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Culture Change: Can Management of Change Principles Improve Aid Sector Programming?

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Abstract

Change is central to the aid sector. Aid programming focuses on introducing new behaviours, attitudes or values to an affected population with the objective of ameliorating a particular challenge or vulnerability. Despite this, the topic of change and how it occurs is largely absent from the sector’s literature.

This study seeks to establish a foundation on which further studies and dialogue can emerge by examining the knowledge and expertise of another sector – the management of change - that specialises in the subject of change. In particular, this study examines if management of change approaches and principles regarding change in culture are appropriate for and transferable to the aid sector at the programming level.

To answer this question, literary sources from both the aid and management sectors are used to conceptualise the concepts of change, culture and the process by which change occurs in culture. Interviews with management professionals bolster the qualitative data extracted from the literature and provide a contextual reference from which to assess the applicability of management of change approaches in societal culture change and aid programming.

More specifically, this study begins by developing working definitions of societal and organisational cultures to establish that the two are similar enough to allow for approaches regarding the latter to be applicable to the former. Thereafter, the concept of change, its characteristics and influencing factors as well as the process by which it occurs are examined through the lens of management of change theories in order to identify key principles which are relevant and potentially transferable to the context of aid programming.

In conclusion, this study identifies and outlines nine principles deemed significant to culture change and relevant to facilitating such change from an
aid programming perspective. It also examines if these learned lessons could readily be absorbed into aid programming by evaluating the challenges faced in appropriating knowledge and expertise extracted from the management of change to the aid sector. Ultimately, this study concludes by establishing that not only is it possible to transfer management of change approaches regarding culture change to aid sector programming but, in fact, it is crucial to the success of the sector and its overall purpose.
Statement of Originality and Ethics Approval

Statement of Originality

This thesis is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references.

Signed ________ Candice Roggeveen ________ Date __12.01.2012___

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library load, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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Statement of Ethics Review Approval

This dissertation involved human participants. A Form E1BE for each group of participants, showing ethics review approval, has been attached to this dissertation as an appendix.
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With appreciation I would like to acknowledge the contribution of time and expertise made by each of the interviewees and informants, without whom this study and my understanding of the management of change approaches would be severely lacking. Thank you to my colleagues, professors, friends and family members who challenged everything from my use of a semi-colon to my concluding assertions. Your scrutiny ensured my best efforts. Finally, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to Professor Mohamed Hamza for answering my (over)abundance of questions and concerns with sound and patient advice. It cannot always have been easy.
Acronyms

ALNAP  Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
ICRC  International Committee of the Red Cross
IMF  International Monetary Fund
UN  United Nations
WB  World Bank
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Introduction

Change is almost always a difficult process even at the most individual and minute of levels, thus it follows that at a larger scale it will be an equal, if not greater, challenge. Notably, the aid sector is premised on change. Programming and practices are, more often than not, centred on introducing new behaviours, attitudes or values to an affected population with the objective of ameliorating a particular challenge or vulnerability. Therefore, it follows that the sector’s thinkers and practitioners would share an avid understanding within the literature and current discourse of the intricacies of change and, more specifically, when change occurs within societies, particularly since the aid sector continues to struggle with questions of cultural appropriateness in chosen methods of intervention. However, this is not the case.

The literature regarding culture and change, individually, as well as the process by which the latter occurs in the former is often lacking within the aid sector and where it does exist, it often originates and remains hinged in other fields of study, such as sociology and anthropology. However, these are not the only areas which examine culture and its potential for adaptation or the process by which it is realised. In fact, the management of change field within the business sector is devoted to examining both the concept and the process of change in cultures, albeit organisational cultures.

Furthermore, management approaches have already been employed within the sector at the organisational level, with entire agencies dedicated to examining and improving the aid sector’s culture both within the individual organisations and across the sector. Despite this, this same expertise has yet to be examined for its validity at the programming level within aid. This study attempts to look at just that.

In the interest of contributing to the professionalization of the aid sector, this study examines management of change approaches regarding change within cultures in order to determine if they are transferable to the aid sector at the programming level and if so, which approaches or theories, specifically.
To answer this question, literature from both sectors and interviews with change or management professionals will be examined. A background on the aid sector will set the context in which to understand both the significance and feasibility of this question. Thereafter, culture within societies and organisations will be defined and it will be determined if societal and organisational cultures share enough in common for theories and approaches appropriate to the latter to be suitable for the former. Upon establishing this, the concept of change and its process of realisation within a culture will be studied in order to identify any principles or approaches that are transferable to the aid sector. Lessons learned will be outlined and their respective benefits to the aid sector explored. In conclusion, challenges to implementing management of change expertise in the aid sector will be considered in order to conclude the transferability of the lessons learned. Areas of further study will also be acknowledged where relevant.

**Background**

The global system has seen many changes and alterations in power, paradigm and control mechanisms throughout the ages. Domination and superiority asserted through both physical force and condescending tones have dominated entire sections of human history from eras of monarchies and serfdom to colonisation and slavery, permeating all levels or avenues of life. In many ways, this dynamic still continues today. However, things have changed and have done so profoundly in recent decades. In particular, the atrocities and horror of World War 1 and 2 stimulated an intense desire, globally, to guarantee nothing similar would ever occur again. Consequently, a new era was born; one in which humankind was no longer to be considered dispensable and western nations could no longer ignore the challenges faced by their global neighbours and former colonies. Within this new paradigm human rights emerged as supreme and international cooperation was meant to further these rights through the economic growth of nations, unlike the past imperial pattern of pillaging (Ball and Gready, 2006). Furthermore, a new
international system was established including global organisations, such as the United Nations (UN), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to oversee the success of this new global direction (Black, 2002). It was amidst this whirlwind of hopeful rhetoric, goals and new international structure that the aid sector was conceived, made of two branches: development and emergency response.

Today, the hopeful, and indeed naive, nature of that time is striking as several decades on the debate surrounding the shift is still in full form. In fact, over the decades various critiques have surfaced, such as the feminist critique or the cultural relativism debate; each seeking to present its own account of the weaknesses and, at times, strengths of the latest global system and context.

The development sector, also largely rooted in the post-World War 2 era, has also experienced its own unique lifecycle over the decades, expanding throughout history from strict economic parameters to include social and human attributes, the natural and built environment as well as concepts of democracy and human rights. Born of the western world, development was defined and driven by this world and can be said to have found its stride in the 1960s when US President John F. Kennedy declared it the Decade of Development (Ball and Gready, 2006). Simultaneously, Kennedy established the Peace Corps, the Alliance for Progress and Food for Peace while also supporting the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s Freedom from Hunger campaign (Black, 2002).

The belief was that ‘poor’ or underdeveloped nations were simply lacking in infrastructure; political, physical, institutional, professional, financial and administrative as well as in health, education and social services, and therefore directing financial resources towards the establishment of these structures would result in the development, or ‘catching up’ of these nations. However, this decade did not produce growth to the extent or manner it promised and Kennedy’s Decade of Development ended consumed in distrust (Black, 2001).

Consequently, the 1970s saw a somewhat different approach with a tidal sized resurgence of critiques and suggestions surrounding the concept of development. This fury of input was the result of an emergence of
governmental and intergovernmental institutions, university programmes, specialised researchers and practitioners, and charitable programmes throughout this decade. Small-scale non-governmental initiatives also emerged and proved themselves effective. It was also during this time that WB President Robert McNamara asserted, for the first time, the importance of the social nature of development (Black, 2002).

The push towards non-state action was further legitimised as a result of the poor economic climate of the 1980s. The work of voluntary initiatives and nongovernmental organisations began to be taken more seriously both for their perceived success rates as well as the mere fact that they were external to the state efforts. The sector continued strong with the ending of the Cold War owing to increases in catastrophes around the globe and development spending amounting to approximately US$55 billion per year at that time (Black, 2002). It was recognised still however that the global condition of poverty was still growing in severity. This reality sparked continued introspection of the development sector and in the 1990s the ideas of ‘human’, ‘sustainable’ and ‘participatory’ development came to the forefront. Subsequently, new tools like the Human Development Index and Report were created, and the UN Millennium Goals were written in the interest of moving the sector’s focus to the very people that provide its raison d’être (Black, 2002). This exemplifies the changing nature of the sector - a legacy this study seeks to build upon.

Meanwhile, the emergency response leg of aid was born of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1863 in order to protect the well-being of those affected within war or conflict situations (ICRC.org, 2011). Thereafter, however, the story of emergency response sits intertwined with that of the development sector as a whole having taken off, like development, in response to both World Wars. Notably, between 1915 and 1945, organisations like Oxfam, CARE, the Catholic Relief Services and the International Rescue Committee formed to address the needs of those affected by catastrophic events or circumstances during and after World War 2 (InsideDisaster.com, n.d.). Thereafter, emergency response efforts expanded both in practice and theory as thinkers and practitioners pushed for the establishment of new delivery approaches (e.g. Mary B. Anderson’s Do No
Harm approach), minimum standards (e.g. the Sphere Project), and recognition of the importance of maintaining strict autonomy from political and military objectives. Again, as the number and scale of emergencies increased thus expanded the size, funds and influence of aid agencies at the global level.

Similarly to development, emergency response efforts have in recent years undergone serious criticism surrounding effectiveness and accountability both internally and externally, and consequently, key structural reforms have been enacted in the hopes of ameliorating response practices overall. Pre-positioning of supplies and skilled practitioners as well as the creation of the cluster system are two solutions being attempted and assessed in the 2000s (InsideDisaster.com, n.d.).

Despite these strategies, both development and emergency practice continue to prove far from perfect and further reflection and innovation are needed if both fields are going to cooperate towards achieving the overall objective of the aid sector. Therefore, this study intends to further the growth and development of the aid sector by examining new avenues to how things are done within both branches of aid, development and emergency response, at the programming level. The means by which this study will be undertaken will now be addressed.

**Methodology**

This study examines the question of cultural adaptation in development and emergency practice (which for the purpose of this study will be referred to as aid, aid programming or the aid sector) by asking if management of change approaches or principles governing change in organisational culture are relevant to aid sector programming in so far as they can offer improved guidance around how to facilitate change within a societal culture. This study is unique because it looks at the use of management approaches at the programming level rather than applying these approaches to the organisational
level which is a valuable exercise but one that has already been done and quite successfully at that. In doing so, this study aims to expand the literature within the aid sector surrounding change at a cultural level in the least-threatening and most culturally consistent manner possible.

By examining management of change approaches, this study also seeks to further the discourse around the importance of seeking tested knowledge from outside the aid sector to use at the programming level. This study challenges the existing acceptance that the aid sector cannot or, more naively, need not change or attempt to improve its practices simply because it is hard to do so given the life and death nature of its work. Indeed, this study argues it is precisely because of the significance of aid work that its practices need to be as flexible and ever-improving. The alternative would be to commit a disservice to the beneficiaries as well as the sector’s raison d’être. Given that aid, at its core, disrupts a community’s culture and way of life, albeit in the interest of benefiting the community itself, there is no excuse for not being critical of current practices and modifying those that no longer function. Lastly, if we as a sector are not ready, willing or able to endure change within our professional lives or how we conduct business, how can we be so contrite to expect entire communities to endure modifications to their very way of life?

This study, responding to the current absence of similar studies within the literature, tackles the thesis question at a very preliminary level in an attempt to build a sound foundation on which further studies can be conducted. This study does not claim to have all the answers, nor is it exhaustive in its scope, depth or means of research. Indeed, this study is deliberately limited and will therefore put forward further questions of study. This desk study will include a literature review with a combination of primary and secondary sources from books, journals, online sources and electronic articles. Thereafter, interviews with professionals will help supplement the conclusions drawn from the literary research, offering a primary source to challenge and/or support conclusions derived from the literature.

The use of management of change theories and approaches within the aid sector is not new as they have been applied in various capacities throughout
aid literature. What is new, however, is the manner in which this study seeks to apply management of change approaches. The current literature places organisational change theories at the heart of the discourse surrounding the structures of aid agencies and organisations, while this study seeks to introduce the question of whether these same approaches and principles, centred around cultural change within an organisation, are in fact applicable to change within societal culture. To answer this, it must first be determined if there are enough similarities across organisational and societal cultures to allow for a relevant comparison between the two cultures and potentially transferable approaches. Thereafter, the concept of change will be extrapolated from the literature to form a working definition.

Meanwhile, the characteristics, influencing factors and overall process of change will be explored. To do this, management approaches guiding organisational culture change will be examined to delineate how change occurs within such a culture. This process will then be compared against a societal culture in an attempt to identify those approaches and principles, which owing to the similar characteristics between organisational and societal cultures, are key to culture adaptation and thus likely to be effective within aid programming.

The written sources come from both aid and management sectors and will be examined and filtered largely via theme or subject matter. Key points addressing major themes will be extracted from the texts. Examples of themes include, but are not limited to: characteristics of culture, influencing factors and catalysts for change, the process of and challenges in change. Once this data has been categorised by subject matter, each topic will be synthesised and ordered to depict the theme in a useful and relevant manner, at which point, each themed group of data will be assessed for any glaring gaps and holes supplemented by further research.

Lastly, interviews will be conducted in order to supplement and enrich the understandings and conclusions drawn from the literature. These will be undertaken on an individual basis with a select group of management professionals in the interest of either delving deeper into a particular approach
on which the respective informant is an expert, or growing general comprehension and knowledge surrounding the various approaches and principles available.

To this effect, interviews will assume a fairly open ended format to provide maximum space for the informant to expand upon or detail certain subject matter, meanwhile several pre-scripted questions will help to focus the dialogue and ensure coverage of all key topics without limiting the scope too much. All interviewees are given the option of remaining anonymous and/or to have their given responses used only as background or supplementary information and not directly referenced in the text. All such requests will be strictly respected, regardless of any reduction in the number of interviews or collected information able to be referenced.

The analysis of the interviews will again by filtered by theme or word association; statements on a specific topic will be compared against extractions on the same subject matter deriving from the literature in order to identify (a) consistencies and contradictions, and (b) where the interview responses expand upon or further develop the approaches and principles found in the literature. Through this, the interview responses will act as a tool to challenge and perhaps improve upon the conclusions put forward within this study.

Furthermore, the interviews offer the opportunity for the author of this study, who possesses no management training, to ensure a sound level of understanding and to test any queries or points of confusion. It should be stated that while it is openly admitted that the study’s author has no prior experience in management of change, this is not seen as a weakness as this study assesses the relevance of these approaches within a sector of which the author is familiar. Indeed, an introductory understanding of management may prove beneficial as theories and approaches will therefore be examined through an aid sector perspective when determining if they are able to be applied across sectors. Furthermore, the author’s pursuit to understand a sector with which she has no experience exemplifies the mindset this study
advocates is necessary within the aid sector today should it want to improve beyond its current successes and limitations.

**Significance**

The significance of this study derives from the responses of three basic questions: (i) why bother with culture? (ii) why examine change within development and emergency practice?; and (iii) why investigate management of change approaches in relation to change in development and emergency practice?.

To answer the first, I will refer to the following quote,

“The sign over the Kabul Museum declares: ‘A nation stays alive when its culture stays alive.’ This is not only true for nations, but also for communities, for cities, for villages, for ethnicities and tribes. However, protecting the life of a culture implies more than saving historical artefacts and monuments. Culture includes everything that binds a community together and forms a link between the community and its past and future (Klein Goldewijk, Berma, Frerks, Georg and Van Der Plas, Els. (ed.), 2011, p.23).”

If the sign over the Kabul Museum is correct, and the push within the aid sector in recent years for culturally appropriate and sensitive programming is some indication, then it is clear that culture is vital not only to the vibrancy of a society but to its very survival. Given this, aid practitioners cannot overlook the impacts of their work upon the local societal cultures in which they operate or risk doing more harm than good. It is crucial that the aid sector continually examine and question its understanding of culture, including its characteristics, influencing factors and role in aid programming. This paper will first endeavour to build upon the existing literature of culture – a pursuit which can only help further both discourse and overall understanding within the sector.
The recognition of the importance of culture to the survival of communities combined with the reality that in the aid sector “the bottom line is measured in changed lives (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009, p.24),” makes it clear that the simple delivery of goods and services is not sufficient, especially where those items do nothing to safeguard or may even attack a community’s culture and thus its survival. This study takes the stance that aid practitioners are problem-solvers, not delivery men and women – a fact established within the sector’s raison d’être as being responsible for assisting vulnerable or hazard-affected populations to find ways to help themselves. Consequently, in this capacity, practitioners seek to foster change within the affected population, whether its change in their behaviours, norms, societal structures or technology, to name only a few potential areas of change, in order to address a particular need or problem. As such, understanding change, in general, and within cultures, more specifically, can only help better prepare practitioners to achieve their individual, organisational and sectoral objective(s).

This is especially poignant when considering that mistakes within aid programming are still common place, and it is widely acknowledged that many of today’s solutions still linger within the one-size-fits-all category. For example, solutions in major sectors like food, water, health and shelter, remain based in standardized technical-logistical options (Van Brabant, 1997). Regardless of the solution type or its success rate, it is clear that change or specifically the act of supporting change is a sector-wide objective in aid programming and as such, must remain at the centre of the sector’s discourse and literature. This study attempts to do exactly that.

The benefits of questioning change as a concept, the need for it and how our sector goes about fostering it (if at all) is therefore crucial to ensuring the overall success, effectiveness and accountability of the sector. This study could contribute to this end in several key ways.

First, staff development is consistently recognised as a weakness within the aid sector (Borton, 2002 and Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009). Given the inherent focus on change within aid programming, a greater understanding
of the complexities of the nature and process of change is necessary among practitioners if they are to be effective at guiding an affected population through the dynamics of change in any aspect of community life (Wilson, 1992). This knowledge has the potential to raise the general comprehension of staff and practitioners at all levels of an organisation and the sector, from the donors to those at the grassroots level. This in turn may provide a better foundation on which to base decisions at all levels and stages of the aid process, including planning, implementation and evaluation.

Second, getting better at what the aid sector does should always be a central goal amongst the field’s professionals and academics, but in today’s age when the professionalization of the aid sector is a hot topic and accountability is not only demanded but won or lost through ever-increasing scrutiny by the media, the aid sector cannot afford to fall short in its pursuit for continuous improvement, particularly when one considers the consequences of such failure are life and death. In recognition that, “the assertive pursuit of problems in the service of continuous improvement is the kind of accountability that can make a difference (Fullan and Miles, n.d., p.2),” this study aims to contribute to the sector’s efforts for self-improvement by examining one of the cornerstones upon which this sector was and continues to be built - change.

Third, understanding change may not only improve the sector’s ability to deal with or react to current and existing crises or issues, but also provide a perspective through which to examine future or potential hazards. For example, development practitioners may identify a cultural norm which currently renders a group within a community particularly vulnerable and seek to use this understanding of the culture and of change, itself, to encourage the re-definition of such norms towards an alternative which is both culturally relevant and unthreatening, while also effective at reducing, if not eliminating, a specified vulnerability. Therefore, understanding change, as this study seeks to do, could provide a means towards developing more preventative aid programming, which is heavily recognised to be more effective than, and thus preferable to, reactionary efforts.
There is also recognition amongst growing numbers of thinkers and practitioners within the aid sector that agencies need to push the boundaries of current practice. That being said, there currently exists little stimuli within the practices and culture of the field today for such change. The same scholars go further to argue that while many factors in programme implementation are beyond the control of practitioners, the sector as a whole is not capitalising on its potential for innovation and creativity but rather it is settling into a conservative and insular climate which is risk-averse and fearful of criticism (Borton, 2002).

This attitude within a sector prone to mistakes given the sheer complexity of the tasks it attempts to accomplish is unacceptable, particularly since it is readily acknowledged within the sector that the complexities of today’s challenges require truly multi-disciplinary responses in order to be successful. Furthermore, an alternative approach may be able to address the failures chronically plaguing the sector, and in so far as the institutionalised tools – evaluation, knowledge management, policies and capacity development – previously employed to transform work of aid agencies have not proved successful, it is key that thinkers within aid not only push the boundaries of current literature and practice but go beyond the box that is the aid sector’s current knowledge to seek potentially transformative approaches from other relevant sectors.

This study has selected management of change as the ‘other relevant sector’ and has done so in the interest of not reinventing the wheel as this sector is designated to and specialises in change. Furthermore, it is already recognised that

“the theory and practice of innovation, originating from the private sector, is itself evolving, and has been adapted and re-applied to fit the different needs and realities of companies and entrepreneurs. Its relevance for humanitarian work is that it can help organisations to focus on positive and proactive approaches to improving their work (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009, p.5).”
In other words, not only is the management of change sector devoted to understanding the complexities of change and how it is applicable to practice, the field’s work continues to grow and evolve much as the work of the aid sector should. Furthermore, of particular importance to this study, the private sector’s work has already proved transferable to the aid world.

It is not this study’s intention to claim management of change approaches as superior to those developed internally to the aid sector, nor does this study claim that these approaches are a catch-all solution to every issue facing aid programming. This study simply seeks to find potential means to improve ‘how things are done’ within the sector through the knowledge and experience of another.

More to the point, the tumultuous nature of the environment in which aid efforts operate requires that agencies and their practices remain flexible and ready to change as needed, and sometimes with little warning, in order to remain effective. This study, in recognition that aid organisations and practice need, like all organisations, to have adequate capacities to be able to change even in relatively stable environments, will examine if management of change, with its intimate understanding of the subject, can provide the knowledge and expertise necessary for aid agencies and practitioners to be more capable at adapting and responding to their ever-shifting environments (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008).

Management of change approaches while providing better insight into change in general may in turn assist to reduce the number of mistakes made in aid programming, if only by helping the sector to find ways of not repeating failures – a weakness readily critiqued within the aid literature today. More specifically, understanding change within culture could also have direct impacts on the outcomes of projects. For example, induction and handover (also known as exit strategies) are two main areas of weakness in aid operations. This seems particularly true in situations where the programming is heavily reliant on the presence of the sponsor agency and thus the process of change collapses as and when the sponsor leaves or retracts its efforts in the area. Understanding how change occurs within cultures, as has been and
continues to be explored within management of change theories, may provide the ability for aid practitioners to foster solutions through change which have been built-in to the existing culture or are culturally consistent, rather than forcing a new cultural norm, and are consequently more robust in acceptance and ability to survive beyond the presence and efforts of a ‘sponsor.’ This type of change boasts potential to be more sustainable and profound within beneficiary communities, while also exercising the community’s ability to cope with and address further or increasing difficulties and vulnerabilities in a more proactive and preventative manner. The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) Review of Humanitarian Action of July 2009 refers to a similar concept involving private sector approaches (albeit at and within the organisational level), stating a need exists for “a humanitarian business model capable of addressing the increasingly difficult and volatile environments and events” affecting beneficiaries today (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009, p.8).

Notably, today’s non-governmental organisations often become service providers, rather than innovative experimenters, and as the aid world expands, for-profit companies are testing their hand at ‘the business of aid work.’ From a purely survivalist perspective, if the aid sector cannot find a healthy balance between sticking to what works and being creative where things do not both in the literature and, more importantly, in practice (i.e. programming implementation), it is likely that other sectors seeking to expand and capitalise on their respective specialities may choose to enter into development and emergency response, perceiving a profitable skill set not yet exploited by aid organisations. Such companies are likely to do so without the same or any moral conviction currently present among (the majority of) aid providers.

That being said, the search for knowledge and learning from another sector, and especially the private sector, does not have to be characterised by competition. This study seeks to examine and learn from management of change with an understanding that there is even greater opportunity in furthering cooperation between the public and private sectors as well as academia. Subsequently, learning from management of change approaches may just open the door, while also rendering aid practitioners more capable of
recognising the need for future partnerships with private and academic sectors based on “competencies, mutual learning and continuity (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009, p.7).”

Fourth, the ethical debate surrounding the effectiveness and appropriateness of aid work in foreign cultures underlines the importance of continually bettering both our comprehension of and practices involving or touching on the cultural lives of those the sector aims to assist. Simply put, understanding how change can occur within a culturally consistent and therefore less destructive and threatening manner can only help to eradicate or, at least, minimize both the harm inflicted upon beneficiaries and any undertones of colonial legacies often present in a force-fed solution. This can only be a positive for the aid sector and its work. This study explores the possibility that management of change approaches and principles may provide the doorway to more respectful and ethical aid programming.

The significance of this study is thus derived from the potential positive impact it could have on how aid programming is conceptualised, planned and conducted as well as the sector’s overall success rate. Ultimately, there is of course no guarantee that this study will find conclusions that contain this level of transformative power, and even if it does, that it will be read. However, to not ask the question guarantees no results and thus no transformation. So, in the interests of innovation, experimentation and pushing the boundaries of the aid sector beyond where they are today, this study asks, how can management of change approaches and principles in relation to cultural change inform or improve aid programming, if at all?

**Culture**

Culture, in its complexity and social significance, is a heavily studied subject – filling the pages of countless dissertations, journal articles and books – in many sectors. However, much of current day understanding surrounding culture stems from sociology, anthropology and social psychology; three fields
which specialise in varying aspects of this subject. That being said, culture, as a concept, also fills the literature of the management and aid sectors.

This section will examine and provide a description of the concept of societal culture as well as organisational culture in order to determine if in fact these two cultures are similar enough, if at all, for approaches and principles applicable to the later to be suitable in the former.

**Societal Culture**

In the mid-seventies, a cultural geographer Haggot stated, “Culture describes patterns of behaviour that form a durable template by which ideas and images can be transferred from one generation to another, or from one group to another (Wilson, 2001, p.3).” Today, Haggot’s statement continues to act as a foundation for theorists. Edgar Schein (2010) also emphasises that culture is based and developed in history, highlighting that not all groups of people develop a culture, such as crowds or collections of people. In fact, culture creation within a group is reserved for once there is enough shared history amongst and between the group’s members. Furthermore, culture does not cease to grow once it is created in shared experiences; there is an accumulative affect as more time and experiences pass within the group. In the case of long-standing societal cultures, it is highly difficult to decipher the exact origins of the respective culture as the current status quo is the accumulation of the community’s historical stories and events.

If culture is the sum of its historical parts, what does it entail and what purpose does it serve? Plainly put, culture involves patterns of behaviour held, established and passed on within a group as a means of interpreting and thereby functioning within the greater world, without which everyday tasks and interactions would be nearly impossible (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000). Culture therefore dictates guidelines for behaviour and dealing with thoughts, perceptions and emotions, which having proved successful in solving past challenges are taught to new members (Schein, 2010).
The inherent significance of culture to the daily lives of individuals and collectives is apparent in so far as it enables the maintenance and stability of daily life, relationships and tasks. It does so by being made up of two parts. The first refers to the overt and readily identifiable characteristics of a society, such as the physical and social environments, behavioural patterns as well as the chosen written and spoken language(s) of the group. Conversely, the second aspect of culture is deeper and far less visible as it involves the group’s basic assumptions and life values or paradigm by which the group members live. The values described here refer to the ethics of a group, outlining the accepted norms or manner of being surrounding behaviour, emotions, goals and concerns (Wilson, 2001).

Many theorists describe the visible level as involving the ‘manifestations’ of culture; actions, artefacts or symbols which reflect the characteristics or essence of a culture but are not the culture itself. This level is readily observable, playing out in everyday behaviours, attitudes and rituals. Meanwhile, the deeper dynamics of culture are far more difficult to isolate and identify, involving complex, abstract and non-cognoscente assumptions about life and the surrounding environment which are taken for granted and largely non-negotiable amongst group members (Schein, 2010 and Langton, Robbins and Judge, 2011).

Culture has a cohesive function, providing a collective identity among and within which community members attain a sense of belonging (Langton, Robbins and Judge, 2011). In other words, culture provides the ‘who are we’ or raison d’être for a group. In the interest of continuing this collective identity, culture is passed from existing members to new ones through both formal and informal processes of socialisation (Wilson, 2001). Adversely, culture can also be highly divisive in nature. In so far as it is designed to highlight the differences as well as similarities between people and communities, it defines the ‘us’ and ‘them’ or the ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. This has a unifying power within the ‘in’ group but can also result in the presence of sub-cultures where smaller groups emerge within the larger whole or the stern distinguishing between one’s community and an ‘other,’ each
perceived as culturally distinct. Such comparisons further solidify the community’s ‘groupness’ or sense of self.

Consequently, culture is multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, offering stability, predictability and meaning to daily life or operations and cannot be easily reduced to one or two dynamics, traditions or communicated norms. Rather culture is the sum of countless interwoven manifestations, historical events and non-cognoscente assumptions. As such, culture is thought to be constantly in flux and changing. It is believed that

“...new behaviours, values and beliefs, together with associated rituals, myths and symbols that arise to support them, combine over time to establish and then to reinforce the core assumptions of the culture (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000, p.2).”

In other words, cultures adapt and change over time. It is thought that new understandings of the world can also emerge over time as a consequence of durable adaptations in patterns of behaviours, beliefs and supporting social events and symbols, undertaken either by requirement or voluntarily, which demonstrate or reinforce their utility by making the surrounding circumstances or life condition more comprehensible, manageable or ‘liveable.’

Notably, despite that this initial section is dedicated to depicting societal culture it also readily defines the characteristics present within organisational culture. A literature review reveals common themes and characteristics present across the relevant management literature, which offers a useful description of organisational culture while also exemplifying the profound similarities organisational culture shares with its larger partner, societal culture.

**Organisational Culture**

That being said, the literature and management thinkers have not always seen or described organisational culture in this manner, in fact much debate and perspectives have emerged and developed over time to describe and explain
the existence as well as purpose of culture within organisations. However, one point that has seemed always in agreement within the literature is that at the inception, an organisation assumes the characteristics of its surrounding industry, while exuding the values of its founder(s)/early leader(s) and the wider community of its employees (Langton, Robbins and Judge, 2011). It is only after this point in an organisation’s history that the discourse divides into different theoretical perspectives, each putting forward varying theories regarding the development of organisational culture. One major barrier to developing a unified and master perspective regarding organisational culture is the sheer complexity of the concept. Therefore, key to these various theories of understanding organisational culture is the metaphor used to describe the characteristics of the culture, by which the individual can readily conceptualise the highly complex notion (Morgan, 1980).

Within the literature there exists a spectrum of metaphors. Those most commonly employed by the sector’s thinkers include comparing an organisation to (i) a machine, (ii) a complex adaptive system or (iii) a human brain. However, all of these examples suffer from one short-coming or another, albeit some more than others - a fault inherent to any model which reduces a complex issue down to one or two key elements. That being said, the classical approaches towards organisational culture tended to favour the machine-perspective and included theories like structural analysis.

Structural Analysis theorists argue that it is the structure or ‘shape configuration’ of an organisation which is key to defining organisational culture. Within this perspective, Handy identified four typologies of organisational culture based on the structural orientation of the organisation: power, bureaucratic, matrix and structure-less organisations. First, a Power culture consists of a centrally controlled system, which an individual or small group command. Second, the Bureaucratic culture is one where actions and decisions are subject to rules, regulations and precedent. Third, a Matrix culture is defined by an organisational philosophy of a project/task-based structure. Fourth, a Structure-less culture is exactly that, lacking in structure, and instead it is characterised by a professional independence (Wilson, 1992).
Some thinkers also hone into the ‘nature’ of organisational culture by theorising about the various forms of culture that can be present in an organisation. Willcoxson and Millet (2000) describe a three camp theory, including the Unitarist, the Pluralist, and Anarchist perspectives. In the Unitarist perspective, culture is believed to be centrally unified and therefore controlled and defined through a top-down leadership and organisation-wide system and structure. Strong management is critical in this perspective. Next, the Pluralist perspective tenders that the culture of any given organisation is comprised of sub-cultures, and is influenced by various factors, including but not limited to: professional affiliation, status, social or divisional interactions. Effective leadership and management of diversity are seen as necessary to the success of an organisation. Finally, on the other extreme, the Anarchist perspective advocates that no cultural unity is possible, except on a transient basis, because each individual brings his/her own norms, values and assumptions. As such, no unified culture exists to be employed for management’s ends.

Wilson (2001) added that each camp, which he relabelled the Integration, Differentiation, and Fragmentation perspectives, respectively, exuded a particular level of consensus consistent with each perspective’s levels of unity within the culture. Therefore, the Unitarist/Integration perspective maintains organisation-wide consensus and consistency, where sub-cultures are seen as a negative. In the Pluralist/Differentiation perspective consensus occurs at the sub-culture level rather than at the organisational level, and the Fragmentation/Anarchist perspective maintains that ambiguity is commonplace and consensus/dissention are constantly in flux.

Notably, both of these theories and others of the same genre view organisations as almost machine-like, declaring organisational culture a ‘mechanism’ which can be used, and with exclusion of the Anarchist perspective, controlled by managers in the interest of achieving greater organisational effectiveness. Culture, in these and similar perspectives, is something an organisation possesses, not something inherent to its make-up (Wilson, 2001).
Growing out of the inadequacies recognised in the classical perspectives, the anthropological perspective was conceived. Human centric, the anthropological perspective draws from human-based examples in order to illustrate organisational culture or specific aspects of organisational culture. For example, organisational culture is described as resembling human minds with emotional and reflective capacities (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009). Organisational culture, as described by the anthropological perspective, is made up of group parameters, such as language, regulations or ideology, and normative criteria which provide status, power, authority, rewards, punishment, relationships and respect. These patterns of shared basic assumptions are continued and taught to new members of the organisation because they have proved valid in the past and therefore continue to be defined and prescribed as the correct way to behave, feel, think or perform (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000).

Organisational culture in this perspective is the creation and discovery of people, and is not separable from the organisation. It is also considered not easily or quickly altered, nor is it the toy or creation of a leader alone and while a leader may guide certain aspects of the culture, even in such cases, new values require time to form and cannot be forced by management to be adopted (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000).

Notably, this perspective resembles some of that which was put forth in the initial description of societal culture and while it is tempting to contain one’s understanding to this realm of culture, the reality is that any given organisational culture will likely exude a unique combination of characteristics described in the various models available from the classical to the anthropological viewpoint. As such, each metaphor hauled up by the various models offers specific aspects of accuracy and insight into organisational culture and should not be overlooked (Morgan, 1980).

Furthermore, regardless of what theory is being used, they all suffer from short-comings. In fact, both the classical and more anthropological views emphasize the role of leadership and management, but neglecting to clarify what organisational culture entails. Fortunately, Jerry Johnson’s Culture Web
offers a visual representation of the “make up of organisational culture,” while also demonstrating how applicable the initial definition of societal culture is to organisational culture (Seel, 2000).

Figure 1 is the original version of Johnson’s Culture Web limited to the ‘parts’ that make up the culture of an organisation, while Figure 2 is modified to provide examples of each ‘part’ as they exist within societal culture.

**Figure 1: Johnson's Culture Web for Organisational Culture**

![Diagram of Johnson's Culture Web for Organisational Culture](image)

*Source: Seel, 2000*
In the centre of the flower-esk web is the paradigm, which Johnson describes as a set of core beliefs resulting from the socialisation process and responsible for the unity of/within the culture. The ‘petals’ are the manifestations of the culture, which result from the central paradigm. In other words, the ‘petals’ describe the acting out of the core beliefs within the structures, systems, interpersonal relationships and processes by the members of the culture (Seel, 2000). Therefore, similar to societal culture, organisational culture is seen as having a ‘shadow’ side, which encases the invisible, yet profound, aspects of the culture (such as the beliefs, values and assumptions guiding the correct way of operation), and a visible or formal side which includes the cultures many rituals, traditions, practices and behaviours of daily life.

Johnson’s Culture Web, although created as a tool to aid organisational culture change, clearly depicts the similarities or perhaps, more importantly, the absence of significant differences between societal and organisational cultures.
Specifically, each and all the ‘petals’ of this web remain relevant regardless which culture is under examination. Therefore, despite the varying theoretical understandings of and debate surrounding organisational culture within management literature there does exist, across the spectrum of definitions, commonalities and it is in these that this study finds a suitable definition for its purpose. Lundberg (1990) accurately synthesises these commonalities into the following characteristics and paraphrased definition, organisational culture is a shared, common frame of reference, often taken for granted by the members of the group, that transmits governing rules for behaviour and which is socially learned and transmitted by its members. It is a common psychology conveying the organisation’s uniqueness thus contributing to its identity. It is enduring over time, and is symbolically represented in language, behaviour and items which possess meaning. However, at its core, organisational culture is invisible and determinant as it is made of profoundly rooted values and assumptions. It is modifiable, but not easily so. Just like societal culture.

In short, culture, regardless if it is organisational or societal, is “what is taught and reinforced to members as the proper way to perceive, think, feel and act vis-à-vis crises and tasks (Lundberg, 1990, p.20).” Therefore, those approaches and principles found within management of change theory which are applicable to the change process and management of that process within organisational cultures possess the potential of being suitable for use within societal cultures. This study will now examine the concept and process of change in order to provide a basis on which to understand and critically analyse if particular principles and/or approaches put forward within organisational change theory are in fact relevant and appropriate for aid sector practices involving societal change.

Change

The Oxford Dictionary defines change as an act or process through which something becomes different, the substitution of one thing for another, or an alteration or modification (oxforddictionaries.com, 2011). Thus change is
understood as an action or progression undertaken in the interest of producing a modified result. The management of change literature further emphasises the point that change is a process, describing it as an open-ended and continuous journey, rather than a route guided by a set roadmap (Todnem, 2005). Meanwhile, thinkers like Schumpeter refer to the process of change as one of creative destruction where conventional ways of thinking are torn down to create new ones (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009).

Furthermore, change can be acute or incremental and can consist of minute or extreme and transformational modifications. Given this, change rarely, if ever, looks or occurs the same in any two given contexts. Change is also acknowledged to be a resource intensive process, regardless of whom or what is experiencing it. It often demands significant time, energy, finances, skill and emotional investment (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). This ‘pay-out’ can be justified in so far as change can offer significant rewards or benefits to those who or that which undergo it.

The 2009 ALNAP Review of Humanitarian Action takes the definition of change further still, stating that it involves

“dynamic processes which focus on the creation and implementation of new or improved products and services, processes, positions and paradigms. Successful innovations are those that result in improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, quality or social outcomes/impacts. Moreover, innovation processes are not insulated from the world but are embedded in and shaped by the capabilities of the actors in and around a given sector, the relationships between them, and wider social, economic and political contexts. These factors play a crucial role in enabling and inhibiting innovation processes and in shaping the resulting changes (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009, p.27).”

The final two sentences in this statement highlight the importance of both the external environment and other influencing factors such as interpersonal relationships, key actors, resources, external pressures and context, to name only a few. These factors affect how a change process is initiated, how it
occurs, the rate at which it happens and if the change process is successful (both in implementation and in outputs).

Change is neither inherently nor automatically positive (Van Brabant, 1997). A real-life example of negative change was the push to switch mothers in developing nations to bottled formula and away from breast-feeding, claiming it was the healthier option. Only to find out the opposite was true, as children fell ill due to issues like unclean water sources and not benefiting from the natural immunity or filtration provided by mothers through breast milk (Smale, 1998). Thus, the value-added or good of a change should not be taken as a given, rather, where possible, change should be assessed prior to and throughout the process to ensure both the successful delivery of the desired change and the suitability of the change itself.

If that is what change is, what is the process by which change occurs? Within the literature, the process or progression of change was detailed in 1947 by Kurt Lewin’s Unfreeze-Effect/Learning-Refreeze model (Schein, 2010). Lewin’s model states that the change process begins with a destabilising shock that forces a coping process (Schein, 2010). This is the Unfreezing phase when the basic assumptions of a culture are challenged. Upon the realisation that previous ways of life and behaviours are no longer suitable to the circumstances, the involved parties respond by changing behaviours or actions – the Effect/Learning phase. The Refreeze stage occurs once these actions and the respective beliefs, values and attitudes become ingrained and accepted within the culture (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000).

This process is traumatic as individuals find it difficult to reconcile and accept that previously successful actions or beliefs are no longer functional. It is characterised by various stages of denial, anger, abandonment and adjustment within individual group members as they internalise new values and understandings of the world. This final act of assuming ownership over the new values and assumptions exemplifies when refreezing takes place (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000).

Since this model emerged in Lewin’s writings, it has been reiterated, added to and redesigned on various occasions and in various approaches. In particular,
thinkers like Bullock and Batten, and Isabella in the mid-80s and 90s, respectively, developed four-phase models based off Lewin’s. Each however proved ill suited to situations involving rapid and transformational change, assuming constant conditions characterised by planned shifts from one stable state to another. They also ignored various influencing factors like politics, conflict and resistance (Todnem, 2005).

The literature also refers to various forms of change processes. The first of which, the Discontinuous change approach, mimics Lewin’s theory in so far as change is considered to be induced via a severe shock producing an acute change action. This is contrasted by the Continuous change approach which involves recurrent small-scale steps in an on-going process, which is readily monitored and responded to. The Incremental change approach, as defined by Burnes, entails successive, limited and negotiated shifts in a rollercoaster action where the calm periods involve systematic and predictable change at a constant rate but the more common unpredictable periods possess highly erratic pace of change (Todnem, 2005). Each of these approaches has individual benefits and consequences. For example, the Discontinuous approach tends to encourage defensive behaviours, complacency, self-centric focus and formulaic routines while the Continuous approach is useful in highly changing environments. Finally, the Contingency approach argues that no two organisations are the same, nor will they face the same contexts or issues, thus each must discover its own unique ‘best way’ (Todnem, 2005).

These approaches all depict a change process that is sequential or linear in nature, however, experience shows that change rarely moves through distinct and separate phases, rather some phases take longer than others, some overlap and still others only occur at a localised level, without permeating throughout the entire culture (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008).

Recognising that change has never occurred faster, and it continues to take on all new shapes, forms and sizes, the Emergent approach arose, in which change is considered so rapid that managers cannot effectively identify, plan and implement the necessary responses. Change is therefore driven from the bottom up and is characterised by its unpredictable nature. This approach
advocates ‘change readiness’ or preparing to facilitate the natural process of change instead of inducing it through pre-planned steps and it considers culture a product of the wider organisational-environmental linkages (Todnem, 2005). The Emergent approach sees the change process as one of learning with multiple different means to achieve the same goal. However, this approach does neglect to provide guidance on how to vary change strategies to achieve the optimal outcome (Wilson, 1992).

Building on the Emergent approach, Richard Seel’s Complexity approach further challenges the classical theories arguing that change cannot be forced to occur in the way Lewin’s Unfreeze-Refreeze model suggests. The Complexity approach advocates assisting an organisation “to prepare for the change by increasing connectivity or interactions between the various people in the system” in order to expose both the current and potential culture (Seel, 2000, p.5-7). This approach seeks to facilitate the emergence of change, by removing barriers and making available opportunities (or factors) which allow the organisation to self-organise to the point that change becomes possible, rather than implementing a particular form of planned change (Seel, 2000).

Again, it should be noted that, similarly to the models describing organisational culture, all models are inherently lacking given the need to oversimplify highly complex and dynamic realities. Additionally, all of these aforementioned models, or at least aspects of each, are applicable to various situations as certain dynamics of given models may occur simultaneously within a single change process. Examining change within culture therefore requires more than simply selecting or matching the correct model to the type of change occurring or desired.

**Change within Culture**

Within a given community, either organisational or societal, change occurs on a daily basis and often it does so without much notice by those affected. Things like new members of staff, updated computer systems or physical renovations to the surrounding built environment occur readily and often with
little fuss. This type of change is not culture change, however. This change occurs at a very superficial level and does not challenge the existing culture but in fact is likely the consequence of it. This is not the type of change to which this study refers. Instead, the type of change this study seeks to understand is that which is transformative at a profound level – culture change.

This type of change is little understood within the aid sector despite its central role within the sector’s work. Furthermore, where culture change is pursued, in any sector, without a sound understanding of the process and careful attention to how it is facilitated or managed, there is a high risk that the prospective change will, at best, remain within the realm of superficial and likely short-lived or, at worse, be negative and destructive in nature.

Any change process within a culture needs to address both the formal and informal aspects of the culture, as described previously, if the transformation is to be truly sustainable beyond the immediate future. Change efforts in aid programming cannot simply seek behavioural compliance or focus solely on things such as policies, structures, building techniques, but must also delve into the realm of people and how they behave within the group setting or in other words, the values and beliefs shared by those within the culture (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Therefore, what does this change process entail? How does it play out in communities, organisational or societal?

In examining change within cultures, the major factor which cannot be overlooked is that these cultures are made up of people and their relationships to each other and the surroundings. As such, these same elements affect how change occurs within a particular culture and just as culture is developed through shared experience, so are coping mechanisms. In fact, individuals use past experience as a template to direct their future actions, even when the particular paradigm is no longer appropriate to their current circumstances (Wilson, 1992 and Seel, 2000). How much a particular modification conforms to the existing cultural norms will influence the extent to which it is resisted or embraced (Wilson, 1992). In the case where new methods or ideas are being passed from one person, group or society to another, there must also be a
process of ‘convergence’ of thinking (Smale, 1998). As such, change within culture is more than simply a series of steps, as many of the models above would have one believe, rather change within a culture is affected by the perceptions and impressions of those within that particular culture.

Furthermore, culture change requires that a modification occur beyond the daily operating procedures, at the very core paradigm, or ‘shadow’ side, of the culture if it is to be effective and long-lasting. In doing so, the existing culture must be identified, contemplated and re-examined for its weaknesses and strengths. This process is not a simple or painless one. It requires the creativity to not only identify a problem, nor to simply select a solution, but to also manipulate and reinvent any chosen solution to fit the local circumstances. This can of course lead to direct conflict with cultural practices, beliefs and norms as well as those who support the status quo. Resistance is therefore an integral part of the change process and will be further examined later.

Therefore, transformational change requires individuals and collectives to recognise that their understanding of their surroundings and the world, are at odds with reality in one way or another, and depending upon the severity or significance of the discrepancy, the levels of an individual’s and/or the group’s anxiety will vary accordingly. Culture change is a learning process in which people need to come to grips with a new personal meaning or in which “people’s sense of purpose is identified, considered and continuously shaped and reshaped (Fullan and Miles, n.d.).” As such, understanding learning is critical to understanding change within a culture.

**Learning**

In its simplest definition, learning is the act of coming to understand and to be good at something new (Fullan and Miles, n.d.). More explicitly, the act of learning involves recognising problems and differences in relation to our basic assumptions (or models and theories) which guide our understanding of the answer to a particular question or how the world should be. In other words,
learning occurs when we, as an individual or a collective, experience a ‘reality check’ by which real outcomes in a specific context highlight the contrast between our own and other perspectives (Van Brabant, 1997).

Learning, like change, is an ongoing process in which one can learn both correct and incorrect lessons. Alternatively, one can wrongly apply lessons previously learned as they are not automatically transferable across contexts. That being said, much learning is achieved as a result of mistakes (Van Brabant, 1997).

The process of learning is clearly outlined in Roche’s 1995 model, The Learning Spiral, which entails the following stages: (i) information gathering, (ii) analysis and synthesis, (iii) dissemination, (iv) memorising and finally, (v) new action, or in other words, (i) problem identification (observation and reflection), (ii) diagnosis (decision making), (iii) implementation (action) (Van Brabant, 1997).

There also exist various levels of learning, known as single-loop, double-loop or triple-loop learning. The former references that which is done within the existing practices, policies and norms. It involves rectifying deviations and improving the standard operating procedures (to use a management term) of life. This type of learning is common across aid operations today, despite that most projects, and the sector’s raison d’être, aim primarily to achieve the double-loop learning, while occasionally advocating for triple-loop learning, in development and emergency response programming (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009).

Double-loop learning involves “reflection on the appropriateness of existing practices, policies and norms (Schein, 2010, p. 28)” and is a conscious process of identification and designing new ways of doing things as a response to changes in circumstances. It therefore focuses on seeking out new innovative solutions to existing problems. This is a highly difficult type of learning and is considered necessary when learning something entirely new (Schein, 2010). Going further, triple-loop learning is reminiscent of what a political scientist would call a paradigm shift, in that it entails the critiquing and, consequently, restructuring of the internal structure and practices as well
as the external environment (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009). Finally, it is also recognised that while individual learning does not ensure organisational learning, it is still necessary for collective learning to occur (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Developing a shared vision, values and sense of mission within a collective helps foster learning by generating enthusiasm, commitment and shared or unified responsibility, and through learning can come change (Van Brabant, 1997).

That is not to say that change is therefore simply a matter of “teaching someone or oneself” the new way. In fact, both learning and change are far more complicated than that. Furthermore, when speaking about change which occurs from the outside, whether from a community member, a leader or at the recommendation of an outside party, it is clear that people cannot be forced to change. Indeed they will change where they choose and not simply because they have been advised, told or restructured to do so (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Therefore, although change involves learning, it cannot be made to occur and until it does the change process will never be fully complete or effective. Where compliance occurs without learning, change will remain superficial. Thus, individual and collective learning is paramount to the efficacy of a change effort.

**Resistance**

Learning is only one key aspect of a change process; as briefly mentioned, resistance is also crucial. In fact, anxiety, uncertainty and resistance are inherent to change and resistance is significant to the success of change, occurring for various reasons, taking countless forms and serving a myriad of functions. Resistance is present within all change processes, regardless of the sector.

When addressing change at a cultural level, anxiety and uncertainty run high. Culture acts as a defence mechanism against uncertainty and destabilising factors in the daily life of a group by defining who one is, how to interact with others and how to feel about oneself and environment (Schein, 2010). Self-
image and interpersonal relationships are areas in which people, either individually or collectively, often experience vulnerability, and as such when this is questioned it is highly anxiety provoking (Van Brabant, 1997). Such change is often also perceived as a threat to the wellbeing of the individual or the community as a whole thus resulting in defensive or protective reactions. Additionally, where there are losers - individuals who will lose out or are negatively affected by modifications to the status quo - how can it be expected that those individuals or groups will not resist?

Resistance is not only or necessarily driven by self-interest, concern for the overall community and its underlying stability can also be a driving force. In the case of outside change or that induced by a new leading insider, the group’s suspicion and subsequent resistance are understandable as it lacks any prior examples or proof of the leader’s skills and potential for success (Schein, 2010). Exclusion from the planning process also feeds attitudes of resistance and in such cases, it may be the manner of implementation, rather than the change itself, which is resented (Smale, 1998).

Resistant behaviours come in many different forms and they are all not necessarily overtly identifiable or conscious actions. It should not be assumed that individuals are always able to achieve the necessary change or that they will also be able to identify when their actions are non-compliant or ineffective to the desired change process (Smale, 1998). Individuals resist in various ways, often denying themselves the space to focus on a solution; blaming oneself or others, deflecting thought away from the issue, or complacent and uncritical acceptance of the dictated change are three examples how people resist change (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Open conflict is an example of overt resistance, while disengagement can be either overt or passive in nature. Disengagement occurs when an individual denies that a change is possible due to external factors or concentrates on purely ‘cosmetic’ changes thereby avoiding the behaviours, beliefs and underlying assumptions necessary for change to occur (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008).

Furthermore, communication plays an important role in change and resistance. Misinformation or limited information can leave people distrusting or
confused about the change, what it entails and its potential affects. Similarly, information overload can render it too much for people to digest (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000). Cross cultural communication and interpretation can further affect resistance as the various actors behave, either positively or negatively, in accordance with their perceptions about the other actors’ actions and attitudes.

Resistance is not simply a plague on a change process, it can also be constructive. For example, resistance can be a safety net for the preservation of an organisation’s or community’s culture ensuring that change is not simply adopted without proper vetting. Resistance can help prevent bad ideas from being implemented and assists in maintaining a level of stability and certainty as well as continuity within the context of an ever-changing environment (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Indeed, profound change is going to ruffle feathers, particularly if it affects the status, position or access enjoyed by individuals within a community, therefore resistance should be taken as a sign of a healthy change process in so far as its absence would indicate that either the changes being attempted are not profound or that those involved believe it will fail and are willing to comply until the inevitable occurs (Fullan and Miles, n.d.).

Recognising resistance and providing formal space for its discussion can satisfy disagreements and displeasure as well as the sense of uncertainty and allow for convergence of ideas by making all the information available (Smale, 1998). This creates a space in which difficulties can be recognised as tools for positive and constructive change – a reality which, if practiced often enough, could facilitate the organisation or community in future change processes or unstable environments. Therefore, change managers or facilitators (whether a management of change expert in an organisation or an aid practitioner in a community) should distinguish between actors who resist the introduction of the innovation itself versus how it is being introduced, while also identifying those whose resistance makes the new change impossible, in order to be able to take advantage of the constructive potential of resistance and select the most suitable methods and strategies to working within resistance (Smale, 1998). Alternatively, resistance can create an
opportunity to identify those actors, or change agents, who are willing and able to positively contribute to the change process.¹

All of this is not to say that the destructive potential of resistance should be ignored or that it should be sought after but it is common for thinkers and practitioners, alike, to attack resistance; identifying potential sources, scouting where and when it manifests and finally neutralising it (Willcoxson and Millett, 2000). A successful change process is often a

“negotiation between what an organisation is and what it should become, between what will be gained and what will be given up – and perhaps more importantly by whom, and for whom (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008, p.75).”

There is an art to finding compatible changes and not constantly struggling against opposition.² This is particularly true where the goal is to both encourage a positive change process and prepare the community - organisational or societal - to be good at change through developing its ability to select and employ the most effective and suitable methods to ensuring change success (Smale, 1998 and Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008).

Managing resistance is not the only area, in which change facilitators need to be attentive, there are other challenges and issues which face change processes in general that must be keenly watched. There is no exact recipe to which issues and challenges each change process will experience or what significance each factor will have even if it is present. However it is clear that influencing factors in general can have a compounding affect both for the positive and the negative (Van Brabant, 1997). One example of such a challenge can be that success requires the adoption of the change at all or various levels within a culture while often parts of the collective will perceive the change differently and subsequently disagree about its outcome(s) or probability of success (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Not to mention, change processes are extremely resource intensive, requiring almost endless time, effort and financial investment.

¹ Interview with G. Wilson (05 December 2011)
² Interview with B. Bigland (25 November 2011)
Successful Change

So, what does a successful change process look like? It has already been described as a negotiation between the various actors regarding what the culture is, should become and for and by whom. Within this understanding five key elements are often present within successful changes. First, recognition of the problem or vulnerability is necessary. This involves both identifying the problem and re-framing in such a way that will allow for the next stage, invention of a solution. A new way of doing things is invented at this point. This ‘new way’ may derive from an entirely original practice or idea, or alternatively it may come from the re-orientation or hybridisation of one or more old ideas. Next, an implementation plan is developed, often including plans, guidelines or models. During this process, the change shifts from those who created it to those whose practices and behaviours must change. From there, implementation can occur. Implementation often begins with a pilot project which is then scaled up as appropriate (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009). It should be made clear that the order and sequential nature of these steps is not wholly intended. Like any model, this explanation is simplified and in fact, these steps are much more fluid than they appear on paper. They may occur simultaneously, overlap or take place in a plethora of combinations or forms.

Notably, where culture change does occur, it is also often characterised by stability and continuity in much of the culture. In other words, large portions of the culture remain constant throughout the change process (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Furthermore, a telling-trait of a successful change is that the community has come to ‘own’ the change and in doing so, the group members will often forget that life was ever different or that the new way of doing things was ever challenged (Schein, 2010).

Culture change is therefore a profound and transformational shift which involves the recalculation of assumptions about life, the surrounding environment and one’s circumstances. Profound change is neither fast nor painless, requiring intense resource investment as well as a process of learning at the individual and collective level. Most importantly, change and the
Management of Change

Lessons Learned

If change is this elaborate process by which individuals and collectives, alike, must struggle to come to grips with the inconsistencies in their beliefs and their circumstances, it is clear that change managers or facilitators, whether an in- or out-sider, should have a sound understanding of the many potential dynamics and unique challenges present within a change process. Without such an understanding, a change leader can only guess that his/her efforts are suitable and positive influencing. Therefore, learning to identify and appreciate the intricacies present within culture change is crucial to being effective in the work conducted within the aid sector. Fortunately, the examination of change in cultures highlights several guiding principles applicable to aid programming today. These lessons are:

**Principle 1: Context is key.**

No single model is suitable for all circumstances or environments. Understanding the context is not only important to guiding the change process itself, but also to determining what needs to be changed, the best manner in which to encourage change to occur and the selection of the most appropriate leadership strategies. This requires consideration of and to the existing local culture (including its manifestations and its more tacit features), not simply identifying the vulnerabilities and needs of the beneficiaries, which are currently the focus in aid programming.

For an aid practitioner to be fully effective at influencing profound change which lessens the vulnerability(ies) in a long-term and maintainable manner, the change facilitator must first understand the local context: the problem, the
actors or stakeholders and their competing interests, as well as the cultural attributes, potential existing cultural solutions and coping mechanisms. Often, this mapping exercise can help the facilitator identify cultural attributes as well as key motivating or influencing factors. Important questions to ask include: why is the change needed, what needs to change (and what does not), how the necessary change can come about (the solution and how do people learn) and who carries it out. Understanding these factors allows the facilitator to address critical issues or at least, not exacerbate them throughout the change effort.

Mapping and understanding the context cannot be done in isolation from the affected community(ies) itself, as culture is made up of countless dimensions, which exist in the shadows of the overt daily behaviours and ways of life. ‘Informants’ within the collective are often able to help expose aspects of the cultural paradigm, even where they may not be able to identify or articulate cultural paradigms or motivations specifically. This requires that the facilitator listen and hear the affected individual(s).

**Principle 2: Frame change as a problem-solving process, not as culture change.**

Framing change in terms of the problem needing to be addressed, instead of culture change, acts to disarm the potentially threatening undertones present in the term ‘culture change’, thus helping to minimise defensive or protective responses. This will help aid practitioners “get on with it” with a little push-back or hindrance as possible.

Additionally, presenting a tangible challenge at which attention and energy can be directed provides an accessible starting point or springboard for solution generation. It also provides a particular feature around which in- and out-siders, alike, can unify in a common vision or purpose. This is particularly important as it may allow aid practitioners the opportunity to build trust and confidence with beneficiaries, while also providing a space in which new and innovative solutions can be put forward openly given that the focus of any

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3 Interview with G. Wilson (05 December 2011)
4 Interview with B. Bigland (25 November 2011)
such suggestion is problem-centric and solution-oriented, not culturally offensive.

**Principle 3: Vision is crucial to change processes, even if change happens in the implementation and not the planning**

Shared vision provides a unifying direction around which entire communities can rally (Oxford Change Management, n.d.[a]). Developing a strategy which outlines needs, objectives and vision can be an effective way of achieving or solidifying a single vision. Strategy also provides a springboard for programming; however, it is not necessarily easily done. It is value-loaded as it defines a community’s priorities and outlines how and to whom scarce resources will be distributed. Additionally, it is not an implementation plan and thus does not define how things will get done (Oxford Change Management, n.d.[b]). Developing a straightforward strategy that outlines the various priorities and needs of a community can be particularly useful in building and communicating a unified effort around a defined and solvable challenge.

In aid programming this offers a chance to encourage and, perhaps, introduce transformational programming by lessening anxiety or suspicions of cultural invasion amongst the beneficiaries. This could once again prosper an environment in which new ideas or solutions may be welcomed, rather than being perceived with mistrust, thereby strengthening the potential for lasting and positive change.

Furthermore, a shared vision and goals could increase the likelihood that the chosen adaptations and changes are constructive and self-sustaining in nature – which is always a major concern in aid programming. As well, it may encourage a consistent implementation process, once the aid effort has reached that stage.
Principle 4: Long-lasting transformational change influences the tacit side of a culture.

Change efforts often focus on the manifestations of culture or those elements depicted within the ‘petals’ of Johnson’s Culture Web. This has often resulted in short-lived change. Where programming seeks to make long-term sustainable changes either in an organisation or a society, change facilitators must consciously seek to influence beyond the explicit cultural attributes into the tacit world of a culture. This needs to be undertaken within a contextually relevant and solution-oriented manner if it is to be long-standing, sustainable and culturally consistent. Where this is not done, it is likely that behaviours or practices will be adopted or perhaps overlaid upon existing cultural norms in the short-term, but not endure, as ingrained assumptions and beliefs will render them invalid or inconsistent with cultural values in the long-run.

Therefore, it is key that aid practitioners engaged in programming have a sound conceptual knowledge of culture, including its overt manifestations and its shadow undertones, on which to build their contextually-specific cultural understanding. This knowledge will empower practitioners to better recognise when a desired programme requires profound change, involving cultural adaptation, versus superficial behavioural adjustments. As well, practitioners will be better prepared to assess when a change effort is likely to be successful or ineffective, and to attempt modifications, where necessary. Consequently, programming from assessment through to monitoring and evaluation will improve.

Principle 5: Transformational change is painful and anxiety-provoking. Resistance is natural and not necessarily negative.

Change at any level involves the process of reconciling the discrepancies between one’s perceptions and reality. Such transitions almost never occur in the absence of intense emotional response(s), and often these emotions are that of anxiety and fear. This can lead to resistance, regardless if the change is beneficial to the affected population or not. It is commonplace for organisational managers and aid practitioners, alike, to attack resistance as though an enemy in an if-you-are-not-with-us-your-against-us type attitude.
However, change professionals now acknowledge that resistance can indicate and even contribute to a healthier change process.

Resistance is a coping mechanism. Offering space for the airing of frustrations, concerns, support, defection and suggestions can provide empowerment in seemingly uncontrollable circumstances by giving a voice to the individual(s). Change facilitators would do well to recognise the power of such discourse and seek appropriate forums in which this can occur in a safe and open environment thus providing a venue where areas of concern or weakness within the change itself and the method by which it is being implemented can be brought to the manager’s attention. Solutions may also surface during this process. These same forums, may also allow the facilitator to identify ‘hidden leaders’ or individuals who have significant influence irrespective of their limited formal power within the collective and could therefore help further (or hinder) the change process.⁵

Undoubtedly, it can be difficult in the best of circumstances to turn something, like resistance, which inherently appears hostile into something with a potential for positive growth. Therefore, emphasising the need for training among aid practitioners on the origins and motivators behind resistance, and how it can be used positively or in the least minimised. Recognising resistance for the tool that it is and letting it work to help change rather than hinder it within aid programming has the potential to unlock unforeseeable innovations in the aid sector. Additionally, is not increased beneficiary involvement and input one of the most commonly stated recommendations in criticisms of aid programming today?

**Principle 6: Not everything needs to change.**

Change does not require the entire overhaul of a culture rather it can seek to remove or modify that which no longer functions while maintaining all that does. Highlighting or making clear those things that will remain the same can help to reduce anxiety, uncertainty and detrimental resistance, while offering a

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⁵ Interview with Dr. G. Wilson (05 December 2011)
platform for positive interaction between change managers and change implementers, or in the aid sector, between practitioners and beneficiaries.

Validation of one’s values is important and can build trust, confidence and respect. Affirming those things that will remain the same or crediting those aspects of the culture which are productive and will continue through the changes prepares the people and by extension, the community and its culture, for the change process. This has the potential to spin the present and future cultural modifications as necessary but not unavoidably destructive, thereby influencing how that community perceives change and ultimately whether it is capable and willing to engage in such processes in the future. This could result in more willingness and ability within a community to undergo preventative change where and when necessary in the future. Such a shift within communities would promote a similar one within both development and emergency response, where programming could move into the business of preventing, rather than cleaning up after, disaster.

Such recognition may also establish or improve relationships with the affected population(s), while building the legitimacy of the aid practitioner and its agencies as change leaders. The challenge then becomes adopting modifications that are culturally consistent in a culturally appropriate manner and that offer direct and tangible value-added outcomes, which brings us to our seventh learned lesson.

**Principle 7: Change is about more than access to information; it involves a convergence of ideas.**

It is not because information is made available that an individual will act differently or alter his/her beliefs and resulting behaviours, nor will he/she necessarily recognise when his/her behaviour is inconsistent with those desired. Furthermore, individuals do not always behave as instructed or intended, regardless of the benefits (Smale, 1998). Therefore, change involves the process of learning by way of a convergence of ideas between those seeking to implement and those affected by the change. Convergence entails having knowledge about, recognising the benefits of and accepting the practicalities of acting out a particular idea. It is does not occur by one part
instructing another on the ‘correct way,’ rather it more closely resembles a ‘meeting of the minds.’ This process requires time and effective communication.

Therefore, change facilitators must be effective at communicating in a manner appropriate to encouraging, not forcing, the convergence of ideas in a variety of cultures and contexts. Where languages and cultures differ, the act of convergence can become a significant challenge and may require extra time. Change leaders, and therefore aid practitioners, need to be aware of this and able to identify means by which to help the process along. Aid practitioners would therefore benefit from taught skills around recognizing the need for and how to encourage convergence so that beneficiaries are afforded more voice within the programming process.

Within emergency situations, convergence may seem irrelevant or impractical given the time constraints of such circumstances however the earlier it is established within an aid effort the greater the potential effects on present and future responses. That is not to say that convergence can be achieved in all circumstances. That question is beyond this study. The conditions in which and when convergence can/does occur could in fact be an entire other dissertation. This is simply to say that the complexity of emergency situations should not be used as an excuse to neglect crucial learning simply because it is deemed too difficult to implement at a particular stage in the aid effort.

**Principle 8: Change is resource intensive.**

Not only does change require high emotional and psychological effort, it can be physically taxing on both the facilitator and those affected. Transformational change rarely occurs overnight. In fact, change processes within organisations on average take three years, while it took 15 years for the rights-based approach to fully infiltrate the aid sector’s paradigm (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Furthermore, significant financial and professional resources are necessary and must be properly distributed in order to be highly effective.
Insecure and limited funding, high staff turnover as well as limited training or exposure to management of change principles are examples of the limitations faced by the aid sector in supporting transformational change. Every aid practitioner should be aware of these resource limitations and the resulting consequences, during and after embarking upon any form of programming and, most especially, where aid efforts promote cultural adaptations.

**Principle 9: Manage change by consequences, not objectives**

This principle may be the most important and probably most difficult as it not only requires managers to be good at planning and implementing a programme, but rather also requires that both the potential and realised outcomes of a programme must be continually taken into account and practice(s) adjusted accordingly. It requires high levels of awareness, involving continual monitoring and evaluations as well as the general ability to anticipate outcomes, challenges and change capacities. This is referred within the management literature as more of an art than a science, highlighting the importance of a diverse knowledge and skill sets among change facilitators. This ability is largely assisted by ‘insider knowledge’, thus relationships and communication are again significant in facilitating a change process. As well, this form of facilitating requires highly flexible or responsive programming effort(s) – a task not easily achieved. Consequently, aid practitioners need to be trained in how, and supported when attempting, to achieve this principle, if they are to be effective in furthering the aid sector’s *raison d’être* and to the benefit of those he/she aims to help.

These guiding principles have all been extracted from the models, approaches and theories of management of change professionals and literature, and ultimately, do offer a highly informative set of guiding principles around change. Recognising the applicability and transferability of these principles to aid is also readily done. Therefore, the knowledge and expertise on cultural change in the management of change sector is applicable to aid programming.

That being said, the question of applicability is not limited to only the relevance of these principles learned, the ability for the aid sector to appropriate these principles is also in question. This study now asks what are
the various challenges or barriers faced by the aid sector that could render difficult the implementation of such learning and guiding lessons.

**Challenges within the Aid Sector**

The extensive amount of literature and thinkers devoted to the topic of change in the management sector alone indicates the complexity of the issue and change within the aid sector is no exception. Indeed, some argue that it is harder than in business, while others feel that innovation (in the form of profound change processes) is something that is only appropriate far from the highly volatile, pressurised and complex environments in which aid work is conducted. The justification for this argument is built both on a comparison between the business and social sector as well as the internal structure present in the aid sector today.

It is thought that the rules of the game in the business sector are more clearly defined - to maximise competitive advantage and profitability. Meanwhile, the aid sector operates with ambiguous rules, attempting to distribute limited resources in an equitable and fair fashion within highly stressed, political and, at times, conflictual circumstances. Aid work, at its core, addresses and impacts power relations (Van Brabant, 1997). This inherently carries ethical implications, regardless if it is immediate life saving action or long-term sustainable programming in question. Thus, there is a sense that experimentation or changes within the sector at any level (organisationally or in programming) could have inexcusable repercussions, such as loss of life (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009).

Furthermore, the aid sector functions with highly limited resources and short-term programming cycles, which are again not supportive of change processes which often require sizeable commitment both in time and resources (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Furthermore, the sector’s low rates of in-field staff retention and limited databanks (with previous assessments logged for future use) or availability of assessment data and materials are also not conducive to long-term change processes given that with each new staff rotation and
emergency context, the assessment and programming cycle starts a new (Van Brabant, 1997).

Unlike in the business sector, where profit acts as a motivator to perform both at the individual and the organisational level, the social sector does not enjoy the same incentives (Ramalingam, Scriven and Conor, 2009). Furthermore, the aid sector’s priority is to save lives and it is judged on this standard, not on experimentation or innovation (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008). Therefore, unlike in business where success means more profits or resources to draw from, when the aid sector is successful it maintains a drain on its resources without necessarily enlarging its resource pool. The high levels of emotional attachment on behalf of aid practitioners towards the employing agency as well as their respective work can also result in serious resistance to change within any part of an organisation or programming (Clarke and Ramalingam, 2008).

The current method of learning in the aid sector is largely *learning-by-doing*, however, given the lack of effective information sharing surrounding operational failures within and between organisations, this practice should not be accepted without question. Nor should the aid sector be so arrogant to believe that its work sits at a juncture of complexity that no other sector has experienced, particularly when the business sector has in the past and continues today to venture into emerging and volatile economies which requires similar understanding and influence over power relations.

Furthermore, while it is reasonable to reference externally-imposed challenges, such as limited and unstable funding, it is unacceptable to argue that internal sector short-comings are in fact insurmountable barriers to the sector’s growth and amelioration. These are sector dictated and maintained and it is the sector’s responsibility to undergo its own change processes internally where sectoral procedures and culture are incompatible with the overall *raison d’être*, particularly when the purpose of our sector is to assist and guide others on how to do exactly that themselves. These internally, and even some of the externally imposed, challenges can be considered the ‘emergency’ currently plaguing the aid sector, hindering its ability to
effectively change and improve both for the benefit of itself and those it seeks to help.

Additionally, it cannot be claimed that the challenges used to justify against adopting or meaningfully evaluating management of change approaches and principles are insurmountable. Particularly if these same professionals boast of being qualified enough to work in some of the most complex and difficult environments in the world and with some of the globe’s most vulnerable populations. Is problem-solving not the very basis of development and emergency practice? If the issue is that there are ambiguous rules, then develop standards and guidelines – the Sphere is a good start but not sufficiently enough. If short-programming cycles are the problem, then programme for longer operations, develop funding mechanisms for greater follow-up evaluations and programming and lobby donors for greater flexibility in programming timelines. Where poor staff retention or incentives are lacking, create them. Offer both carrot and stick motivators wherever possible and emphasise recognition for high performance and safe mistake reporting methods. It is this type of innovation and creativity which will raise the level of professionalism across the sector, while also bettering overall practice from headquarters to in-country operations.

Lastly, the ethical question regarding the cost in lives which could result from innovative or experimental practices in the field must be addressed as it is certainly a poignant argument. Indeed it is the ultimate trump card over any change or innovation effort in a sector so wholly concerned with human life. This study puts forward that learning and innovation are good things, when done in a safe and responsible manner. Therefore there needs to be a healthy balance between sticking to traditional ways of doing things and attempting to modify what is no longer effective, particularly where it concerns the success of aid programming.

As established within this study, there is no easy solution to change, nor is it realistic to think that solutions could become reality simply because they were written in this study, nor that there are not already individuals working to set in place similar or better-suited modifications at the same time that this study
is being conducted. However, it is obvious that there are short-comings in current day aid practices – a fact readily recognised by the sector from the dusty ground to the pearly towers. As such, the ethical question is not if change should be encouraged but rather what change needs to occur and how will it be conducted. It is, after all, a question of life or death. This point and the former suggestions are nothing new, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action readily acknowledges in its learning and development literary works the need to develop ‘safe experimental zones’ or space where innovation can be attempted within morally acceptable constraints. Irrespective of the solutions adopted, the fact of the matter is, the aid sector needs to start living up to the challenge it asks its beneficiaries to so readily embrace – culture change.

Conclusion

This study sought to determine if management of change principles and approaches are appropriate for aid programming, and in doing so, it identified nine guiding principles which highlight key elements to the process of change as well as the knowledge and skill sets that aid practitioners should possess when undertaking programming which involves culture change. In this process, working definitions for organisational and societal cultures as well as the concept of change were developed. Understanding culture and the similarities or differences between those of organisations and societies was critical in determining if there was a basis on which to examine the appropriateness and transferability of management of change approaches and principles to aid. Meanwhile, establishing a keen understanding of the characteristics, influencing factors and process of change provided the foundation on which to extrapolate the relevant guiding principles.

The aid sector’s ability to adopt changes at the programming level, or any level for that matter, is long acknowledged to face several challenges unique to the sector due to its structure and work. Therefore, these issues were assessed for their relevance in excusing or halting changes to the sector’s
ability to learn and adapt. Ultimately, however, the guiding principles put forward in this paper are not so revolutionary that a complete overhaul of the sector’s practices is required. Indeed, the main conclusion highlighted within these nine principles is that practitioners need to understand the nature of culture and how it undergoes change if they are to be anything more than spectators in the process. Therefore, learning to apply principles, guidelines and approaches from the management of change sector can equip aid practitioners with practical and highly relevant knowledge and skill sets.

That being said, this study, by its own admission, is very limited in its scope, depth, data and research approaches. It has however established the preliminary groundwork for additional studies. In particular, field research or further desk studies using case-specific studies or extensive interviews from in-field aid practitioners are recommended. Additional management approaches could be tested with special focus given to examining specific change frameworks or management techniques for their respective suitability to aid programming. Further exploration of individual approaches as well as case study testing may also recommend new or innovative principles and approaches applicable for either sector. There is also a credible need for further study into ‘how a culture becomes good at transformative change’ as well as to assess the impacts such learning can have on preventing vulnerabilities and challenges from becoming disastrous.

However, despite the limitations of this respective study, it has established that management of change approaches and principles are transferable to the level of aid programming and should not be limited to changes within aid organisations. In doing so, it puts forward that there is no excuse for the aid sector to neglect or reject valuable lessons available from the expertise and knowledge of the management sector, particularly when it has the unwritten potential to profoundly benefit the sector’s bottom line – to save or improve more lives. It is time for aid practitioners and thinkers, alike, to undergo the very process they demand of those they seek to help – learning to change – even if just in its practices.
References


Oxford Change Management. (n.d.[a]) Key issues to consider when planning change.


Further Reading


# Appendix 1 List of Interviews

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<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>National Leader in Education / Head Teacher</td>
<td><a href="mailto:brenda@bigland.me.uk">brenda@bigland.me.uk</a></td>
<td>25/11/2011</td>
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<td>Wilson, G.</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Behavioural Scientist / Management of change consultant</td>
<td><a href="mailto:gw@grahamwilson.org">gw@grahamwilson.org</a></td>
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<td>Mills, M</td>
<td>Okanagan School of Business, Okanagan College</td>
<td>College Professor</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmills@okanagan.bc.ca">mmills@okanagan.bc.ca</a></td>
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Appendix 2 Ethics Form

Faculty Of Technology, Design & Environment, Oxford Brookes University
ARCHITECTURE / PLANNING / REAL ESTATE & CONSTRUCTION

RESEARCH ETHICS FORM E1BE FOR STUDENTS ON TAUGHT COURSES
Please read the Guidance Notes at www.brookes.ac.uk/res/ethics/forms

Section A - You & your project
What is your name?
First name: CANDICE
Surname: ROGGEVEEN

What is your student number?
1 0 9 9 5 8 3 9

What is your email address?
10090589@brookes.ac.uk

What is your supervisor’s name?
First name: Mo
Surname: Hamza

What is your supervisor’s email address?
m.hamza@brookes.ac.uk

In which Department are you studying?
X Architecture
Planning
HEC

What course are you taking?
Development and Emergency Practice

What is the topic area of your research?
Cultural change in the Aid Sector

On what kinds of topics will you be collecting data from the participants in the research?
Culture, the concept and process of change, organisational change and change management strategies

Section B - Your participants
What kind of participants will be involved in your research? (Please tick one – if more than one, then complete a separate form)
X Professional/management group
Members of the general public
Vulnerable individuals

Briefly describe these participants
Change management professionals, and development or humanitarian aid practitioners and academics.

How many participants will be involved?
<20 Number of people

How will the participants be selected?
Selection will be based upon professional qualifications (i.e. change management professionals, and/or humanitarian practitioners and particularly those with expertise in change and/or culture).

Section C - Your data collection
When is your data collection likely to start?
1 0 1 1 2 0 1

What will be your method of data collection?
X In-depth interviews
X Telephone
Face-to-face surveys
X Email
Direct observation
Post
Other, please specify

What kind of data will you be collecting?
Quantitative/statistical/numerical
X Qualitative/written/text
Images/drawings/maps

Will it be possible to avoid asking for personal data from the participants?
X Yes
No

Will it be possible to ensure the participants are not being deceived in any way?
X Yes
No

Will it be possible to ensure the participants remain completely anonymous?
X Yes
No

Will it be possible to ensure the participants do not suffer any negative consequences?
X Yes
No

You may only start fieldwork when this form has been signed by your supervisor & your Module Leader
Section D – Declaration

I declare that I will

- give all participants an information sheet conforming to university guidelines
- not contact any participant until my supervisor has approved my information sheet, research questions and methodology
- be sufficiently well-trained in necessary methods of data collection and analysis

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