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## **Extract from 'What is development management?'**

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The specific nature of development tasks means that managing such tasks differs from the simple idea of getting the work done by the best means available on several counts. First, aiming at social change means directing effort outside the particular organization one works for, as well as within it. Second, there will never be enough 'means available' to impose a particular social change; hence the emphasis on influence or intervention. Third, it may not be agreed what work has to be done ... Finally, and more generally, ideas such as influence, social change and sustainability all point to the overriding importance process and continuity. It is not just that development agencies undertake tasks of trying to influence ongoing social processes; the policies and practices of the development agencies, and hence the very tasks they carry out, are themselves part and parcel of those same processes.

Let us take these four points in turn. How far does each imply that development management is distinctive, and in what ways? The first point is that while conventional management is mostly a question of trying to achieve *internal, organizational* goals by co-ordinating internal organizational resources, development management also aims further, at *social* goals *external* to any particular organization. Of course, the skills and competences relevant to co-ordinating the use of internal resources are still relevant. They now have to be extended to include assisting in the mobilization and co-ordination of resources from a variety of sources. Generally speaking, no single agency has control over all the relevant resources, so there is also a need for inter-organizational negotiation and brokering as a prerequisite to the co-ordination activity.

This brings us to the second point. This was expressed above as the lack of sufficient means (even if all resources from different sources were brought together) to impose a given social change. Another way of expressing much the same idea would be to note that social goals are generally not amenable to being achieved simply by the concentration of sufficient effort. 'Means available' just is not the right concept for working towards social goals. Hence where conventional management may be about *directing* resources towards meeting goals, development management is more about using resources for *influencing* social processes or *intervening* in such processes in favour of certain goals. One can extend the point about no single agency having control over the relevant resources to noting that no single agency has anything but very partial control over these social processes.

Once again, there are skills and competences in conventional management that remain relevant, in this case those used to work out what is the 'best means available'. These would include methods for calculating efficiency or appraising alternative investments, as well as employee appraisal, the use of motivational techniques, and so on. But once one moves from directing to influencing and intervening, the appraisal methods required also need to broaden, to include social research methods, economic and social policy analysis, and so on. Particular research and analysis skills are needed for the quick but rigorous appraisal of specific situations and the likely impact of proposed interventions on the basis of incomplete information. In addition, the forging of alliances and mobilization of resources across several organizations requires an extension of motivational techniques to the management of values, since it is often on the basis of shared values that organizations are able to work together effectively.

Third, how is it decided what work is to be done in the name of development? The social goals aimed at are strongly subject to value-based conflicts, derived from different conceptions of 'progress' and development, and from differences in interests, as mentioned above. Thus,

development management can include facilitating a process of conflict resolution or negotiating between interests in order to formulate widely accepted goals. Or it may be that conflicting interests are not reconcilable, in which case achieving a development task can be a matter of struggling to promote a particular view of 'progress' in the face of opposition from other, powerful, interests. In some cases, extreme perhaps but unfortunately not uncommon, conflicts are all too violently physical. The resulting social upheaval may be such that it is not clear how anything approaching 'development' can take place, but there is certainly work to be done.

The expressive aspect of management may be very important here, and basic ethical and philosophical questions are involved. For example, what gives agencies the right to act or negotiate on behalf of particular groups or interests? Given the uncertainty of achieving any particular long-term result, can it be legitimate to employ means aimed at development that impact negatively on particular groups in the short term? And so on.

Finally, the importance of process is a point that may be missed if the notion of task is emphasized too much. Development agencies are trying to influence social processes but they also have their own histories and their own policies and practices change as a result of such processes. They are even subject to influence from other development agencies! Although we are here considering a view of development as the result of deliberate efforts at positive change, this view is certainly not a mechanistic one in which one agency (a particular state within its borders, say) prescribes solutions to development problems and development results directly from their implementation. States may be more or less powerful but there is always a multiplicity of agencies whose actions impact on the course of development. And the idea of process is important, not only because development is a process which such actions may be designed to shift in a positive direction, but also because such actions result from policies on behalf of the agencies which themselves shift. Development policy itself should be regarded as process.

What exactly are the implications of this last point for development management? Are there particular skills or competences required to manage in such a context? There may be certain skills required for building up the capacity to maintain influence into the future rather than just carrying out projects or other one-off interventions. In the context of a single organization such capacity building would require skills in the area known as organizational development; with multiple agencies involved these skills need extending into *institutional development*. On the whole, though, rather than any specific additional skill requirements, what is suggested is the overriding need for an appreciation of the complexities of development in terms of policy as process involving multiple agencies. This appreciation may even be a starting point for the whole subject of development management.