How does Doing Development Differently (DDD) and Problem Driven Iterative Adaption (PDIA) connect to core principles of the MSD approach?

Market systems development (MSD) grew in popularity in response to a perceived failing of development programmes to deliver widespread, sustainable change. Unsurprisingly, MSD practitioners were not the only ones to notice this problem.

Recently there has been a flourishing of experimental approaches to state building, social reform and private sector development. An accepted ‘good practice’ is emerging, such as Doing Development Differently (DDD) and Problem Driven Iterative Adaption (PDIA).

So what can we learn from them? Notwithstanding occasional blog posts and twitter threads, there’s been a surprising lack of integration between various strands of development thinking.

A recent blog by Duncan Green on the “family of approaches” interested in thinking and working politically didn’t even mention MSD. Our hypothesis is that this is because the different approaches are driven by different groups.

MSD is often promoted and used by consulting companies and specialist networks (including, of course, the BEAM Exchange). DDD and PDIA, by contrast, are driven by academic institutions and networks of practitioners. There is not enough overlap in practitioners, conferences or publication venues to enable collaboration. To contribute to this debate, in the last BEAM Evidence Review we tried to map out a couple of different approaches, and examine the similarities.
The PDIA Toolkit, published by Harvard University Centre for International Development in October 2018 focuses on tactics and strategies for building state capacity\(^1\). The PDIA framework and its concepts encourage practitioners to focus on:

- Local solutions for local problems, best-fit over best-practice
- Problem Driven; deconstructing problems and building solutions
- Positive Deviance; promoting experimentation, entrepreneurial thinking
- Iterative and Adaptive learning from implementation, which is supported by evidence-based feedback

Doing Development Differently (DDD) is an approach built out of frustrations of development not delivering results, ‘schools built but children do not learn’ as they note in their manifesto\(^2\). Development is complex, with many players and institutions, but interventions that have little internal or external ownership will not succeed\(^3\). Instead, DDD advocates:

- Focus on solving local problems defined by local people
- Ownership and legitimacy at all levels (politically and socially)
- Work through ‘conveners’ who mobilise those who have a stake in progress
- Implementation through rapid cycles of action, reflection and revision.
- Risk management through pursuing success and dropping others

So how do they connect to core principles of the MSD approach? The table below tries to map them, and shows that they have a lot in common with the principles of the MSD approach.

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<th>MSD Principle</th>
<th>DDD Principle</th>
<th>PDIA Principle</th>
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<td>Market Systems</td>
<td>Complexity</td>
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<td>Working through market actors</td>
<td>Local problems defined by local people</td>
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<td>Systemic change</td>
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<td>Facilitation</td>
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<td>Adaptive</td>
<td>Cycles of reflections and revisions, organisational culture of learning</td>
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For future reviews, looking widely at evidence underlying different approaches would likely complement the evidence produced by MSD programmes themselves. It may also introduce new ideas and perspectives on the challenge of sustainability and scale of development programmes.