

Practice-based change: a workshop

Dates: 29-30 November 2001 in London, UK

Across the international aid sector, there are a growing number of voices challenging the classic linear project model through which so much aid is delivered. These concerns are rooted in analyses of historicity and of power; of sustainability and ownership; of complexity, emergence and new models for change; as well as of actual effectiveness. In addition, new practices of knowledge exchange, at many different levels, clash with the often compartmentalised and purely functional approaches of much traditional project management. Above all, questions are posed about the quality of the knowledge that development organisations have of the societies they are trying to assist and of the depth of their relationships with local institutions and communities.

The IKM Emergent programme is one of a number of recent initiatives to research these issues but the implications of its findings for development practice would benefit from further thought and discussion. 'Development practice' here is taken to relate to the development and management of programmes at local, regional and headquarters level.

So far, the most important lessons learnt to date would appear to involve

- Limited communication in and use of local languages
- Limited support for local knowledge processes or for making use of the output of participatory process
- The inappropriateness of tools for programme planning, management, monitoring and evaluation which are based on predictability and dampen the potential of emergent properties
- The challenges of accountability, both to donors and to beneficiaries, if more flexible management procedures are introduced
- The value of sharing programme information with others who may learn from it

In addition, there is an issue of whether and how the practices adopted by development organisations have wider impact within the communities in which they work, outside of their direct control.

Objectives

IKM Emergent therefore proposes to organise a workshop, the aim of which is to bring together development organisations and development practitioners to explore ways of working at project and programme level which better reflect the information and knowledge issues raised by IKM and others.

The main intended audience of the workshop are practitioners who work for development organisations with operations in countries other than their own, in other words those who wish to be external agents of change. We expect US, British, Dutch and Spanish organisations to become involved. The workshop will however be informed, as far as possible, by evidence emanating from those who might look for external support to achieve their locally generated desires for change.

Problem statement

This workshop aims to address the following three main problems:



1. Inappropriateness of much current development practice

Much current development practice for information and knowledge management is inappropriate, as are many of the tools being used. This is because the assumptions and foundations for the practice and the tools are not suitable for supporting a developmental way of working.

2. Development practitioners lack 'spaces' to reflect on their practice

Development practice is seen to be the driver in much of innovation within development but many practitioners are struggling to have the opportunity to reflect, not only on what happens in their own organisations but also to learn from experiences in the broader development sector.

3. Poor understanding of the nature of change within development

The nature of change within development is poorly understood at both a sector-wide and organisational level. There is not enough understanding of how innovation happens, the forces that lead to change, and the role that individuals can play inside their organisations. In addition to this, the role of consultants should be considered.

Inputs to the workshop

The following two studies, both in progress, are seen as important inputs to the workshop. We hope there will be many more and invite contributions from others.

Lessons from IKM Emergent

A deeper analysis of the lessons on IKM Emergent's research for development practice will be undertaken by Hannah Beardon and Daniel Guijarro. This will include:

- The use of information generated by participatory processes by iNGOs (Hannah Beardon and Kate Newman)
- How iNGOs share information in the countries in which they work: the case of Kenya (Stephen Kiriimi and Eliud Wakwabubi)
- The implications of *tracture*¹ for development practice (Wangui wa Goro)
- Emergence and evaluation (Julian Jenkins and Chris Mowles)
- Project cycles and evaluation (Valerie Brown, Simon Hearn and Ewen Leborgne)
- Complexity and evaluation (Robin Vincent)

Lessons from CARE International's work in Peru and Nepal

Action research in Nepal and Peru will be undertaken by Michael Drinkwater. Both pieces of work will take place within primarily the institutional context of CARE International, an iNGO that has been attempting to reform its programmatic practices in recent years. In both cases too, the work is institutionally 'emergent', arising out of innovative practices developed by staff in each context.

- The research in Nepal will focus on a process of 'emergent' change, whereby sets of strikes against landowners initiated by solidarity groups resulted in a substantial increase in wage labour rates for over 13,000 wage labourers.
- A secondary enquiry will relate to innovative work in Peru that seeks to address donors' interests in improving the quality of impact measurement, whilst at the same time developing wider 360° accountability systems.

Workshop outline

The workshop will take place over during 29-30 November 2011 in London, UK. Its scale, and the range of themes addressed will depend on the level of interest in participation, potential for co-hosting and other joint initiatives. Issues relating to practice in the following areas will be raised:

¹ For a working definition: <http://bit.ly/oQru8M>

- Design and implementation
- M&E reporting and accountability
- *Traducture*
- Using and supporting local knowledge processes
- Knowledge use and interaction (KM and OL)

Collaboration and co-organising

We are looking for organisations who would be interested in co-organising the workshop with IKM Emergent and Care International and also who would be able to provide substantial inputs into the workshop programme.

About the organisers

IKM Emergent is a research and communication programme founded on a critical analysis of current practice in the use of all forms of knowledge, including formal research, within the international development sector. <http://ikmemergent.net>

CARE is one of the world's largest private international humanitarian organisations, committed to helping families in poor communities improve their lives and achieve lasting victories over poverty. www.care.org

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To join the online platform on Practice-based change: <http://bit.ly/r2tz0n>