

What's in a Name?

Job categorisation & relationship building in aid organisations

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OUTLINE



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 - Project ADDUP
- This study
 - Background
 - Findings
- Ongoing research

WHO AM I?



- Trained in Industrial & Organisational (I/O) Psychology
- Particularly interested in poverty issues
- Aid work in India and Cambodia



AID ORGANISATIONS



- A unique challenge:
 - wide variation in size and scope
 - mix of worker types, cultures
 - within a social context of inequity and injustice
- Some work by cross-cultural psychology
 - e.g. Expatriate assignments, volunteering
- Largely untouched by I/O psychology
- Capacity development between:
 - Aid workers and the wider community (social psyc)
 - Individuals working within aid organisations (I/O psyc)



- Are Development Discrepancies Undermining Performance?
- What is the impact of pay diversity on the performance of aid workers?
- Pay ratio: can be 10:1 or more (expat:local)
- Aid organisations may therefore inadvertently perpetuate the very injustices they seek to address

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT?



(Carr, Chipande & MacLachlan, 1998)

- ‘Double demotivation’
- Locals: Helplessness / demotivated
- Higher paid expats: guilt / superiority
- Expats on local salaries: see both guilt of expats, and demotivation of locals
- But: is there more to it than pay alone?

CRITICAL INCIDENTS



- “You’re the expert”
 - You deserve more money, you’re the expert
 - A local can’t do that work, it has to be an expat
- “Just a volunteer”
 - There’s no one around anymore who knows what they’re doing, you’re just a volunteer

AN IDEA



- Pay may play an important role in influencing (or perhaps even allocating?) group membership
- This may reinforce barriers between groups and result in segregation, poor communication and little networking or collaboration

EXPLORATORY STUDY



- Field research to examine group membership and the concept of capacity development
- Project site: Cambodia
- Qualitative and exploratory interviews
- 17 aid workers
 - 9 expat: 2 permanent, 4 consultants, 3 volunteers
 - 8 local: 6 permanent, 1 consultant, 1 consultant/volunteer
- Thematic analysis
 - Finding 1: group membership/categorisation
 - Finding 2: relationship building

FINDING 1: CATEGORISATION



- Expat-local dichotomy
- “Some expats they are proud with themselves [...] they look to us such like we know nothing about things or something like that and after that our relationship become bad, become worse and worse”
-local worker, permanent
- “I think that just by being foreign you get this either fear or people don't like you sometimes, like resentment, or just that people are afraid of you, afraid to talk to you for some reason. I don't know if it's that they think that you're higher ranking or you're going to get them in trouble, or just they don't want to...they're afraid of their English skills”
-expatriate worker, consultant

JOB CATEGORIES



- **Permanent:** “but the permanent expatriate is different [to volunteers and consultants] because they have position, they have power” -*local worker, permanent*
- **Consultant:** “the consultant [is] making a lot of money, a lot of money, and probably there is a certain prestige to being a [...] consultant versus being a volunteer” -*expatriate worker, consultant*
- **Volunteer (+):** “[volunteers are] easy to make the friend because they don’t consider they are boss” -*local worker, consultant*
- **Volunteer (-):** “people think that if you volunteer it’s because you have no job back home that you can take.” -*expatriate worker, permanent*

FINDING 2: RELATIONSHIP BUILDING



- The key to capacity development success
Four themes:
 - **Communication** – being understood, being listened to, listening to others, and being open and honest
“normally to make [capacity development] happen we need, people need to communicate to each other more effectively, to understand each other” -*local worker, permanent*
 - **Confidence** – belief in own ability, belief in ability of others
“the problem was that noone would listen to her and if I hadn’t been there [...] that first “no” she would have taken that as a no” -*expatriate worker, volunteer*

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING (cont)



- **Friendship** – spending time informally, developing trust
“going along to social functions with them, you know if they invite you to their house, go along, you know and show that you’re not above anything like that” -*expatriate worker, consultant*
- **Reciprocal learning/teaching** - two-way relationship
“if they can see that you are also learning from them then that’s how you get a very good relationship, that’s how it works very well.” -*expatriate worker, consultant*

SUMMARY



- Workers categorise themselves and others in terms of their job type
- Implicit power structure: Permanent-consultant-volunteer-local
- Barriers between groups are reinforced by positioning by self and others
- Relationship building is key for capacity development and aid work generally

WHERE TO FROM HERE?



- Two more studies planned:
 - Study 2: develop a quantitative measure of relationship building. Currently being administered in 6 countries.
 - Study 3: develop a model of the link between job category, relationship building and capacity development (via 'work engagement'?) to be tested in Cambodia.

Questions? Comments? Feedback?



References:

Carr, S. C., Chipande, R., & MacLachlan, M. (1998). Expatriate aid salaries in Malawi: a doubly demotivating influence? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 18(2), 133-143.

OECD. (2006). *Technical co-operation: its role in capacity development*. Istanbul: Issues paper.