

Modeling and Practise of Integral Development in rural Zambia. Case Macha.

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Abstract. During the last years, the small, rural community of Macha, Zambia transformed from a closed community with fixed thinking paradigms to a community open to change. As a result, the community embraces the implementation and use of information and communication technologies (ICT). Further, interventions result in a significant reduction of malaria. This paper presents how an integral approach to development does undergird the outcomes in Macha. Based upon an ethnographic study of the Macha community, the study indicates components of social innovation through an integral approach. Such approach views activities in a holistic, instead of particularized, manner. Simultaneous investments in education, leadership, and community vitalize and sustain progress. Development practitioners act as mentors that 'hold the space' for change to come. The study indicates the life conditions and interactions that overcome barriers to change, and how a 3rd culture perspective stimulates local initiatives to address local needs and inspires the local community.

Key words: integral development, change, community, Macha, Zambia

1 Introduction

This paper reflects the findings of a case study research on aspects of an integral approach to change in Macha, rural Zambia. The document describes the rural environment in which the study took place. The literature base, together with the systematic, qualitative and longitudinal methodology is presented. The outcome of the process results in an integral development model.

The model is corroborated by field observations and disciplinary publications from the community.

2 Environment

The case study focuses on the change in the community of Macha, a small rural community located in the Southern Province of Zambia. Since mid twentieth century a central area in the community, it contains health and education institutes that retain a small establishment of medical and education professionals. Since 2003 Macha has grown from being a small rural village with limited facilities and accommodations for health and education only, to a rural community with, among others: Internet access, an innovative education campus, a community center, a radio station, entrepreneurial activities and an airstrip. These developments, driven by local talent and local initiative, have proven to be inspirational and enabling and were accompanied by tangible progress in the form of growth of socio-economic activities, agency, and a higher standard of living, as well as intangible progress bringing hope to the local community making them believe they themselves can be the change.

Next to socio-economic growth, Macha has seen important results in the fight against malaria and growth of community-driven projects. The Macha Research Trust, an institute conducting state-of-the-art malaria research, has shown a dramatic reduction of malaria cases in under 5 years olds in Macha of 90%, a significant result in rural Africa. Although the results are clear the etiology for the change remained unclear [1]. The cooperative community venture, Macha Works, acts as the vehicle for social progress, involved with implementation of infrastructures and programs in the Macha community. This entity emerged from a respectful vision informed by the dreams of so-called local talents gathered since 2003. Activities are implemented according to the Macha Works! model [2] and span interventions in education, communications, transport, and energy. Thus Macha Works is also involved in collaborative Internet through its entity LinkNet [3], and innovative primary education through Macha Innovative Community School (MICS).

The case study examined the events in Macha using an integral perspective. The integral perspective builds on the human development theory of Spiral Dynamics [4] and the Integral Model [5]. It recognizes human consciousness as a developmental model in which each stage becomes more complex and inclusive. Next to exterior, tangible aspects (behavior and structures) it recognizes interior, intangible aspects (intentions/culture) at both an individual and collective level and emphasizes their interdependence.

Looking from an integral perspective, an intervention in a changing setting cannot be viewed in isolation. The approach used must be holistic (transdisciplinary) instead of particular (disciplinary), taking different factors into account. These factors show their affect in intangibles like empowerment, self-esteem, and sense of self-worth at the individual level, and social cohesion and strengthening of social fabric at the collective level.

3 Goal, Purpose, and Methodology

The goal and purpose of the case study research is two-fold. Firstly, the research tries to answer the missing etiology for the successful results of malaria reduction in Macha using an integral perspective. Secondly, the research with the integral approach answers the global call for new effective approaches within development, taking the case of Macha Works into account.

The case study uses Macha as a proof-of-concept of implementing an integral approach within development. The case study examines the underlying success factors by using valuable on-ground-knowledge and insights to provide input for reproducing the successful approach used in Macha to other sites in rural Zambia and Africa.

The case study used models as provided through Spiral Dynamics (SDi) [4] and practical interactions to conduct integral research, incorporating tools like the CultureSCAN - a test assessing and plotting value systems, change dynamics and culture - and looked through an integral lens in a five phases approach. Researchers and mentors were trained in SDi, with its five distinct phases:

- Phase 1 empirical study at Macha, Zambia;
- Phase 2 structuring information;
- Phase 3 theory review;
- Phase 4 analysis and develop prototype roadmap;
- Phase 5 continuous review and development of Integral Development Model.

Phase 1 consisted of an empirical, ethnographic study performed at Macha, Zambia for a period of 10 weeks in 2008. During the period information was gathered using the following method:

1. *Literature/documentation*. Documents and reports only available in Macha were collected and reviewed on important information.
2. *Observation*. Observations were made throughout the ten weeks period that determined the research path that was being followed.
3. *Participation/experience*. By participating within the community, working in local organizations and with local people (LinkNet and MICS) and attending activities (meetings, classes, welcoming visitors, sports, openings, medical research, birthdays, and church) relationships with the local people were built and information was gathered.
4. *Interviews*. Documented (recorded) interviews with local people were held, as well as undocumented interviews and conversations.
5. *Photo/film*. Through use of photo and film, important information was documented.

There were no pre-structured interviews, no queries and there was no schedule of activities. The only part of the research that followed some schedule was the first week in which an introduction was given on Macha and the different activities that took place. The choice of not using a prior set structure was made in order to start the research as blank as possible, being objective and taking

everything into account. The only purpose of the empirical study was to understand the community. What is happening, where, how and why? The path followed for the empirical study was determined by the observations, participation and experience of the researcher who used his training in SDi in order to be able to do so. By participating within the local community, relationships with the local people were built. These relationships contributed to the acceptance of the researcher and the mutual openness between the local community and the researcher. During the empirical study important actors (organizations, persons and local leaders) were identified and examined for further research.

Although not using a prior set structure in order to be objective, having the research path be determined on the observations and experience of the researcher is sensitive to subjectivity. In order to diminish this subjectivity the researcher at all times followed the principle of 'seeing that what you see is not everything that is what you see', constantly keeping on asking the question *why?* in order to get a deeper understanding of the situation.

Being knowledgeable in theories of human development brought understanding in identifying different mindsets and value systems and helped to make a distinction between the subjective and inter-subjective, thereby contributing to the researcher's objectivity.

Phase 2 of the methodology focused on structuring the information gained from the empirical study. The information was structured for: the actors (organizations, persons and local leaders) within Macha that were identified as important and for which detailed information was available; Macha Works' documentation and extant like Sachs [6], different fields of focus within a holistic approach (water, power, health, education, infrastructure, communication and leadership); and other relevant and important information that could not be assigned to one of the actors or fields of focus. The purpose of phase 2 was to bring structure in the information gathered during the empirical study without relating it to theory in order to give a description of what has and is happening in Macha.

Phase 3 of the study involved the theory review. The following theories were reviewed in order to provide a theoretical background and explanation on integral thinking and interior human development: Spiral Dynamics [4], Wilber's Integral model [5], Barretts four forms of alignment [7] and Merry's evolutionary leadership [8]. Looking at interior human development, different developmental lines can be defined (cognitive, moral, emotional, interpersonal etc. [9]). This case study focused on the value line. Appearing as the most calibrated line, the value line provided the best way to examine the developments that have and are taking place in Macha and gave valuable insights for the study. Leading from the theoretical background, a review was done on using an integral approach within development incorporating a conceptual model for operating on a relational instead of rational basis in order to align with local values. Furthermore, using the theory review, explanation is derived on the basic stages of interior human development from both an individualistic and collectivistic perspective.

The purpose of this phase was to provide the theoretical background upon which further analysis could be made.

Phase 4 of the methodology focused on putting the practice to theory. Here the information structured in phase 2 was linked to the theoretical background provided in phase 3 in order to analyze what has and is happening in Macha and explain why and how. The analysis followed the structure as presented in phase 2 (actors, fields, others) and looked at their correlations and interdependence. Here the purpose was to provide an analysis that from the theoretical background: explains the approach being used in Macha; identifies and captures the success factors; and give insight on the possible degree of re-production.

Phase 5 in this phase a continuous review on the findings of the study took place over the period 2008 - 2012. Being sensitized to the framework, findings were continuously reviewed and looped back. When faced with an unknown or remarkable happening, it was approached with the attitudes 'it is not wrong, it is just different', and 'it does not matter why, it only matters that', 'never assume', and 'always look for alternate interpretations'.

4 Integral Development Model

The conceptual model derived from the work provides a road map for integral development. It encompasses three distinct areas of attention, which are *Thinking*, *Practice*, and *Progress*.

4.1 Thinking

This area of attention aggregates the body of thoughts. These thoughts consist of two focus points: interior human development, and holistic approach.

Human Development People develop through different identifiable stages, or value systems, that become more complex and inclusive. Human consciousness consists of a developmental model in the form of a growth hierarchy, in which each stage influences the entire sequence as people transcend and include the former. In order to recognize and be able to level and interact with different stages, mentors play an important role. They uphold an open view. They operate from a 3rd culture perspective. Next to their personal value system that includes beliefs and intentions, mentors are open to the local value systems, which are likely to be at a different level of human consciousness, in order to provide solutions that fit the local needs and enshrine the local culture in a healthy manner.

Holistic Approach Mentors operate from an integral perspective, with projects set-up horizontally instead of vertically and with simultaneous investments in different disciplines such as education, leadership, and community, thereby vitalizing and enforcing each other. The intentions and behavior of individuals and collectives, and the existing structures and systems, are seen as interdependent.

It is recognized that no challenge or intervention can be addressed in isolation. Different factors as socio-economics and agency, including unquantifiable impacts should be taken into account.

Within a holistic approach, both the exterior, (the structures and behavior), and the interior, (the intentions and values), are taken into account. These are intangible and can only be revealed by speaking with and listening to people, and necessitate the presence of trust. Trust requires an open view, respecting and understanding the local value system(s), and being sensitive to the local community, especially to the interior (intentions and values) of people. Trust diminishes the distance between a mentor and the local community and thereby enables feedback and the ability to reveal and utilize valuable decentralized information.

Aspects of human consciousness, and the practice of a holistic approach, can appear either *folk-informed* in response to the reality on the ground and independent of theory, or transdisciplinarily *integrally-informed*, explicitly drawn on theories providing theoretical background, so long as it enables one to hold an open view. Many interdependent denominators must be taken into account, (for instance all four quadrants - intentions, behavior, culture and structure of the Integral model). Change must address all denominators in order to realize integral and sustainable progress.

4.2 Practice

Building on the body of thought provided by the Thinking phase, *Practice* focuses on the life conditions. This is the environment in which an individual or collective resides. By holding an open view, operating from a 3rd culture perspective and understanding the interior of the local community, activities are aligned to the local intentions and culture. So that Changes needed to be made in structure and systems alter the life conditions to stimulate healthy and sustainable progress. Such is realized by 'holding the space' for change to come.

Transformational change involves the local community to evolve from being reluctant to change, to willing to change, to being capable of change. Or in other words from being a *closed community*, with its thinking frozen in its own value system and seeing no (external) need for change, to an *arrested community*, willing to change but still with barriers to overcome, to an *open community*, capable of change.

With today's growing globalization, even rural areas in Africa are experiencing influence from urban areas and the West, and therefore get exposed to a different set of value systems. This exposure causes the local life conditions to change, possibly sensitizing the community to evolve from being frozen in its own value system, to slowly starting to become willing to change, but still with barriers to overcome. Therefore mentors must 'hold the space' for change to come. At such times focus is on creating the life conditions that break down barriers for change and that transcend and include conventional thinking into breakthrough action. In other words: everything needed for change is already

there, it only needs to be given the space to emerge. Focus points for holding the space are:

- *long-term vision*, as change in general, and especially change in intentions and values, involves a long-term process;
- *guide instead of lead*, to assure holding an open view and operating from a 3rd culture perspective the mentor should position him/herself as a *guider* instead of a *leader*, acting from the background providing time and space for local initiative and talent to emerge;
- *local initiative*, providing time and space, acting from a guiding role, allowing for local initiative and talent to emerge;
- *the part and the whole*, to act on behalf of the entire organism for both the greater good and for the individual gain, bringing alignment towards the higher purpose. (Note: holding space, taking a guiding role and operating from the background, does not mean the mentor is not allowed at times to take a leading position. In fact, when healthy development of the local community is jeopardized the mentor should stand up and act accordingly in order to secure the higher purpose).
- *eehee-feeling*, being passionate about the work contributes to the quality of performance. This includes authentic behaviour, being accepted by the local culture, and supported within existing local structures.

4.3 Progress

The *Thinking* and *Practice* results in *Progress* as such progress is defined in the local value system. In a rural African environment like Macha such progress can be witnessed through acceptance, agency and local ownership, and being able to celebrate the contributions.

Living the Life To be part of the community, the mentor must align to the local life conditions, and *live the life* in order to gain acceptance within the local community. Focus points for living the life in rural Macha are:

- *value relationship*, as the culture is one of collectivism and centers on the relationship, efficiency is approached from a relational perspective which needs time to build and maintain;
- *show commitment*, since to strengthen relationships within the local community a mentor must be able and willing to recognize and value physical presence at important community events;
- *here and now*, since rural life focuses on activities in the here and now, with traditions providing for valuable guidance for today's activities;
- *paucity*, as in a resource-limited environment abundance cannot be shown without having been allowed to do so. All resources are shared with the community. By showing abundance, acceptance and existence within the local community is jeopardized;
- *suffering and sacrifice*, is perceived by the local community as normal and commonplace;

- *recognizing (local) authority* to follow the decision as announced by Chiefs and Government, as having their support will contribute to the impact of the mentor’s activities and acceptance within the local community;
- *believes and practices*, as religious life plays an important role in Macha. In order to align activities to the local life conditions, local (Christian) values should be respected and incorporated.

Ownership and Empowerment For change to be sustainable and embraced by the local community, people must feel they have invested. Activities therefore must be locally owned and operated. Holding the space for local talent and initiative to emerge, not telling people what to do, contributes significantly to local ownership and empowerment with activities better aligned to the local life conditions and use of de-centralized local knowledge.

Celebrate contributions In order to get support, whether financial, political or in the form of positive energy, it is important to make contributions known. People at different levels should be aware of what is happening in order for them to provide support. Of course, at an international and national level, making the contributions known can lead to financial, material and/or strategic support. Whereas at a regional and local level, making the contributions known contributes to the acceptance of the activities within in the local community as well as getting support from important local stakeholders. Also following the seeing-is-believing principle, making the contributions transparent and visible to the local community, will contribute to breaking down the barrier to change and enable breakthrough development for the community at large.

5 Field Observations

Being of holistic nature, the integral approach recognized in Macha bases itself on the recognition of human agency as a part of a developmental model, and its effect of changing life conditions. In order for the local community of Macha to develop, *space was held* for change to come. By the mentor taking a *guiding* instead of *leading role*, working from a higher purpose with different horizontal projects simultaneously taking place in the fields: health; education; infrastructure; communication and community, and not telling people what to do, local talent and initiatives did emerge. Macha transformed from being a community frozen in its own old thinking paradigm and beliefs to a community that has opened up to change and that today incorporates new technologies (like the Internet) and exhibits significant agency. Due to the change in the life conditions, caused by exposure to the West, the willingness for change slowly emerged, but still with barriers to overcome. Holding the space and following the seeing-is-believing principle, local change agents in the community stood up and overcame these barriers to change, which enabled breakthrough sustainable progress for the community at large.

When viewed from a knowledge perspective, Macha as a living laboratory provides insights and on-ground knowledge for integral development in general and rural Africa specifically. Progress emphasizes the importance of aligning to, and adapting life conditions in order to stimulate upward development, keeping the water instead of the fish, as well as stimulating local talent and initiatives in order for activities to meet the local needs and assure a sustainable approach. Rather than holding a closed view, providing solutions from their own value system, mentors in the community were effectively holding an open view making them able to level with the local community and act on behalf of the entire organism for both the greater good and individual gain, recognizing the part as well as the whole. They did focus on creating the life conditions that break down barriers for change and that transcend and include conventional thinking into breakthrough action. And although holding space does not give exact direction, it gives the advantage of not knowing and seeing things emerge chaordically that are really needed.

Aligning the activities in Macha Works according to this model for integral development provided base for further growth of mentorship and local talent in the Macha Works model [2]. Over a period of eight years (2003-2011), around forty local individuals in the direct sphere of influence were recognized to have emerged and were able to contribute significantly to strengthen community driven solutions. The three phases of the model were looped together repeatedly, informing the thinking phase by previous progress recognized. By holding the time and space, and purposefully not telling people what to do, the local talents have been stimulated to themselves find what it is they should be doing and how they can contribute to the higher purpose. A high level of local knowledge is thus utilized and initiatives emerge that fit the local needs and that are vested in the community, thereby contributing to a sustainable approach.

The local talent function as a trigger, inspiring the local community with belief that they themselves can bring change and development. It is expected that each of the local talents will have influenced numerous people in their own sphere of influence. The increase in agency and capacity in Macha has been widely recognized. Various elements of the work provided for new viewpoints, of which a number were conceptualized and explained in a book 'Placemark' [10], and inspired contributions to the body of knowledge through essays, numerous publications, and national and international presentations. Such presence has supported understanding and awareness and opportunities for growth and recognition of local and national leadership.

6 Conclusions

The approach in Macha is recognized to be holistic (transdisciplinary) instead of particular (disciplinary). It takes into account a complex array of conceptual, interdisciplinary and qualitative factors. The significant reduction of malaria in Macha is not only realized due to improvements in healthcare, but synchronized with improvements in education, communication, housing, and economic welfare,

which have raised the standard of living. Further, the emergence of community-driven projects, including the set up and operation of a large community internet network, coined and guided by local talent was greatly aided by mentors 'holding space' for the local talent to gain grounding and develop.

This case study research presents a model for an integral approach, with three distinct phases: Thinking, Practice, and Progress, that can be an effective approach for social innovation that addresses local needs in rural Africa.

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