

Culture and Change Management: A Case Study of GIMPA

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Abstract

This paper looks at organisational change by examining the restructuring of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), which was formerly a publicly-funded institution. In 1999 GIMPA, the sole public administration training institution in Ghana, was diagnosed as being unsuccessful in carrying out its mandate to build and develop vital human resources for national development and, therefore, faced closure. This paper examines the extent to which the employment of Ghanaian cultural values contributed to the change process. It explores change and leadership issues and indicates that the African believes in change and uses various forms of indigenous knowledge that support the concept of change to bring about change. It argues that the necessity for consideration of traditions of local cultures in change management is crucial, particularly where foreign management approaches are practiced in those places.

Keywords: Organisational change, public administration, Ghanaian culture, indigenous knowledge, proverbs

Introduction

During the past 20 years many African countries, including Ghana, have experienced Public Sector Reforms (PSR) with support from donor institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In recent years, the external environment has changed. The support is not easily forthcoming and therefore, the need for reforms has become critical. For public educational institutions in Ghana, the main pressures for change are driven by the government diverting public investment from higher education to primary education, and competitive pressure from the private universities (Manuh, Gariba & Budu, 2007). These forces demand that institutions move away from the former ways of doing things to new strategies for their survival.¹

The Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA), which is the focus of this paper was established in 1961 by Executive Instrument 117 under Act 41 as a Management Development Institute (MDI). It was fully funded by the Ghana government, and its founding objective was mainly to train graduates from the universities and similar institutions for induction into Ghana's public service. In other words, it was to prepare individuals as employees and managers for the Public Administrative Systems. In 1999, GIMPA, the sole public administration training institution in Ghana, was diagnosed as being unsuccessful in carrying out its mandate to build and develop vital

human resources for national development (Amoah, 1999).

GIMPA restructuring, then, was part of the national PSR aimed at restructuring the public sectors to make them more effective in providing goods and services for the citizens. The PSR was implemented through various development models, such as commercialization of agencies, partially funding agencies, closure of institutions, retrenchment of staff, programme redesign and management, cost recovery, and new control processes of the public sector (Ayee, 2001; Antwi, Analoui & Nana-Agyekum, 2008; World Bank Report 2004).

This paper looks at organisational change by examining the success story of the restructuring of GIMPA. It looks at the extent to which the employment of Ghanaian cultural values contributed to the change process. Specifically, the paper explores change and leadership issues and indicates that the African believes in change and uses various forms of indigenous knowledge that support the concept of change to bring about change. It argues that the necessity for consideration of traditions of local cultures in change management is crucial, particularly where foreign management approaches are practiced in those places.

¹ The material that informs much of this paper is based foremost on field interviews by Betty Nanor in 2010 of some GIMPA staff members and other stakeholders who participated in the restructure process of GIMPA, as well as subsequent interviews and also materials from other sources.

Organisational change

Organisational development, which may also take names such as 'organisational change', 'change management' or 'innovative monitoring', is a context-based approach to organisational transformation. Barnett & Carroll (1995: 219) posit that, by definition, organisational change entails 'a transformation of an organisation between two points in time.' It is a movement of an organisation from 'the existing plateau toward a desired future state in order to increase organisational efficiency and effectiveness' (Pryor *et al.* 2008: 2; see also George & Jones 2002; Cummings & Worley, 2005). Again, it is a long-term effort to improve problem-solving and renewal processes of an organisation. It, therefore, involves particularly 'a more effective and collaborative management of organisational culture of formal work teams with the assistance of a change agent, or catalyst...' (French & Bell, 1999: 25-26).

Organisational development, thus, calls for an in-depth knowledge of the organisation, innovation of goals, structures, actors, roles, technology, and new ways of interactions. It involves planning, coordinating, controlling, monitoring and executing changes in the process of the change (Sarayreh, Khudair & Barakat, 2013). As Tsoukas & Chia (2002: 567) argue, change therefore is 'the reweaving of actors' webs of beliefs and habits of action to accommodate new experiences obtained through interactions'. The new experiences obtained by way of interactions may in turn cumulatively affect the environment of the organisation. The alteration that may occur in that manner may consequently call for organisational change. In

other words, there are driving forces that may trigger the necessity for change in an organisation. These may be threats that require responses or opportunities that are a motivation for adaptation of change.

Organisations are required to adapt change, and in some cases radical and total transformation, as they face the dynamic, changing environment (Pryor *et al.*, 2008). And the dynamic, changing environment may be factors that arise due to internal causes (Boies & Prechel, 2002; Baker 1990; Prechel & Boies 1998) or external causes (Fligstein, 1985; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thus change becomes necessary for reasons that originate internally as well as externally to the organisation, and as Burnes (2004) argues, the change comes in all forms, sizes and shapes. The link between environmental factors and organisational change needs examining for the simple reason that the stability of an organisation depends on the stability of its environments.

Organisational change may occur due to the characteristics of the organisation (Prechel, (2000)). The characteristics may be the small size of the organisation or its financial instability, which may endanger its continued existence, or cause it to depend on other organisations (Morris, 2007; Boies & Prechel, 2002; Baker, 1990). For example, in the U.S.A.'s banking industry, banks with weak financial characteristics are dependent on the federal government (Morris, 2007). Such an organisation is likely to adapt change because of lack of autonomy arising from inherent poor financial characteristics. Internal characteristics or factors may cause an organisation to adapt to change. Similarly, external en-

vironmental factors may cause change in an organisation. Pryor *et al.* (2008: 5) cite 'major economic and political changes, technological advances, rapid expansion in the global marketplace and altering demographic and social structures' as the most widely-stated macro-environmental factors that may motivate organisations to change. (See also George & Jones, 2002).

But crucial to organisational change is also the important role of culture. Organisational change is culture sensitive; it includes a cultural change in the host organisation (Head, Sorenson, Preston, & Yaeger, 2005)—theories and technologies to be applied may include foreign approaches—as well as a consideration of the national culture in which the organisation subsists. Aguirre, Post & Alpern (2013) and Schein (2009) echo this when they indicate that cultural considerations are crucial as culture is the bedrock of behavior in organisations. 'Culture is a pattern of shared tacit assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems' (Schein, 2009: 27). It is a set of assumptions, beliefs, and values shared and expressed by members of a group through their behavior (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Therefore, initiating change demands a clear understanding and interpretation of values and norms of behavior that are acceptable by the institution (Cummings & Worley, 2005). In other words, to understand or initiate change in an organisation, insightful knowledge about the foundational structures (which include the national culture) of the organ-

isation, its values, beliefs, and norms is fundamental (Kezar, 2001).

Hinds, Lei & Lyon (2011) have provided strong evidence that national cultural diversity in global work is intertwined with performance, organisational climate, social identity, work processes, and structure, and that global work is a complex landscape in which culture plays a central and important role. They argue, after reviewing 38 major journal review articles on global management, that time is overdue for a more serious investigation of management and culture and for a more behavioral, contextual, and dynamic view of culture in studies of global work. Walsh and Ungson (1991) perceive the organisation as the sum of the participating individuals' knowledge. A successful change management of an organisation calls for knowledge of its environmental and/or operational culture. It also calls for the involvement of an effective leadership and management team.

The personal involvement of senior management signals the level of commitment to change and also heightens the sense of urgency for change. It reinforces the urgency for strong, personal leadership from the top that provides a clear overarching vision and focus (Graetz, 2000). If organisational change is a process of taking an organisation on a journey from its current state to a desired future state, and dealing with all problems that arise along the journey, then change is about leadership as well as management. 'Leadership is setting a vision and inspiring people to follow and deliver on the activities needed to achieve that vision' (Torkornoo, 2015). It is about showing the way—using personal power to win the hearts and minds of peo-

ple to work together towards a common goal (Gill, 2003). To lead change effectively means acknowledging that senior managers do not have all the answers, and, therefore, encouraging 'integrated thinking and acting at all levels' (Senge, 1990: 7). Effective leadership entails identifying and promoting shared values. Shared values are a key feature of a strong organisational culture (that includes beliefs, attitudes and patterns of habitual behavior) that supports a common purpose and engenders commitment to it. Shared values create a sense of belonging and may contribute positively to competitive advantage (Deetz *et al.*, 2000).

As indicated above, culture is crucial to organisational change. With specific reference to Africa, Antal & Easton (2009) and Nyong, Adesina, Elasha & Osama (2007) state that an understanding of the indigenous culture is important to organisational change in Africa. The African continent is rich with indigenous knowledge, therefore, change concepts to be employed in organisations in Africa must be integrated with African indigenous knowledge—values, norms, beliefs, and assumptions (James, 2004). It must integrate African cultural concepts, including its mode of communication.

Arthur (2001) and Kudajei (1996) point out that in Africa the medium for communication is oral, and is expressed through proverbs, storytelling, symbols/signs and songs². Africans have used 'both visual

and oral 'picture words' for a considerable period of time to express, transmit and store their thoughts, emotions and attitudes' (Dzobo, 1992: 85). The knowledge and use of a variety of proverbs, and local communication forms that are culturally appropriate to the formulation of change dialogue to minimize individual and group apprehension of the change is critically necessary. The African believes in change and uses various forms of indigenous knowledge that supports the concept of change to bring about change. The necessity for considerations of traditions of local cultures in change management cannot be overstated, particularly when foreign management approaches are practiced in those nations, and as local cultures can be indifferent to foreign management theories and techniques.

The concept of change in Ghana

As remarked above the African believes in change and applies various forms of indigenous knowledge to cause change. The Akans and the Ga-Adangmes of Ghana, for example, use terms for change such as *dane* and *gyakei* respectively, both of which mean renewal, transformation, adaptation, and decay (Kudadjei, 1996). Again, as Arthur (2001), Kudajei (1996), and Dzobo, (1992) have variously argued, in Africa the medium for communication is oral and is expressed through proverbs, storytelling, songs, names, and symbols such as artifacts and dance.

² "Undoubtedly, oral communication and traditions have been important modes of social dialogue and transmitting history in African societies for a long time. Oral traditions include oral narratives (epics, legends, and explanatory tales), poetry (praise poetry, chants, and songs), and epigrams (proverbs, riddles, puns, and tongue twisters). Combined, they served to link the past and the present, construct collective world views and identity, educate

the youth, express political views, and provide entertainment and aesthetic pleasure." Science Encyclopedia. (n.d.). Communication in Africa and its Influence - Orality And Performance. <http://science.jrank.org/pages/8711/Communication-in-Africa-its-Influence-Orality-Performance.html#ixzz3lipm6Lg4>, accessed September 14, 2015.

These tools are used within the African culture to communicate and manage change (James, 2004). For example, the Akan proverbs, *anomaa si dua so kyeree a, ɔgye boɔ*, (if a bird perches on a tree for too long, it is asking for a stone), and *nsuo kyere ahenam mu a ebɔn* (if water keeps long in the pot, it reeks) are indicative of the necessity for change.

The Ewe symbol; *Kpodolanyui*, 'three heads joined together' which 'depicts the value of consultation and discussions in arriving at mature decisions' (Dzobo, 1992: 92), the Krobo saying, *yi kake ye adjriɲ*, 'one head cannot consult', the Akan proverbs, *tikorɔ mu nni nyansa*, 'wisdom resides not in one person', *obakofoɔ nsa nso nyame ani kata*, 'the sky cannot be covered by one man's hand', and the Ewe sayings, *ati deka metua xɔ o*, 'one stick does not build a house', *ta deka mede adahũ o*, 'one head does not constitute a jury' point to the need for discussions in change process or decision-making. They reveal Ghanaians' preference for team and participatory approaches to problem solving to bring about change, and, therefore, provisions are always made for individual consultation (Wiredu, 2000; Appiah, Appiah, Duah & Agyeman, 2007). Thus, the traditional approach to change is based on system theory that applies the concept of integrated group problem solving. A traditional approach also includes individual consultation, communication, control, trust, and motivation (Weisbord, 2004).

In other words, in Africa deliberations, dialogue, discussions, consensus, reconciliation are employed in decision-making and change processes (Wiredu, 2000). Employing indigenous values in institutional restructuring gives greater meaning to the

people aiding in the process of reform. In the Ghanaian culture, knowledge and the internalization of proverbs are particularly beneficial, especially when used skilfully to deliver the right message at the right occasion (Appiah *et al.*, 2007). Influential Ghanaian proverbs, names, storytelling, songs and symbols contribute greatly to traditional concepts of change.

Ghanaians understand the turbulent nature of the environment and its effect on their livelihood. The forces may come from internal and external environments such as nature, community regulations, as well as demographic and technological situations. These forces require change in the community, and individuals are persuaded to adapt to these changes. The Kasena name a person *Zemteo* (Today's world), implying that contemporary times need to be seen as *sui generis*. It requires different approaches to operate. This is supported by their adage which says *teo ko mumviriko munviri* (every community has its peculiar mode of making a snack from millet flour or when in Rome, do as the Romans do) (Awedoba, 2000). Similarly, a saying has it that, 'if you visit the country of frogs and you find them squatting, you must squat too even though you may find it inconvenient', meaning you need to make some adjustment in a new situation of life (Dzobo, 1992: 96). The Akans say *mmere dane* (time changes); *mmere dane a dane wo ho* (when time changes adapt and develop); *mmɔfra be nyini*, (the young shall grow).

Again the Kasena give personal names such as Logo leiri (The times have changed), Diimjei (Yesterday is no more), both of which imply that the past is gone, and Feilatega (The modern world), which also

implies that change has come to roost and there is need to come to terms with this. An Akan proverb says *odenkyem da nsuo mu nso ahome mframa*, (the crocodile lives in water, yet breathes the air), indicating an ability to adapt to situations (Arthur, 2001). Ghanaians use a system-wide approach to identify, analyze, and find solutions to emerging pressures for change. They emphasize unity, cohesiveness, cooperation, intervention, and other collective concepts. For example, the Akans would say, *yetoatoa mu se nkonsa nkonsan*, (we are united together like a chain); *nkwa mu o, ye toa mu, owu o mu a yetoa mu*, (in life or in death we are united); *abusua mu nte da*, (family ties are never broken); *nkabomu ma yetumi gyina ha, mpaapaemu ma yehwease*, (united we stand, divided we fall), the Kasena state *zurigaluu mo tei dam* (power belongs to the group whose members work together) and *balei gare dedo* (two are preferable to one lone actor). Interventions such as process collaboration, discussions, consensus building, consultation, and coalition formation are used in the African culture.

An inclusive management process assures context-specific and flexible decision making, rather than imposed decisions and regulations (Arthur, 2001; Ayee 2001). However, while Ghanaians emphasize communalism, there are occasions when individuals or groups, departments or units, fight for their own interests, creating conflict (Arthur 2001). This is captured by the Ewe expression, *minye amedeka abe venarvi sitso fodeka me* (we are twins from the stomach) and the Akan, *funtumfunafu denkyem funafu*, (Siamese twin crocodile with one stomach), which

portray how individuals with a common goal negotiate for priority.

The African emphasizes critical thinking, and it is expressed in, for example, the Akan proverb, *bese pa ne konini ahaban ye ase no abanyansafoa*, (the leaves of the white and red kola plants are similar, and it takes skill and experience to separate them), and the *aborobe* (pineapple) symbol which 'represents the value of deliberation and careful thought, prerequisites for sound decisions...' The *aborobe* symbol is derived from a proverb which says: 'If you are in a hurry to eat a pineapple, you end up eating a green (i.e. unripe) one' (Dzobo, 1992: 93). The Ewe also say *hahometsaa too* (it takes planning and cooperation to properly and successfully wade through a large body of water). Change and problem solving demand critical and careful analysis of all alternatives before making a decision. The African believes in change and employs various forms of indigenous knowledge such as proverbs, learning, values, symbols, names, beliefs and practices of the society that support the concept of change to engender change. The process of "the restructuring of GIMPA immensely benefited from the use of Ghanaian cultural values and practices.

GIMPA restructuring and the Ghanaian cultural considerations

As indicated above, this case study unpacks stories surrounding the GIMPA organisational change. The data for this paper were gathered mainly through interviewing GIMPA staff members and

other stakeholders³ who participated in the restructure process, as well as data from other sources. Purposive sampling method was used in selecting interviewees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an open-ended questionnaire to guide the interviews. Some exploratory questions that respondents were asked included the following:

1. How did you hear about the restructuring?
2. Were you asked to make any input?
3. Did the process follow the cultural way of consultation?
4. What did you find particularly Ghanaian in the whole process?
5. In your view, what Ghanaian knowledge was used to reinforce the interventions?

Interview sessions were pre-arranged by telephone and by visiting selected individuals. Most interviews took place at the participants' workstations and offices. In all 25 participants—a number which was a representative force of the entire restructuring team—were interviewed. These included GIMPA council members and senior, middle, and junior staff. Participants recollected their experiences during the restructuring, particularly around the five exploratory questions stated above. However, analysing the data collected, four primary elements surfaced that together capture the experiences of people interviewed and also illuminate the contribution of the Ghanaian culture to the process of the change. The four primary elements are involvement of stakeholders, communal

values, communication, and factors that brought about the change.

Reasons for restructuring

Organisational change, as the literature shows, comes about for reasons that are internal and/or external to the organisation. The change at GIMPA was both externally and internally driven. Externally, in 1999 the Government of Ghana planned a national restructuring programme for government subvented agencies for both budgetary and productivity implications. The main objective was to cut down on expenditure so that government budget could balance. This was to be done through introducing some efficiency in the running of public institutions to improve their productivity, and for institutions that provided services that were purchased by others to shoulder their own responsibilities.

Some factors that interviewees mentioned as reasons for the change were that public servants no longer found GIMPA programmes relevant to their needs, and moreover, government was not paying for the services rendered for training people from the public service. GIMPA was, therefore, financially strapped. The data collected also suggested that GIMPA was facing much competition for its training and consultancy services from private consultants including Pricewaterhouse Coopers, Deloitte & Touch, as well as former employees of GIMPA who had either resigned or retired to run their own consultancies. These activities were seriously strangling the core businesses—the training, especially the implant (customized) programmes—of GIMPA.

³ The stakeholders in this study included GIMPA Council Members, Ghana Government, Pricewaterhouse, Deloitte and Touch, Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) and GIMPA (senior, middle, and junior) staff.

In addition to the external forces, a number of people noted that internal factors which emanated from lack of funds, over-staffing, indiscipline, inadequate infrastructure, and poor performance were part of the reasons why the institute was not in the position to successfully meet its mandate and, therefore, had to restructure. One senior member said that GIMPA was not seen by the government as a viable entity because admissions into programmes were very low to the extent that those who were admitted were not enough to sustain the institute. The following are some of the reasons that a senior member gave for the change: poor salaries, fewer programmes, over-staffing, inadequate infrastructure and poor working environment, indiscipline, absenteeism and poor attitude to work by staff. One middle staff summed up the whole situation thus: 'GIMPA was on the verge of collapsing. It was time for change'.

Involvement of stakeholders

In Ghanaian tradition, the value of consultation and discussion is emphasized when it comes to communal or group decision-making especially at the highest level (Wiredu, 2000; Arthur, 2001). The rationale is to encourage democracy in decision making, and the Akans articulate this with expressions such as *ɔbaakofo mmu man*, (one person does not rule a state), *tikorɔ nkɔ agina*, (one head does not go into counsel—wisdom does not reside in only one person's head); *dua korɔ gye mframa ɔbu*, (one tree cannot withstand a storm). Each person's contribution, therefore, matters to achieving both community and individual goals. Based on this understanding, GIMPA Management

made efforts to include its stakeholders in the restructuring process: individuals and GIMPA staff were made to believe that they had the ideas, information, capabilities, energy, and experiences in terms of skills to drive the change process. Many of the staff interviewed pointed out that both internal and external stakeholders initially participated extensively and aggressively in the planning and implementation process. There was also extensive engagement with senior management and external consultants on proposed interventions. Some of the interventions, however, were seen by some interviewees to lack Ghanaian environmental and cultural considerations. One senior staff explained the situation as: 'I think Management had a master plan document they had to try and use at all cost to implement the whole thing. But proposals they were making did not go down well with people and, therefore, there were frictions here and there'. The leader's comment on the proposals when interviewed was: 'I made sure that the report was contextual and reflected what needed to be done and what I wanted to do.'

The information collected for this paper seems to indicate that, generally there was satisfaction among the staff with regard to stakeholders' participation. Many participants stated that they took part in interviews conducted by consultants to determine the best way to restructure the institute. Some senior staff said that they were part of the group which validated consultants Situational Analysis report on GIMPA and that members of the institute and other individuals were given space to make inputs into decisions that would promote innovative ideas to increase productivity. They shared information on op-

erational results, worked hard to remove bottle necks, and brainstormed to find solutions to problems. Some of the inputs were made at meetings, durbars, through suggestion boxes and through representatives of centres/units, and within units or departments. The inputs are illustrated in some of the comments made by some stakeholders: 'I was a member of the operational team, which was made up of all departmental heads, some senior staff and the leader. We had daily operational meetings at 7:00am to 7:30am to give progress reports, discuss rising issues and give suggestions to improve performance'; 'We discussed and developed some new programmes—Executive Masters, undergraduates, and accelerated programmes for the public sector'; 'We were called for several meetings where ideas were shared especially on the way forward, looking at the new vision that the Institute was projecting and how we could get there'.

The leader's vision and his determination to *get all* involved and to deliver became infectious as a senior staff member remarked, 'I was determined to see the programme succeed, so I had to work sometimes 12 hours or more a day. I must say I have never worked that hard in my life'. Although people were tired, as one interviewee stated, 'they had to work round the clock. Everybody worked hard'. It was not only the members of GIMPA who were consulted on the process of the change Stakeholders outside the Institute were also brought into it. An interviewee reported:

As part of my work plan, I decided that chief executives and people who had ideas about training programmes should be invited for a day's discussion

on the various things that we were going to do. We sent to them the proposed modules with a notice stating that in October we would start a new course/programme, so they should take a look and let us meet and talk about it. So they came. I remember SSNIT came with copious notes on human resource.... Many of them came to make input and when eventually the programs were advertised, they supported them. They sponsored people to come. The Institute created 13 new undergraduate programs for its Greenhill College division. This is a tuition-supported facility for mature working individuals.

On a personal level, a senior staff member expressed how he was given the opportunity to make his contribution:

As a member of the council, Management board, and academic committee, I had the opportunity to give input on streamlining administrative and financial procedure, staff separation, address staff and client concerns, and develop new products with extensive contributions from external stakeholders. It is rewarding when you witness that your input is positively affecting performance.

Commenting on involving staff in decision making during the process of the change, the leader said, 'I engaged in extensive consultation, we joked and laughed. I walked to people's offices and practiced open door policy'. He continued, 'In terms of decision making and discussions, I am as open as anybody. I take advice from labourers, cleaners, from anybody who feels free to share their views with me, even if their views disagree with mine'.

However, some participants reported of experiencing psychological withdrawal, especially at meetings, when the leader found it difficult to manage different perceptions of a problem or different proposed lines of action. There were others who felt that there were times when people were not consulted—the leader sometimes took arbitrary decisions and some decisions were made at Management level which were withheld on purpose from some stakeholders.

A few participants also felt that the consultative approach did not follow the cultural procedures whereby the leader is the last person to speak (give a brief summary of what has been discussed) after everyone has spoken. The leader did not observe this tradition. Some interviewees indicated that an impression was created at GIMPA that organized associations in the institution were not recognized or consulted on staff issues.

Communal values

African cultures, as do the Ghanaian culture, embrace communal values to reinforce change (Hofstede, 2001). Communal values in the culture guide the social interaction of the people towards a common goal (Igboin, 2011). As Mbiti's (1969) popular expression of an African communal value has it, 'I am because we are and, since we are, therefore I am'. In Africa, one's interests are bound up with the interests of others in the community (Gyekye, 1987; Owoahene-Acheampong 1998). An individual's humanity is idyllically expressed in the person's relationship with others in the community and theirs

in turn through recognition of the humanity of the individual. As Igboin (2011: 99-100) rightly indicates, 'Interpersonal bonds go beyond biological affinity in expressing the values of communality; Africans share mutually; they care for one another, they are interdependent and they solidarise (see also Owoahene-Acheampong, 1998). Africans give respect also to 'claims of individuality—individual initiative and responsibility' (Gyekye, 1996: 51). An individual is seen as a social being that naturally has 'individuality, personal will, and an identity that must be exercised' (Gyekye, 1996: 47). Both values of communality and individuality are recognized in African cultures and are expected to be given right and proper consideration in one's thought and action.

During the restructuring at GIMPA, participants acknowledged the emphasis of communalism as a concept to rally support for the exercise. The leader was seen to be looking at and building on the collective philosophy of communalism. A participant of the exercise observed: 'I think using that communal society idea that what an individual does should be for the good of our community—and not thinking about oneself alone, was one of the best trump cards the leader played'. An interviewee stated: 'We knew the challenge was big. But the idea of this is where I work and I am part of this workforce, and, therefore, I want to be part of the restructuring and to enjoy the benefits that would result. It made me work hard; it made me have some amount of patience, hope, and tolerance towards the exercise'. One senior staff member noted: 'There was this communal spirit. When something happened to one

of us, people rallied together to support the person. Even if people would not show it out publicly, they supported the person privately. It helped with the change’.

As mentioned above, African cultures place emphasis on communality, however, they also recognize that the individual is real and has his/her own needs, interests and goals that they may want to pursue. Thus, the cultivation of individualistic tendencies by individuals as against communal interest could possibly occur, and that could be attributed to cultural changes.⁴ A statement by one senior staff member who played a key role in the exercise points to this: ‘The exercise has taught me a lot of lessons about human beings, that, at the end of the day, whether it is an institution or a social group, people in it just tend to look at what will benefit them. So, those of us who go in looking at the collective good end up being disappointed’.

The value and benefit of hard work is emphasized in African cultures. This idea was utilized in the change exercise. Participants noted that they were encouraged to work hard for the well-being of the Institution. They were encouraged as staff members to work in unity and cooperate with other co-workers and clients, and to show a readiness to assist one another. Ghanaians believe in the maxim that states, *nsateaa baako ntumi mma adeeso* (one finger cannot lift up a thing).

This symbolizes the functional interrelatedness of all fingers in accomplishing a job. This collaborative attitude was used, for example, to encourage internal and

external key stakeholders, and international scholars to design unique Master’s programmes—Executive Master’s in Business Administration; Executive Master’s in Public Administration; and Executive Master’s in Governance and Leadership. A senior staff commented on this strategy:

We were coming up with programs. As a PR person how do you make sure that people see what you are doing? So in my work plan for the second quarter of 2000, I decided that the public had to know what was happening, and one of the things that we were seeking . . . was to have our Master’s and Executive Master’s programmes accredited. We brought in scholars from Europe, South Africa, Singapore, the University of Texas, Australia, and Malaysia . . . to help us design modules.

Though some internal experts were involved in this and other exercises, some participants felt that a number of experienced experts [from GIMPA] who could have positively contributed to these assignments were left out. As one participant commented, ‘... local capacity was utilized, but it was concentrated’. Along with embracing a communal ideology, individuals were also seen as important change agents. Individuals were given responsibility and were expected to perform—they were held accountable for their activities. Individual talents and skills were further developed through educational and professional programmes.

Communication

Among the Akans, as mentioned above, consensus building in order to arrive at a decision during a deliberation is very

⁴ According to Gyekye (1996: 51), ‘cultural changes that are most likely to be occasioned by urbanization and the transformation of the pristine socio-economic situations can be expected to affect the balance between the two claims, perhaps tilting it more in favor of individualism.’

important. And this is often achieved through good communication. Selecting appropriate communication channels to inform people about change is, therefore, important. It builds trust and minimizes resistance. At GIMPA, many staff members who were interviewed shared the view that the change was communicated through formal and informal communication channels. One very effective communication strategy in the restructuring was the holding of a durbar, a traditional group gathering that considers important issues. In the Ghanaian tradition, a durbar emphasizes open expression of individual opinions alongside listening to what others have to say, in a collegial environment. It facilitates direct communication to all members of a group and eliminates reported/second hand transmission of information. It breaks power distance. In other words, it does away with the top-bottom communication approach that is usually characteristic of corporate institutions. It legitimizes current action and addresses any political, social conflict. Frequent durbar meetings were held at the initial stages to consult employees and solicit their views. The durbars brought all employees together to listen, assess, and address thoughts about the benefits and consequences of the change. A middle level staff narrates how the change was communicated to staff:

There was this durbar which was organized by the new leader when he took office. Even before that durbar, the news was all over the place in the media that the government of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) was going to select some institutions, departments and ministries to be weaned from government subvention,

and GIMPA would be one of those institutions. At the durbar, the leader announced to the staff what was going to happen—that he was going to try if GIMPA could become self-governing; that is we would work and pay ourselves. Many of us were convinced, but some staff doubted, because they were wondering how that could be possible, what some of the implications might be, and how beneficial was it going to be for us.

A participant emphasized that there were a series of durbars; there were notices, and union leaders were also written to, so it was during the durbars that staff was informed about the impending change. Notices on the notice board also informed staff about it and some official correspondences were also sent to the unions. Another interviewee also mentioned hearing about the change through series of management meetings, notices, official circulars, a diagnostic study, the national media, informal conversation with the leader and other colleagues. Other staff members were consulted at management and individual levels. Some senior staff also said that they were aware of the change through their involvement in the national exercise for the Public Sector Reform Programme.

A number of participants indicated that opportunity was given to them to express their opinion freely and to ask questions. A participant noted:

Every unit would communicate at the durbar, which made everything transparent. Whatever task confronted you, you voiced it out, so that we would all help to find a solution to it. At least every two weeks a durbar was organized. The leader was very open

and frank at the initial stages and this had a great impact on the whole process. He told us about all that was going on, and what his plans were, and what had been decided at the Operations Team (OT) meetings.

The durbars utilized the indigenous concepts of respect, empowerment, and cooperation, while reducing people's fears about the radical change. Torkornoo (2015) has pointed out that a leader is one who sets a vision and inspires people to follow and delivers on the activities needed to achieve that vision. A leader is thus a catalyst of change. An Ewe symbol, 'The crowing rooster (cock)' points to that. It is a symbol of good leadership. The Ewe believe that 'a good leader is a person who wakes up his followers to their responsibilities and privileges' (Dzobo, 1992: 92). A council member of the institute stated the determination of the leader to carry out his vision and the course that he was carving:

You could see that the guy was determined, so you realized that he needed all the support to get those things done, especially when something was new. If he didn't get that support, the initiative would have failed... He looked very committed, very dedicated to the course... And even the staff, everybody, was excited about it. We were all anxious to see where we were going to and whether or not to go there.

Among Ghanaians, a leader is seen as good and knowledgeable if he/she uses the appropriate proverbs to motivate and convince his/her followers. The use of proverbs as a communicating tool facilitated the change. A junior staff member commented:

He boosted our morale with the numerous proverbs he would use to describe the situations at hand. I believe it also gave us the urge to strive to the top. Some of the proverbs helped to release the built-up tension in the air as they made us laugh. He had a very affectionate way of mentioning your native name, for instance Kwaadee, Agya Koo, Agya Manu, just to make you feel at home and encourage you to work harder.

A number of interviewees, however, indicated that the leader often used some Ghanaian expressions that were counter-productive to the process. For example, a middle level staff member pointed out that the leader used some Ghanaian expressions at durbars, such as *eburu a ebedwo*, literally meaning, 'when it boils it will cool', 'I will tie you like a knot' when there was a contention. A junior staff had this to say: 'In fact, he used a lot of expressions to either put fear in us or to make us believe that what he had planned to do, he would definitely achieve it, and so we should prepare for it'. This sometimes, according to some staff, led to some arbitrary decisions he made without consulting Council which created conflicts within it. Some Council members and staff perceived his leadership style as sometimes 'very bossy'. This tended to have a negative effect on staff and led to the resignation of some of them. On occasions when the leader insisted to get something done in his own way, against all advice, a senior staff member indicated:

We'd all acquiesce, and as Ghanaians will say, 'okay, fine go ahead and do your thing. We will watch you'. That was what was happening; peo-

ple didn't want to challenge, they just allowed things to happen ... so the man who was at the helm of affairs, just had his way. There were a lot of things that happened, unfortunately. But there was nobody to stop him, and it went on.

Generally, respondents felt that the communication channels employed— sharing of information and soliciting opinions through frequent meetings with Management, faculty, OT and the durbars—at the initial stages of the transition had a positive effect on staff and the process of the change. Some of the respondents made references to the fact that they had the opportunity to work as a team not only at their departmental or unit levels but with other departments and units throughout the institute. This encouraged building of personal and human resource relations and acquiring knowledge of the operations and activities of other units. It also encouraged cooperation, initiative taking and innovation.

Appraising use of cultural approach

The importance of consideration of culture in a process of change has been emphasized in this paper. In order to evaluate the application of the Ghanaian culture (systems of knowledge) in the change process interviewees were asked to describe their experiences in relation to that. A number of interviewees described the approach of the restructuring as both Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian, and many of the descriptions related to leadership style. A staff member indicated that the use of the durbars, and communal meetings, as

a means of consultation at the beginning of the change was culturally appropriate and institutionally beneficial. 'The fact that every staff member, except one person that I know who opted not to be there, attended the durbars was indicative of the significance people attached to that cultural practice'. He explained further: 'When individuals do not attend a durbar, it means that the environment of the durbar is threatening or unfavorable, or the issue to be discussed was not important. But this was not the case here at GIMPA'.

As mentioned above, the use of proverbs during the change was seen by interviewees as appropriate and useful: the morale of the staff was boosted and tensions were minimized. The Ghanaian way of inducing people to one's side by referring to them by their appellations or affectionate names as was done by the leader was also seen to have positively helped the process. The appellations and the proverbs personalized the problems for the change and encouraged the staff to relate to them.

There was, however, a number of things done by the leader that many of the staff at the Institute said were counter-cultural. They felt that the leader broke some Ghanaian traditions. An interviewee observed:

There was something about the leader. He was too open, and he said everything he wanted to do without any inhibition. By doing that he was rendering himself too open for people to know every act of his and that was not traditional. Traditionally, not everything intended to be done by the leader is communicated in the open; it is leaked quietly and diplomatically through some elders and some indi-

viduals before a formal announcement is made. In that way the leader is not seen by the people as failing to take their interest at heart and also not giving what he/she plans to do a human face.

According to a senior staff:

Well actually, there were things that were non-Ghanaian. The way certain things were done is not the way in the cultural setting we do things. In the cultural setting, we operate by consultation. However, in our culture the leader is the last person who makes an input during deliberations. So when you go to *abenhie* (the chief's palace) during meetings, it is the people and the elders who make inputs before the chief comes in and summarizes everything, and that is it.

A participant observed that on several occasions the leader overstepped the bounds that Ghanaian culture allows him to: 'He would shout at and also discipline staff members [adults] in public, and that is culturally unacceptable. The leader was sometimes rude in the way he handled people or delivered messages'. It was the view of some of the members that the leader took advantage of the Ghanaian cultural concepts that say that an elder does not make mistakes, he/she is always right; that he/she is to be respected. These concepts made it difficult for the staff to question some decisions of the leader.

Conclusion

This paper has noted that during a seven-year period from 2000 to 2007, GIMPA went through a process of change with

the goal of changing from a publicly-supported institution to a self-financing one. The established academic and administrative systems were restructured and replaced with new arrangements. Today, GIMPA is the only successfully public self-financed university in Ghana. This new status of GIMPA makes it a unique institution not only in Ghana but Africa as a whole.

It has been shown in this paper that the African believes in change and that the various forms of the indigenous knowledge and practices in the cultures are functional to support a process of change. As Kezar (2001) has pointed out, it is crucial for a leader to have insightful knowledge about the institution/society and its culture to cause a change. The various forms of indigenous knowledge which were employed by the leader greatly contributed to the success of the restructuring of GIMPA.

The use of the concepts of collective and individual growth, expressed in proverbs and other forms benefited the change. During the restructuring, many activities were undertaken collectively but would not have been accomplished without individual responsibility, accountability, commitment, hardwork, and cooperation; virtues inculcated in them by their culture. The Africans approach to things that were employed allowed employees to take ownership of the change process, and also helped to reduce tension and resistance.

However disheartened some interviewees were about some of the non-cultural approaches to issues during the change process and the change itself, they goaded themselves on with the Kasena saying *N na tage wen ga dae kasambɔɔ*, (if you tar-

get the sky and fail to score a hit you are not necessarily a lousy shot), and the Akan proverbs that say that *manpam se, me des ne sɛmɛrɛpam me man, nyamammnoe*, (the lizard says mine is to help build, but not to destroy), and *apeseɣ kese a, ɔyɔ ma dufokyeɔ*, (when the hedgehog grows fat, it benefits the wet log, or your success is also mine).

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