo and Wehn 2016.

gains in knowledge and skills (learning gains) and the behavioural change which consists of applying this learning (learning usage).

Figure 1. Simplified results chain of capacity development for IPA.



Source: Author's own.

Even when a CD programme has in-built learning assessments (which few programmes seem to have¹⁹), this data should not stand for outputs but should be analysed towards understanding what changes occurred in individuals' learning and how these changes came about. Otherwise, CD evaluations fail to address the black box of how trained individuals learn, and without that, they cannot provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CD.

There are multiple approaches for evaluating the outcomes of CD programmes. In the context of the results agenda in development cooperation, much preference has been placed on experimental or semi-experimental designs based on a counterfactual comparison. However, these are often unfeasible for CD in IPA because of the political sensitivity of the interventions.²⁰ Instead, approaches such as Contribution Analysis (CA) are more apt as they shine a light on the causal mechanisms, the combination of causal and contextual factors, and underlying

¹⁹ NIMD's evaluations do not specify if and how learning from its CD programmes is assessed on the individual level, see for example Schakel, Lydeke, and Lars Svåsand. 2014. *An evaluation of NIMD's application of direct party assistance*. The Hague: NIMD. <https://nimd.org/evaluation/evaluation-report-nimds-direct-party-assistance-2/>. PYPAs have yearly learning evaluations conducted by external evaluators. Learning assessment is based on survey data and interviews, with analysis of change conducted against a baseline generated at the start of the programme, see Karlsson, Ann, Elin Ekström, and Monica Johansson. 2016. *Annual evaluation report PYPAs 2015*. Stockholm: KIC. <http://kicsweden.org/en/our-projects/pypa-program-for-young-politicians-in-africa/>.

²⁰ For KASYP, no counterfactual could be constructed due to the political sensitivities of applicants' nominations. Participation in KASYP cannot be randomised because it is programmed to be competitive and applicants are usually nominated by the Foundation's country offices, by parties with which KASYP collaborated, or by alumni. Applications must be formally endorsed by the applicant's political party through a nomination letter from a higher-ranking party official to ensure the party's engagement.

assumptions.²¹ Yet CA does not reflect by itself the specificities of developing the capacities of individuals.

I propose that combining CA with well-established models for evaluating adult learning in fields such as education and health can draw a more complete picture of what learning outcomes for IPA can be delivered by CD programmes, how and for whom. One such model is Kirkpatrick's four-level Training Effectiveness Model (TEM). It was developed in 1959 for evaluating organisational training, mainly in businesses, and today is often adapted and used to evaluate CD programmes for development.²² The model conceptualises effectiveness as a four-level hierarchy, in which one level builds on another and increases effectiveness towards the achievement of organisational goals:

- 1) Reaction: The degree to which participants perceive the training to be favourable, engaging and relevant to their jobs.
- 2) Learning: The degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, confidence and commitment from the training.
- 3) Behaviour: The degree to which participants apply what they learnt from training when they are back on the job.
- 4) Results: The degree to which targeted outcomes, usually on the organisational level, occur as a result of the training and follow-up package.²³

As levels rise, they are more consecutive: while participants can still learn even if their reaction is negative, they cannot change their behaviour if they have not gained knowledge to do so. Combining this model with the analytical approach of

²¹ i) Stern, et al. 2012. ii) Westhorp, Gill. 2014. *Realist impact evaluation. An introduction*. Working and Discussion Papers, London: ODI. <https://www.odi.org/publications/8716-realist-impact-evaluation-introduction>.

²² Carroll-Scott, Amy, Peggy Toy, Roberta Wyn, Jazmin Zane, and Steven Wallace. 2012. "Results From the Data & Democracy Initiative to Enhance Community-Based Organization Data and Research Capacity." *American Journal of Public Health* 102 (7): 1384-1391. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3478024/>. Another frequently used approach is Brinkerhoff's Success Case Method, which informed the interviewee selection of this evaluation. Evaluations with this method were conducted, for example by Olson, Curtis, Marianna Shershneva, and Michelle Horowitz. 2011. "Peering Inside the Clock: Using Success Case Method to Determine How and Why Practice-Based Educational Interventions Succeed." *Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions* 50-59.

²³ Kirkpatrick Partners. 2019. *The Kirkpatrick Model*. 26 June. <https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-Kirkpatrick-Mode>.

CA allows researchers to observe learning gains and usage, as well as contributing and hindering factors.

EVIDENCE ON LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM THE KASYP EVALUATION

KASYP is a CD programme established in 2010 within the scope of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation's IPA mission to "consolidate democracy" by fostering representative and accountable democratic parties in Asia through strengthening young politicians' capacities. By 2019, the programme had trained more than 200 young politicians from 15 Asian countries and 43 political parties. Through four one-week training sessions in four different countries, it delivers modules on party building and electoral campaigning in democratic systems, local governance and German politics, while also training practical skills such as project management.

A preliminary phase of the evaluation reconstructed KASYP's Theory of Change (ToC) in collaboration with programme staff. Based on the outcomes and assumptions specified in the ToC, the evaluation objective was recalibrated into providing empirical evidence on what observable learning outcomes were achieved and what context factors mediate these results. This information would serve the Foundation in improving the effectiveness of its programme and adapting it to young politicians' learning needs. The evaluation applied a combined analytical framework of CA and TEM but limited the research to the first three effectiveness levels because KASYP had neither specified nor monitored targets on the level of political parties. Research proceeded in three steps: 1. Descriptive analysis of KASYP outputs; 2. Identification analysis of KASYP learning outcomes; and 3. Exploratory analysis of contribution mechanisms. To complete step 2, indicators were developed for identifying and qualifying change in alumni's capacities (outcome 1: alumni learnt) and in their behaviour (outcome 2: alumni used learning).

Primary data was collected to complete all three steps. No method for assessing learning is ideal; quizzes, reports, interviews or observations all have advantages and limitations. Thus, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was used to observe alumni's ability to recall learning contents and their reported usage of these contents. An online survey targeted all KASYP alumni and provided a sample of 73 respondents which reflected the population's diversity. The survey was rolled out in anonymous and non-anonymous forms, the latter because it allowed increasing response rates at a KASYP event. Positive bias from these personal responses, and from non-respondents, was partially addressed by considering incomplete responses and comparing responses from both survey

rollouts. As the indicators for gauging changes in alumni's knowledge and skills were recall-abilities, negative bias could have been introduced by respondents who completed the programme many years ago and whose recall abilities were naturally weakened by time. This was partially addressed by analysing data from seven semi-structured interviews with successful alumni and from focus group discussions using the World Café methodology with 100 participants divided into two clusters.²⁴ Additional information was drawn from document reviews and programme staff provided insights for the early stage of the evaluation.

Because of the high diversity of alumni's backgrounds and the multiple contexts in which KASYP was conducted, the findings and conclusions from the evaluation cannot be generalised to other CD programmes for IPA. However, they provide clues for further studying and understanding the potential and challenges of IPA youth CD programmes in Asian democracies.

Learning gains – What alumni learnt

On the first effectiveness level, Reaction, KASYP was found to be effective as its alumni were satisfied with the programme and considered it relevant. On the second level, Learning, the research interest lay in finding evidence of learning gains related to the following targeted capacities, which were anchored in the KASYP curriculum:

- Democratic knowledge: role and functioning of political parties in democracies, good governance, local governance, local sustainable development, electoral campaigning and (new) media, the political system of Germany.
- Political hard and soft skills: project design and management, campaigning, communication, intercultural competency.

Findings were mixed. On the one hand, recall among surveyed and interviewed alumni was found to be common and detailed on the topic of electoral campaigning. Responses not only highlighted specific issues such as campaign strategy and messaging, but also reflected on tools, cases and specific lessons such as “know the pulse of voters and hit them right there”. Less frequent but likewise detailed recall was found on project design and management skills. The logical framework (logframe) was mentioned most prominently in the survey answers and in the interviews while other tools, such as SWOT analysis, were also recalled. Multiple

²⁴ Special thanks to the KASPDA team for shouldering the main workload of the interviews and group discussions in Penang.

responses highlighted lessons about using and adapting planning and management tools to personal contexts. Additionally, the interviews also suggest that alumni developed unintended learning gains: awareness and information on Asian current affairs.

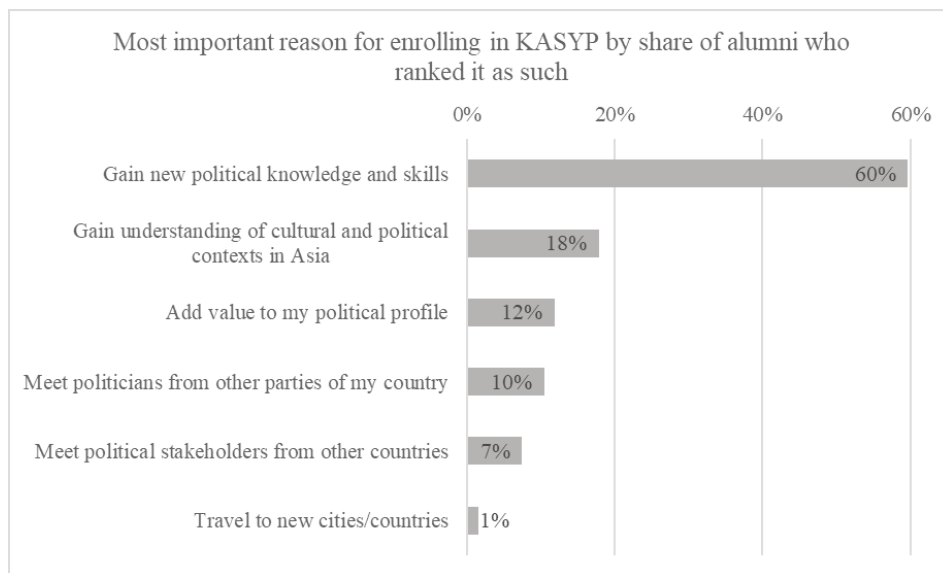
On the other hand, only weak evidence was found of alumni gaining knowledge on the role of political parties and the liberal democratic system. The quantitative and qualitative data contained high amounts of namedropping – recall by name only. Most frequently mentioned were the words “party functions” and the fact that parties are important to democracy, without further specifying the functions nor why parties matter. Only one interviewee engaged with the topic by describing his country’s democratic transition scenario. Beyond this case, interviews added no further evidence of learning beyond names. Notably, two interviews and the group discussions included remarks on these topics, which raises the question of whether values of democracy were left open for interpretation. For example, one interviewee used the diversity of country-specific contexts to relativise democratic principles such as non-discrimination and human rights.

It is noteworthy that despite the limited learning gains on democracy and party functions, alumni expressed a strong demand for knowledge and skills to address new challenges to democracy. In the group discussions, the most frequently mentioned topics were issues of press freedom and interest in learning how to address digital misinformation and fake news.

Regarding soft skills, recall is not an adequate indicator and behavioural observation was not possible. Instead, survey responses and personal reflections were analysed. These suggest that most alumni increased their self-confidence and their appreciation for diversity; 62 per cent of survey respondents also fully agreed with the statement that through KASYP they had grown more tolerant of worldviews different from their own.

Contextual factors on the demand and supply side of training were then explored to find possible explanations for the variations in learning outcomes. On the demand side, a key assumption in the KASYP ToC is that participants have the willingness to learn. This was confirmed through a proxy, as 60 per cent of respondents ranked the gaining of new political knowledge and skills as their most important reason for enrolling in the programme.

Figure 2. Alumni primary reason for enrolment.



Source: Author's own, data from online survey, both rollouts.

Yet, the difference in learning gains by topics suggests that alumni had preferences on what they were willing to learn. Among survey respondents who were members of political parties, 84 per cent participated in electoral campaigns, more than in any other party activity. These experiences are likely to have enabled learning gains in campaigning skills. Knowledge and skill interests were also contingent on alumni's party positions – while most alumni were involved in party work, some had responsibilities in government when they participated in the programme, either as members of the executive or the legislative branch. Interviewees with government positions displayed high appreciation for project management skills and lessons from local governance experiences in Germany and Asia.

On the supply side, learning was driven by an environment perceived to be conducive and effective, with much learning occurring through peer-to-peer exchange among cohort members during and after the programme. KASYP features a hands-on component, the political project, intended to serve as an opportunity for participants to practise. Indeed, 86 per cent of survey respondents found it “much” and “very much” useful for practising project management skills. The experiential dimension of learning matters and it may be one of the factors limiting learning gains on the topics of political parties and democracy. As these largely comprise theoretical knowledge, building and retaining it is difficult. More so if contents are difficult to relate to alumni's country realities, as multiple respondents noted.

Learning usage – What alumni used

The third training effectiveness level refers to whether alumni used what they learnt in KASYP, what learnings specifically they applied in their political parties, and in which situations. The empirical evidence to assess this effectiveness level is limited to alumni declaring such usage in the survey and the interviews. Alumni's reports could have been biased towards projecting a proactive image of themselves; thus, responses were read carefully and probed when possible. KASYP's training effectiveness on this level was low.

Among respondents to the anonymous and personal survey rollouts, 76 per cent and 88 per cent respectively declared that they used the gained knowledge and skills, mostly campaigning and project management skills. Concrete and detailed examples of such usage would have served as strong indicators of effectiveness on this level, but only one verifiable example was found in the interviews – one alumnus described how he used his KASYP learning for opinion polling and manifesto drafting. The survey responses contained 11 brief examples, but because no probing was possible, they counted as weak evidence.

Table 1. Selected examples of KASYP learning usage.

Topics/skills	Anonymous rollout	Personal rollout
Campaigning	I am a Member of [...]. Currently we are doing research for the 2020 Election in Myanmar. In our research, I am using the things learnt from KASYP, especially from Electoral Campaign Lecture. [...] Our findings and recommendations are reported to [...] to support its decision-making for preparation of the 2020 Election.	I am currently working on a campaign plan for the next year's election, and the campaign planning sessions have been a great resource.

Source: Author's own, data from online survey, both rollouts.

Nevertheless, 85 per cent of survey respondents and all interviewees reported that they used their learning indirectly by passing it on to other beneficiaries in their parties, often through self-organised training events.

The key contextual factor influencing alumni's usage was their party environment. Survey responses and interviews indicate that alumni with close links to the party elite, and in parties where KASYP had a good reputation, enjoyed more resources and opportunities to use their KASYP learning during and after the programme. Alumni in opposite environments struggled to apply and share their KASYP learning in their parties, i.e., due to party bureaucracy. Additionally, interviewees reported that party support was more easily given to their projects and

initiatives in the context of elections and when these initiatives served election purposes.

Lastly, alumni cannot carry their learning into the parties if they are not party members. Among survey respondents, party membership after graduation declined from 92 per cent to 77 per cent, while none of the alumni from academia and civil society joined a party after completing the programme. This constitutes a risk to the sustainability of KASYP's training effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of CD in developing knowledge and skills for democracy and party consolidation is the initial but understudied link in the results chains of IPA. It is still a black box in our understanding of how CD delivers results for IPA. The KASYP evaluation peered into this black box by providing empirical evidence on the programme's learning outcomes in young Asian politicians and on the factors that enabled or hindered these.

Applying a combined analytical framework of Contribution Analysis and Kirkpatrick's Training Effectiveness Model, the evaluation found that KASYP was effective in driving learning gains on electoral campaigning, project design and management skills and current affairs. These gains were enabled by alumni's learning preferences, which in turn were shaped by their party work experience and their responsibilities tied to their party positions. CD programming for IPA should hence be tailored to young politician's learning needs related to their actual party work. By harmonising targeted capacities, curriculum contents and the participant selection process, CD programmes can build on a participant's existing knowledge and interest to increase its effectiveness on learning gains.

The evaluation found only weak evidence of learning gains in the core topic of CD for IPA: knowledge on the role of political parties and the liberal democratic system. If young politicians cannot relate them to their country realities, they struggle to comprehend their meaning and how to implement them. To embed democratic learning contents into participants' contexts, they can be delivered around democratic challenges of concern to participants, such as press freedom and fake news. In doing so, programmes can allow for critical reflection and simultaneously build understanding about the quality of democracy. If CD is to have effectiveness for IPA, trained young politicians need to gain a solid analytical and value-based foundation on party functions and democracy.

Furthermore, the experiential dimension of learning matters. Given the theoretical nature of these topics, CD programmes can focus their didactical approaches

on practical and creative methodologies. As the evaluation showed, peer-to-peer exchange is also an important vehicle for learning gains and can be levered not only to increase them but also to sustain them over time.

KASYP's effectiveness regarding alumni's usage of their new learning was found to be low. An influential factor on this is alumni's political capital and their party environment, which can enable or hinder usage. CD programmes can address this by engaging closer with parties and strengthening programme reputation. Furthermore, strong evidence was found for indirect usage, where alumni pass their knowledge and skills on to other youths and party members. CD programmes can steer and harness young politicians' potential as democratic multipliers by including Train-the-Trainer approaches in their designs.

Lastly, peering into the black box of CD effectiveness is not enough. Evaluation research and IPA practitioners must lift the lid and assess a CD programme's contributions at the level of political parties. More data from within parties, as well as complementary research methods such as participatory observation, are needed. While party research is sensitive and laborious, it can provide necessary evidence on expected CD outcomes for party consolidation and democracy.

Isabel Urrutia holds a Master's degree in Public Policy from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, and a M.A. in Interdisciplinary Latin American Studies from the Freie Universität Berlin. She has served as independent consultant for the GIZ in Lima, the UNSSC in Bonn and Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Singapore, among others.