HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

Leadership Challenges of Handover Situations

Leadership Challenges of Handover Situations in Humanitarian Organisations

Using the Example of the International Committee of Red Cross

Caroline Burghardt and Marie-Lena Hutfils

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) is present in 80 countries around the world. The leader of each mission changes after around every year and a half. Even though handover processes are therefore a regular feature to the ICRC operations, there is no guideline or standardisation. Hence, valuable experience and already effective and efficient structures and processes might get lost. Communication skills and knowledge transfer are crucial for the success of the handover process. It is important to familiarize the future leader with his new working environment by enabling an exchange of experience and expectations on equal footing between former and future manager. The aim of this paper is to develop guidelines structuring the handover processes between two leaders in a mission of the ICRC.

burghardtcaroline@web.de
lena.hutfils@mailbox.org

1. Introduction

A successful handover process is an important factor in every business or organisation that has to restructure a project or working team. This paper deals with the question of how changes of staff can be designed successfully during an ongoing project under challenging circumstances. This will be done by looking at the example of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Although operating in a purely humanitarian context, with around 12,000 people working across 80 countries, the ICRC shares many of the same management challenges that other public or private business projects have to deal with as well (cf. ICRC 2013). Because of this similarity, the term for the ICRC missions used in this paper will be projects.

Project management in business corporations can be taken as a good model for the analysis of handover processes in humanitarian leadership. Even in a humanitarian organisation like the ICRC, many processes work in a similar manner to those in a business corporation. The ICRC's aims are smoothly-run processes with maximum effectiveness and efficiency. As there is not a lot of literature about handover processes in humanitarian organisations, the following analyses and findings are mainly based on results in the business management sector. ICRC top managers in the delegations (a delegation representing a country or a region) change around every 12 to 18 months to uphold the 'Fundamental Principles of the ICRC', especially neutrality, independence and impartiality (cf. ICRC 1979), and to prevent corruption. In the run-up to the handover process, every newly assigned manager ('recipient' in the following) gets a one-day onboarding introduction in Geneva.[1] Apart from that, they are not necessarily familiar with the country, staff and working processes within the delegation. The on-site handover process itself normally takes two to three weeks and is not standardised. However, a standardisation would be possible as the majority of ICRC missions, though being in areas of conflict, are carried out in non-emergency situations. In Israel, for example, the ICRC has had a permanent presence since the aftermath of the 1967 war.

The two most important actors in this process are the recipient and the manager who previously led the project ('former manager'). In the ICRC's current handover processes, both managers have to organise the turnover mostly themselves as there are no guidelines, checklists or any other kind of standardisation. If every important aspect is not considered during the handover process, losses of information and knowledge might be the consequences of the lack of standard procedures. In

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1   According to employees of the ICRC.

order to prevent such information losses, efficient knowledge transfer is indispensable. Therefore communication on equal footing and a certain structure in the process are necessary. Our aim is to point out which criteria have to be fulfilled in order to create a successful handover process.

In the following, we will first describe the current situation regarding the handover process at the ICRC in detail. Based on our analysis, we will then appoint out the distinctions among three cases regarding the consequences of the current handover process: In the first one, the recipients are able to handle the handover without any knowledge or process losses. In the second one, the new managers feel overstrained. Finally, in the third case, they are over-motivated and try to change or improve the current situation. In the following step, we will work out which criteria influence the successful handover process of a project. On the basis of those results, we will show which components have already been implemented in process employed by the ICRC and which ones still need to be considered in order to make the handover process even more effective and efficient.

2.   *What Makes a Handover Process Successful?*

The handover process – and the change of manager that goes along with it – can bring new innovations and opportunities to the whole project. But at the same time, it must be ensured that the change between the two managers does not disturb the workflow in the ongoing project. It is necessary that, even though there is a change in the management, the rest of the staff can keep the project going. According to Sarnitz, a successful handover process should be "as quick as possible, autonomously, efficient and effective" (Sarnitz 2012: 2). The term 'effective' refers to a situation in which the process itself works as well as possible. 'Efficient' means that the process is organised with as little money and time as possible in order to save valuable resources without suffering from any losses. With a smoothly-functioning process, the likelihood for the success of the handover can be augmented significantly. In order to achieve such a process, several factors have to be considered. The highest aim of the handover is and should be the fruitful transfer of existing knowledge. Only if that is given can losses be kept to a minimum, and the new manager will be able to start his job with as much insight and background knowledge as possible (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 72 ff.).

There are three main factors determining the success of a handover; the process-specific factors, the interaction-specific factors and the framework conditions (see figure 1). In the following, we will mainly concentrate on the first two factors, namely the process-specific and the interaction-specific

factors, and point out how they can be optimised. Once they have been improved, it is possible to enhance the framework conditions as well by providing both managers with guidelines or checklists.

The process-specific factors refer to the structure of the process, adequate training and active participation and motivation of both the recipient and the former manager. According to Sarnitz, a well-structured process with regard to the content significantly influences the success of the handover process (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 72). With the establishment of the ICRC Humanitarian Leadership and Management School (HLMS), an adequate learning and development program has already been founded. Future managers will be given the opportunity to be trained in learning, responsibility, teamwork and creativity. In the following, we want to point out how the handover process could be
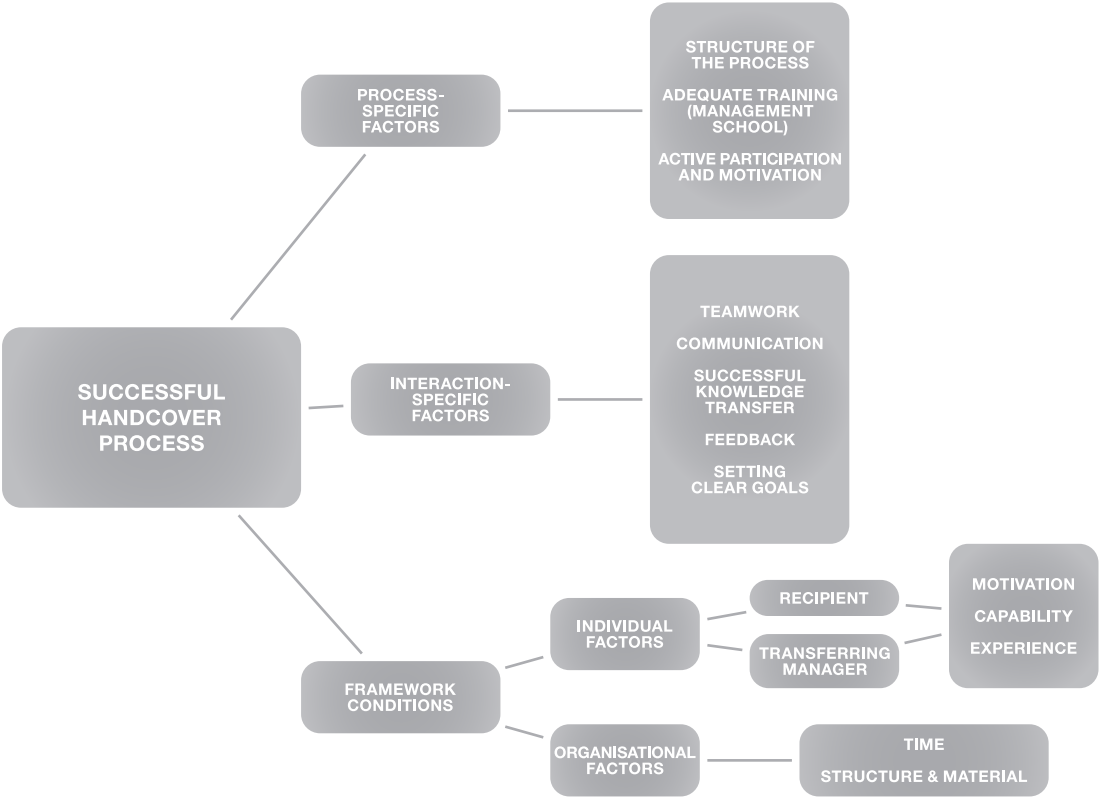

FIGURE 1: FACTORS FOR A SUCCESSFULL HANDOVER PROCESS (BASED ON SARNITZ 2012)

included in this programme in order to improve this factor even more. The last two of the process-specific factors, namely participation and motivation, are factors that will not be considered in any further depth. To select motivated staff is part of the human resources department and cannot be influenced to a significant degree during the handover process.

Interaction-specific factors refer to teamwork, communication, good leadership, successful knowledge transfer, feedback and setting clear goals. In the following, we will mainly focus on these factors as they set the foundation for a functional and successful handover process. The knowledge transfer should thereby be the priority and should be based on the other factors such as teamwork and communication (see table 1). All factors then should be integrated in such a way that a structure for the handover process can be developed.

To create a standardised handover process that is as easy as possible to implement, we will use the framework conditions already established in and by the ICRC. Such factors making up the framework conditions are, for instance, the manager's motivation, capability and experience (see figure 1). These are considered in the ICRC's human resources department and are of no further importance for this paper. Another framework condition for the handover process is time. Our propositions will be based on the time frame of two to three weeks for the handover process, just as it is the case right now. The last two factors making up the framework conditions are structure and material. Once we have analysed the important factors mentioned above in more detail, a possible structure can be developed and registered in guidelines or checklists.

3. Current Situation and Challenges

3.1 Current Circumstances in the Handover Process in the ICRC

Three typical and main characteristics of projects in the humanitarian sector are complexity, clear setting of objectives and limited resources, such as time, money and staff (cf. Wastian et al. 2012: 76). The frequent change of project managers is rational as it minimises the possibility of corruption and helps to keep the project lively. At the same time, this procedure involves the danger of knowledge, experience and structural losses during the handover process, but this will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The recipient is not familiar with the local staff and knows from the beginning onwards that he will be in the field for only a limited time of about one and a half years. Furthermore, he has to face a certain task difficulty, as he has to work in a country and has to deal with structures in the particular project that in most cases are not familiar to the leader. There is no time for the new leader to slowly grow into the project. He has to deal with already established structures and processes. In every country, the recipient therefore has to face some kind of 'exceptional situation'; cultivated knowledge and knowhow is put into question (cf. Wastian et al. 2012: 79 ff.).

3.2 Three Cases of Handover Processes

In order to analyse how successfully the managers can handle this exceptional situation in the field, a distinction of cases is necessary. This distinction regards the situation of the recipient and how he handles the handover process without any given structure on the part of the ICRC. Three possible cases can occur.

In the best case, the recipient can easily handle the new working environment. Together with the former manager, he develops a framework and structure for the handover process. They discuss all the important aspects the successor has to keep in mind; he learns about the structures and processes in the country as well as in the work team. Even though there are no guidelines, the two managers handle the handover process without any problems and make it a successful one. Much like the handover itself, no problems occur in the first period and no further help is needed. If one were to ask the current managers about how successful they judged their handovers to be, most of them would probably classify themselves in this first category. But according to internal estimates of the ICRC personnel, only ten per cent of the handover processes can really be described as successful.

In the case of excessive demand, the recipient is overstrained by the situation. At first, he thinks he can handle the new environment, job and staff easily. After the handover process, he quickly notices that the new structures and processes in the country and within the work team are unfamiliar and do not necessarily reflect his expectations and experience. In most cases, the recipients are in the country where the project takes place for the first time or at least have never really lived there before. This excessive demand can not only hinder the progress of the project but also influence the manager personally. As he tries to deal with this challenge, an "accumulative stress syndrome" might be the result, causing "serious and long-term effects on [the] humanitarian

worker" (cf. Lupton-Bowers 2003: 65). The probability that he will not go into a next mission increases. These personal and environmental factors are some of the several factors explaining why there is such a high churn rate in the humanitarian sector (cf. Loquercio et al. 2006: 6).

In the case of overmotivation, the recipient enters the mission with high ambitions, wanting to improve and renovate the existing processes and structures. As he is convinced of his future success in the project, he does not think he will need a lot of help or knowledge from the former manager. This overambitious approach often does not work as intended. Expectations are too high; the entire project or staff members do not work as expected. The workflow in the new country is a different one.

> "Those [leaders] who pose a challenge to the status quo may, rather than being appreciated as potential sources of innovation and as breathing new life into stagnant Organisations, be labelled as 'maverick' or 'deviant' and suffer personally in terms of belittlement, backlash or exclusion from the 'inner core' of the Organisation" (Hill 2000: 113).

The teamwork with such an ambitious person is often considered difficult and in most cases the cause for damage throughout the working process.

3.3 Resulting Challenges

The distinction of cases in the previous section was necessary as it gives insights into the resulting challenges. The first case, i.e. when the recipient can easily handle the turnover, is quite unproblematic. The other two cases, however, show that a structured process making the handover more efficient and effective is useful and needed.

The highest aims and therefore the main challenges in project management are a constant workflow and as few disturbances and losses (e.g. of knowledge or established processes) as possible. Even if the project manager fails to lead successfully, well-elaborated processes are basic rules which should be known and followed by everyone. Therefore it is important that those established and well-working processes do not get lost during the handover. Especially inexperienced project managers often fail to arrange connections early enough and to strike up coalitions (cf. Wastian et al. 2012: 96). If the former manager and the recipient miss out on the chance to exchange

experiences and knowledge, the new leader might interrupt processes in the ongoing project. He might try to improve and renovate too much, or he simply does not consider the importance of the interchange of knowledge if he is an overstrained manager.

Another challenge for the recipient is to become familiar with his leading position in the new environment. Even if he was a manager in different missions of the ICRC before, each operation differs from the other and requires flexibility in order to handle the new situation. We will now have a look at the theory of good leadership and analyse which factors are important to be implemented in the handover process.

4. The Theory of Good Leadership

4.1 What is Good Leadership?

Four important aspects for successful humanitarian leadership are: the ability to communicate aims, to collaborate, to organise and to listen to people. These are characteristics that refer to social connection and are therefore of special importance for the handover as the latter can only be successful if the former manager, recipient and the work team are able to work together in a satisfactory manner.

Firstly, it is important that the manager of a mission communicates aims – no matter whether the leader is responsible for three, ten or hundred people. Having an aim raises the motivation for the leader and other members in the project. In a difficult and often dangerous environment – as it is the case in most of the ICRC missions – it is therefore even more important to clarify the aim of the mission so that everyone knows how to act and cooperate in such an environment. Once the aims of the project are clear to the staff, it will raise their motivation (cf. Wastian et al. 2013: 77 ff.). Secondly, the manager can, as the head of the project, foster collaboration with and within his work team. He should therefore reinforce the team's possibility to participate in decision making, boost the foundation of power, foster relationships and open access to information. For the manager, this results in an opportunity to be informed early in an 'informal way' and to get access to people with special features needed in case of emergency (cf. Wastian et al. 2012: 95). Thirdly, the leader has to organise relationships to stakeholders and staff by means of an effective use of political processes to influence and persuade others (cf. IASC 2009: 5). He should "establish

appropriate coordination structures to organize the contingency planning process" (IASC 2010: 27) and briefings with locals to discuss coordination mechanisms and structures to work more effectively. Working in an unorganised environment can make the leader and all employees feel on edge (cf. IASC 2010: 21, 65).

> "[The leader] needs to address the organisational structure, capabilities, constraints and operating procedures, and its values, vision, ethos and policies. [He is] ideally [informed about] an overview of relevant geographical and programmatic experiences, and the institutional history of the program or programs one is assigned to manage" (Brabant 1997: 33 ff.).

As mentioned above, to listen to others is a fourth characteristic that is important for good leadership. But as this is also a main point to a successful transfer of knowledge and therefore very important for the handover process, we are going to discuss this point more in detail in section 4.3. To summarise, a good leader needs not only to know how to organise himself in a new environment but also needs to be informed about every structure in the organisation.
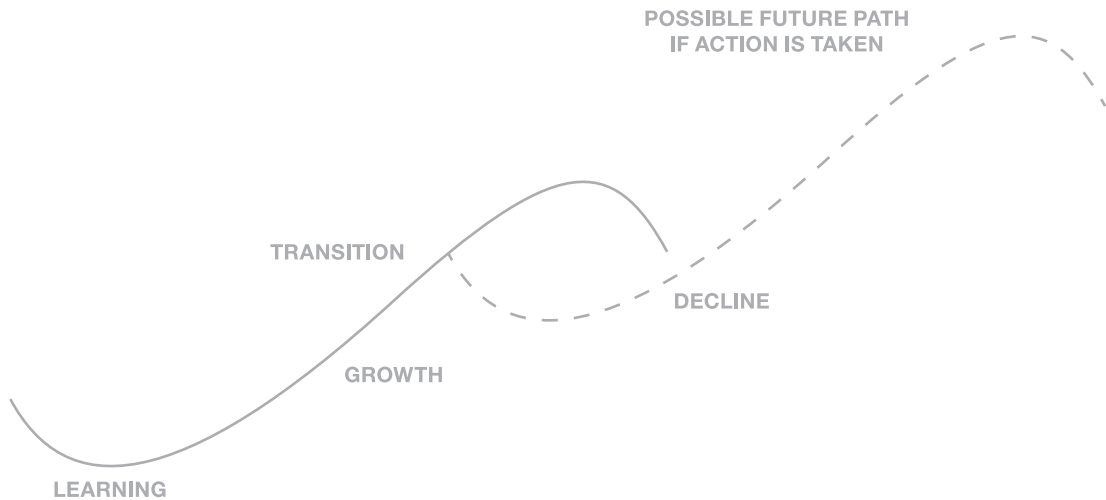

FIGURE 2: THE SIGMOID CURVE (BASED ON HANDY 1991)

4.2 Charles Handy's S-Curve

The techniques mentioned in the previous section are the foundation for a successful handover and project. In this section, we will examine how a successful handover process can keep a project vivid and effective and is therefore of such importance for the whole mission. According to Charles Handy, the success of a business can be displayed as a bell-shaped curve. At the beginning, there is a phase of learning which results in growth. The key to further success is, according to Handy, not to rely on this growth, but to start thinking about future problems and about the decline that is about to come (cf. Handy 1991). In a phase of growth and success, it is possible to foresee and prevent future problems and thus start a new cycle of learning and growing. Therefore action has to be taken in the phase where transition is possible (see figure 2).

This is of importance for the handover processes in the ICRC, as the former manager has more insight into the project and the established structures. Even though his job in the particular country ends with the handover process, he should think about the future development of the mission. With the insight and know how he acquired during the eighteen-month period, he can think about future challenges that have to be dealt with and steps that should be taken in order to keep the success of the mission growing. He knows what has been working so far, what still needs to be done and in which areas of the project problems might occur in the future. Therefore, in order to start a new cycle of growth as described by Handy, a transfer of knowledge is important within the managing structures of the ICRC during a time of transition. With good communication and the successful transfer of knowledge, the handover can be the start of a new cycle of growth.

4.3 Communication and Transfer of Knowledge

The handover process and knowledge transfer in the ICRC can be called a 'direct handover' as the recipient takes over the work directly from the former manager during the ongoing project (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 62 f.). This allows the former manager to support his successor and make sure that no valid information and knowledge get lost. Therefore, good communication is indispensable for a successful transfer of knowledge.

It is necessary that the former leader knows about the previous experience of his recipient (e.g. How often has he been in the field? What is his experience?) (cf. Sarnitz, 2012: 71). With this

knowledge, the former manager is capable of encouraging the recipient and showing respect and sensitivity towards potential controversies (cf. IASC, 2009: 12).

Considering communication as the crucial means of creating a fruitful exchange of ideas and experiences, we should devote special focus to the capability of giving feedback. Particularly in complex situations and at the beginning of a mission, giving feedback can simplify procedures and help the leader to run his team. The feedback therefore should, on the one hand, be both positive and negative, so that it is not only associated with bad feelings and, on the other hand, be reciprocal, in order to guarantee its legitimacy and make everybody open to it (cf. Lupton-Bowers, 2003: 87). Not only is the feedback between locals and leader important but also between former manager and recipient (see table 2). If both sides formulate their expectations as specifically as possible, misunderstandings can be minimised. This is an important aspect during the handover, making the communication and therefore the process itself more efficient (cf. Sarnitz, 2012: 71ff).

When expectations are clarified, the next step, the transfer of knowledge, can be taken. This is probably the most important and most difficult aspect as missions suffer a loss of efficiency if the new leader has to start all over again without any knowledge. There are three important parts of knowledge: know-how, know-why and know-what. Know-how represents the concept of "learning-by-doing", an understanding of the generative processes that constitutes phenomena. Know-why can be described as the creation of knowledge ("learning-by-studying"), an understanding of phenomena in life worth pursuing. "Learning-by-using" can be called the 'know-what' part (cf. Garud 1997: 81, 86). As the transfer of knowledge should be as encompassing as possible in order to prevent any losses, all three parts of knowledge have to be considered by both leaders. But still, the benchmark should not be the utopian ideal of economic rationality or absolute information. It is more about avoidable mistakes in social information procurement: producible information which has not yet been produced; obtainable information that has not yet been obtained; existing information that has not yet been used or misunderstood even if it is relevant for decision making (cf. Scholl et al. 2012: 393). Therefore the recipient needs to talk to the staff in order to clarify who has which part in the project to avoid misunderstandings.

One factor of influence is a permanent exchange: "ongoing social interaction" stabilises the provision or receipt of task information, knowhow and feedback regarding a product or procedure (cf. Wastian et al. 2012: 85). The recipient should listen actively to his new work team. To avoid problems from the beginning, an empowerment-oriented leadership can be the key to successful work. Employees who feel significant and have participatory leadership give the best information

to superiors. Besides the value of information, there are five more necessary facts for empowerment-oriented leadership: coaching, leading by example, showing concern, interaction with the team and participative decision making (cf. Scholl et al. 2012: 409). Of course this cannot always be the case. If the mission takes place in an emergency situation, such as an armed conflict, quick decisions have to be made and the leader must take them. If decision making were done in the team, it would simply take too much time that is not available.

Showing concern does not only mean empathy but also not always to cling to one's own opinion. Again, active listening helps the leader to get to know his team. The leader should not only be a coordinator; he has to create a good, conducive working environment. The past has shown that an environment of fear can cause losses and can make people purposely hold back important information. If there is trust, there are more possibilities to experience and to act (cf. Döring-Seipel et al. 2012: 170). It is also possible that subordinates – in the case of ICRC, these are often local residents – try to whitewash existing aspects to manipulate the new leader. Incorrect information can exacerbate the start of the recipient and causes additional problems. Another reason for loss of information (especially in the last case where the leader is overmotivated) is wishful thinking: a research study by the German research community and Hans-Christof Gierschner and Lutz Hoffmann found out that wishful thinking in 15 out of 24 cases ended in failure. Wishful thinking means selective, skewed absorption of information, devaluation of other team members or an exaggerated opinion of oneself. If possible, the new leader should look for constant contact to the former leader before the mission starts (Scholl et al. 2012: 369 ff.). Such behaviour can prevent this problem. In the past, some leaders of the ICRC used to write reports for their successors giving an overview of the project. According to Sarnitz, a leader who has received a written document summarizing what has been done in the project so far and saying what the next steps are, evaluated their handover process much more positively than those who had to start completely new from the beginning (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 70). Therefore it would be helpful to implement some kind of report that should be written during or after the handover process. How this can be implemented in particular and made as easy and quick as possible for the recipient will be suggested in section five.

4.4 Teamwork

Pamela Lupton-Bowers writes, "The importance of teamwork cannot be overemphasized in humanitarian assistance operations" (Lupton-Bowers, 2003: 59). Teamwork is an essential factor that makes a handover process work. In this passage, we will discuss teamwork in general and particularly between the former manager and the recipient. The handover can only be efficient if both act together in a collective process. It can be assumed that the quality of handover is primarily determined by the quality of interaction (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 2). In general, one can say that good collaboration affects the evaluation of the handover process positively and leads to greater success (cf. Lupton-Bowers 2003: 70).

According to Lupton-Bowers, there is a model for describing effective teamwork, consisting of three components: what (concerning the task in terms of its common goal and objectives), 'how' (concerning the process of communication and decision making) and who (concerning the people's competencies and preferences). "The what gives the team its purpose and legitimacy. It describes what the team has to do, what it must achieve" (Lupton-Bowers 2003: 84). The common goal should be in line with the organisational mission (in our case, with the seven fundamental principles of the ICRC).[2] "Individual objectives develop out of this common goal. They are allocated fairly according to specific technical ability, skills, competencies, and capacity of each of the members" (Lupton-Bowers 2003: 85). They should also take into consideration, where possible, that individual style and preferences are needed. The individual profile of each team member and how they are able to contribute covers the who.

> "For optimal performance, teams must: respect individual differences, cultures, preferential work styles, be aware of and put to use people's potential [...]; be empowered , achieve within their respective roles and as mitted and encouraged if the team is to operate optimally; [...] pay attention to informal relationships: how will it celebrate success, how will it commiserate, how will it maintain energy and enthusiasm, how will it deal with stress?" (Lupton-Bowers 2003: 86).

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2   The fundamental principles of the ICRC: humanity, independence, impartiality, voluntary service, unity, neutrality, universality.

INFLUENCING FACTOR	DERIVED COURSE OF ACTION
FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS	
MOTIVATION	IF POSSIBLE: CLARIFY MOTIVATION OF RECIPIENT AND THE FORMER MANAGER FOR THE HANDOVER
EXPECTATIONS	OPEN AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION ABOUT EXPECTATIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE HANDOVER
INTERACTION-SPECIFIC FACTORS	
TEAMWORK	CREATE A TENSION AND CONFLICT FREE WORKING ATMOSPHERE CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK LISTEN TO EACH OTHER
SUPPORT	ACTIVE DEMAND FOR SUPPORT (REGARDING RECIPIENT ACTIVE OFFER OF SUPPORT (REGARDING FORMER MANAGER) POSSIBILITY FOR CALL BACKS AT ANY TIME IF NECCESSARY, REFER TO A COMPETENT PERSON
PROCESS-SPECIFIC FACTORS	
CLARIFY PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE	IF POSSIBLE: EXPLAINING PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE REGARDING PROFESSIONAL, METHODICAL AND STRUCTURAL KNOWLEDGE
STRUCTURE OF THE PROJECT AND MILESTONES	SHOWING STRUCTURE(S) OF THE PROJECT, AIMS OF THE PROJECT AND ALREADY ACHIEVD MILESTONES IDENTIFYING WHAT THE RECIPIENT CAN DO TO REACH THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT
EXPECTATIONS	COMMUNICATE OPENLY MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS AT THE BEGINNING DURING THE PROCESS: CHECKING WHICH EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN AND CAN BE ACHIEVED (IF NECCESSARY, ADJUST EXPECTATIONS)
STRUCTURE OF THE HANDOVER	SPECIFICALLY PLANNED HANDOVER MEETINGS STRUCTURED HANDOVER WITH REGARD CONTENT IDENTIFICATION OF CONTENT STRUCTURE DURING PROCESS: SUMMARIZING TURNED-OVER CONTENT IN THE RUNNING PROCESS: IDENTIFYING WHICH STEPS ARE STILL MISSING FOR COMPLETING HANDOVER
JOINT MANAGEMENT OF THE HANDOVER	GIVING THE RECIPIENT THE POSSIBILITY TO ACTIVELY TAKE PART IN THE HANDOVER PROCESS INVITE THE RECIPIENT TO DO SO ACTIVELY CONJOINTLY DETERMINE WHICH PARTS OF THE CONTENT THE RECIPIENT WORKS OUT BY HIMSELF AND WHICH ARE TURNED OVER DIRECTLY BY THE ANTECCESSOR

TABLE 1: IMPORTANT FACTORS INFLUENCING A SUCCESSFUL HANDOVER
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

The 'how' is characterised by describing how the team will operate and how each member will contribute and participate in the process. It is important to agree upon certain procedures in order to foster the cooperation within the team. These are namely: participation, decision-making, contribution, performance and progress. According to Sarnitz, the better the cooperation between the former leader and the recipient, the better is the overall performance of the handover evaluated is (see table 1: support).

Furthermore, teamwork "…and interpersonal relations contribute to raising people's ability to cope with stress" (Lupton-Bowers 2003: 67), which becomes very important when having in mind the limited time of the handover process and in general the surroundings in which the members of the ICRC are working. If stress and conflicts during the handover occur, the process is evaluated negatively. Sharing knowledge helps the team to facilitate cross-fertilisation, so that everyone benefits during the project (cf. Loquercio 2006: 19). Cross-fertilisation means "the mixing of ideas and customs of different places or groups of people, to produce a better result" (Cambridge Dictionary 2013). But not only teamwork in the whole project but also between former manager and recipient should be considered as an important factor to make a handover process successful. A surrounding where the former leader supports the recipient 'adequately' supports the performance of the handover process. Adequately means that the recipient can ask questions at any time and that his questions are responded to appropriately or that the former leader, in case he cannot answer them, passes the question on to a capable person. Therefore teamwork does not only refer to the capability of a group of people to work well together but also the opportunity to use everyone's abilities and talents. If all sides benefit from the exchange of knowledge, less information gets lost and the working atmosphere is more likely both tension and conflict free, which is important for a successful handover process (cf. table 1).

5. Implementation in the ICRC

Many of the basic skills mentioned above, such as teamwork and communication, will be considered in the HLMS. In the first module of the HLMS, four topics will be treated: learning, responsibility, collaboration and creativity. As mentioned above, teamwork and learning skills are highly important for a successful handover. Only with those two skills can the knowledge transfer be effective and efficient and this should be – as we have already seen – the highest aim of the handover process.

Team play on equal footing is needed in order to make the process work. Having a clear and structured guideline helps both the recipient and the former manager. Therefore it is important that guidelines or a checklist is provided for both parts. A possible set of guidelines, developed on the basis of the analysis of this paper, can be found in table 2. Furthermore the handover process will be rated better if turned-over content is summarised during the process (cf. Sarnitz 2012: 72). Therefore it would be useful if the guidelines were used as a structure for reporting and summarizing the handover. Each topic can be thought as a headline of one part of the report. There have already been sporadic, informal and unstructured reports in the ICRC but we recommend making use of a structured guideline (see below) that everyone has to use. This way, both managers and the ICRC ensure that all important factors have been dealt with. Gaps in the handover process can be determined more easily and content does not get lost as the successor can always look up what was discussed during the handover.

6. Conclusion

With this, the transfer of information and knowledge, which is the highest aim of a successful handover, can be assured. Furthermore, communication plays a pivotal role in making this transfer work. The former leader and new leader should meet on equal footing, trying to work as a team for the success of the project. The former leader should keep in mind that the project does not end with his time in the mission but that further progress is still to be achieved. Only if he takes the chance to give his successor the needed information, pointing out what worked well and what still needs to be improved, can the following leader go on with his work. Another point is the importance of foresight. With his experience and knowledge, the former leader might know which future problems could come up and where the new leader should be careful.

We suggest the ICRC to provide its leaders with a set of guidelines (like the one suggested in this paper) to ensure that no important factor in the handover is missing. These guidelines should be available in an easy-to-handle tool. With these guidelines, the handover can become more structured. To implement a model, respectively guidelines, suggested in this paper could not only prevent losses of knowledge, but furthermore save limited resources, such as valuable time and money. The process itself then becomes more efficient and effective.

The school is a good approach to equip the future leaders and managers with important basic skills. Nevertheless it would be helpful not only to give the recipients those general techniques, but also to place a focus on the handover process itself. For example, training could address which aspects are of special importance in order to create a fruitful working environment with a manager colleague. When former manager and successor are working together, there is no or at least should be no hierarchy. A fruitful exchange of information and a successful handover are only possible if both participants (recipient and former manager) can have a dialogue at eye level.

"The personal identification with roles and authority tends to generate more overtly defensive aptitudes [...]. Such potential threats have to be avoided, repulsed or suppressed. That creates tension, at a personal level, and at an interpersonal and organisational level" (Brabant 1997: 17).

PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE	WHAT EXPERIENCE DOES THE FOLLOWING LEADER HAVE? WHAT MIGHT BE DIFFERENT IN THIS MISSION?
AIMS	PAST: WHAT ALREADY BEEN IMPLEMENTED FUTURE: WHAT HAS TO BE DONE? WHAT COULD THE FUTURE PROBLEMS BE?
STAFF	ARE THERE ANY CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OR IMPORTANT TRADITIONS THE FOLLOWER HAS TO KNOW ABOUT? HIERARCHICAL SPECIFICS? GET TO KNOW / WHO IS WHO
STRUCTURES	CONTACTS AND COOPERATION PARTNERS PROBLEMATIC COOPERATION
FEEDBACK	STAFF SHOULD GIVE FEEDBACK TO THE FORMER MANAGER FORMER AND FOLLOWING LEADER SHOULD WORK THROUGH THE FEEDBACK

TABLE 2: GUIDELINE FOR A SUCCESSFUL HANDOVER PROCESS
(SOURCE: OWN ILLUSTRATION)

As shown in the paper, it is helpful if turned-over content is summarised. Therefore we suggest including a report in the handover process that should be written by the successor during and after the handover. In doing this, the successor creates something like his own 'manual to the project' and the ICRC ensures that the important aspects and information of the handover do not get lost.

A handover process can and should be a source of new inspiration and input. This potential should be used, and giving the handover process a structure should ensure its success. The guidelines and tables presented in this paper can facilitate and improve the handover process between former manager and recipient and managers, work team, and the whole mission will benefit and be conducive to more effective and efficient work in humanitarian leadership.

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