



Politically Agile Programming. Paper 3.

All About Behaviour: KAPE®, Adaptation and ‘Sticky’ Institutional Change

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One of the thorniest problems for international assistance is getting institutional reforms that are both effective, and that ‘stick’ – especially in the political institutions shaping policy and service delivery.

The growing donor interest in adaptive programmes has highlighted the importance of going beyond simply reforming structures to engage with the incentives and interests of the people whom such reforms are designed to help. There are a number of commonly-agreed principles to inform assistance, including multiple entry-points, iteration, adaptation and political astuteness. These are all important, but they are a means to an end. Ultimately, international assistance should be about changing behaviour. Reforms to institutional structure, process and power are meaningless, unless they are accompanied by shifts to working patterns, institutional culture and behavioural norms. There is still a big gap between the theory of more agile programming, and practical guidelines to actually make it work on the ground¹ – especially when it comes to behaviour.

It is true that an increasing number of donor agencies and think tanks are now highlighting the importance of behaviour. But, it is almost never articulated as a specific programme objective – the assumption appears to be that it will happen organically and inevitably as the result of a project. In contrast to the business world, where ‘adaptive management’ has been evolving as a discipline over the last thirty years, there are few strategies within the development

field which highlight how problem-management needs to engage with, and alter behavioural norms.

This paper describes Global Partners Governance’s (GPG’s) approach to institutional reform and political change. Developed over the last decade of working in some of the most complex and sensitive political environments with politicians and officials in parliaments, political parties, ministries and local government, it describes the KAPE® (*knowledge-application-practice-effect*) methodology that we adopt to get ‘sticky’ institutional and behavioural change.

The KAPE methodology was the result of our need to describe, in straightforward terms, to our funders the logic of our approach, the intended effects and how we measure impact. This paper sets out that logic in three sections. It describes, first, the central role of behaviour in getting lasting institutional change, second, how we use KAPE to deliver projects, with specific reference to our work with the Parliament of Iraq and third, how KAPE provides a way of measuring change and impact that acts as an alternative (or addition) to the logframe.

1) Two dimensions of ‘adaptive programmes’: Flexible delivery and getting behaviour change

It is now widely recognised that one of the most significant failings of traditional

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international assistance to strengthen governance was that it tended to focus exclusively on altering institutional structures, rules and powers, at the expense of understanding how political institutions actually worked in practice. The tendency was most neatly captured by Matt Andrews in *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development*,² which describes how international assistance programmes were so concerned with creating new institutional architecture that they forgot to take the people inside with them. Support projects would often succeed in establishing more ‘efficient’ structures, but – because they failed to engage with the organisational culture or behavioural norms – employees largely continued to follow the same patterns of work and attitudes to their role. In short, people ended up doing the same things, just in slightly different surroundings.

As a result of Andrews’ work, along with that of many other organisations and individuals (notably the Overseas Development Institute and the Development Leadership Programme), there is now considerable appetite within donor agencies for more ‘adaptive’ programmes.³ However, it is important to understand that there are at least two dimensions to adaptive programmes. The first is to ensure that projects are designed, delivered and monitored in a way that they can respond flexibly and adapt to an evolving local context. The second dimension is about helping individuals themselves to adapt to new institutional structures and local conditions. Unless reforms to institutional structures or processes are accompanied by the development of new cultural and behavioural norms, they are likely to be short-lived, and ineffective.

This problem is particularly obvious when it comes to an area such as parliamentary support. In every parliament around the world there is a gap between the powers that the parliament has in theory to hold government to account, and the willingness or ability of MPs to use the powers at their disposal. Traditional parliamentary assistance that seeks to increase the capacity, resources and power of a parliament, through the provision of resources, training and institutional reform, often has an important role in strengthening the legislature. But unless programmes also engage with political interests and incentives so that they utilise those new resources, the effect on the institution, and on politics in general, will be negligible. The task is to understand why politicians and staff have adopted such patterns of behaviour in the first place, then seek to establish new working patterns and cultural norms around those changes to structure, process and

power, that make the individual, and the institution, more effective.

It is behaviour and incentives that will determine whether change is likely to last, or not. Whereas structural reforms deal with the surface, behavioural adaptation will create new and accepted ways of working that go far deeper and lock in change. This is partly because individual behaviour is intimately tied to a perception of one’s own self-interest, peer pressure and institutional incentives. As John P Kotter, one of the leading authors on change management puts it,

“change sticks only when it becomes ‘the way we do things around here’, when it seeps into the very bloodstream of the work unit or corporate body. Until new behaviours are rooted in social norms and shared values, they are always subject to degradation as soon as the pressures associated with a change effort are removed.”⁴

It is exactly this sort of ‘sticky’ change that international assistance is aiming for, but which it has always found so elusive. Although many international projects can cite evidence of change, it is the extent to which that change lasts beyond the lifetime of the project that should be the key measure. A measure which far too many projects fail.

The KAPE approach is GPG’s contribution to the effort to find practical and politically agile approaches to institutional change, that concentrates on engaging with, and adapting, behavioural norms. We have developed and refined KAPE over the last decade and, reflecting the complexity of the political environments in which we work, it is an intrinsically adaptive form of programming – in both senses of the term. In the first place, all of our projects have had to be flexible enough to evolve and adapt along with the needs of the people with whom we are working, as political conditions change. But, second, the most fundamental aim of our work is to help people do their jobs better – implementing structural reform where necessary, but also finding new ways of working and establishing new patterns of behaviour, that will strengthen the institution as a whole.

2) Enabling Change: KAPE and The Logic of Institutional Reform

Knowledge-Application-Practice-Effect (KAPE) reflect the four phases of strategy to support and reform political institutions.

In conversation with others we have often described this approach as a form of ‘management consultancy for politicians in difficult places’, as it relies less on the training events, publications and grand institutional designs that characterise traditional aid to parliament, than it does on providing focused, practical, expert support to our partners in finding new ways of managing their daily problems at work. The broader strategic objective is to get a collective impact, so that the component parts of an organisation work more effectively to improve the performance of the institution (and other political institutions) as a whole.

Each of the K-A-P-E phases is explained below in turn, illustrated by examples from our programme of support to the Iraqi parliament that ran from 2008 to 2016. The project sought principally to strengthen and support the work of the parliamentary committees in overseeing and calling government to account. It started small, with two committees, but over time expanded as more MPs asked for help to incorporate support to around ten different committees, as well as working with several internal parliamentary directorates, the Secretary General and the Speaker’s Office on the strategic development of parliament.

The project highlights our approach to the two dimensions of adaptive programming. Given the complexity of the political environment in Iraq, the variety of opinions on what parliament should be doing, and the vastly different needs of the various committees, the project required considerable political skills in navigating the different interests vying for power. The potential for the political situation to change suddenly meant that we had to be alive to the dangers, and agile enough to respond to the opportunities they presented. It also meant that we worked with different partners in different ways, to help them make the system work more effectively, and achieve the objectives that they regarded as important. This multi-faceted approach meant that the work with each committee or directorate differed, so that it specifically

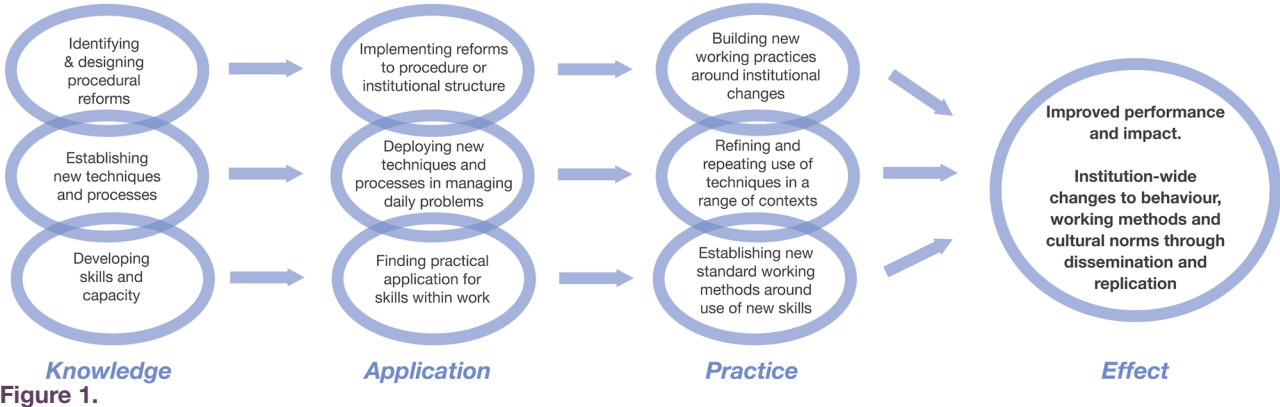
responded to their needs, but all the project strands were focused on the same overarching long-term goals of strengthening parliamentary oversight. In such conditions it was not possible to plot the exact route in advance, but the strategic goals remained constant.

K: Knowledge – Defining the problem and what to do about it

The ‘knowledge’ phase can be broadly understood as whatever form of support or guidance is needed to make things happen, to help local partners manage the daily problems that are a cause – and often a result – of the wider institutional weakness. That first phase is usually a process of discussion with our partners as to the sorts of challenges that they face, and identifying the most suitable ways of finding solutions. Typically, this is usually in one of three forms: i) helping them with specific institutional reforms, ii) developing new internal working methods, processes and techniques, and iii) training and mentoring to enhance skills. Most often, projects will involve all three things at once, using multiple entry-points, recognising that some will work more effectively than others, and offering scope for adapting those approaches during the lifetime of the project.

The approach to supporting committees in Iraq was shaped by those initial discussions with MPs and staff themselves. In 2008 most were frustrated by the level of disorganisation and lack of impact. The effectiveness of the committees depended almost entirely on the leadership of the chair and the individual interests of members. Every committee therefore worked in different ways, often taking up issues that were not part of their responsibility, and often getting in each other’s way. Significantly, each of the committees identified their problems in different ways, and therefore each required a different type of support.

The Health Committee, with whom we first worked, exemplified some of the challenges.



The Committee had a huge amount of technical and medical expertise, but lacked the organisational capacity and strategy to have an effect. Each of the members had some sort of medical training, mainly as doctors or pharmacologists. Their own direct experience meant all of them had a detailed understanding of some of the challenges facing healthcare, and most of them had developed detailed plans to reform national healthcare provision. Their passion to improve things for Iraqi citizens, combined with their lack of faith in the committee system, meant that they simply went off in different directions. At one point, the Ministry of Health appeared to have received half a dozen reports calling for change from the same Committee, but each authored and sent by a different MP, and each saying different things.

The starting point was therefore to get the Committee to state, collectively, what they wanted to achieve over the course of the parliamentary term, and then work out the best way to do it. That strategy emphasised the importance of speaking with a single voice, and basing their recommendations on firm evidence that they gathered as a Committee - by visiting different parts of Iraq and questioning witnesses - rather than relying on anecdote and opinion. With that strategy in place, the task was then to help them identify whether they had the right resources, staffing, and structure to implement it, and start to put in place the committee processes and organisation that would enable them to achieve their objectives.

We went through a similar process with other committees. The interests and approach of the Defence and Security, Finance, Human Rights, and Services and Reconstruction Committees varied widely, but the strategy was the same. This was to start by getting the basics right – job descriptions for staff, processes for dealing with correspondence, diary management, and communication structures inside and outside the committee, before attempting to deal with the bigger political issues.

A: Application – Making Systems Work in Practice

Traditional forms of assistance to political institutions like parliaments, political parties and government ministries often stopped at implementing structural reform, providing information or training. Parliamentary support, in particular, seemed to be based on the assumption that provided a parliament had the right rules, sufficient constitutional power, properly-trained staff and enough resources, it was bound to be effective. This surface level approach misses the human factor: in the operation of

politics, institutional culture and behavioural norms.

The provision of resources or reform of structure is less important than how people inside the institution react to it. The application phase of a project is about understanding what individuals want to achieve and helping them to achieve it. In its simplest form it's about providing practical support to apply skills and implement new processes that help people do their jobs better and make institutional structures work more effectively.

The acid test for parliamentary committees is in their ability to hold government to account – scrutinising the work of ministries, questioning ministers and proposing changes to law and policy.

In Iraq, with the basics in place, we then sought to support committees with each aspect of the scrutiny and oversight process, particularly during committee inquiries.

Our work with the Reconstruction and Services Committee focused on their desire to do something about the lack of potable water in certain parts of Iraq, following a recent dramatic increase of water-borne diseases such as cholera, and to address the impact of corruption on water provision. The Committee was though filled with opinionated MPs who tended to reflect the wider divisions in Iraqi politics between – and within – the political blocs, meaning that it was a difficult task for the chair to manage and find common ground amongst members. Having agreed the need to focus on the issue of potable water, our support then involved assistance to different parts of the Committee and members to make the Committee inquiry work effectively.

At one level, this meant direct support to the Committee chair, involving procedural and practical advice from seasoned politicians in the process of establishing a strategy, managing unruly MPs and getting consensus within the Committee. It also though involved support to committee staff to utilise new processes for running an inquiry, and discussions with other MPs about their roles and how they could work most effectively within the context of the Committee. That support was provided at each stage of the inquiry process, from the framing of the policy issue, the call for evidence, the selection and questioning of witnesses, through to the arduous task of agreeing conclusions, making policy recommendations and, after publication, pursuing the ministry to ensure they implemented those recommendations. The

resulting improvements to water provision and policy were a direct result of the Committee's investigation and follow-up.

The point at which institutional change starts to occur is when individuals see the value of new techniques in managing their day to day problems. Implementing those changes will often mean overcoming institutional inertia and resistance, requiring some political astuteness on the part of the project. But the more important point is that during the application phase, forms of support have to stay relevant to the direct concerns of the people that it is seeking to help, without losing sight of the longer-term strategic objectives to which it is addressed.

P: Practice – Pockets of good practice and establishing 'the new normal'

By using specific entry-points within an institution, the logic of change behind our approach is to start small, finding new ways of working and adopting new techniques in isolated areas of the organisation. Developing these 'pockets of good practice' is, though, a process which takes time. It is not enough to use a new technique once; it should be used repeatedly to manage a range of daily challenges. Getting beyond surface level change means helping individuals to refine and adapt those new skills and procedures themselves, deploying them flexibly in different situations and adapting to new conditions. The aim is to embed this approach, so that the principles underlying it become the routine and accepted way of working, continuing long after the lifetime of the project. The task, as a Kenyan MP once described it to us, is to create 'the new normal.'

Evidence of these sorts of changes will only emerge over a period of months or years. In Iraq, this started to occur after about eighteen months of the project with the Defence and Security Committee. In every parliament there is a hierarchy of committees, with the most senior politicians usually getting positions on the committees dealing with foreign affairs, finance and defence and security. In 2008 the Defence and Security Committee was mainly made up of leading political figures from each of the blocs who – unsurprisingly given that Iraq was still in the midst of violent sectarian conflict – usually held senior positions in the militias that were conducting the war outside the walls of parliament.

As a result, the Committee operated mostly as a forum within which the different militias would engage with each other, and occasionally broker deals. It rarely, if ever, dealt with national defence or security policy. Over a period of two years we sought to help the Committee focus

on strategic ways of improving security across Baghdad, and Iraq more generally, by engaging more with the public impact of security breaches, looking closely at the way the security services operated, and the performance of the Ministry of Defence. Slowly the Committee altered the way that it worked so that by 2010 it was routinely calling in Ministers, demanding explanations for failings and making recommendations to improve security.

After 2010 our support to committees expanded, and included the Human Rights Committee, where we sought to support the staff, develop internal structures and carry out a number of policy inquiries into issues such as freedom of expression and human trafficking. The chair (Salim Al-Jburi, who subsequently became Speaker of Parliament) and the Committee's specialist adviser (Ali Omar), relished the opportunity to increase their impact and change national policy, by building consensus amongst its members, adopting new inquiry techniques, regularly drawing on outside expertise and strengthening the staff structure within the Committee itself. That leadership meant that over the space of three to four years, the Committee had created not only new ways of working, but an entrenched committee culture built around a strategic vision of what it should be doing, shared by members and staff alike.

Creating this sort of cultural and behavioural change is partly about repeating and refining new techniques so that they become standard practice. But it is also about finding ways of creating institutional memory. In many new parliaments there is a high turnover of MPs, meaning that after each election international assistance programmes need to start again from scratch. Simply ensuring that committees produce an end of term report which sets out their achievements and working practices is one method. But we also collaborated with staff directorates including the Parliamentary Directorate (which manages legislation and committees) and the Research Directorate, to capture these changes, and then reiterate them during the induction process for new MPs, so that they started to become part of the accepted ways of working inside the parliament.

E: Effect – Improved performance and the 'Ripple Effect'

In politics, as in business, the most significant and long-lasting institutional changes tend to start small, and are internally-driven, by parts of the organisation that innovate and experiment. International political assistance should work in this way: improve specific parts of the institution, by creating pockets of good practice, and

then support a ripple effect, that sees new practices and behaviours adopted across the institution, and possibly other institutions, to improve overall performance. The objective of all international assistance efforts should not only be to have an impact beyond its project's lifetime, but also to have an effect beyond its original scope.

In parliaments MPs do not learn how to be MPs by being trained. They learn by watching what others MPs are doing and then copying them. As one academic has put it, they tend to be socialised into their roles,⁵ by the dominant parliamentary culture. The style of a high-profile MP is likely to be emulated by others, and where a committee is operating particularly effectively other committees will often copy their techniques. It is this internally-driven and incremental logic that KAPE seeks to utilise.

In countries wracked by conflict or where the parliament is newly-established and there is a high turnover of MPs, that socialising process is often missing. The task for international assistance is therefore to support the creation of that culture by encouraging replication across the institution. The chair and members of an effective committee will have a direct incentive to promote their own achievements to their fellow MPs and to the wider public, which creates a neat entry point for assistance projects.

While working with individual committees in the Iraqi parliament we also supported the parliamentary authorities to disseminate examples of good practice across the institution. Initially, with the Parliamentary Directorate we helped to establish a template for an end of term report by all committees. However, as word of our work spread throughout the institution we were also asked by the Speaker's Office to help them develop a system for co-ordinating all committee activity, and to establish a set of core tasks and benchmarks which all committees should meet.

The process meant that we helped to set institution-wide standards for committee activity and performance through the Speaker's Office, while at the same time supporting committees across the parliament to improve their impact and meet those centrally-set standards. In other words, by working bottom-up and top-down simultaneously we were able to promote new techniques, create new behavioural norms and strengthen the parliamentary culture around routinised ways of working.

This logic of institutional change is the diametric opposite of many traditional

programmes. Rather than trying to change structures first, it starts by helping people to do their jobs better. This might involve changes to rules and structure, but these are less important than how people see their role, use the tools at their disposal and respond to the behavioural norms inside the institution. By engaging directly with the incentives of the people inside the institution it aims to create new ways of working, which over time become part of the institutional culture. At that point, once these patterns and logic are accepted, it is much easier to formalise the process of change, by changing the rules to reflect the new reality.

3) Measuring Impact: Monitoring and Evolving

The progress in Iraq's parliament in the last ten years is obviously hugely affected by the wider politics of country, which remain difficult and uncertain. This should not, though, detract from the efforts of the people inside the parliament that have made the institution more effective. It continues to face enormous challenges and will need continuing support in its efforts to manage them. But the purpose of our work there was to help MPs and staff create an institution that was more able to withstand such an onslaught of problems. Although those differences might look small to the casual observer, by 2016 the parliament was better organised, more influential, and far more resilient than that which existed in 2008. During a period when many parliaments in the region have fallen apart, the Iraqi parliament has faced arguably more significant problems and, despite stumbles, remained the most important political forum for the management of political differences in Iraq.

In such a turbulent political environment it would have been impossible to set out at the start of the project how the parliament would evolve over the period of the project, or our role in supporting that process. Such work requires a combination of political nous and agility, in order to first understand and then respond to events. But, equally, we needed to show to our funders that we were either making headway, or to explain why certain things were not working as envisaged.

KAPE evolved as a way of explaining the strategic logic of what we were trying to achieve in the first place, but also to measure progress as we were delivering the project. This was partly because we found ourselves regularly writing narrative reports to accompany our quarterly updates. We had to write these narratives to cover all the important factors and developments that we could not fit into the logframe format:

including our assessment of the political context, our progress in getting traction and buy-in with key political actors, anticipation of future events and why almost everything in the original logframe was no longer relevant and needed to be updated.

Although we regularly had to alter the description of activities, indicators and outputs, crucially, our strategic objectives and the underlying logic remained constant. The objective was to strengthen individual committees and the committee system as a whole, and although the route changed, we had always been looking for evidence of progress through the same phases of change within parliament: knowledge-application-practice-effect.

The previous section dealt with KAPE as a logic for reform, this section explains how we use KAPE to measure behaviour change and impact. There are two aspects to this, first in assessing progress as it happens and second in combining the use of quantitative and qualitative data.

i) Diagnosing and adapting to problems

Anyone who has had a serious bout of food poisoning will be familiar with the experience of seeing a doctor when you think you are dying, then having to provide a 'sample' that is sent off for analysis, only to receive a letter from the hospital two weeks later - by which time you are already back on your bike - telling you exactly how ill you had been, and warning you to be more careful in the future. A lot of monitoring and evaluation of international assistance still falls into this category of 'after the event' wisdom: so that only once a project is over does a verdict arrive on whether it worked or not. It is often highly detailed, based on thorough analysis and arrives far too late to be of use.

It is more important to have a system of monitoring that provides a diagnosis at the time, which highlights the causes of illness, and allows you to adapt immediately. This is the point of the KAPE chain (Figure 2 overleaf), which means that we can tell how far we are progressing at any given moment during the project.

For example, following initial activities to impart 'knowledge', it will be quickly clear if our interlocutors are applying that knowledge during the course of their work. If they are not, it suggests a problem, perhaps a misunderstanding on our part about the nature of the issue or a failure to engage at the right level. Similarly, if partners only use the new techniques once, but fail to utilise those new skills or procedures repeatedly (in other words if new 'practices' fail to emerge) it may suggest a lack of understanding, relevance

or suitability. Or where 'pockets of good practice' do emerge, but do not improve institutional performance, it will pinpoint other challenges. All of this means it will be evident, at the time, when the behavioural and cultural change that underlie lasting reforms is missing.

This matters because when the expected movement from one stage to the next does not occur, it forces us to question the reasons for that failure, which in turn ensures we adapt what we do next. If progress has stalled it is important to know whether this is to do with deliberate obstruction on the part of certain individuals, or a subtle change in the incentives at work locally so that stakeholders no longer see the project as relevant in dealing with pressing problems.

The point of reflecting is not just to identify the factors limiting impact, but to go back and question the assumptions that underpin the project logic so that it remains relevant, which in turn means continually refining the political analysis at the heart of the strategy. In other words, what did we assume about incentives? What new factors have come into play? And, crucially, what do we do instead to get things moving?

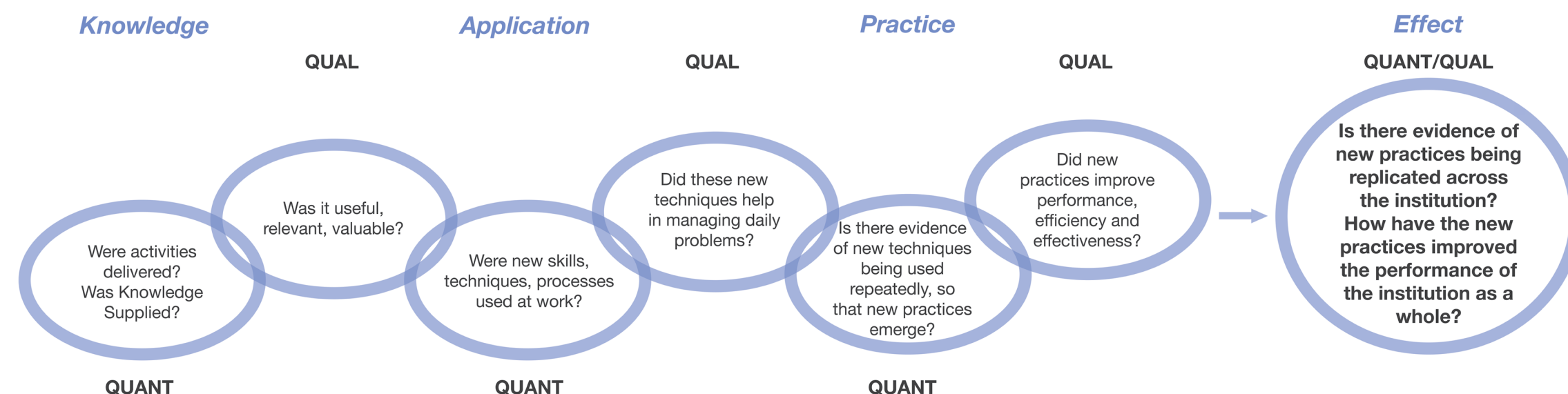
This then gives us a realistic assessment of our own progress. Rather than persevere with something that is patently not working, we can alter, adapt and look for new entry points. On occasion this has meant that we will stop working entirely with a specific parliamentary committee, ministry or certain politicians because we know we do not have enough traction to make change happen. However, this does not mean that we are also changing direction. The point is that we will simply look for new routes and new entry-points to achieve those same strategic objectives, and still be able to show progress towards them. Critically, it is this understanding and analysis that we need to use to justify to our funders any change to the project itself.

ii) Utilising qualitative and quantitative indicators to reinforce each other

The other challenge is how to capture behavioural change when you have to keep changing tactics. One of the most common criticisms of adaptive programming is that it is impossible to measure progress reliably if activities and indicators keep changing. This though reflects the narrowness of traditional approaches, an absence of innovation and an over-reliance on quantitative analysis.

Logframes are built around a linear form of mostly quantitative monitoring that checks whether activities were delivered as promised, and whether they had the intended effect. This captures very little

Figure 2.



that is meaningful. One problem, as Rachel Kleinfeld has pointed out, is that many of the most significant indicators only become apparent after they have occurred.⁶ It is often easier to sense political change than it is to measure it: the fact that two politicians are talking to each other in the corner of a room can be a significant development, but you wouldn't put it in a logframe at the start of a project.

The virtue of the KAPE chain is that (unlike a logframe) it is less concerned with reporting on the specifics of process, than it is with tracking progress towards the strategic objectives of behavioural and political change. The intention is not to capture everything, but to look for evidence of movement from knowledge to application to practice to effect. We cannot know what the most salient indicators will be in advance and so, as part of the process of analysis, reflection and adaptation we use a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators to reinforce one another during the delivery of the project.

The quantitative indicators at each stage will be clear. At the first 'knowledge' stage it will revolve around whether activities were delivered and whether knowledge was imparted. This is easily measured. The qualitative judgement on the effect of those activities is more subjective, where we need to ask those on the receiving end of it whether they thought it was relevant, useful and valuable. There is much that could affect such subjective judgements, and means they need treating with care. We look to verify those judgements in the next quantitative measure, under 'application': were those new skills applied during the course of work? If they were relevant, useful or valuable, you would expect to see

evidence of application, which is verified by quantitative measures.

Each stage of the KAPE monitoring process looks to substantiate the qualitative assessment through evidence at the next quantitative measure. So, the qualitative assessment of whether the application of these new skills streamlined processes, made you better at your job and improved performance, is verified by a search for quantitative results that new practices are being repeated around the application of those new techniques. Similarly, an assessment on the quality and value of those new practices being used repeatedly will elicit a variety of responses that can be tested by the next quantitative measure, which will look for replication of new practices and improved performance across the institution.

Indicators during the last phase – Effect – should be capturing behavioural change, but should also assess the performance of the individual committee, as well as the parliament as a whole. This involves a different set of metrics, measuring several aspects of parliamentary activity (reports, questions, legislation, changes to policy, etc.), against a baseline developed at the start of the project. The important point though is that these measures should not be the sole indicator of impact, for two reasons.

First, such indicators on their own can be highly misleading. For example, the speedier passage of a law might be a good thing in one context, but might also mean that parliament did not have a chance to look at it properly. Similarly, more parliamentary questions or committee reports might indicate greater seriousness on the part of MPs, but that can only be

judged by examining the quality of those questions or reports. Second, if such quantitative indicators become the prime measure of success, all project activity will be geared towards hitting them. Meeting such quantitative milestones can be done in many ways, but often by neglecting the broader institutional, behavioural and cultural reform that will secure long-term institutional improvements. Without those deeper changes, any 'improvement' in activity is likely to be short-lived. What's more, political change takes time, and there should be a lag between behavioural change and its impact on performance over the following months and years, which rudimentary indicators will not reflect.

4) Conclusion: Behavioural insights, adaptive management and sticky change

KAPE reflects a particular view of how institutional change happens – particularly in political institutions – that is built partly from the direct experience of trying to implement reform at the heart of the UK political system,⁷ and from supporting the process of strengthening politics in a variety of countries and contexts. But it also draws heavily on insights and expertise from other fields, not least from change management literature in the business world,⁸ political science and more recently on the flourishing discipline of behavioural economics.

All of these emphasise that sticky institutional reform tends to occur in an incremental and experimental fashion, rather than as the result of grand institutional reform plans. As Douglass North shows, that path is conditioned by the interaction of informal norms of behaviour with formal

institutional rules and structure.⁹ Eric Schickler has usefully described a process of 'disjointed pluralism' to characterise parliamentary evolution.¹⁰ Because the vested interests which hold together any system cannot be entirely erased or removed during periods of modernisation and change, each new reform has to be built on the misshapen and crumbling remains of what existed previously, like a form of bricolage.

More recently, the work of the Behavioural Insights Team in the UK, which has sought to apply behavioural economics and psychology to a whole range of policy issues across government, describes their approach as 'radical incrementalism'. This means securing small improvements in the first instance which, collectively, have a transformative effect on the performance of the institution as a whole.¹¹

Within the development field there is a growing interest in behaviour, including the World Bank's 2015 World Development Report, *Mind, Society and Behaviour*.¹² Similarly, the renewed interest in adaptive programming has brought new levels of consensus around the need for more flexible projects that understand, and engage with, the incentives and interests that affect political and development outcomes. But there has been less progress, and perhaps less inquisitiveness, about how to operationalise these insights towards changing behaviour, and the harder task of how to actually manage and maintain the process of institutional reform. There are notable exceptions to this, such as the Springfield Centre's 'Adapt-Adopt-Expand-Respond' framework,¹³ or the efforts of organisations like Mercy Corps and the National School of Government International

to improve performance by altering behaviour.¹⁴ But such examples are rare.

Part of the answer may depend on the international assistance field learning from the voluminous literature from the business world where ‘adaptive management’ has been evolving as a discipline since the mid-1990s. Distinguishing between technical and adaptive fixes, it emphasises the need to think politically, the value of small-scale innovation and the fact that managing change is an iterative and reflexive process. But, crucially it argues that the ‘stickiness’ of change lies in the process of adaptation and behaviour. In *Leadership Without Easy Answers* published in 1994, Ronald Heifetz argued that adaptive solutions must “engage people in facing the challenge, adjusting their values, changing perspectives, and developing new habits of behaviour”.¹⁵

The point is that political and institutional reform is a process that is messy, unpredictable and haphazard - and change takes time. This is the nature of politics itself. Politics cannot be simply be bent to the will of outside donor agencies, no matter how much money they throw at it. Programmes that get lasting change are more likely to start small, and aim at incremental progress. Instead of commissioning increasingly large projects for institutional redesign, international assistance should perhaps expend more effort on helping to get the small things right.

KAPE is the way in which we seek to employ these principles in practice – during the design, management and measurement of such projects. Our previous efforts at describing how international assistance might use these insights,¹⁶ revolved around three key points, which are worth reiterating, namely: i) Lasting reform must be initiated from within the institution, rather than being implemented from the outside: the role of assistance must be to enable and support the process of change, rather than seek to implement it; ii) Start with the individual, not the institution: instead of framing the problem in terms of the institution, understand patterns of behaviour and what they tell us about how the institution functions; and, iii) Create catalysts for change, rather than trying to do everything at once: in other words, look for pockets of good practice and a ripple effect.

Working in this way is inevitably a process of what has been described as ‘muddling through’,¹⁷ and seizing opportunities when you can. But the point of KAPE is to emphasise that it is perfectly possible to innovate, experiment, and respond, while still having a clear sense of strategy, purpose and progress.

The next two papers in the Politically Agile Programming series will build on these themes, looking at how programming could learn from change management in the integration of politics into programmes, and why donor agencies need to fund more small-scale initiatives if they want to secure lasting political change.

Footnotes

¹ See in particular, Menocal, A., (2014) *Getting Real About Politics: From Thinking Politically to Working Differently*, London: ODI

² Andrews, M., (2013), *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

³ It is widely acknowledged that adaptive and agile techniques are not new but the recent interest has shifted these discussions to the forefront of debate in the international assistance field. For instance, amongst many others: Booth, D., Harris, D. & Wild, L., (2016), *From Political Economy Analysis to Doing Development Differently*, London: ODI; Hudson, D., & Leftwich, A., (2014), *From Political Economy to Political Analysis*, Research Paper 25, Birmingham: Development Leadership Programme; Booth, D., & Unsworth, S., (2014), *Politically Smart, Locally Led Development*, London: ODI

⁴ Kotter, J., (1996), *Leading Change*, Harvard Business School Press, p. 14

⁵ See the work of Michael Rush on socialisation of MPs, notably, Rush, M., & Giddings, P, (2011) *Parliamentary Socialisation: Learning the Ropes or Determining Behaviour*, Palgrave Macmillan

⁶ Kleinfeld, R., (2015), *Improving Development Design and Evaluation: Plan for Sailboats, Not Trains*, Washington; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

⁷ Power, G., (2007), ‘The Politics of Parliamentary Strengthening: Lessons from the House of Commons 2001-5’, *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 3

⁸ Power, G., (2010), *The Politics of Parliamentary Strengthening: Understanding Political Incentives and Institutional Behaviour in Parliamentary Support Strategies*, Global Partners/ WFD

⁹ North, D., (1990), *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Cambridge University Press

¹⁰ Schickler, E., (2001) *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the US Congress*, Princeton University Press

¹¹ Halpern, D., (2015), *Inside the Nudge Unit: How Small Changes Can Make Big Difference*, London: WH Allen, pp. 289-292

¹² World Bank Group, (2015), *Mind, Society and Behaviour*, Washington: World Bank

¹³ Nippard, D., Hitchins, R., Elliott, D., (2014), *Adopt-Adapt-Expand-Respond: A Framework for Managing and Measuring Systemic Change Processes*, Durham: The Springfield Centre

¹⁴ Allana, A., (2014) *Navigating Complexity: Adaptive Management at the Northern Karamoja Growth, Health and Governance Program*, Mercy Corps/Engineers Without Borders; Alari, C., & Thomas, P. (2016), *Improving the Impact of Aid Interventions to Support Centre of Government Reforms*, London: NSGI

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¹⁶ See for example, Power, G., (2010), op cit.: Global Partners Governance, *Enabling Change: A Behavioural Approach To Political Programming*, London: Global Partners Governance

¹⁷ See Andrews, M., Pritchett, L., & Woolcock, M., (2012), ‘*Escaping Capability Traps through Problem-Driven Iterative Adaptation*’, Center for Global Development Working Paper 209

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