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A member of the SevenPlus Network Europe

# THE PEOPLE DIMENSION IN DEVELOPMENT AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

**By**

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**Vienna, January 2004**

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## INTRODUCTION[1]:

In principle, development co-operation agencies recognise:

- that developing countries (people in Government, institutions and enterprises) are responsible for the management of the identification, formulation and implementation of their own development programmes; and
- that their leaders, managers and staff are responsible for the provision of technical co-operation in the identification, formulation and/or implementation of those programmes, so as to have a sustainable impact on the capacity-building process of the local institutions[2].

In other words, the role of a development co-operation agency is to help people in a country to help themselves; to help them to embrace change - provided that they do want to change. Change - like development - implies learning; the two go hand-in-hand towards ownership of a change process that is not imposed from outside. It requires leadership in the country by people who want to drive their own development process.

Today, the development co-operation community focuses on the importance of local ownership of the development process and on the need: to respect that by using participatory approaches; to promote self-help; to achieve tangible and sustainable results - notably in building national capacities to get 'things' done.

Unfortunately, reality is somewhat different: we have provided a lot of advice on policies, strategies, techniques, technology, methods, training as well as equipment, materials etc.. And yet the results and overall impact has been far less than expected by all concerned.

Foreign experts / consultants often take over the driving seat and end up by leading the development process leaving local people on the sidelines to watch

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[1] The authors of the Report on Global Governance described what is at stake: world development, world peace and economic, social and environmental equilibrium. Governments' role is the creation of so-called enabling environment as defined by each situation.
The political leaders at the G-7 Summit (Halifax Declaration 1995) and so many others recognised that: primary responsibility for development lies with the developing countries; multi- and bilateral international co-operation is essential to support national efforts and have crucial role to play by providing intellectual leadership and policy advice. They also stressed the importance of improving the quality (impact, sustainability) of the services provided; involving the people in the solutions of their own problems; the use of participatory approaches.

[2] This impact is measured through the ability of local institutions to improve the situation of the beneficiaries, i.e. to achieve the objective of their development programmes.

what they do and with little strengthened capacity to sustain results produced by the foreign experts.

There are many reasons for this state of affairs. For example:

- Experts' services/outputs are not specifically linked to the constraints faced by a client to achieving his goals - enabling him to do something better in the future; in other words, the purpose has not been defined with any degree of precision;
- It is faster for experts to do it themselves; they use the tools they know best regardless of their effectiveness in enabling the client to overcome his/her constraints;
- There are deadlines to be met; the expert wants to make sure that he / she is given another assignment;
- The urge to be always "in control" - meaning that the expert will do what he is used to doing and does best; he / she is not open to new initiatives, adapting to local conditions, curiosity, experimenting;
- Little or no knowledge of people's perspective of the world, in terms of beliefs, values, capabilities, wants etc..
- The emphasis is on training rather than also on learning.

## The Issue: How to reach the desired outcomes?

If we want to see local ownership and sustainable results, we have to look first at ourselves to make sure that we do practice what we preach and whether we are /have the people with the mind-set that will permit them to achieve the results - that is, when people (partners) in developing countries will say about a development project: "We did it ourselves.!"

For this purpose, we need to be aware of our mission, how what we think of ourselves (**identity**) shapes what we believe in and is important for us (**beliefs and values**); these in turn influence the knowledge and skills we possess (**capabilities**) and what we say and do (**behaviour**) - which determine the results we achieve in our work (**environment**).

We also have to go beyond the provision of methods and techniques - to focus on **people in recipient countries who want to improve their situation** - and who will do so by changing behaviour / attitude / mind-set as part of their improvement process to produce better results for their company, institution or country... **and for themselves personally**.! All human beings have a built-in drive to learn, take pride in their work, experiment and improve; there is a positive side to all human behaviour. The question is how to make the best use of the resources human beings possess.

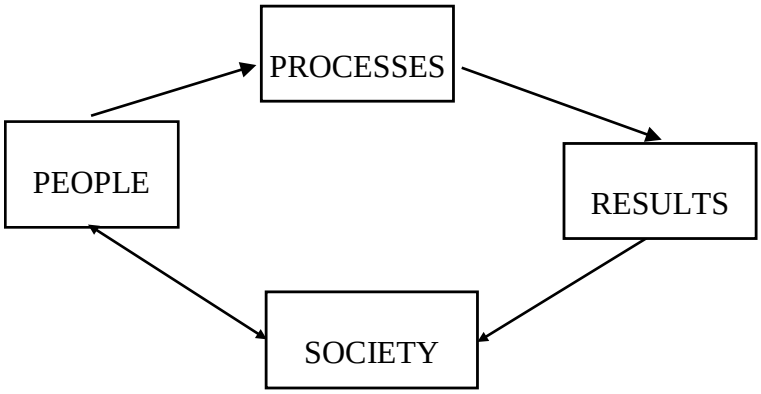


**Fig. 1: A Simple Quality System**

All work on management has focused on various and many techniques and processes which - when correctly used - will enable you to produce better results (increased productivity, competitiveness etc..). Unfortunately, **the map is not the territory - and in the same way, good planning techniques are not synonymous with good results.**

More often than not, leaders and managers complain that their people do not apply those techniques/ processes properly; or that they do not have the "right" mind-set, "behaviour," "attitude towards their work", etc.. Some of the key questions to be asked might be:

- How do leaders and managers get themselves into the "right" state of mind ?
- How are they capable of motivating their people so that they do have the necessary attitude, behaviour etc. towards their work ?
- How can their communication be effective so that it elicits the desired response from the people working with them ?

**Leadership and communication** by people at all levels in a system (organisation, public / private sector institutions, company, government, etc..) are crucial to success of development and development co-operation. It is people who drive policy and strategy, management of staff, financial and other resources, and decide and use processes to produce the planned results; the quality of the results will depend on the quality of their inter-action between all the people involved in the system (see EFQM: European Model for Business Excellence).

**<u>How people function</u> -** what do we know about:

- their mental models (filters of how they see the world, and how those images influences the way they act and take decisions) [3];
- their capacity to create the results they most desire and the working / organisational environment in which those results can be achieved; this implies being aware of their sense of self (identity), beliefs and values, skills / capabilities, their everyday behaviour towards others in their work environment.
- their sense of commitment and belonging; having a common understanding or creating a vision of the future which is shared by others; sharing of principles according to which they can achieve their tasks.
- teams' learning capacity to drive a movement towards the achievement of the desired future situation whereby the knowledge of the whole is greater than that of the sum of that of the individuals in the team.

The mental models of staff of a development co-operation agency would have to include the beliefs and values inherent to Total Quality Management, Best Practice, etc. and be shown in practice through their attitude, behaviour and recognition that:

- problems are best solved by the people in the country who are working / coping with them;
- people's willingness to change, skills, achievement, contributions has a higher value than status, position, compliance with rules and procedures;
- problems can be reframed and treated as opportunities;
- mistakes should be tolerated;
- and above all, that it is people who drive institutions and enterprises.

Hence the importance of an atmosphere of trust and confidence being established at both institution and people levels. This assumes that foreign experts believe and understand that:

- The meaning of communication is the response you get - not what you say;
- There are no resistant people; only ineffective communicators;
- If you do what you have always done, you will get what you have always got;
- There is no such thing as failure - only feedback, the basis for continuous improvement.

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[3] Some people want to move away from the present situation without necessarily having established what they want to move towards; for small business entrepreneurs, the strategy is one of struggling to survive with limited goals in life. They are generally on the 'effect' rather than the 'cause' side of events, or with little possibility or willingness to influence them. Experience shows that motivation is important for them to carry out a situation analysis / needs assessment - and to imagine or get a feeling for their situation in a couple of years' time. Other small and medium businesses know what they want their future situation to be like.

It takes time and a minimum knowledge of Neuro-linguistics and psychology to establish rapport, understand others beliefs and value systems, and create an atmosphere of trust and confidence. More often than not, we have to discuss many issues related to the family and community which are not directly related to the general problem area identified. Yet, it is a necessary process.

# INTRODUCTION TO SYSTEMIC ALIGNMENT

## PEOPLE

You produce your best performance (at work or at play) when you are aligned at five levels:

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. Environment: | Where you work? When? |
| 2. Behaviour: | What you do while working? (Within environment). |
| 3. Capabilities: | How you do it? (Knowledge, competence and skills guiding your behaviour). |
| 4. Beliefs/values: | Why you do it? (Motivation, permission,). |
| 5. Identity: | Who are you? (Overall purpose shaping beliefs and values through our sense of self). |

If any level is not aligned with the others, you will not produce your best performance

**"Ownership" is the feeling you have when you are at "one" with yourself and with what you are doing—aligned at five levels:**

- **Identity** — Your sense of self, mission in life determines to a great extent your.....
- **Beliefs and values** — What you believe to be true about development and how that development is important to you. These influence your.....
- **Capabilities/skills** — What you are willing to do... With the knowledge, experience, skills which are part of you as a result of your beliefs, values and identity. These condition your.....
- **Behaviour/action** — How you apply your skills and your other resources every day and are authorised to do so in your ....
- **Work environment** — How you relate to others in your enterprise or organisation in a mutually supportive way in line with your beliefs, values and identity... and contribute to the well-being of your family, community, etc.

## ORGANISATIONS

Organisations also produce their best performance when they and their staff are aligned at these 5 levels. In order to learn about the kind of organisation you work in and how you relate to it, please answer the following questions:

### Procedure

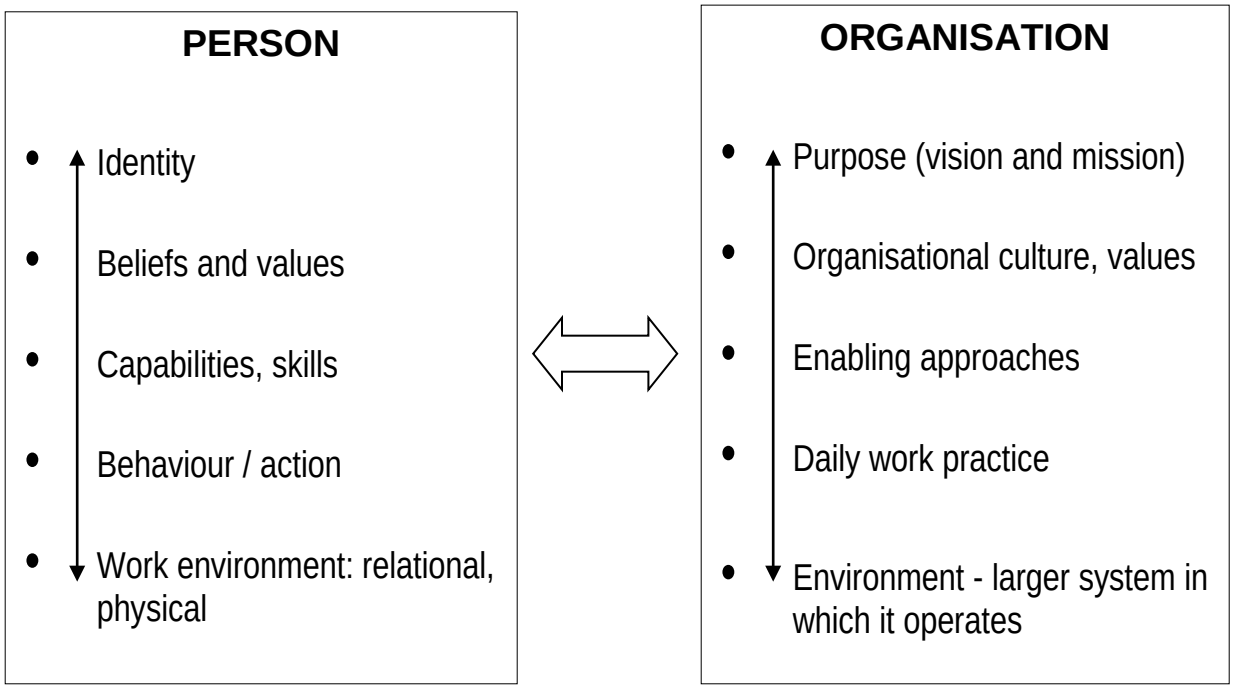
| | |
|---|---|
| Purpose: | Does the organisation have a vision and mission?<br>Does it have an identity of its own?<br>Do the people that work in it feel a sense of belonging? |
| Organisational Values and culture: | What is important for the organisation?<br>Have the principles for running it been identified, documented and communicated to and accepted by the staff, clients and potential clients? |
| Enabling approaches: | What skills does the organisation possess (i.e. its staff) and how are they different from its competitors?<br>How effective is its leadership?<br>What policies, strategies, processes/procedures are required to produce the desired results (products, services)?<br>What resources does it have at its disposal? |
| Daily work practice: | What do people do in this organisation?<br>What is happening on a day-to-day basis?<br>What training or retraining is required? |
| Environment: | Where is the organisation located in relation to its clients?<br>What office space is available?<br>What equipment do we have?<br>What partnerships has it established?<br>In what kind of socio-cultural environment does it operate? |

### Feedback

How do you relate to your organisation at each of the 5 levels? Are there any levels where there are “conflicts” or differences between your own profile and that of your organisation? What might you be able to do about it?

## SYSTEMIC 5–LEVEL ALIGNMENT BETWEEN PEOPLE AND THEIR ORGANISATION

**Performance excellence is achieved when people and organisations are aligned in themselves (vertical) and with each other (horizontal):**



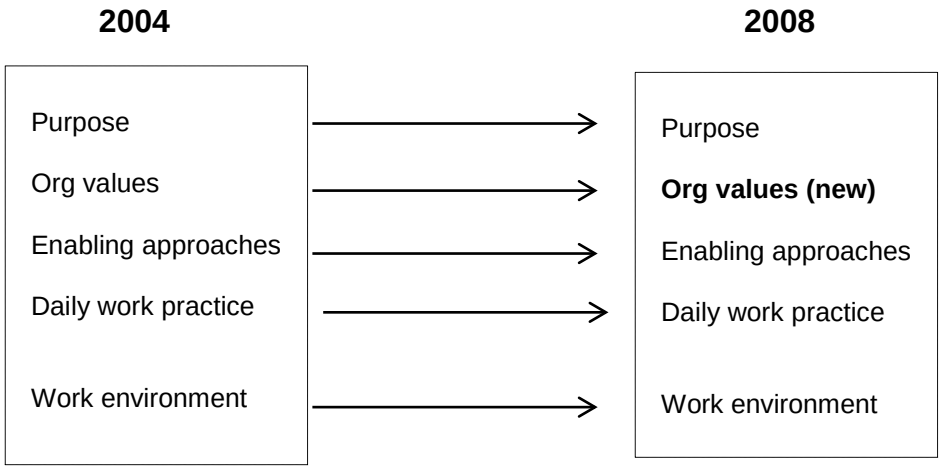
## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### People and organisations: learning and improvement for development

Traditionally, learning and improvement require remembering facts and figures and their implications, methods, techniques. When improvement is sustained, people utilise the feedback obtained—not only to improve their capabilities and skills—but more importantly to re-assess the beliefs and values regarding the subject of learning and improvement.

When you have gone through the stages of learning and reach the stage of "unconscious competence[4]", you have full ownership of what you have learned; you have taken on new beliefs / values about your work — there is increased sense of responsibility, motivation and commitment. This is then reflected in the organisation's overall performance and contributes to the community's development.

THE LEARNING, IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS DOES NOT TAKE PLACE ONLY AT THE SKILLS LEVEL




[4] The four stages in a learning or change process are:

- Unconscious incompetence
- Conscious incompetence
- Conscious competence
- Unconscious competence

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