Accountability, autonomy, and authenticity: assessing the development waltz conducted to a 'kwaito' beat in Southern Africa

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For the purposes of accountability and uniformity, and as a way of giving insight into their intellectual capital regarding development practices, NGOs in Southern Africa are required by donor agencies to describe their intended activities in very clear, unambiguous terms. These requirements may include the expression of theoretical approaches, the development of logical frameworks, clear objectives, indicators for success, criteria for sustainable development, and relationships to government policies. However, the interface between reality and these planning measures and tools, most often completed without the input and contributions of the communities whom they are to serve/service, produces a much more messy, dynamic, and involved picture of the development process. None the less, the NGOs are still required to be accountable on the basis of their original proposal and planning. The author presents examples of this phenomenon and discusses the challenges facing an evaluator when dealing with competing principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity.

Introduction

Despite the numerous political, economic, and developmental changes that have occurred in sub-Saharan Africa over the past two decades, the region is still facing enormous socio-economic challenges. The attainment of peace in Mozambique, the cessation of hostilities in Angola, and the end of the apartheid regime and the subsequent democratic elections in South Africa were all extremely positive developments which also signalled the possibility of rapid economic growth, at least in Southern Africa. This did not happen, for many reasons: complex historical factors; ill-conceived economic policies; increased debt; inept governments and the resulting social policies; natural disasters such as drought and flooding; the debilitating effects of HIV/AIDS on families and economies; land-ownership disputes; negative traditional practices; continued international disputes and conflicts that draw attention

away from Southern Africa; and over-dependence on external investment all militated against expectations of broad economic growth and relief from poverty and hunger. People living in rural areas, women, and young children continue to bear the brunt of the inter-related factors listed above.

Poverty in the rural areas of Southern Africa remains persistent and all-pervasive. The lack of access to basic infrastructure, inadequate schooling, poor health and illness, and the struggle to manage meagre assets continue to result in hunger and psychological strain. In South Africa in particular, the challenge for the new government was to undo its history, dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid, sexism, and repressive labour policies, which had resulted in segregated, fragmented communities and a breakdown of traditional values and support systems within them. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), launched by the African National Congress (the present government) in 1994, described the situation thus:

> The result is that poverty and degradation exist side by side with modern cities and a developing mining, industrial and commercial infrastructure. Segregation in education, health, welfare, transport and employment left deep scars of inequality, and economic inefficiency. The result is that in every sphere of society – economic, social political, cultural and environmental – South Africans are confronted by serious problems. There is not a single sector of South African society, not a person living in South Africa, untouched by the ravages of apartheid. (ANC 1994: 3)

Despite all the efforts of the government of South Africa and other governments in the region, as well as other agencies, the problems are not decreasing. In their rationale for an Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), programme developers based at the University of Pretoria make the following observation:

> The state remains largely ineffective in reaching the poor. Impoverished communities feel that their lives remain unchanged by government interventions. They report that their interaction with state representatives is marred by rudeness, humiliation, harassment and corruption. There are also gender differences in their experiences with state institutions that reflect societal norms of gender-based power inequity. (IRDP 2001: 8)

Clearly, the planners were not arguing that the state should abdicate its responsibility, but calling for a reflection on how services are delivered, and for the possible use of civil-society structures such as NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs). Their argument is similar to that of Collins (2002), who believes that civil society should be seen as working with the state, and that such structures allow the state to make inroads into social groups and geographic areas that it has hitherto failed to reach. In the case of South Africa, NGOs have themselves embarked on a number of development projects. Some have done this in collaboration with the government, and others operate independently, using international and national funding sources to support their programmes. The contribution of NGO development work in South Africa has been significant. With the existence of so many unmet needs in the country, NGOs have been able to offer products and services where the government was unable to deliver them.

It is in this context that this article considers the approaches adopted by sponsors of development interventions as well as development practitioners, and considers how they navigate the principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity.

Approaches to development

The existence of basic needs does not translate automatically into development initiatives. The belief that it does is a remnant from the neo-classical approach which suggested that all

members of society would benefit from national growth, as increased wealth gradually spread from the richer sections of the community to the poorer: the 'trickle down' theory (Cusworth and Franks 1993). This notion was replaced with an emphasis on improving the policies that would enhance development. Since policies determine the environment and framework within which development takes place, there was a huge push by international lending agencies for developing countries to adopt and implement 'appropriate' policies that would lead to successful development – structural adjustment. Policies and good intentions alone did not work, however. It became increasingly clear that policies needed to be linked to appropriate projects that would serve as direct tools for development. It is at the project level where policies meet their intended target audiences. Development projects have been defined as an investment of capital (physical and human) in a time-bound intervention to create productive assets (Cusworth and Franks 1993). It is at this level of investment of financial and physical resources, human energy, and commitment that the principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity emerge as factors determining a project's success or failure.

Development projects are established not only because of existing needs. A project is sometimes started because funding has become available, or because it is a convenient means by which a local politician can buy and/or maintain loyalty, or because it guarantees the livelihood of a service provider, or because a few individuals in a community will benefit financially, or because it speaks directly to the needs of a community and will contribute to the area's continued and sustainable development. Because of the immense scale of the problems outlined above, NGOs are still closely involved in development projects. As a way of ensuring their continued survival, they must account for their activities in a way that will endear them to the communities whom they serve, the donors who provide the funds, and the government structures that are potential partners and sources of work. Dwindling and scarce financial resources have forced donors to be much more circumspect about how and whom they fund.

To ensure adherence to the principles of accountability, authenticity, and autonomy, service providers (NGOs in particular) are required to articulate in minute detail the theoretical underpinnings of their interventions. These must or should preferably be accompanied by logical frameworks that define clearly the projects' objectives in such a way that logical linkages are established between a hierarchical set of sub-objectives, each set of which ultimately contributes to the ultimate development aims. Logical frameworks represent, in a summarised form, the thinking, planning, and theoretical orientation of the development practitioner. A typical 'log-frame' (in development-speak) will start with a narrative summary; outline the assumptions underlying relationships between project goals, purposes, outputs, and inputs; and provide indicators of success and the means of verification. The logical framework also provides an assessment of risk which should satisfy donors that they can make calculated decisions. The development of logical frameworks has become an art to be mastered, as well as a gateway to development resources. The basic format for such frameworks is recognised in most, if not all, developing countries and has become the accepted procedure for planning and implementation. To phrase it differently, and contextualising it for this article, the logical framework has become the 'musical score for the development waltz'.

The 'development waltz' embraces a host of approaches to development. These would include the modernisation thesis, which held that development must result in economic changes aimed at turning traditional societies into modern ones. Societies are assumed to be either inside capitalism, in which case they are labelled modern, or outside capitalism, in which case they are called traditional. These assumptions have been challenged, and dependency theories were later offered as a more realistic point of departure for development. The premise of dependency theories is that the Third World is condemned to a state of perpetual underdevelopment and forced into processes that produce, reproduce, and maintain

dependency. Other theoretical approaches include the modes of production theory (MOP), the new international division of labour theory (NIDL), regulation theory, critical theory, and post-modern theory, some of them arguing from a Marxist perspective. While Klerck (1996: 111) states that 'there can be no Grand Theory of Development or Universal Theory of History, nor should we settle for – at the other extreme – an abstracted empiricism devoid of any theory, all unrestricted by both time and space', and Hette (1982: 17) contends that 'there can be no fixed and final definition of development, merely suggestions of what development should imply', development has, since the Second World War, grown into a huge industry. It is in this context that the principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity should be considered.

Accountability

The development waltz places a high premium on accountability. This is inevitable in an environment of growing social problems and dwindling resources with which to address them. The primary purpose of social interventions is to improve the human condition, and one of the most important contributions of programme evaluation is to help to determine whether the intended improvements have actually taken place. The challenge for the evaluator is linked to his or her interpretation of the brief, and the extent to which the original blueprints or log-frames (the musical scores) are used to assess the outcomes of the intervention. The initial log-frames can act as an 'agreed-upon' scheme of accountability which in its dominant mode, is mechanistic and has productivity as its ethic and power at its core. Simons (1981) cites House [1973], who argues:

> Most accountability schemes – whether they be performance contracting, cost – benefit analysis, performance-based teacher education or whatever – apply a mechanical sol-ution, a power solution, to reform complex social organizations. They punish individuals who fail to achieve the pre-specified outcomes and distort reality, since a single measure of output of precisely defined objectives is often the only indicator of value. (Cited in Simons 1981: 130)

This implies that accountability is not a neutral concept, but a strategic term deployed in specific social and political contexts; its use therefore serves particular needs and interests. As suggested by House, there is the risk that accountability to the initial plans, objectives, indicators, and measures can become a bureaucratic exercise within an evaluation, if addressed in a mechan-istic way. Accountability in this framework is more about relations of power and authority, where it structures the giving of accounts in exchange for delegated powers and responsibilities (Flinders 2001). The real danger is that, used mechanistically, accountability schemes can hinder flexibility and innovation in programme delivery. This in turn can lead to demoralisation, among those required to implement these schemes, and among those experiencing them. Porter et al. (1991) view the introduction of better management systems, logical frameworks, tighter financial control, and cost –benefit analyses – read: accountability measures – as responses intended to control the uncertainty created especially in rural development projects. They argue that this type of control orientation is the antithesis of good development. For them, such an approach has merit only in relation to certain infrastructural projects in which most elements can reasonably be determined beforehand.

But Klatt et al. (1999) argue, from a corporate viewpoint, that accountability practised through the application of 'Accountability Agreements' brings structure, focus, and clarity to human endeavours in organisations. They propose that accountability agreements be drawn up between parties to ensure commitment to certain objectives. Furthermore, they offer the

following elements (Klatt et al. 1999: 18), which would form the 'practical theory' of accountability.

. Accountability   is a statement of personal promise.
. Accountability   for results means activities aren't enough.
. Accountability   for results requires room for personal judgement and decision-making.
. Accountability   is neither shared nor conditional.
. Accountability   for the organization as a whole belongs to everyone.
. Accountability   is meaningless without consequences.

They (Klatt et al.) also make the point that, for them, the concepts 'accountability' and 'responsibility' are essentially synonymous, but they avoid using the word 'responsibility', because it elicits a defensive response.

If accountability is linked to another important principle, that of sustainability, then it takes on various meanings. A project aimed at economic development and economic growth may succeed in its objective to increase the income-driven capacity of the target group. The evaluation findings will reveal that it can account for the resources used to run the project. When the ultimate costs are added up, however, then the project will be deemed to be unsustainable and harmful to the environment or the persons involved. Projects therefore need to be accountable to the environment as well. An example here would be a project that aimed to reduce deforestation being judged as successful by its introduction of paraffin stoves to rural households. The long-term results would reflect a financial burden on the rural poor, physical efforts to obtain paraffin, and poor ventilation of the rural homes, resulting in many illnesses. Accountability to the initial framework in this example does not necessarily lead to a successful project.

Accountability can also be conceived in a non-mechanistic manner and relate to the extent to which participants in a project are accountable to each other. Here the principle is subsumed under other principles of ownership and participation. Being accountable to preconceived indicators does not guarantee success. Unless there are ways of engaging with the indicators to make them more relevant, appropriate, and linked to the actual activities that emerge through the project, then the logical framework will remain a piece of paper that is of little use to the evaluator.

Autonomy

At a social and philosophical level, autonomy is often discussed along the Kantian lines of individual autonomy (freedom) versus the bonds and traditions that are present in a community context. This contradiction is resolved for Kupfer (1990), who inserts social interaction as a key element in autonomy. He believes that social interaction contributes to autonomy, first as an exercise of autonomy and then as an enabling condition of its exercise. 'The first adds a significant, if not essential, domain for autonomous choice. The latter is more like education or transportation; it makes possible autonomous functions that would not otherwise exist' (Kupfer 1990: 159). He further contends that, as social beings, we exercise autonomy in relation to others. Thus, without the opportunity to be with others, autonomy is empty.

Autonomy is a highly valued principle in development work. The world's collective experience of slavery and colonialism, and more recent global emphasis on values of human rights and respect for the dignity of others, have created an awareness of the debilitating effects of condescending and patronising behaviour on the part of the 'haves' on the 'have-nots'. The master–slave arrangement is rejected, and a new arrangement, one that involves power sharing, empowerment, and a fundamental change in the quality of life for those involved, is treasured.

The principles of autonomy and accountability are closely linked. It seems incredible that those dependent on external sources of financial and or other kinds of support should argue for autonomy. This does not make sense. Complete autonomy is also impossible. It is, however, in the interdependent nature of development that autonomy becomes essential. True participation requires a certain level of autonomy, or it becomes co-option. People will have to make certain decisions affecting their lives without influence from outside or others.

Complex projects can be constrained or enhanced by high levels of autonomy. The complex nature of some projects presents the danger of engaging in equally complex activities. Bradshaw warns against complex interventions:

> There are many problems associated with complexity. First, by developing projects that accomplish goals in a highly complex system, attention is diverted from the underlying source of the complexity in the first place. (Bradshaw 2000:10)

Complexity can result in projects having autonomous component parts. How these parts interact with each other, and how they contribute to the bigger system are the key concerns, along with the local/national policy environment. Policies that provide the necessary space for autonomous behaviour are essential. These are often called 'enabling policies'.

Autonomy is also contextual. Group autonomy can be in conflict with individual autonomy. Individuals who are unable to make choices because they lack the power and status to do so rely on community networks and community goals in order to survive. As soon as people obtain the resources that enable them to make choices and act autonomously, they relinquish their community networks. Conditions that foster greater community cohesiveness may be the opposite of those conditions that foster empowerment. Becoming empowered may reduce the individual's dependency on the community, which is the paradox inherent in empowerment through autonomy. On the other hand, Kevane (2004) maintains that men and women make differing choices. Women are more inclined to maintain and sustain community networks so that their children and broader family can benefit. Such 'gendered' choices may alter or reproduce traditional gender structures. The principle of autonomy in this context would involve a host of cultural, historical, and religious factors and their interaction with the agenda(s) of specific interventions.

Authenticity

'The sciences have served mankind well.' 'We all live in a global village.' 'Think globally, act locally.' These statements conjure up images of a world tribe, congregating nightly around the open fire and sharing scientific findings and communicating with the wise to get the best solutions to our daily problems. This is not the reality. Despite the global-village image, there is still huge diversity and differentiation along North – South lines, haves –have-nots, rich – poor, developed – developing, and well-resourced –under-resourced. Grand theories and grand solutions have failed. Successful interventions are interventions that are relevant to local conditions and needs. This does not mean that cross-pollination cannot happen, and that learning from one corner of the globe cannot be transported to another far-flung place elsewhere. It merely suggests that local, possibly unique, and therefore authentic mixes become necessary so that other principles, such as ownership and participation, can be enhanced. Authentic local solutions will, however, always be subject to, limited by, or enhanced by disabling or enabling macro environments.

Authenticity, like autonomy, is not a blanket requirement for successful projects. It is the level of authenticity that enhances the value of the project, not only for itself, but also the extent to which other settings can learn from its 'uniqueness'. It is true that social problems

are shared among the nations of the world. However, the solution to unemployment in rural Botswana would be vastly different from the solution to unemployment in rural USA. This is not only because of the present prevailing factors and varying conditions, but also because of the historical factors that dictated patterns of power and power-relations.

The notion of authenticity is also embedded in Freire's (1973) central position that human beings are able to reflect and 'problematize', as opposed to merely 'problem-solve', and that the role of reflection is to react to the action in order to reveal its objectives, its means, and its efficacy. Campfens (1997) summarises the following four themes emerging from Freire's philosophy which, according to him, should influence the developmental approach of interventions:

. If there is to be effective action, the poor and the oppressed must be listened to, and the world must be seen through their eyes.
. Knowledge of the truth and awareness of conditions is not in itself sufficient to acquire a new vision. Material and cultural conditions must be created that will enable the poor to gain liberty and arrive at the truth.
. There will be liberation only when the poor assume their own liberation. The traditional work of charity and assistance to the poor that treats them as objects is not acceptable. The poor must be treated as subjects of their own transformation and participate actively in the formulation and execution of development initiatives.
. The poor, not science or technology, should be regarded as the point of departure in development and liberation. This is not to minimize the importance of science and technology but rather to emphasize the correct priority. (Campfens 1997:18)

These themes capture the essence and intent of the principles of autonomy and authenticity, but not necessarily of accountability. Furthermore, authenticity is also embroiled in the sometimes contested discourse of empowerment. The process notion of empowerment can be simplistically construed as the assumption that there is an agent, someone doing the empowering; that power is a commodity being transferred from one person to the next; and that the recipients of this power are given the opportunity to exert more control over issues that are important to them (Fielding 1997). Fielding argues against this zero-sum notion of power, which for him leads to the inevitable conclusion that in order for someone to be empowered, the person who does the empowerment will have less power as a consequence. Instead, he frames empowerment in an emancipatory scheme which intrinsically involves values and purpose.

The question of values intersects with all development principles. More so, values are also embedded in the people involved in development work. They regard themselves as professionals with given expertise, engaged in unpredictable environments. The more stability they create for themselves and the projects, the longer they are able to work and sustain themselves. This necessary 'artificially induced' stability can come at the cost of authenticity.

Principles in action

As a way of considering and reflecting on the above principles and how they play out in reality, two case studies are presented and discussed in relation to the challenges faced by an evaluator when confronted with these principles.

The first case study involves a request for proposals (RFPs) during 2001 from a consortium of NGOs in South Africa to service rural schools, with the aim of improving quality in primary school education in these settings. A consultant had completed a needs assessment. The RFP was in fact a monumental document, outlining the geographic spread of the teachers, learners,

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and their communities, as well as the specific needs of the schools. A new national curriculum had been introduced, and teachers needed support in this area. The management of the schools needed urgent attention, and the principals and senior staff members were to be targeted. In addition, the consortium had to supply the learners with appropriate learning materials which would enhance the quality of the learning and teaching process.

The document articulated the underlying assumptions of the intervention. A specific timeline was attached, and clear indicators for success were stipulated. Each component of the intervention – management training, teachers' development, and resource provision – had clearly stipulated objectives. The number of sessions for the training components was also provided. The support of the Education Department officials was guaranteed, and locally based service providers were given preference. About 400 rural schools were targeted. The US-based funder required the NGOs to provide historical evidence of financial management and records of previous interventions. The implementation of this project was delayed for several months before a consortium approximating to the requirements and demands of the funder could be found. After several more delays, the project was started and eventually completed during 2003, two years later than expected.

The second case study is an intervention by the Integrated Rural Development Programme that targeted nine sites in Southern Africa, also funded by a US-based agency. After a pilot phase of the IRDP, with sites in Zimbabwe and South Africa, nine sites were identified in Zimbabwe (one added), South Africa (two added), Mozambique, Lesotho, Swaziland, and Botswana. The reduction of poverty was presented as the development imperative for the programme.

Asserting that governments have been ineffective in reaching the poor, the IRDP articulated the goal of developing applicable and holistic approaches to building the capacities of rural communities to craft, drive, and sustain their own social and economic development. The following specific objectives were expressed:

. Increasing civic participation. To mobilize rural communities to work together optimising their institutional capacities to support sustainable and integrated development.
. Increasing economic opportunity. To increase community capacity towards sustainable economic development, especially among economically marginalized groups.
. Enhancing well-being. To increase the capacity of individuals, families and communities to follow healthy lifestyles.
. Developing human capacity. To develop community capacity, especially among women and youth in life skills, family and community values and responsible leadership. (IRDP 2001:10)

For each of these 'cross-cutting' objectives, the management of the programme developed a logical framework analysis that included key outputs and outcomes: indicators of success; means of verification; and related assumptions. All the indicators outlined in the analysis refer to the findings of a baseline study in all the communities. Some key concepts, described in the strategic framework document of the IRDP, contain the underlying philosophy of co-operative action by civil society in integrated programmes. Some of these concepts include the following:

> 'Civic participation' is a process through which civil society influences and shares control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources that affect them. It is a process of co-operative action in which a group of individuals and/or organizations willingly share in the responsibilities and consequences of a common understanding or achievement of a task.

> 'Human Capacity Development' is a term used to denote learning related to the present functions of the individual, learning for the general growth of the individual and learning related to the transformation of the community. (IRDP 2001: 5)

In order to achieve the above objectives, the IRDP management set up a Regional Management structure and appointed a District Facilitator for each of the nine sites in the region. Each site had to set up a development board which would direct the development activities in that area. The IPDP management structure was based at a university, and several other initiatives linked to the intentions of the programme were loosely incorporated. NGOs, as service providers, had to be identified by local boards, who then submitted their development plans to the Regional Management for ratification and payment for services rendered.

Discussion

Both case examples involved considerable financial resources being made available. In the first example, the conceptualisation of the project happened between the donor and the consulting agency that was commissioned to conduct the needs assessment. The schools were not involved, the Education Departments played a supportive role, and the NGOs, the delivery agents, came on board towards the end.

However, the project plan was very detailed, there were clear objectives and a framework for implementation, and an explicit theoretical orientation was supplied. This was congruent with the expectations of the 'development waltz'. The actual implementation of the intervention introduced the 'kwaito beat' of development. 'Kwaito' is the name given to South African popular music, comprising Hip-Hop, R&B, Ragga, and a heavy dose of US and UK house music. Mix all of that up, give it lots of local spice and attitude, and you have got kwaito.[1]

The delay in starting the process was partly due to the requirements – having different organisations form a consortium of providers – and was possibly more the result of the ambitious scale of the project. The successful consortium struggled to bring together the different cultures and working and operational styles of its 'members'. There was neither budget nor much time available for the consortium to do this. The Education Department, with newly appointed officials, lent its support by compelling schools and teachers to attend the various training sessions. Principals and teachers attended the training sessions because they were instructed to do so, and because they were promised resources such as learning materials. Principals and teachers resented the identification of their schools as 'poor-performing', and this fact influenced the way in which they co-operated within the intervention.

The donor agency was successful in establishing the parameters for accountability. All the systems were put in place to ensure accountability. It could in all probability give adequate account of the financial expenditure and the human-resource utilisation. This principle, however, remained at the bureaucratised, mechanistic level, and there was very little chance for its success at other levels, such as mutual accountability, because the project failed to consider other interrelated principles such as 'ownership', 'participation', and 'autonomy'.

The principle of autonomy was accorded a very low priority in this case example. The 'call for proposals' should have been called 'calls for accepting proposals', because although NGOs were able to offer their own programmes, albeit revised within the consortium, they were locked into an operational framework that militated against autonomous decisions about fundamental aspects of the programme. Innovation and authenticity were limited to the interaction between the NGO's personnel and the participants, but even here the service providers were constrained and dictated to by preset outcomes that they had to meet. Some of the reported delays that occurred in this project were linked to teacher resistance.

The 'kwaito' beat in the second example was quite resounding. The target communities were engaged and consulted about their participation in the project. They were excited about the broad objectives, and keen to participate. Communities were encouraged to set up their governing structures, and the District Facilitators were employed to assist with this process.

This was, however, still in line with the development waltz. The beat changed after a while, when the lack of capacity of the governing boards became evident. Not only did they lack the capacity to drive the process, they were given little or no resources to do so. The employment of a District Facilitator, armed with transport and technical support – telephone and computer – can be very useful, if considered only in terms of the tune of the waltz. It can also create conflict that arises from envy and resentment, and this is the kwaito beat that needs to be considered. The response of the Regional Management structure to this and other dilemmas was to introduce more policy, principles, and implementation mechanisms as a way of managing the nine sites in Southern Africa. This gave more volume to the development waltz. The Regional Management's contribution at a leadership level was enormous, but it was adding a 'dancer' to an already confused rhythm.

The socio-political environment in Zimbabwe allowed for very little music to be played, let alone kwaito. The lack of project-linkage to local government structures in all the sites constrained the volume of the music. Traditional structures such as chiefdoms delayed implementation, and political differences forced participants to dance to different tunes.

The regional management structure set the pace for development, even though the intention was for the local governing boards to drive the process. For the sake of accountability, local boards had to present their plans and budgets to the regional structure. The District Facilitators, although locally based, were employed by the regional management structure. They were accountable to their employers, not to the local structure. The regional structure was accountable to the US donor. The local structure was forced to account to the regional structure, and technically the NGOs had to account to the local structure, but in reality to the District Facilitator, who would account to the regional structure. This bureaucratised system was probably necessary in an environment where people lacked the capacity to deal appropriately with large sums of money. Other levels and forms of accountability were drowned out by the need for mechanisms to account for actions as well as resources utilised.

The operational framework for the local governing boards clearly alludes to pseudo-autonomy, where local people were informed that they were in control of the project and that they had to drive the development process. This they had to do without basic resources such as means of communication, transport facilities, and financial resources to cover expenses. The District Facilitator was ostensibly accountable to the local board. This person was in fact employed by the regional co-ordinating structure and accounted to this structure for his/her work. The autonomy principle was also compromised by the lack of capacity of the individuals on the local governing boards. They lacked capacity both in terms of skills and resources.

Within the broad objectives of the IRDP, and allowing local NGOs to provide services, there was space for authentic initiatives on the part of service providers. However, the evaluation of the pilot process revealed that there was 'a lack of focus on the principle of building on African values and practices. This might affect sustainability of the program, diminish its value. The IRDP should take account of cultural heritage and provide a way of working that promotes a deep respect and resuscitation of progressive values that can assist and accelerate progress' (Ofir and Musi 2001: Executive Summary, ii).

The principle of authenticity is also linked to the comments above. The comments emphasise a focus on the uniqueness of the local conditions and on making that work for the project. The knowledge embedded in the African values and practice referred to above is essential for the development process. It also implies that every social and ecological entity has its own unique dynamics and characteristics, which justify a unique approach to development. The social and ecological information is usually found in a particular social system. The important point is that the local people, irrespective of how poor they are, usually have the appropriate

information about the hardware and software that are suited to their particular conditions. This does not mean that local people have all the necessary information, or all the answers. If the planning process does not involve the local people nor take into consideration the specificity of local conditions, then interventions are doomed to fail.

Despite the ambivalent practices and findings of these interventions and their inability to give full articulation to the principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity, it must be said that they had had some effect. In an environment where the needs are so stark and the local resource-base so minimal, any contribution will have some effect. The evaluation of the pilot phase of the IRDP found the following:

> The attitudes of many programme participants are starting to change towards understanding the importance of developing their own skills, insights and activities in order to determine their own future, rather than waiting for handouts.
>
> Community leaders as well as a number of participants have an increased awareness of the need for integrated approaches to development activities.
>
> New partnerships were formed among role players within each of the sites, and with some external parties.
>
> A community vision is starting to drive development processes in at least two of the sites. (Ofir and Musi 2001: executive summary, i)

Challenges for the evaluator

Evaluators are required to provide both formative reports, to assist programme staff with programme improvement, and summative reports to funding agencies for the purposes of accountability. This brings about assistance – accountability tensions. In order to do justice to the full potential and implications of the principles of accountability, autonomy, and authenticity, an evaluator should be aware that any development programme contains a theoretical as well as a practical aspect; and that social scientists often wrongly assume that conditions and people are the same all around the world, and that theories developed in far-off places are just as valid locally. In a formative evaluation, the evaluator must also consider 'whether the theoretical content of the programme has been adequately adapted to the social reality and whether conceptual definitions have been adequately operationalized' (Bless and Higson-Smith 1995: 50).

In a social environment where cultural norms and practices hold sway, evaluators will have to familiarise themselves with multiple interpretations of certain contexts. For example, an intervention persuading people that it is detrimental to the environment to cut down trees for firewood and that they should instead be using other, more commercial, forms of fuel may fail not only because people cannot afford the fuel, but also because they believe that it is their right to live off the land that belongs to them. Innovative programme theories that accommodate such views need to be developed for specific development interventions in African settings. This is an added task for those who are training and preparing evaluators, and for those who are writing texts for use in the training of evaluators.

Pawson and Tilley (1994) assert that causal explanations cannot be inferred merely by observing the relations between different phenomena. The evaluator needs to look beyond the events that produce change, in order to explain the process of change itself. The authors' interpretation of an experimental design, from a realistic perspective, introduces two critical concepts, namely 'mechanisms' and 'context'. They maintain that the context can dramatically influence the success or failure of an intervention. Not only must conditions be favourable and

suited to the intervention, the attitudes of the participants or clients will also play a major role. Elsewhere, Pawson and Tilley (1997) have argued:

> Regardless of whether they are born of inspiration or ignorance, the subject's choices at each of these junctures will frame the extent and the nature of change . . . Potential subjects will consider a program (or not), volunteer for (or not), co-operate closely (or not), stay the course (or not), learn lessons (or not), retain lessons (or not) and apply the lessons (or not). (Pawson and Tilley 1997: 38)

This suggests that an evaluator needs to look beyond the logical framework and employ a strategy of what Mark (2001) calls values enquiry, which is essentially an attempt to identify the values positions relevant to the programme intervention and related policies, so that these can inform the evaluation. It will then be possible to assess how the development principles have been applied.

Conclusion

Donors, development organisations, and civil-society organisations do engage in strategic planning, Strategic planning has also become entrenched in the discourse of international development. However, this discourse, 'the development waltz', needs to take into account the tunes that are emerging on the ground, so that the overall 'harmony' or 'symphony' is directed by an informed 'musical score'. An evaluator's sharpened awareness of the change process should alert him or her to the local tunes, which could include the influence of local politics on project management and implementation or individual attitudes of participants. Measures of possible influences exerted by community, social capital, and policy environments on the individual will deepen our understanding of the change processes and the value that people place on various components in everyday life. These measures will assist evaluators to avoid what Fiske and Taylor (1991) call the 'fundamental attribution error', whereby an individual's behaviour is attributed to his or her personal qualities, rather than considering situational factors.

The real danger in development work is when the logical framework embraces a 'development myth' (Chambers 1997) that is sustained despite evidence to the contrary; for example, when a host of different levels of intervention is attempted, and 'complexification' is introduced and enforced in the name of integrated development. The increase in complexity, the different levels and lines of accountability, and the (dif)fusion of objectives can nullify any gains that were promised initially. The noble intentions are often supported by social theories and get embedded in logical frameworks, which in turn are generated at a distance from where the interventions need to take place, by individuals who do not question the power that they wield through the intellectual, cultural, material, and financial resources that they control. The local, complex, diverse, dynamic, and unpredictable realities are underestimated. The evaluator, faced with the charge of attributing causality within an intervention programme, needs as much assistance as is possible and financially feasible in order to go beyond the original logical framework to uncover the actual melodies and rhythms operating in an intervention. It would benefit the intervention if those most likely to be adversely affected when things do go wrong are trained, empowered, and informed so that they are able to judge, decide, and influence events. This could involve letting go of the logical framework, making it subject to the needs and desires of the recipients – that is, allowing different tunes, rhythms, and beats to emerge.

Note

1. Kwaito is about the township: knowing about the township, understanding the township, walking the walk, talking the talk, and – most importantly – being proud of these things. The township is being

celebrated by the youth of South Africa in kwaito music, which is interesting, given that the township was created to keep a ready supply of cheap labour under the control of the apartheid government.

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