Cross-cultural management in South African NGOs

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Little has been written on cross-cultural management in Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), despite their apparent importance in managing people through reconciling cultural influences from post-colonial, Western and local sources, and despite development NGOs' working predominantly in multicultural societies. This article provides a model for analysing cross-cultural dynamics in the management of people through a concept of cultural crossvergence and hybridisation, and by incorporating the idea of locus of human value, focusing on instrumental and humanistic views of the value of people. Hypotheses are developed regarding the appropriateness of management systems to the cultural expectations of local staff, and the consequences for motivation and commitment. Through a study of local NGOs in South Africa, as an example of management in a multicultural, developing country, there is evidence of resistance to instrumental and results-oriented principles of managing people, such as performance related reward. Rather, there is a development of hybrid management forms that incorporate local, humanistic values and expectations. Yet cross-cultural issues appear not to be addressed formally through capacity building. These initial findings have implications for the way people are managed in local NGOs, and should be noted by local managers as well as policy makers in development agencies.

Key Words: NGO Capacity Building, Cross-cultural management, South Africa

Introduction

Despite the NGO sector's assumption that its comparative advantage lies in its local responsiveness, social focus, cultural sensitivity to peoples' needs and the appropriateness of interventions (Cernea, 1988; Brown & Covey 1987; Burkey 1993; Najam 1998; Mercer 2004 *et al*.; Lloyd & Las Casas, 2005), there is little or no articulation of a cross-cultural approach in the relatively sparse literature on management in NGOs (for example, Edwards and Fowler, 2002; Cooke 1997 & 1998). Furthermore, international ('Northern') funding agencies place pressure on local NGOs to adopt 'modern' management methods (Fowler, 1995), which may be quite inappropriate for managing local staff. This appears to

be accompanied by a denigration of 'local' or indigenous management knowledge in 'developing' regions as a result of colonial and post-colonial influences (Dia, 1996; Ayitter, 1991; Bannerjee 2003). A cross-cultural approach appears to lend itself to understanding the management of people within development NGOs. However, the recent 'discovery' of extant cross-cultural theories, such as that of Hofstede (1980), by the academic development community (for example, Dia, 1996, and Lewis, 2001), has provided a relatively blunt instrument for analysing cross-cultural issues in the management of local NGOs in developing, often multicultural, countries with complex cross-cultural influences, such as South Africa.

The article provides an initial conceptual framework for understanding the management of people in local NGOs in developing regions. It focuses on local NGOs, using South Africa as an example of a multicultural society with a recent history of strong influences from Western colonial sources, and, more latterly, of Western management education and multinational companies.

Despite these influences, there is also a strong articulation of an emerging indigenous influence within management, particularly through the concept of *ubuntu* (from a Xhosa phrase that means 'people are only people through other people'), (for example, Mbigi, 1997, and Jackson, 1999). Many development NGOs in South Africa grew out of the struggles against apartheid. Not only did this involve struggles against iniquities and injustice, but often also implicitly against the values of post-colonial society and Western influences, towards communalistic values. Many NGOs reflect these values, and address issues that deeply affect community life in South Africa.

A conceptual base: understanding cross-cultural interaction in local NGOs

Conceptually, for local NGOs, the main cross-cultural issues can be understood by reference to 'inter-continental' (North-South, or Western-nonWestern) interactions, both historically, through colonial and post-colonial relations, and currently, through neo-colonial relations (Figure 1). This involves relationships of power, based either on military/economic power (colonial relations) or economic/ideological power (neo-colonial relations), through international agencies, Multi-national Corporations (MNCs) and the hegemony of Western management education (Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Grindle & Thomas, 1992). Issues can also be understood at the level of inter-ethnic relations in the workplace or staff-client/community relations (Jackson, 2004).

At the intercontinental level, the value that is placed on people in the organisation, or *locus of human value* (Jackson, 2002a), may be a major aspect of cross-cultural misunderstanding in the management of people.

Valuing people differently

Western management (American, British, French, Scandinavian, and so forth) encompasses many different approaches to managing people and organisations. Culturally, these approaches appear to be linked by an *instrumental* view of people in organisations (Jack-

son, 2002b; Mater, 2006). That is, people are seen as a means to an end. This can be distinguished from 'non-Western' views, which often see people as an end in themselves, that is, a 'humanistic' view.

Concepts such as viewing human beings as a 'resource' reflect the former view. The predominance of the phrase *Human Resource Management* throughout the world, including within the NGO sector, reflects the uncritical influence of this view, although, for example, the term 'people management' is gaining currency in South Africa. Ignoring the value of a person in themselves (and often as part of a wider social collective) and imposing a perception of people as having a value only in what they can do for the organisation (a resource), rather than valuing them for who and what they are, runs contrary to many 'non-Western' cultural values systems, such as that of Japan (Allinson, 1993), Africa (Mbigi, 1997) and India (Rao, 1996).
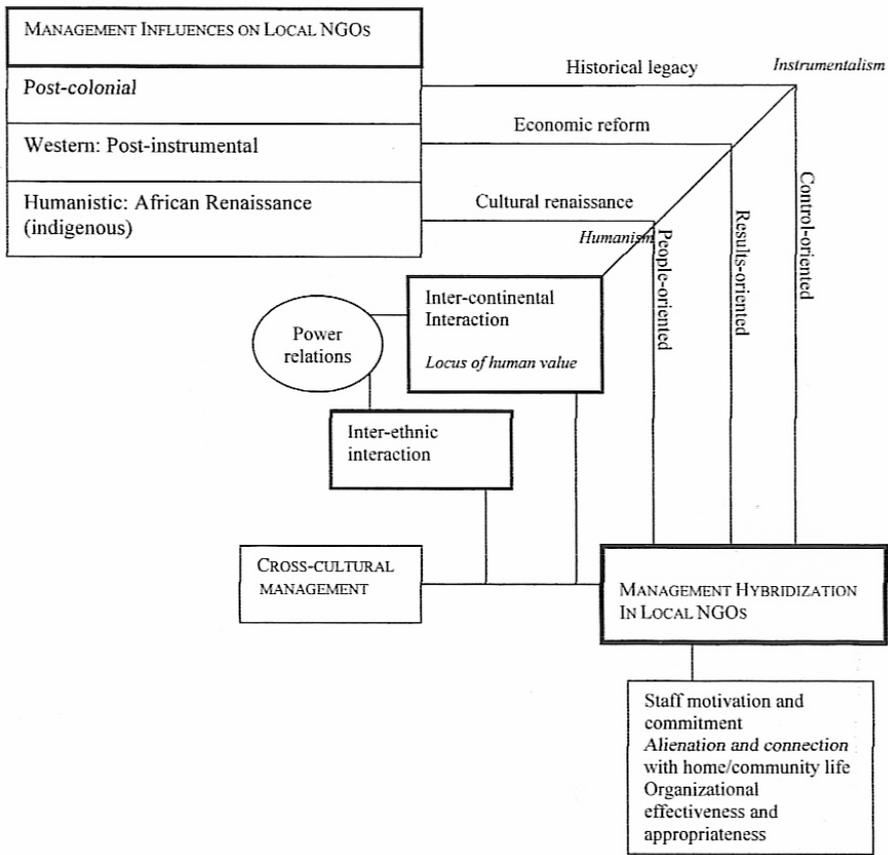

Figure 1 Managing cross-cultural interaction in local NGOs

The NGO sector may well be adopting the idea of human beings as a 'resource' quite uncritically and culturally insensitively (for example, Fowler, 1997). By referring to the concept of *locus of human value* (Jackson, 2002a), it may be possible to understand better the appropriateness of the different influences of management systems on local NGOs and how these might combine in different hybrid forms in particular organisations, as a result of the historical legacy of colonialism, the imperative of economic reform and the articulation of a cultural renaissance of indigenous values and principles (Figure 1).

A 'developing-developed' world view: post-colonial management

The perception of management in developing countries, in literature, as hierarchical, centralised, authoritarian or 'paternalistic', rule bound, lacking flexibility and distrustful of employees (for example, Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990) reflects 'post-colonial' management systems. Management in 'developing' countries is thus seen in a pejorative sense (Cooke, 1998; Dia, 1996). The obvious 'solution' within the *developing-developed* world paradigm is to move towards a 'Western' approach, which is often consultative/participative, results-focused and uses a 'contingency' approach that balances a task- and people-focus. Multinational corporations, as well as agencies such as the World Bank/International Monetary Fund, are urging this movement. This uptake of 'Western' principles also applies to NGOs operating in developing countries (Taylor, 2002). Yet this represents a similar dynamic to that which created post-colonial systems.

For example, Dia (1996), writing about Africa, proposes the 'disconnect' thesis. Institutions were imposed on communities during the colonial era. This gave rise to the systems of management and control that have continued to be seen as 'African': African chiefs were seen as dictatorial, authoritarian and non-consultative. In the literature, there is evidence that post-colonial systems may be a feature in some Southern NGOs (for example, Edwards' description of Save the Children Federation (SCF) in Bangladesh, 1999). Hence:

> Hypothesis 1. Where there is evidence among local NGOs of post-colonial
> management systems, there will be a lack of fit between the culture of the
> organisation and the community that the organisation serves. Staff may
> exhibit signs of demotivation and alienation.

This may well have a negative implication for sustainable capacity building where there is a need to gain employee commitment and community stakeholder involvement. Therefore, are so-called 'Western' (or more accurately Anglo-America) management systems any more appropriate in developing regions where NGOs operate?

Toward 'modern' management: 'post-instrumentalism'

It is difficult to argue that mature 'modern' human resource management (HRM) systems in Western countries reflect a 'hard' instrumentalism. Such systems have adopted a 'contingency' principle that makes use of task- and people-focused approaches (Taylor 2002; Ehrnrooth, 2002: Green, 1999). Taylor's (2002) critique of participation and empowerment in NGO sectors suggests that they are part of the discourse of contingency instrumental approaches rather than that of a humanist approach, which values people as an end in itself. Indeed, Jackson (2004) suggests that, in the commercial sector in South Africa,

participation and empowerment are often used on a tactical basis at an operational level of the organisation, leaving strategic decision-making processes within the sphere of the organisation's (often foreign) elite, and without reference to a wider stakeholder base. Although to denote the sophistication of 'modern' management methods may be termed 'post-instrumental', the common factor in such approaches appears to be a result-orientation, with an underlying assumption that people have an instrumental value as a means to an end (Jackson, 2002a).

Evidence suggests that Western approaches are being used uncritically in development NGOs (Lewis, 2001; Fowler, 2002; Igoe & Kelsall, 2005) driven by globalisation and the demand for economic and structural reform, and there is an emerging body of work that conceptualises NGOs as agents of neo-dependency relationships (Manji & O'Coill, 2002). Such post-instrumental management approaches may run contrary to humanistic cultural perceptions within the local community. Hence:

> Hypothesis 2. Local NGOs are increasingly adopting Western instrumental approaches to managing people. Where this is the case, there will be a lack of fit between the culture of the organisation and the community that the organisation serves. Staff will perceive this as disconnected from their home and community lives and culture.

This may well create a 'contractualising' organisation, where staff members themselves use the organisation in an instrumental way. This could have a negative effect on capacity building.

Towards humanistic management approaches: the 'African Renaissance'

Humanistic approaches to management are being articulated within Africa. This is particularly manifest in South Africa through the concept of *ubuntu* (for example, Mbigi, 1997). A number of public and commercial sector organisations have implemented management development programmes based on these principles, which seek to capture indigenous humanistic African values (Swartz & Davies, 1997). Although this approach has not had a tremendous or profound effect on management in South Africa, it serves as an ideal of cultural renaissance, representing an approach that may be more in line with local employees' perception of the humanistic value of people.

However, evidence from other sub-Saharan countries, which have not necessarily come into contact with *ubuntu* principles from South Africa, suggests that some commercial sector organisations are attempting to reintroduce 'African' values (Jackson, 2004). Whether or not this movement has touched the NGO community is difficult to determine from the literature in the absence of empirical research. There are inferences in the literature that NGOs need to relate to their local clientele in a way that reflects local values and practices (Gibb & Adhikary, 2000; Howes, 1997). The humanistic view of people is in line with the stated mission of many development NGOs, although this may come into contradiction with the considerable influence of Western management approaches. Hence:

> Hypothesis 3. There is movement towards a humanistic management approach within local NGOs. Where this is the case, there will be a closer fit between the culture of the organisation and the community within which it works. Staff will therefore be more involved in the organisation as

they will see a connection between work and their home and community life.

An emerging understanding and adoption of indigenous approaches may assist in organisational capacity building through the greater commitment and involvement of the community and staff.

Hybridisation in NGO management

Although these three management systems or approaches are unlikely to be found in any pure form, they represent historical and current cultural influences on modern day management practices in various hybrid forms. The usefulness in describing these 'ideal types' is in conceptualising and analysing the different influences on management in developing regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, in a process of cultural crossvergence and hybridisation of management systems. This may be a departure from the apparent contradiction between the convergence thesis (for example, Hickson and Pugh, 1995) and the divergence thesis (for example, Hofstede, 1980). Cultural crossvergence (see Priem, Love & Shaffer, 2000, for a review) suggests that, through different cultural influences, hybrid forms of management are developing, some highly adaptive to their operating environment and some maladaptive. This has been used to develop systems of people management such as Indian HRD (human resource development), which brings together both Western and Indian influences (Rao, 1996).

However, these theories do tend to pass over the importance of power and ideology in the development of hybrid management forms. For example, the power of development agencies and donors, and the influence of Western management textbooks and courses, must have had a substantial impact on the type of hybrid management forms operating within development NGOs. They also pass over cross-cultural dynamics at different levels. So far, this article has dealt with 'inter-continental' interaction. Yet it is also important for local NGOs to take both levels of interaction into account (Figure 1). Inter-ethnic cross-cultural interaction may well shape the nature of people interaction and management within NGOs. Although there is little or no empirical evidence in the literature, it could be argued that organisations that take this into account in a manifest way may facilitate capacity building by demonstrating greater cross-cultural sensitivity. This may help in facilitating the way in which knowledge is transferred at the 'intercontinental' level and the view of cultural hybridisation as a process to be managed. Hence:

> Hypothesis 4. Management approaches that seek to manage cross-cultural influence and dynamics will be more successful/effective/appropriate within their operating environment.

A study of local NGOs in South Africa

Five representative NGOs were selected to study in depth through interviews with key managers and staff. Their identities have been disguised pending permissions. They are:

- **HealthOrg** is based in Cape Town. They have adult training workshops and special care centres, and are involved in health promotion and advocacy. They have 125 staff members, and a budget of Rand 10.3 million. Most of their funding is from

South African government sources but they have some overseas funding, mainly through family trusts. Seven key managers and staff, including the director, were interviewed.

- **RuralpeoplesOrg** is funded mainly by European agencies, significantly including French, but not American, organisations. They work directly with communities over land issues, mainly in the Western and Northern Capes, and are also involved in advocacy. Their main office is in Cape Town, with two smaller offices in outlying areas. They employ 22 people in total. Ten key people, including the director, were interviewed.

- **CommunityOrg** is an old, established national NGO, tracing its origins to the black consciousness movement and involved mainly in rural issues, developing productive land use, and building community organisations. They are also engaged with local government over social-economic rights. They act as an umbrella organisation for other associated NGOs, in different parts of the country, including SubsidiaryOrg in Port Elizabeth. Five key managers and staff, including the director, were interviewed.

- **SubsidiaryOrg** works with poor rural communities in the area of land use, access and management, often in partnership with local government in one of the poorest provinces in South Africa, the Eastern Cape. They are involved in youth skills development and gender issues. Currently, they are understaffed at five staff members, with a full complement being eight. The director, finance and administration manager, and programmes manager were interviewed.

- **BuildingsOrg** is a young, small NGO that is quite different from the others included in the study. They grew out of an American NGO, based in Port Elizabeth, and are heavily funded by USAID, with whom they have a good partnership, as opposed to the other NGOs included in the study. They facilitate the building of low cost housing in the poorest urban areas, working closely with local government, and often compete directly for funding with consultancy organisations. As such, they are very entrepreneurial. They have eight staff members, and often take on temporary staff as the need arises. In-depth interviews were conducted with four key managers and staff, including the director.

Some indicative results

The remnants of post-colonial management

There seems to be little evidence of post-colonial management in these five NGOs. Certainly some directors exhibited a control-oriented style of management, but this could be a result of their entrepreneurialism and wanting to get things done with meagre resources, as in the case of CommunityOrg. There is a higher turnover of staff in this organisation, which can partly be attributed to the sometimes high-handed style of the director, but is more to do with the uncertainty of the continuing viability of the NGO. However, a post-colonial style features in the very recent history of RuralPeoplesOrg. In the late 1990s, this necessitated the instigation of a Staff Forum by the staff. The current director explains that:

> The Staff Forum was started in a period of turmoil in 1997-8. Then the

organisation was very autocratic in its decision-making. There was a strong racial divide between managers and field staff. Managers were mainly white. Black managers were seen not to be competent. A black manager was sacked. The Board appointed a three-person directorate. It was in a situation of developing from a struggle organisation to a professional organisation without being in touch with staff. It didn't manage the people within this. It left people feeling not important, and being administratively side-lined. Suddenly people were structured and had to deliver on objectives.

This situation, the remnants of a post-colonial style and at times a fall-back to autocratic decision-making, whose solution does not necessarily lie in a staff forum, appears to have been a common feature of many land NGOs in South Africa.[1]

The introduction of 'modern' management

NGOs such as HealthOrg openly embrace 'modern' management as they go through a process of 'professionalisation'. However, despite this being articulated by the director, who stated that management principles employed in the organisation are predominantly 'Western', and 'drawn from Western countries that have had more stable governments', there is still a reluctance to become fully 'results-oriented', particularly in the case of reward systems. In four out of the five NGOs investigated, there was a resistance, for example, to performance related reward (PRR). This was the case in CommunityOrg. Although a performance appraisal system operates here, it is seen as a development opportunity. SubsiaryOrg also reflects the view that PRR is contrary to the cultural expectations of staff. One manager suggested that 'staff are not keen as it would make people selfish. We prefer a team reward'.

This, in part, appears to reflect a resistance to donor pressure to introduce such 'modern' methods. For example, a comment from RuralPeoplesOrg was that:

There are some Western principles, but NGO systems are flexible. We don't have to answer to anyone else. You can't get away from having some Western principles, but we do have *ubuntu* in how we relate to each other. Donors have their own conditions, but we have a good style of working that runs through the requirements of donors.

Another manager from the same organisation added that: 'There was a donor orientation, but this is changing as more donors come on board. We are no longer pressured. If the donor does not fit into the strategic plan, we go to someone else'.

Even BuildingsOrg, which is heavily funded by USAID, has been slow to go over to a PRR system. Currently, there appears to be a relationship between performance and reward, but this is at the discretion of the director. This is not untypical behaviour within a young, entrepreneurial organisation, where the director might be expected to take a firm, personal hand in the initial stages of the organisation. However, the Board has now set up an HRM committee to look at reward systems. Although the director remarks that the

1. Personal communication with Mr Dave Tate, CEO of Africa Socio-Economic Development Services, 26 May 2007; and Mr Eddy Russell, Director GEF Projects, UNDP Southern Africa, 30 May 2007. This point also emerges in certain case studies e.g. Cross and Haines (1987).

result will be a mixture of 'private company and NGO', it is highly likely that this NGO will have a PRR systems based on individual performance before very much longer.

Evidence of humanistic 'Renaissance' management

There is always the danger that NGOs will be more humanitarian in their mission than in their internal values, which has an impact on staff. Yet there is strong evidence that, despite the odd blip in their recent post-apartheid history, historically NGOs from the tradition of anti-apartheid struggle have emerged with humanistic values in their orientation toward their staff. One manager in RuralPeoplesOrg said, with regard to management principles:

> There is a bit of both Western and Africa, but the overriding principle is inclusivity. *Ubuntu* is a very important guiding principle. A lot of managers came out of the 1980s culture of South Africa as black activists. This means being consultative. You don't take it for granted that you can take a decision. We have taken the style from this. Our style is transparency and inclusiveness. Everyone knows why a decision has been taken. It is a black South African style.

In SubsidiaryOrg, one manager said that:

> There is a value of caring for other people. It is what we bring in as black people. You don't clap hands when you see someone suffering. You see them as one of your own. You carry this into your work. The colour differences do not make any difference. Your duty is to help people. This is carried over to the way I manage staff. I give people space to work how they want. Because you are in a position above, you don't act like a father towards a child. People should not feel that they have been told.

Confirmation of this came from another manager in the same organisation:

> There is a lot of ubuntu, it is there. We are fairly equal. You can't come to your office and see the manager above all of us. This is in the culture. I am Sotho speaking, and this is a Xhosa speaking area. You see it in the consensus model: people discuss in the villages. We are part of this. We discuss. If we can't get over this, we put it to one side and come back to it. There is the donor influence, they want things to happen at a certain time. How do you balance what you live with on a daily basis? When you come to the office you work in a different manner. To a certain extent this is stepping outside our culture, but not at the level as in the corporate sector. You would want to take people on board. At the same time you cannot allow for culture all the time. For example, you would not have time to get consensus all the time, you would need hours and hours.

Cross-cultural management and development

Although at HealthOrg there is an awareness of cross-cultural issues, one manager intimated: 'It hasn't seemed necessary to do anything formal. Generally at head office, we respect each other. There aren't really issues here'. Another mentioned: 'We have become more sharing with each other. It wasn't an agenda issue when I joined, but there is now more openness to discuss and respect each other. There are no training courses; this

isn't appropriate. It is more a matter of openness and willingness to learn from each other'. Yet 'still people want to sit together at tea: Xhosa people want to sit with people with whom they have something in common. This is freedom of association. In other ways we try to break this down – when the next generation comes through.'

Like the other NGOs, there is little articulation of cross-cultural influences at an inter-continental level in RuralpeoplesOrg. The main issue is with interaction with the communities they serve, which has had an influx of more Xhosa-speaking Africans, with the organisation's field workers being predominantly coloured Afrikaans speakers. This has also influenced cross-cultural dynamics in the organisation, and has raised questions relating, for example, to different cultural ways of dealing with gender issues. However, no formal processes are in place.

In CommunityOrg, the team is culturally diverse. Their bond stems from the shared values of the fight against apartheid. However, there are still cross-cultural tensions, and managers mentioned the need for a formal process of training to address these issues. Within SubsidiaryOrg, there is a predominance of Xhosa speakers. Language can be an issue for non-Xhosa speakers when the team gets together. This organisation's interactions with CommunityOrg, which is predominantly coloured and Afrikaans-speaking, can raise issues of cross-cultural interaction, particularly ones of sensitivity. However, this is not addressed in a formal way. In BuildingsOrg, these issues also appear to be little articulated.

None of the organisations have a systematic approach to training and developing managers. Also missing in some of the organisations is a formal process of identifying training needs, although, for some, these are picked up in the appraisal process. This then is the context of developing cross-cultural competences. Although there is a feeling that there is a need to address issues at the inter-ethnic level, both in the organisation, and in the way that the organisation and its members interact with clients and members of the community, this is not formally addressed as part as a systematic approach to management and staff development, and rarely as an ad hoc activity. The wider issues of the cultural influences on management principles and practices are acknowledged, but are rarely articulated in the organisation unless prompted by a researcher such as myself.

Discussion of results

The idea of 'ideal type' management systems has been posited as a way of conceptualising and analysing the historical, current and cross-cultural influences that combine to provide different hybrid forms of management. The post-colonial (hypothesis 1) and Western or post-instrumental (hypothesis 2) systems, which are the result of the inherent instrumentalism and variance to local cultures within many 'developing' countries in which development NGOs operate, may provide poor fit with staff expectations of how they should be valued, and how these expectations should be met, for example through motivational systems in organisations. Conversely, humanistic 'African renaissance' systems may provide a better fit with local expectations and values. However, the evidence from this initial study of five local South Africa NGOs suggests an adapting and combining of different management systems, with a general decline of post-colonial influences (seen as a thing of the

past) and a move towards both post-instrumental and humanistic systems.

Jackson's (2004) results from over 3000 managers, predominantly in the commercial sector, in 15 sub-Saharan African countries, suggests managers would ideally like to see more of a results- and people-orientation, and a move away from a control-orientation. This was not reflected in the way managers saw the reality in the 15 countries, which included South Africa. They saw a move towards results-, but not people-orientation (Jackson, 2004). The current results may be indicative of the South African NGO sector having a higher humanistic orientation. The authoritarian and perhaps racist management experienced in RuralpeoplesOrg in the late 1990s is not unusual for NGOs in South Africa, but is voiced as what was, rather than what is. Certainly this was accompanied by demotivation and alienation (hypothesis 1), but also by reengagement through the foundation of a staff forum. Not all NGOs followed this route, but the influence of post-colonial management styles, as well as lower levels of motivation, have dissipated through the opening up of higher management posts to previously disadvantaged members of the community.

In part, this turn-around has been influenced by post-instrumental management embracing 'modern' or Western management methods, such as in the case of HealthOrg (hypothesis 2). However, this has been limited by a reluctance to fully move towards a results-orientation as there is a perception, in CommunityOrg and SubsidiaryOrg, that PRR is contrary to the cultural expectations of staff. This perception, which is also reflected in the other NGOs, somewhat supports the assumption of hypothesis 2, that is that staff will perceive post-instrumental approaches as being contrary to community lives and culture.

There is evidence that a mixture of post-instrumental and humanistic renaissance management system influences are operating together in hybrid forms. This does not fully support a movement towards humanistic management, but indicates that it may be a strong influence (hypothesis 3). This may well stem from the values of the community base of the anti-apartheid movement, as previously indicated, as well as the humanitarian nature of the NGO sector itself. This may also partly be a resistance to donor influence, the result of a rising self-sufficiency through a lack of international funding during the sanction years, which appears to be a feature of South African NGOs. It may also reflect the fairly widely-held belief that there is less international funding available for NGOs because of a declining interest internationally for post-apartheid reconstruction.[2]

Given the influence of humanistic management, there appears to be a closer connection between working life and community life, with the proviso made by the manager from SubsidiaryOrg quoted above, that one is always to a certain extent stepping outside one's own culture when going to work, because of the exigencies of modern organisations.

As indicated by the general literature on management in the NGO sector, there appears to be some recognition of the need to be culturally sensitive, and have a level of understanding and competency in cross-cultural interaction, but it is little articulated.

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2. Personal communication with Mr Dave Tate, CEO of Africa Socio-Economic Development Services, 26 May 2007; and Mr Eddy Russell, Director GEF Projects, UNDP Southern Africa, 30 May 2007.

There are few if any formal structures or processes, such as training workshops, to facilitate cross-cultural management. At this stage in the research, hypothesis 4 has to remain a statement of faith rather than a testable proposition. The small number of NGOs studied in this in-depth study appears to have a level of cross-cultural understanding that enables them to operate in complex and challenging environments. It could well be that this could be enhanced by a more formal approach to identifying needs, and by putting processes for training and capacity building in place in this area.

Conclusions

This initial study of local development NGOs is significant for a number of reasons:

1. Despite claiming a comparative advantage in the NGO sector's ability to respond locally, in its social focus and cultural sensitivity (Cernea, 1988), there remains very little articulation of a cross-cultural approach to NGO management in the literature. This article has gone some way in flagging the importance of taking such an approach.

2. 'Northern' donors are placing tremendous pressures on Southern NGOs to adopt 'modern' management methods (for example, Fowler, 1995; Igoe & Kelsall, 2005), presumable through a developing-developed world paradigm that is reflected in the literature on management in developing regions (for example, Kanungo and Jaeger, 1990). An understanding of *locus of human value* (Jackson, 2002a) may well counter this approach, and assist in efforts to generate an alternative conceptual paradigm in understanding the relative contributions that can be made by Northern (agencies) and Southern (local NGOs) partners.

3. Cross-cultural dynamics within the management of NGOs may be better understood through modelling a cultural crossvergence process (Figure 1) that can be the subject of interventions involving organisational capacity building, management development and staff training, as well as policy reformulations by donor agencies.

4. Local South African NGOs appear to be resisting a complete move to 'modern' management methods, and are incorporating humanistic styles and systems that better reflect community values. Through a more extensive investigation of NGOs in Africa and other 'developing' regions, as well as of international NGOs and the ways in which they operate their people management policies, a greater understanding of best practices may accrue to both Northern and Southern partners.

Acknowledgements

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