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Conceptualizations of “results” in Swedish policy for development cooperation from the 1960s to the 2000s

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Abstract. Over the last few decades there has been an increased focus on results within development cooperation, and there has been an intense debate regarding the possible success or failures of development efforts. However, there is no general agreement on what a development result is, or why and whose development results should be reported. The understanding of what a development result entails has also shifted over time. This article aims to contribute to the current debate on development results by exploring how one donor, Sweden, historically has conceptualized development results in its policies and strategies on development cooperation. A review of all policies and general strategies on Swedish development cooperation published between 1962 and 2013, reveals that there has been a shift in how results are conceptualized: from being a mere instrument for supporting partner countries in pursuing more effective development policies and interventions, reporting of development results has become one of the main strategic tools for pursuing a Swedish development cooperation.

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1. Introduction

The search for results is not a new issue on the international development agenda. Since formal development cooperation commenced in the 1940s, it has been under constant scrutiny; decision-makers and implementers of aid have always required evidence of aid effectiveness and a high level of accountability in their development interventions (Patton, 1994; Forss, Carlsson, 1997; Binnendijk, 2000; Riddell, 2007). Nevertheless, over the last decades the interest in results has increased, accompanied by an intense debate on whether or not development assistance has contributed to, or hindered, development in countries in the Global South (cf. Burnside, Dollar, 2004; Sachs, 2005; Easterly, 2006). This debate could be traced to the lack of a common definition of what development is and how development results should be reported and when; if development should be measured in terms of economic achievements; or if other aspects, such as human rights and democracy, also should be included as indicators of development (Riddell, 2007). Although the academic literature on development is extensive (i.e. Dalgaard, Hansen, 2001; Hjertholm, White, 2002; Burnside, Dollar, 2004; Sachs, 2005), and the academic, as well as political, debate on development results has intensified over recent years (i.e. Big Push Forward, 2015), not much attention has been devoted to how development results are conceptualized by different actors, or how this conceptualization has changed over time (cf. Eyben, 2015). This paper aims to contribute to this debate by revealing how Sweden, as a development actor, is conceptualizing results in its policy documents and guidelines

on development cooperation, and how this conceptualization has shifted over time.

Sweden is one of the donor countries which have a long history of searching for development results through monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of its international development cooperation (Riddell, 2007; OECD/DAC, 2008; CGD, 2011). In the first Government Bill on Swedish development cooperation from 1962, it is stated that the realization and the effects of Swedish development interventions should be carefully monitored (Swedish Government, 1962: 8). Nevertheless, over the last decades the focus on results has increased also within Swedish development cooperation (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2008; Vähämäki, 2015). Whether or not Swedish development assistance has contributed to development in partner countries has also been a subject of the political, as well as public, debate in Sweden. This debate has not only concerned the results of Swedish development cooperation, but also challenges associated with measuring development results (i.e. Bistandsdebatten, 2015).

By taking Swedish policy on development cooperation as an example, this article aims to contribute to the academic as well as political debate on development and development results by revealing how a donor has been conceptualizing results in its policies and strategies on development cooperation, including how and why conceptualizations (1)? of results have changed over time. In order to capture these changes, a review of policy and strategy documents has been conducted, which explores changes in how results have been described, as well as why and whose development results have been asked for.

2. Research approach, materials and methods

To reveal changes in conceptualizations of results in Swedish policy on international development cooperation, this study reviews policy and strategy documents on Swedish development cooperation, published between 1962 and 2013 (i.e. from when the first Swedish Government Bill on development cooperation was passed in 1962, until the latest guidelines on development cooperation strategies was published in 2013). The analytical approach applied in this study is inspired by theories of frame analysis which explore how actors understand and attach meaning to an issue by revealing the problems at stake; how these problems are addressed, and how actions taken to address the problems are motivated (cf. Fisher, 1997; Benford, Snow, 2000). The article commences with a short description of how results are, and have been, approached in the context of international development cooperation, followed by an introduction to Swedish development cooperation and how it has evolved since the 1960s. These first two sections not only outline the context which has formed the conceptualization of results in Swedish development cooperation, they also provide insights into why development results have been asked for. Thereafter, an analysis of the reviewed documents is presented seeking to answer the interrelated questions of how results have been conceptualized and why, including how the demand for results has been motivated in the policies and strategies on Swedish development cooperation. The issue of partner country ownership in development cooperation has been emphasized as a key aspect for conducting effective and sustainable cooperation (OECD/DAC, 2008) and it has also been emphasized in Sweden (Wohlgemuth, 1976; Danielson, Wohlgemuth, 2005). Therefore, the document review also explores whose results have been asked for, for instance, whose development objectives the results should be measured against.

This study focuses on how results have been conceptualized in policy and strategy documents, as these documents both reflect, and set the frames for, how stakeholders within Swedish development cooperation approach results. However, the study does not include the impact these conceptualiza-

tions have had on the development cooperation. The review includes analyses of all Government Bills passed by the Swedish Parliament between 1962 and 2013 (in total seven documents) and guidelines for development cooperation and cooperation strategies (three documents); and of all working manuals (in total nine documents) and evaluation guidelines and strategies (in total six documents) published by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (2) during the same time period (see Figure 1 for a List of Analyzed Documents).

The document review begins with a systematic analysis covering various aspects related to how, why and whose results have been asked for. All documents were thoroughly reviewed and different themes and topics were covered, such as definitions of results and results and ownership (3) (e.g. Bowen, 2009). Swedish policy on development cooperation makes an interesting example as the emphasis on development results has increased over the last decade, although M&E and development results always have had a prominent role in Swedish development cooperation. The Swedish case might not be typical, but it highlights the challenges in reporting on results and the changes in conceptualizations of development results that have taken place over the last fifty years of development cooperation.

3. Setting the scene: development cooperation and results

3.1. International development cooperation and results

Current international development cooperation rests on several international agreements, signed by both donors and partner countries, on *what* (4) international development cooperation should achieve, as well as on *how* (5) development cooperation should be carried out reach these goals. In different ways, all these agreements relate to why, how, and whose, results are to be achieved and reported (i.e. UN, 2000; OECD/DAC, 2008). However, there are contradictions between these agreements and, in addition, actors are interpreting the agreements differently while they are applied differently depending on the context. Consequently, there is no shared un-

Government Bills concerning development cooperation

- 1962 Government Bill 1962:100
 1968 Government Bill 1968:101
 1978 Government Bill 1977/78:135 – concerning guidelines for international development cooperation etc.
 1988 Government Bill 1987/88:100
 1993 Government Bill 1992/93:244
 1996 Government Bill 1995/96:153
 2003 Government Bill 2002/03:122 Shared responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development (covers all policy areas)

Government guidelines for development cooperation and results strategies

- 2005 Riktlinjer för samarbetsstrategier [Guidelines for cooperation strategies]
 2010 Riktlinjer för samarbetsstrategier – allmänna riktlinjer [Guidelines for cooperation strategies – general guidelines]
 2013 Riktlinjer för resultatstrategier inom Sveriges internationella bistånd [Guidelines for results strategies in the Swedish development cooperation]

Manuals for development cooperation

- 1972 SIDA: Metodhandbok del 1: Insatsberedning – från idé till avtal [Handbook part 1: Preparation of interventions – from idea to agreement]
 1973 SIDA: Metodhandbok del 2: Insatsförvaltning. Från avtal till samarbetets slut [Handbook part 2: Management of interventions: from agreement to the end of the cooperation]
 1985 SIDA: Metodhandboken. Metoder för beredning, genomförande och utvärdering av biståndsinsatser [Handbook. Methods for preparation, implementation and evaluations of aid interventions]
 1990 SIDA: Handbok för SIDA. METOD handbok 90 [Handbook for SIDA. METHODS handbook 90]
 1997 Sida: Så arbetar Sida. Sidas metoder i utvecklingsarbetet [Sida at work. Sida's methods for the development cooperation]
 2005 Sida: Sida at work: Manual for Sida's contribution management process
 2005 Sida: Sida at work: a guide to principles, procedures and working methods
 2006 Sida's direction plan: where we are, where we are going.
 2012 Sida at work. Manual for Sida's contribution management processes

Sida Guidelines for results measurements (M&E)

- 1971 SIDA: Resultatvärdering – ett programförslag [SIDA Results Valuation – a program proposal]
 1974 SIDA: Program för SIDA:s verksamhet på resultatvärderingsområdet [SIDA Program for SIDA's activities within the area of resultsvaluation]
 1976 SIDA: Resultatvärdering – några råd och anvisningar [SIDA Results Valuation – some advices and instructions]
 1994 SIDA: Evaluation manual for SIDA
 1997 Sida: Sida's evaluation policy
 2007 Sida: Looking back, moving forward. Sida evaluation manual.

Fig. 1. List of analyzed documents

Source: Author's compilation

derstanding of what kinds of results should be reported or why (cf. Eyben, 2015).

The demand for development results has historically been motivated by accountability and learning, i.e. to generate information for reporting on accountability and to improve management and decision-making by learning from achievements and mistakes made in previous development interventions (Binnendijk, 2000; Riddell, 2007; Vähämäki, Schmidt, Molander, 2011). In the 1980s, neoliberal trends came to dominate much of the world politics and the, so-called, New Public Management (NPM) approach appeared as a response to the classic way of providing public service. Previously, the public service sector had been dominated by rather cumbersome and self-sustaining bureaucracy and where, for instance, control was exercised on inputs and resources, and where less attention was paid to the outputs and outcomes of policies and interventions. The NPM implied a movement away from passive administration to active management where clear lines for accountability; explicit standards; and with clear goals against which performance should be assessed. In addition, the NPM implied a greater emphasis on output control, rather than on activities (Pidd, 2012). In line with the NPM, the Results Based Management (RBM) approach became a dominating instrument for managing policy implementation, where focus is on the achievements of results, as well as management of policies and interventions. The RBM emphasizes the importance of defining expected results in the design of policy implementation, and interventions are also designed to achieve these results through the fulfillment of predetermined indicators (Hatton, Schroeder, 2007). One of the key features of RBM is a results chain (illustrated in Figure 2), where focus is on results at outcome or impact levels, rather than on inputs and activities. The RBM is considered “a fundamental re-orientation away from previous management approaches that were dominated by an emphasis on inputs and activities” (Hatton, Schroeder, 2007). These general trends in world politics have also come to dominate international development cooperation, and in the 1990s the RBM approach became one of the main instruments for planning and reporting on development interventions (Binnendijk, 2000; Vähämäki et al., 2011).

In the 1990s another change is argued to have taken place within international development coop-

eration: the previous focus on *development administration* was replaced by *development management*. The development administration phase (which had its origins in the modernization approaches, dominating the development cooperation in the post-World War Two era) focused on the implementation of development cooperation, often involving capacity building to enable social and economic development. The development management approach, on the other hand, focuses on how development (most effectively) is achieved. However, as there is no common definition of (effective) development, there are different understandings of how development should be managed where values and power relations are argued to have come to play a major role in the approaches to development cooperation. It is further argued that over the years the boundaries between development and management has become more blurred and that focus now is on management of development cooperation, rather than on managing for development (e.g. Dar, Cooke, 2008). The search for results could be a product of this, so called, New Development Management, as well as an instrument in the implementation of the same. Although accountability and learning remain two of the main motives in the search for results, other, sometimes concealed, reasons have thus been added; the demand for results is also used as an instrument for managing development cooperation and to facilitate implementation and liability (cf. Barder, 2012; Eyben, 2015).

Despite disagreements on what development is, and how to measure development results, there is a widely accepted and recognized definition of development results provided by the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation’s Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) which states that results are the “outputs, outcomes and impacts (intended or unintended, positive and/or negative) of a development intervention” (OECD/DAC, 2002: 33). OECD/DAC has thus embraced the RBM approach and is specifying results at different levels as illustrated in Figure 2.

Although the OECD/DAC is providing definitions of results, these definitions do not describe why, or how, development results should be measured; they merely provide descriptions which set the frames for how development actors should approach results (cf. Eyben, 2015).

Project cycle

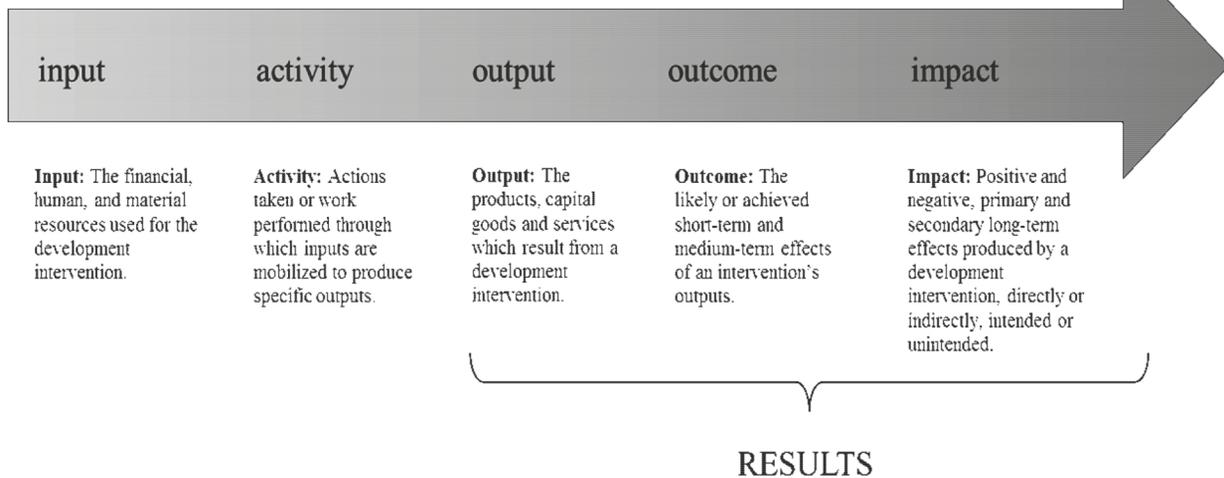


Fig. 2. The RBM results chain

Source: Author inspired by OECD/DAC 2002a

3.2. Swedish policies and results

RBM is not only issue in Swedish policy on development cooperation; since the late 1980s all policy areas in Sweden should be guided by RBM. In the early 2000s the Swedish Government, established a number of monitoring and evaluation agencies, to enforce the implementation of an RBM approach. The main purpose with these agencies was to increase the search for results in specific policy areas. International development cooperation was one of these areas, for which SADEV was established (later replaced by the Expert Group for Aid Studies). Other policy areas for which similar agencies were established were health care and education (Statkontoret, 2011b). These are areas with larger budgets and major impacts on the Swedish society and therefore need to be closely monitored and evaluated. Although the Swedish aid budget makes up for a comparatively small part of the overall budget (6), M&E of international development cooperation is considered to be of specific importance. One reason for this priority is that development cooperation involves spending Swedish taxpayers' money in overseas, with limited control over how the money is invested (Expertgruppen för biståndsanalys, 2015). Results from development cooperation are also more difficult to trace as they have to be

sought for abroad. In addition, development cooperation often is carried out in environments with a high incidence of corruption, therefore requiring more monitoring than many other areas (e.g. Riddell, 2007; Morra-Imas, Rist, 2009).

The Swedish general public is rather positive to international development cooperation. However, the aid opinion is often shifting with (perceived) socio-economic changes. Consequently, after the global economic crisis in 2008 there was a decline in interest for spending public funding on international development cooperation (Abrahamson, Ekengren, 2010). The political debate on development cooperation was also rather intense in Sweden during this period, and it was disputed if Swedish development efforts had actually contributed to development results (e.g. Vähämäki, 2015), which also contributed to an increased demand for results.

4. An introduction to Swedish development cooperation

4.1. Sweden as a donor

The first Swedish Government Bill on international development cooperation was passed in 1962 with the main objective of improving living standards for the poorest people (Swedish Government, 1962: 7).

With only minor modifications in its formulation, this overarching objective has remained the same ever since (Odén, Wohlgemuth, 2012). Sweden has a reputation for being a donor that does not attempt to use aid to promote Swedish interests, and which listens to partner countries' requests. Swedish development cooperation has also been characterized by large shares of ODA and by a limited tying of aid where poverty reduction is the main issue without other explicit objectives (Degnbol-Martinussen, Engberg-Pedersen, 2003; Danielsson, Wohlgemuth, 2005; Engh, 2009; Engh, Pharo, 2009; see also OECD, 2015: 274). For instance, Sweden was the first donor country to reach the target of spending 0,7 of its Gross National Product (GNP) on ODA in 1974 (OECD/DAC, 2002b), and in 2014 it was one out of only four countries (the others were Denmark, Norway and Luxembourg) that reached this target (OECD/DAC, 2016). Although Sweden, in terms of the relative size of its ODA, is a small donor, it has often been very pro-active in discussions on aid effectiveness and ownership (Degnbol-Martinussen, Engberg-Pedersen, 2003; Danielson, Wohlgemuth, 2005). However, the quality and effectiveness of Swedish development cooperation is not undisputed. For instance, in OECD/DAC peer reviews, Swedish aid has been criticized for lacking a focus in its overarching development objective, for being active in too many partner countries and also for having too many policies and guidelines on how the development cooperation should be implemented (OECD/DAC, 2005). Swedish business concerns have also influenced the development cooperation. For instance, in Swedish development cooperation with South Africa, the purchase of Swedish military aircrafts could have played a significant role in the development relations between the two countries (cf. Swedish Government, 2009b).

4.2. Main trends in Swedish policy on development cooperation

Although the overarching objective in Swedish policies on development cooperation has not undergone any significant change since the 1960s, approaches to development, including focus areas and aid modalities, have shifted over time. In the early 1960s, the policy was strongly influenced by moderniza-

tion theories where economic growth was considered the key issue, among other things promoted through capacity building and modernization of production equipment with a strong focus on external markets. As economic development did not occur as expected, another approach to development emerged in the end of the 1960s where underdevelopment in poorer countries was seen a consequence of the development in industrialized countries. Economic growth was still considered a driving force in the Swedish development cooperation, but instead of focusing on external markets, protection of domestic markets in developing countries was emphasized. From the mid-1970s, much of the development debate in Sweden was related to basic need approaches, which partly replaced the focus on economic growth with concerns about equality and independence where participation and bottom-up approaches were seen as the main instruments for promoting development amongst the poorest men and women (Frühling, 1986; Danielsson, Wohlgemuth, 2005; Odén, 2006; Odén, Wohlgemuth, 2012).

The 1980s are, by many development actors, considered a lost decade; debt crisis and the following Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) deteriorated the situation for many of the poor men and women in developing countries. Sweden had not previously been engaged in macroeconomic stabilization, but in line with the emerging neoliberal approaches in world politics in the early 1980s, it now appeared on the Swedish development agenda which was also dominated by the SAPs. After a strong focus on reforms and economic structures during the 1980s, attention shifted towards political and social aspects in the early 1990s and, as in many other donor countries, institutionalism and policy dialogue with partner countries became prioritized issues on the Swedish development agenda (Carlsson, 1998). Even though partner country ownership, in different ways, always had been emphasized in the Swedish development cooperation, it now became even more accentuated (Wohlgemuth, 1976; Carlsson, 1998).

In 2003, the Swedish Government passed the bill "Shared Responsibility: Sweden's Policy for Global Development" (Swedish Government, 2003), popularly called the PGD. With this bill Sweden became the first donor country to adopt an overarching

Government policy which, in line with agreements on policy coherence in development cooperation, integrated development cooperation in all policy areas. Albeit the adoption of the PGD was encouraged by the international donor community (OECD/DAC, 2005) its results have been disputed and the OECD/DAC has repeatedly criticized Sweden for not evaluating its implementation (OECD/DAC, 2005, 2009). During the 2000s, a number of policies and guidelines were adopted by the Swedish Government and by Sida, with a wide range of goals and strategies stating how Swedish development cooperation should be pursued (7). The OECD/DAC has also criticized Sweden a pursuing a development cooperation with a “complex array of policies and themes” (OECD/DAC, 2009: 25) and for being involved in too many partner countries and in too many sectors (OECD/DAC, 2005). Partly as a result of this critique, a new policy structure was adopted in 2009–10 replacing the old policies and strategies with nine thematic policies (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2008). In addition, in 2007 a process was initiated to reduce the number of Swedish partner countries; from 125 to 30 and in which Sweden should be involved in no more than three sectors (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007).

4.3. Monitoring and evaluation in Swedish development cooperation

The necessity of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has constantly been stressed, both by decision makers and implementers of Swedish development cooperation and M&E has always been considered an essential instrument in maintaining and improving the quality of Swedish aid, as well as in increasing the effectiveness of the delivery mechanisms (DAC, 1986, 1988; OECD/DAC, 2009).

An in-house evaluation unit was established at SIDA in the early 1970s and the first SIDA evaluation manual was published in 1971 (SIDA, 1971). In addition to Sida’s in-house evaluation unit, a number of Government institutions have been in place with the purpose of monitoring and evaluating the results of Swedish development cooperation. In the early 1990s the Secretariat for Analysis of Swedish Development Assistance (SASDA) was set up by the

Swedish Government with the mandate to analyze the results and effectiveness of the Swedish development cooperation. When SASDA’s final report was published in 1994 one of the main lessons learnt was that Sweden needs to be more demanding and explicit in what it wants from development partners in terms of quality and effectiveness in to make the development cooperation more effective (DAC, 1996). In 2006, the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV) was established as an independent evaluation agency with the mandate to evaluate all Swedish development cooperation (OECD/DAC, 2009) (8). The purpose of SADEV was to enhance the effectiveness of Swedish development cooperation by providing Swedish policy makers, and other stakeholders, with evaluations of international development cooperation (Statskontoret, 2011a). Establishing an independent agency for evaluating the MFA and Sida could be seen as indirect critique of previous M&E systems in Swedish development cooperation (e.g. Statskontoret, 2011b) and similar approaches to evaluation of development cooperation were later adopted by German and UK (e.g. DEval, 2016; ICAI, 2016). However, after criticism of the quality of evaluations produced by the agency (Statskontoret, 2012) the Government decided to close down SADEV by the end of 2012. With the intention of filling the gap after the closure of SADEV, an Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA) was established in 2013. EBA is a committee consisting of a group of evaluation and development experts assigned by the Government to commission, execute and communicate evaluations, analyses and studies on the implementation and effectiveness of Swedish international development cooperation (EBA, 2015). Even though there is a tradition of evaluating and monitoring Swedish development cooperation, the OECD/DAC has been criticizing Sweden for a lack of results orientation and it has also encouraged Sweden to enhance the development of qualitative and quantitative indicators (OECD/DAC, 2005). The emphasis on results orientation has increased during the 2000s and in 2007 the Swedish Government made results based management (RBM) a top priority, and there is a strong emphasis on RBM in the Swedish parliament. However, it is pointed out in the DAC peer review 2009 that “few [Sida] staff were clear on what results based management really means in practice” (OECD/DAC, 2009: 59).

5. Conceptualization of results in Swedish policy and strategy documents

5.1. From results valuations to result strategies

The need for follow-up, evaluation and assessment of international development cooperation to increase its efficiency was recognized already in Government Bill 1962:100, underlining that improved development cooperation creates mutual benefits for both donor and partner countries (Swedish Government, 1962: 8). In the 1960s and 1970s the planning phase was emphasized for making development cooperation more effective; the idea was that well-planned and well-designed development interventions would lead to improved development results (Swedish Government, 1962). During this time period the term *result valuation* was the main concept used in relation to the search for results (“resultatvärdering” in Swedish). A result valuation is described as a process that continues throughout the implementation and the finalization of a development intervention. A result valuation is described as including M&E and impact assessments of interventions (Bergman, SIDA, 1976; SIDA, 1971, 1972, 1974; Swedish Government, 2008). However, it is the activity phase and the “experiences” of development cooperation that are of main concern in the policy documents (Swedish Government, 1962, 1968), rather than results at an outcome or impact level.

In line with the prevailing neoliberal trends, the focus on development efficiency increased during the 1980s, i.e. that the development outcomes should be weighed against the cost of the intervention. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) exercises were now described as main instruments for capturing development results and the term *results valuations* is no longer applied. M&E is used as one concept for measuring results, where the differences between monitoring and evaluation are described as unclear. Evaluations are, however, considered to include a deeper and broader analysis of development results. Monitoring exercises are, on the other hand, described as more time bound and more often used with the intent to assess whether or not interventions are implemented as planned, or

as a means to control the allocation of resources (SIDA, 1985).

The RBM approach became the main strategy for managing Swedish development cooperation in the 1990s, and thus also the main driving force behind the search for results (SIDA, Suneson, 1990). The main intent with the RBM approach, was to improve the effectiveness by clarifying the Government’s and the implementing agencies (among them Sida’s) roles and responsibilities in the development cooperation (Swedish Government, 1993). Monitoring and evaluations were still considered main instruments for capturing development results, however towards the end of the 1990s there was a slight change in Sida’s definition of what an evaluation should entail. In 1994 Sida described evaluations as the “systematic assessments of projects and programs, strategies and methods and their results and effects” (Lewin, SIDA, 1994:5), while in 1999 it was described as “a systematic thoroughly ex-post evaluation of the design, implementation and the results of an intervention” (Sida, 1999: 83) stressing that an evaluation can only be done after the finalization of (and not during) an intervention. Evaluations should further consist of a thorough analysis which should include assessments of long term effects with the ambition to determine the relations between the activities and results (Sida, 1999).

During the 2000s, the search for results in Swedish development cooperation has dominated much of the development debate in Sweden, especially during the last ten years. This focus on results has been characterized by a demand for increased transparency, accountability (Swedish Government, 2009a), quality assurance and risk management (Sida, 2005). In 2003, a Policy for Global Development (the PGD) was adopted by the Swedish Parliament. This policy does not only cover international development cooperation, but all policy areas. The PGD, nevertheless, has dominated much of the development cooperation during the 2000s and more than any previous Government Bill, the PGD stresses the importance of reporting on development results with the aim to increase effectiveness and efficiency in Swedish development cooperation (Swedish Government, 2003). The focus on results was further emphasized in 2008 when the Swedish Government introduced a new model for RBM. This new model enforced the focus on RBM and

it also specified how the Government should clarify its management of the development cooperation. It further clarified that Sida is required to inform the Government about results in relation to goals and objectives stated in Swedish policies (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2008). In addition, it should also be noted that the Swedish Government in its Budget Bill for 2013 stressed the importance of reporting on development results as it intends to establish a *results culture* in Swedish development cooperation, implying a previous absence, or perceived absence, of one. Here results are defined to include long and short term performances at outcome and impact levels taking place as a result of a specific contribution, thus enforcing reporting on results which are possible to attribute to Swedish development interventions (Swedish Government, 2012). In 2013, the Swedish Government also adopted new *Guidelines for results strategies in Swedish development cooperation* (Swedish Government, 2013) replacing the former *Guidelines for Cooperation Strategies* (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 2010). The new results strategies fulfill the Government's intent to "control the development cooperation through results based management" (Swedish Government, 2013:2) where all Swedish development interventions should be possible to monitor and evaluate.

5.2. Why and whose development results

In the 1960s and 1970s, mutual trust and accountability between donors and recipients of development assistance were seen as a prerequisite for well-functioning development cooperation, including reporting on development results (Swedish Government, 1962: 8). The partner countries' needs and development plans were the focus of the development cooperation, which were reflected in results requirements as well. For instance, SIDA's results valuation manual from 1971 states that it does not aim to assess the results of Swedish development cooperation as such "because it is not possible and it is not in line with the focus on development countries results" (SIDA, 1971: 3). The intention with Swedish development cooperation was that it should contribute to the partner country's own development plans and efforts. Consequently, results reported by, and

in, the partner country, were considered to be results of Swedish development cooperation. Partner countries were considered responsible for reporting on their own development results, but as M&E capacity was considered low in many partner countries, capacity building within this area was part of SIDA's M&E strategy. In the early 1970s this capacity building was part of the objective with SIDA's results requirement; improving reporting on results, and thus increase the knowledge about what works and what does not, is considered to promote development in partner countries (SIDA, 1971). However, during the 1970s another aspect is added to the objective with reporting on Swedish development cooperation, and that is to inform the Swedish Government about the effects of Swedish development assistance (SIDA, 1974).

At the end of the 1970s, there was a shift in the approach to partner countries, with an increased focus on Swedish development objectives; more emphasis is given to accountability and the importance of informing taxpayers in Sweden about the results of Swedish development cooperation (Swedish Government, 1978). Throughout the 1980s, the former focus on partner countries objectives and participation in M&E continued to diminish. For instance, the low M&E capacity in partner countries was considered a hindrance in relying on their reporting on development results. Investigating the efficiency and the effectiveness of development interventions, were two of the main objectives for reporting during the 1980s, although learning from positive and negative experiences was also stressed as a reason for evaluating the development cooperation. In addition, evaluations were described as potential instruments for managing ongoing development projects; when the expected results were not expected to be delivered, mid-term evaluations could be used for improving the implementation of interventions (SIDA, 1985).

In the 1990s there was a renewed focus on partner countries responsibilities for planning, implementation and reporting on development results. SIDA's manual on development cooperation from 1990, recognizes the lack of focus on partner countries in the previous SIDA manual from 1985 and emphasizes the importance of partner countries engagement in development cooperation "as a prerequisite for the project to generate a sustainable value"

(SIDA, Suneson, 1990). However, in a Bill from 1993 the Swedish Government stress that Swedish development objectives should have a more prominent role in Swedish development cooperation (Swedish Government, 1993). Towards the end of the 1990s, development partners' ownership and participation were still stressed in Sida's manuals and guidelines, but no longer as a main focus. For instance, Sida's evaluation policy from 1999 states that "Sida staff is obliged to, in the relation with the cooperating partners, find a practical and attainable balance between encouraging ownership and practice control" (Sida, 1999: 18). One of the reasons for this increased focus on practice control is Sida's responsibility to report to Swedish state authorities and Swedish taxpayers on how the Swedish development assistance has been invested; that Swedish tax payers money is spent in a satisfactory way (without corruption), and where development activities are efficiently implemented and planned results achieved. Therefore, all activities must be thoroughly reviewed and monitored at least once per year. The intention is that all reports should be analyzed by Sida in such a way that it is obvious for the partner country why and how the report was written and that it is suitable for the partner country (Sida, 1999).

When the Millennium Declaration, with its eight Millennium Development Goals, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2000 (UN, 2000), it became the guiding document for how development results should be approached in sought for, especially when it came to the actual effects on poverty in poor countries (Swedish Government, 2003). Sida describes its use of evaluation as mainly strategic, for the purpose of learning and accountability (Sida, 2005; Molund, Schill, Sida, 2007). The PGD emphasizes the importance of common values, i.e. values shared by Sweden and the partner country and Sweden should only cooperate with countries sharing Swedish development objectives. As the development cooperation should be closely monitored and evaluated the "[n]eeds and the prospects of achieving desired results should determine the extent and forms for development cooperation with individual countries" (Swedish Government, 2003: 61). This is further enforced in Sida's strategy from 2012 which explains that "development intervention's objectives and intended results shall contribute towards the achievement of strategy objectives, or equivalent,

adopted by the Swedish Government" (Sida, 2012: 5). Possibilities for monitoring and evaluating should also be one of the criteria in the selection of partner countries (Swedish Government, 2013).

6. Concluding discussion

With Sweden as its example, this article contributes to the academic and political debate on development cooperation and development results by revealing how a donor has been conceptualizing results in its policies and strategies for development cooperation, and how this conceptualization has changed over time. The increased focus on results could be traced to trends in international development cooperation, as well as general trends in international, and Swedish, policies where NPM approaches, inspired by the more results-driven private sector, have come to play a major role. For instance, since the late 1980s all Swedish policy areas should be guided by an RBM approach and the use of public funds should be closely monitored and evaluated. In addition, the political climate in Sweden, where the results of Swedish development cooperation have been disputed, has contributed to an increased focus on results. There are thus several reasons, both internal and external, why the focus on results has increased within Swedish international development cooperation: international trends are enforcing a general focus on results, and set the framework for how Swedish actors approach international development cooperation, while the Swedish debate mainly shapes how results are conceptualized within Swedish development cooperation.

Although the request for results is not a new issue in Swedish development cooperation, the nature of the requested results has changed and the focus on development effectiveness has increased over time. There has, for instance, been a shift from focusing on planning and activities in development cooperation, to a stronger emphasis on development objectives and reporting on results in terms of development outcomes and impacts. One change is that the number of reasons for why results being asked for has increased – in the 1960s the reasons were to learn from previous mistakes and success

stories and to demonstrate accountability, but over the years other aspects have been added. These aspects are to increase the knowledge about partner countries in Sweden and to increase aid efficiency. However, the main, sometimes concealed, reason is to use results requirements to manage and control the development cooperation. Instead of focusing on management *for* development, Swedish development policy appears to focus on management *of* development cooperation (e.g. Cooke, Dar 2008). This change has taken place over the last decade, and it is accompanied by a stronger emphasis on Swedish development objectives, and ways of attributing results to Swedish development interventions.

The review of documents also reveals that the conceptualization of results has not only shifted over time, but also that different stakeholders within Swedish development cooperation have conceptualized development results differently. Whereas Sida is more focused on partner countries' objectives and reporting of development results, the Swedish Government emphasizes Swedish development objectives. The discussion of the Swedish case from the 1960s to 2000s contributes to the debate on development results by demonstrating that the reporting on results depends, among other things, on what kind of, why and whose results are asked for. This article shows that the conceptualization of results has changed over time, but it is also conceptualized differently by different stakeholder. To argue that Swedish development cooperation has not led to expected results, using the current definition of results could thus be misleading.

Notes

- (1) Conceptualization refers to how a phenomenon, in this case the search for development results, is understood and attached meanings to (cf. Oxford Dictionaries, 2015).
- (2) Sida is the main Government agency implementing Swedish bilateral development cooperation. Until 1995 the agency was called the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), but in relation to a reorganization then the name was changed to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) (Odén, Wohlgemuth, 2012)
- (3) For the systematic analysis an analytical matrix was developed, covering all themes relevant for the review. The matrix also allowed additions to be made when needed.
- (4) International agreements of major importance for how development cooperation is, and has been approached, are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNDP 2012; UN, 2015). The MDGs and the SDGs have been criticized for embracing too broad development objectives and for establishing generic indicators which should measure their fulfilment in very different contexts, with very different prerequisites (see English et al. 2015). However, these agreements are still the main guiding documents regarding what international development cooperation should achieve.
- (5) For example, the Monterey Consensus on Financing Development (UN, 2002) Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (OECD/DAC, 2008), the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) (OECD/DAC, 2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, 2012).
- (6) For instance, 14.2 percent of the GNP was spent on the health sector in 2012 (Socialstyrelsen, 2014), while around one percent of the Swedish GNP has been spent on ODA over the last year (Sida, 2016).
- (7) For instance the PGD specified eight sector-like 'central component elements', replacing previous development objectives (Swedish Government, 2003). These elements were in 2008 translated into six interlinked 'global challenges to development' (Swedish Government, 2008). In addition the Swedish development cooperation should be guided by two perspectives, namely "the perspectives of poor people on development and a rights perspective" (Swedish Government, 2008: 7) while three thematic priorities should permeate all Swedish development interventions, namely environment and climate change; and human rights and democracy (Swedish Government, 2007).

- (8) After SADEV was established by the Swedish Government, several other donors set up similar evaluation units which operate outside the development agencies. For instance, the Independent Commission for Aid Impact was established in the UK (ICAI, 2016).

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