

## New Forms Of Public Administration

During the Autumn term a workshop has been running on administration. Attached are the minutes of the meetings, for those who were not able to attend, together with the original outline brief.

IDS

December 1989

## New Forms of Public Administration.

### Outline Brief.

1. During the 20th century, public administration has been organised on the Weberian model. This has the following features:
  1. Specialisation. The work of the bureaucracy is broken down into tasks assigned to particular individuals and departments.
  2. Standardisation. Procedures, and often the conduct of particular tasks are codified, in rule books, standing circulars, manuals, written instructions, even in legal statutes.
  3. Hierarchy. The bureaucracy is organised along an extended vertical chain of command, with little horizontal co-ordination between different departments at lower levels of the hierarchy. In many government departments letters still have to be signed by the head of the Department, or even the Permanent Secretary since it is these senior officials who are formally responsible.
  4. Appointment and promotion on merit; employees are seen as public servants with duties required to work full time for the state, and receiving in return the guarantee of life-time employment.
  5. Written communication and storage in files, which allows the task to be carried out in spite of changes in personnel.
  6. Citizens seen as clients, with influence through the political not administrative process.
  
2. Weber referred to this type of organisation as a machine; it was impersonal, insulated from the patrimonialism of the pre-capitalist state; it was efficient through its rationalisation of tasks; and it was permanent, irrespective of the individual who filled any given post. It had many parallels to Taylorist organisation; being task oriented, with a clear division of conception and execution, a written specification of work to be done, a fragmentation of labour, and a strong vertical hierarchy. Weber was a contemporary of Taylor; Taylor saw his system of Scientific Management as applicable to public administration, but I have seen no evidence of any direct connection between the two. Nevertheless, both models were most suited for the carrying out of routine standardised tasks. Weber's model may be seen as an instrument for mass administration. Indeed, by the 1920's, state office work was organised with similar lay outs to mass production factories, with rows of specialised, semi-skilled workers, connected by a moving production line of files. Just as Ford insisted that work should be delivered to the worker, so files were delivered to the public clerks. For these reasons we can refer to the Weberian model as Fordist administration.

3. There are at least four major problems with this model:

- a) it is not designed for non routine tasks, and lacks flexibility in the face of unforeseen events.
- b) it is slow to innovate, and its incentive system discourages risk taking.
- c) it has a bias to large scale projects, not least because they provide a rationale for the continuation of the bureaucratic structure (argued for the military in Mary Kaldor's Baroque Arsenal).
- d) it is most fitted to produce standardised outputs, and is insensitive to the particular requirements of users of public services. Indeed, the citizen is required to fit in to the state's productive logic, and the state may fragment, de-skill, and develop instruments of control over users to that end.

At a time of increasing unpredictability, with an intensified emphasis on innovation, where scale increases vulnerability, and differentiated needs take on greater significance, the old model has come under strain.

4. In the field of private production, particularly in mass production industry where the traditional Taylorist principles of organisation were most fully applied, there has emerged a new managerialism, epitomised in the title of the latest book from one of its spokespersons, R.S. Peters, called 'Thriving on Chaos'. The main features of the new approach are:

- devolving operational responsibility to the individual or group doing the work; shop floor workers are now involved in statistical analysis, fault diagnosis, maintenance and repair, the control of work flow, as well as multiple operations some firms like Hewlett Packard classify even shop floor operatives as indirect staff to reflect the new job definitions.
- a shift of senior management's emphasis away from direct operational control to strategy, performance review and corporate diplomacy. In the language of systems theory, there has been a move from the centralised control of closed systems, to the management of the boundary conditions of open systems, that is to say the relations between the firm and its external (and uncertain) environment. Or, as one IDS study fellow reported after his return home to manage his clothing factory, "I have devolved all operational responsibilities on my deputy, and now spend the morning acting as internal consultant, and the afternoon training the workforce".

- a shift in emphasis from fragmented to collective tasks, the formation of project teams, and an increase in lateral relations between staff and departments around such common tasks.
  - closer long term relations with suppliers, centred less on price, and more on their capacity for long-term innovation and problem solving with respect to the purchasers' needs.
  - two way relations with users, with increased flexibility introduced into productive capacity to allow rapid response to particular customer requirements.
  - a resulting organisational structure which is a flatter pyramid, with greater decentralisation of operational responsibility (even to sub-contractors) coupled with centralised information systems, and strategic control.
5. In the past few years, the fiscal crisis, and widespread privatisation, has created pressure for innovations of this kind in public bureaucracies. But, as institutions, they are, of course, in a very different position to private corporations. They are subject to political control rather than market discipline. The absence of markets leads to a 'levy-bounty' relationship with citizens rather than one of exchange, and further results in a focus of public sector accounting on the costs of inputs rather than the net value of outputs. In spite of efforts to impose market conditions, and criteria on the state, there is still a public heartland where outputs, capital and labour are all allocated in a manner quite distinct to that of the private sector.
6. The aim of the present project is to look at new ways in which the purposes of the public sphere are being or could be carried out. This will mean considering the following:
- a) the state-citizen relation; this involves questions of tax, as well as those of delivery; of the formation of policy as well as its implementation; of instruments of discipline on the producers with respect to services provided rather than in relation to bureaucratic rules; of information systems about needs and service performance, and of forms of elective control.
  - b) the public wage contract; means of increasing public service flexibility within the context of employment guarantees;
  - c) centralisation and decentralisation; including the role of local and regional government, 'cellular administration', public service corporations, and organisational federalism.
  - d) devolution of service responsibilities to NGO's, users, or private contractors: mechanisms and problems of the grant economy.

- e) organisational models covering such matters as organisational pluralism and competition, matrix structures, task forces, the relationship of staff and line, of technical and administrative professionals, and of politicians and administrators.
  - f) public service information, including user group funding, 'popular planning', the finance of independent service providers, more effective relations between the public sector and independent research institutions.
7. The relevance of the above will depend on place, on the type of service, on administrative capacity and, above all, on politics. One of the lessons of the eighties is that too often the emphasis on politics and policies has led to the administrative question being taken as given. But, all over the world in East and West, in North and South, we are daily reminded that they cannot be assumed away. As Theo Mars has put it "if politics is organised idealism, administration is organised materialism" and politics (and policies) have been deeply flawed when they are separated from their material administrative base.
8. In the field of development, these flaws have been particularly evident. The major development institutions are, with only few exceptions, Fordist organisations imposing Fordist solutions. IDS is itself part of this development structure - as consultant, researcher and teacher - though we are organised on the quite different model of an individualised organisation, where the organisation is subordinate to the individuals, as in a barristers chambers, an architects partnership or a modest consulting firm. This may be one reason why, in our work, we have often come into conflict with the Fordist approach - whether it be in the fields of primary health care, putting farmers first or industrial flexible specialisation. I hope this programme of work will allow us to draw general lessons from these conflicts which will contribute to a new approach to development administration, and even to some suggestions for our own organisation as well.

Robin Murray  
2.9.89

New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of workshop of Oct 10th 1989.

1. The discussion was concerned with the precirculated note on the project by RM.
2. One set of points played down the significance of any one administrative model (e.g. the Weberian) in favour of an analysis of the interests of those inside and outside the bureaucracy who used the model and its administrative rationale as a means of furthering their own ends. The structure of administration is the dependent rather than independent variable.
3. A related point was that the 'ideal' model could not operate in its pure form ('working to rule' being a means of ensuring the breakdown of any system) and what was interesting was how 'actually existing bureaucracy' worked. The interests of para 2. would have some bearing here, but many other practises and informal mechanisms were also relevant. Indeed MM suggested that it was the variations in actually existing Weberianism rather than some post Weberian or post bureaucratic model which was the key question, since all structured organisations had the quoted features of Weberianism. The literature had a strand which contrasted mechanistic (Weberian) organisations with organic (e.g. post-bureaucratic ones) but MM downplayed this distinction in favour of the variations within the first.
4. Another way into the above points was that the failure of state delivery systems was not a question of the models. We needed to understand why . . . say the Weberian model did not work, before trying to develop a new model. Or put another way, how do we make existing administrative systems work, rather than constructing new models. This would involve looking at the systems historically: in health for example the increase and change in the functions to be administered rendered previous informal systems of cohesion inadequate. New technology made possible new forms of administration. While from the macro perspective much of the observed breakdown of state systems may be merely a reflection of the world economic crisis and its pressure on public resources. Attempts to transform administrative structures would be seriously missing the point.
5. The argument was not one way. Some contributors suggested that the Weberian model was significant as a model, that it stood as a permanent shadow to administrative practise. In Health, for example, it was this model which country after country had been trying to make work effectively for forty years - but at the very least it needed a level of sophistication, particularly control systems, which were not present in many developing countries.
6. Another theme re-instated the Weberian model but in a different way. Was not the issue in many developing countries how to construct a Weberian state to supercede patrimonialism - see Fred Riggs in the 60's, xx Hugh Roberts on Algeria, or Congress dominated India. The 'post bureaucratic' model was perhaps more relevant to the first and second worlds than the third.
7. This led to an interesting set of exchanges on the relations between socially constructed hierarchies (forms of state administration) and the natural hierarchical structures of civil society (like sexism and racism) Weber had made the point that his rational bureaucracy would only work in a society which was itself clearly hierarchical. We needed at

any event to recognise the tensions between the two. There was also some criticism of a Riggsian modernisation thesis on the grounds that to be effective administrative systems should indeed take account of the structures of civil society - of the 'affective economy' - and that one of the causes of the failure of post colonial states in Africa had been the imposition of Weberian model onto a society very different from Bismarkian Germany or Imperial Britain. Much of the literature on flexible specialisation in Italy is on the curious mixture between pre-Fordist family structures and forms of community with post Fordist production, with a somewhat Janus like local state in between.

8. There are some interesting historical questions raised by the above: when have administrative reforms been introduced in the process of European or American capitalist development; is - as TB suggests - a patrimonial state 'adequate' for a period of primitive capitalist accumulation, to be replaced by a Weberian state once an independent capital<sup>had</sup> been constituted. (see the Northcott Trevelyan reforms in the 1850's, or the comparison by Gerd Spittler of the Prussian and Malian/Niger administrative states. There was one suggestion that if we looked at administrative history we would find successive 'new forms' - which again would not be captured by the deductive two models of the background paper.

9. Between and beyond the above themes a number of questions were raised:

- what can be learnt for third world public administration from the organisational debates within modern industry - if Weberianism is the sibling of Fordism, what is the administrative sibling of flexible specialisation. What would flex spec. administration of tourist policy look like for example.
- what are the organisational innovations in all spheres of the public sector from which we could learn, (see for example the World Bank's Development Report which covered such issues in improving public sector performance as public sector pay and conditions, targets, mechanisms to improve responsiveness, organisational structure).
- how can collective ownership and entrepreneurship be combined in rural administration (e.g. through the use of NGO's and competition between them rather than a formal extension of the state); the same issue was raised with respect to state owned industrial enterprises in socialist countries, posed in terms of matching public ownership and the economy of performance.
- how different forms of organisation affect individuals.

10. Next week, Oct 17th at 4.00 in room 109, Teddy Brett will talk to his notes on the crisis of administrative theory (to be circulated later in the week); also agreed to circulate a paper by Ostrom, and the early chapters of Arturo Israel's book on Institutional Development. Other suggested readings welcome.

New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of workshop meeting to discuss Teddy Brett's draft "At Whose Service?"

17.10.89

1. Much of the discussion centred on TB's distinction of the market, the state and the 'economy of affection'. The last of these covers the family, NGO's and voluntary organisations. TB posed the question as to what the appropriate distribution of state activities between these three spheres was. Not enough to retain traditional public services in an inflexible, monocratic state.

2. It was pointed out with respect to the family, that families were not independent of the state, but rather a condition for the state. States had used the family in most objectionable ways (e.g. the Nazis). Problematic in any case to see the family in terms of an 'economy of affection' rather than for example, an economy of exploitation. Nevertheless said TB the family still the predominant productive unit in rural areas (and some urban ones as in the flexible specialisation towns). We needed to distinguish different functions of the family, one of which could be quasi self help in services previously provided by the state.

3. GW wanted to introduce a further distinction with <sup>in</sup> TB's economy of affection between a realm of 'spontaneous solidarity' e.g. the family, and the realm of civil society and association. Important not to confuse the two, although in some case the two did merge as with the Mafia: FR likewise insisted on a clear distinction being kept between the family and co-ops. The fourfold distinction could then be used to consider any traditionally public service, e.g. health suggested GW. In primary health care one could find self help (in China) associations (like clean water committees - though elites likely to take them over) the market (again China with price incentives being given to barefoot doctors and traditional medical practitioners) and the state.

4. It was pointed out that we should distinguish the form of organisation, and the form of distribution/allocation. Hence we can distinguish three types of allocation: exchange on the market; the levy(tax)- bounty system of the state; the gift/voluntary funded association. Each raises finance in a different way, provides services in different ways, is subject to different disciplines and constraints. Then there are organisations - private firms, families, co-operatives, voluntary associations, various types of state organs. The nature of the organisation and the form of allocation should not be confused, since there were many permutations between them. Households for example could provide for themselves, could operate on the market, or receive finance from the state. The same is true of voluntary associations.

5. TM made a parallel point when he argued that production systems should not be confused with delivery systems. The argument in the 80's was that the two can be separated, that as long as the state controls the delivery (the form of delivery, the distribution of services etc) it is perfectly possible, and even more efficient, to have private production systems. That is to say, private producers can be regulated by the state to deliver public services. Why not turn this round suggested TM, and ask if public production systems could not effectively operate within private delivery systems - i.e. the market. The counter argument to both the above is that public delivery systems require public production systems - or at least non profit motivated productive systems - since profit oriented systems (public or private) tend to bypass or erode public regulation. VI asked if you can really separate production and delivery: consider the links of consumption, production and delivery in a service like nursing.



6. Key to these issues were the professions, whose organisational structures dominate many third world services, whatever the form of delivery or production system, (though they do of course influence the mix - the NHS doctors' pressure not to be salaried state employees and retaining the freedom of private practise). Abstract administrative models and reforms may be quite deceptive if the power of professions is not taken into account. Thus decentralisation often means power to the professionals, while centralisation reflects an attempt by a political authority to control the professionals. The new right wants to increase the productivity of public service labour, and the professions stand in the way.

7. We should also be aware of the material processes of service delivery, particularly with respect to organisational information. Increasing public accountability often meant little more than allowing those at the centre to know what was going on at the base. Weber was himself less concerned with systems of delivery but rather the way in which bureaucracies formed an effective instrument of power for those at the centre. The struggle for control within the public sphere is parallel to that same struggle within the private (Taylorism and Fordism as first cousins to Weber). In practise of course the public centre has highly imperfect information, and relies on 'gatekeepers' such as local bobbies, or social workers, to filter information, but they in turn develop their own interests and autonomies. They pick out the clients of the state, (see the experience of poverty alleviation programmes). They can be seen as a street level bureaucracy.

8. Other issues touched on:

- the management of open systems, as opposed to monocratic ones which insist on unconditional subordination.
- the forms and relations of tax
- the wage relation of state labour - as a parallel to the question of the professions;
- the power of labour in the different types of production and delivery systems
- alternative means of connecting/socialising/centralising/co-ordinating decentralised forms of association/firms/components of the state.
- the dynamics of organisation - in terms of encouraging the most effective service deliverers to come to the fore (parallel to survival and growth of firms in the market)

9. Next week, we will discuss the paper by Zoe Mars (separately circulated) at 4.30 in room 109, Tuesday October 24th.

On October 31st it has been suggested we discuss the question of information and the state - 'How the State finds out' - covering inter alia the current form of national statistics, alternative sources of information for direct public production, and for greater consumer control of delivery, the experience of Rapid Rural Appraisal and the kind of early warning systems for famine in Mali being developed by Suzanna Davies.

On November 14th the Health Group will present the administrative problems they have faced in their work, and the experience of new structures in health care.

New Forms of Public Administration

Minutes of meeting of October 24th

Zoe Mars on Defining Implementation.

1. One thread of discussion was the way in which Zoe's main themes of policy and implementation were treated in alternative models. First there is the liberal model where the chain runs as follows:

citizens  
interests/  
preferences

politicians  
elected  
democratically  
with  
policies

civil  
servants  
& experts  
work up  
the detail  
of the  
policy

imple-  
mentation

servi  
or  
output  
recei  
ed by  
citiz-  
ens

This is a mechanistic model, open to many kinds of problem:

- citizens may not know their preferences on many matters, or may have been influenced by both the experts' and the politicians' own problematics.

- the politicians may have only general idea of policies: lack the knowledge to counter arguments of bureaucracy.

important to consider the ritual of policy discussion both among politicians and bureaucracy; much policy never meant to be implemented.

note also the variations in the political and technical capability of politicians.

- policy may derived from the bureaucrats and experts. Many varied interests:

\* internal sociological ones; policies put forward as part of intra bureaucratic politics

\* external sociological ones - that is the links of the bureaucrats with civil society

- for same reasons policies derived from elsewhere may be blocked by bureaucracy; indeed one of key problems in implementation is vulnerability of process at any point in the chain. Zoe discussed the technical means of dealing with this (from bar charts to critical path analysis and programme evaluation and review techniques)

- implementation may be undertaken in such a way as to be resisted by those it is intended to benefit. Weakness of model which treats citizens as passive recipients of state services. Rather their own involvement often necessary, both as recipients, and often as providers of the services themselves. cf role of gatekeepers, queues etc.

- the bureaucrats may be inept/inefficient, individually and collectively.

Much of the burden of administrative theory - particularly the 'access' tradition has been a critique on the administrators (professionals looking for problems to solve, clients to make dependent upon them) and the flawed nature of what Theo Mars has called the 'contact situation' between administration and citizen. In general, interests of 'ordinary citizens' subordinate to the rest.

## What responses:

- introduce a market as form of increasing citizen choice/power, or (in the case of sub contracting) disciplining implementers.
- strengthen users by financing user groups, increasing information about services and their standards, independent review bodies, supervisory boards to oversee implementation with citizen representatives.
- more regular and more detailed elections (elections for separate state service)
- increasing resources for politicians to oversee implementation
- training for civil servants. large literature on training, and drawbacks of the model which has concentrated on the training of individuals. When the individuals return, no change in behaviour. Is this because the wrong people are trained; or those trained need more scope for independent action when they return; or the training needs to be collective, involving all those in particular implementation processes; or that the training is inappropriate and uninformed about the particular issues faced by the trainees. Who is sent on training courses? Should training be linked to a broader strategic package - of which training is a continuing part, and is undertaken in many different ways

(note for ourselves: do we do follow ups of our trainees, and assess the effectiveness.

where has effectiveness been highest - when it has been linked in to projects with which we have been involved at the level of policy and implementation - e.g. food/health? )

- recruitment policy for civil service (see the policy of late feudalism of staffing administration from poor families with no connections to feudal magnates - e.g. Ethiopia pre 1974)
- extend democratic institutions; cf. US Information Act as one example.

The above attempt change within context of old model.

## 2. What elements of a new model:

- Zoe suggests break down of the distinction policy/implementation. Interaction between the two. Limitations of concept of plan as 'frozen decision'. This involves a changed view of the policy making process.
- extending the above, importance of seeing the policy making process as one of getting consensus from those on whom implementation depends: politicians, civil servants, citizens. Posing it in this way implies that the policies will be affected by such a process, that a consensus set of policies will be different from those devised by the isolated experts. BH gave example of health policy in Zimbabwe. Group who spent time discussing with 'front line implementers', gained their support around a policy worked out with them and then brought back to centre for further support. The base workers themselves became champions of the policy and pressed the centre to deliver. SM spends 25% of time on a consultancy, going round donors, Ministries etc gaining support, allowing change in policies in the process.
- decentralising implementation as far as possible to recipients of service - Do it Yourself, or to those in close touch and confidence of recipients.
- continuous training - collective - on the spot - problem oriented - an alternative approach in practise.

- change Weberian institutions, rather than train people within existing institutions.

EAB made the point that some notion of policy presented at elections and to which elected politicians then committed to implement was an important part of the notion of democracy - certainly the liberal version of it. How does a transformation of the 'contact situation' extend the notion of liberal democracy

3. A number of points were made on the importance of distinguishing different types of policy:

- pressing policy issues versus chosen ones (e.g. inflation and famine, as against land reform)
- policies which involve antagonistic relations with client citizens (tax, policing, regulation) and those commanding citizen support (basic health). How does the implementation issue vary in each case.
- technical projects (e.g. building) as against organic ones (new cattle policies)

4. How does the way policy is made affect both the policy and the chosen form of implementation; consider macro economic policy for this viewpoint and the contrast of managing a national economy through interest rates, taxation, and exchange controls and ~~import~~, as against detailed industrial policy of a Japanese type. Centralised policy making tends to favour large projects.

How does IDS work and consultancy fit into this: consultants often used as instruments in political/bureaucratic battles, and have influence because of their lack of connection to host society. Or trusted because of that connection. Or need to work with client groups/front line implementers as in the Zimbabwean case. Or may require this extended joint work as condition of coming, as in the case of Demming ~~xxx~~ who insists on a minimum of 7 days working together to anyone who asks him to speak on statistical quality control.

Need to be aware of the limitations of the enlightenment tradition of thought and action, of possibilities of sharp separation of the two, both in time and structurally (thinkers and actors, policy makers and implementers), conceivers and executors. ). Basis for critique of concept of 'experts'.

5. Factors behind the pressure for administrative change.

Is it the result of structural adjustment/national and international crises?  
Or the change in the organisation of civil society/the economy, rise of flex. spec?

6. Next week. October 31st. 4.00 p.m. in Room 221 (note temporary room change)  
(tea at 3.50)

Discussion on The place of information in old and new forms of Administration. 'How the state finds out', should it find out, How the citizen finds out, how the centres and citizenry can monitor performance. ~~xxxx~~

## New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of meeting on 31st Oct 1989

### Public Administration and the system of information.

1. The meeting began with two short papers by Robin Murray and David Evans (available from Maggie). RM's was concerned with the contrast of information systems in a Weberian and a flexible state structures, and highlighted the following issues:

- the need to move from a cost based focus for state information (centred on the budget, and expenditure measured against budget) to one which united output and cost.
- the need to shift the focus of auditing and accountability from short term housekeeping to long term strategy
- the need to change the relations of the state to citizens, with respect to seeing users as key sources of information and control, as well as contributors to strategic planning.
- the alternative institutional forms for improving the operation of the state - including audits, different types of accounting, Rayner type scrutinies, internal statistics, public hearings and enquiries, etc.
- the potential role of the state as a provider of civil society's necessary information - e.g. for the effective operation of markets.

2. David's paper looked at the information the state would need in a centrally planned as against a market based society, and intermediate points along that continuum. He particularly highlighted the different information requirements arising from a move from Fordist to flexibly specialised production, and contrasted information arising from markets to that involved in directly controlled organisations (public and private).

3. From DEE's presentation it emerged that current liberal states had their organisational information systems structured round the way points at which the state met the external money economy: with tax on the one hand, and money spending on the other. The point at which they both met was the budget, which combined annual expenditure forecasts by Department, with an assessment of tax required. Financial control thereafter consists primarily of checking expenditure against scheduled budget spending. There has been much discussion in the public admin literature about the drawbacks of this - particularly the use of incremental rather than zero base budgeting (i.e. assuming that spending by Departments will be the same or more than the previous year unless there are active cuts made, rather than getting each Department to justify all spending each year). Attempts to give attention to output and to intra-departmental flows which do not involve cash spending have by and large not been successful.

4. One theme of the discussion was - as in previous weeks - the difficulty of dissociating administrative issues from those of power. Structures of power were closely bound up with control of information - consider the question of the concealment of information in bureaucracies, and by bureaucracies; the privileged access to information at different levels; the reasons why clearly useful information is not collected, such as indices of doctors' performance, because of professional or bureaucratic power. (We could also recall Polanyi's Dahomey example where every official had a female shadow who was required to report on him to the King). Yet one of the issues about structures of information was to have some which counteracted bureaucratic power (Freedom of Information Acts, the free press, rights of Parliamentary scrutiny). Informa was not itself power, but it was and is a first step towards it.

5. Several people questioned whether information was a useful way into organisational issues - as against power for example. The argument in response was: 1) if systems of information are imbricated with structures of power, then it may be necessary to have countervailing information systems as discussed in para 4 for democratic accountability; 2) quite apart from power, there were distinct questions about systems of information as part of the material process of organisation/administration. Thus accounting systems steered an organisation and its officers to particular types of behaviour. An innovative, decentralised state structure implied a different 'economy' of information from a Weberian system. Was it true for example that the greater the space and time period over which a system had to be co-ordinated, the more the information<sup>was</sup> needed by a central controller? Did it not depend on the system of control itself? Or in the case of the British NHS, one interviewee had said that what was needed for greater effectiveness was more autonomy for local managers. This was an organisational point, but it also depended for its potential viability on a change in information system, particularly on how the local manager would be assessed and controlled. These examples are of administrative questions per se - analytically distinct from those of political/class power, although in practise often bound up with them.

6. One of the above threads of discussion that aroused debate was that of control systems. If there was decentralisation of responsibility, how could a senior manager ensure that a more autonomous subordinate acted as the senior manager would wish. Through multiple objectives? Through frequent inspection? Through long, standard training? Through Weberian rules, and systems of surveillance? Or could we talk of hierarchies of required information, in which the senior manager was not concerned with the detail of operation, but only broad results, and indicators (or 'audit triggers') where things might be going wrong. Such triggers might include rates of labour turnover,<sup>on the</sup> types of management system in place,

7. More generally, what was highlighted was the information overload of many bureaucracies, much of the information being useless, and much of the necessary operational information being unavailable. Example of health systems brought up in this respect: the pull of national and international organisations for particular statistics on types of morbidity, whose results everyone knew, but lack of information on impact of alternative forms of health care, on the relative performance of health officials, or on local food production and consumption. There was a need to analyse the forces behind the collection of redundant statistics, and the non collection of necessary ones (back to the question of concealment). Need perhaps to have decentralisation of information gathering capacity (whether statistics or research), allowing the undertaking ~~of~~ research necessary for policy, often on a one off basis.

8. The central planning model assumes the centre will have full knowledge of operating level. But in ldc's in particular important to set up systems on presumption that the centre will not know, and cannot know everything. What is the minimum it needs to know. What is the strategic information?

9. The kinds of question we should ask are: what is the quality of info; how is info. organised, not least linguistically (professional languages/labelling); what info needed in open and closed systems (the cybernetic problematics); what inequalities of info; how can you multiply sources of info, e.g. through setting up competing producers and channels of info; what is the power behind any info?

10. TM raised question of Time. Classic bureaucracy based on past info; files; past procedures and events; precedents; fitting new problems into old bottles; benefits are accuracy & reliability; defects: rigidity. Every innovation is a crisis. Then we have present oriented systems- the economics model. Info on what other are doing nec. to determine present action; discounting the future. Indicative planning. Thirdly, future oriented systems - strategic info. Utopian? because of the uncertainty, unless like large firms you have power to determine the future through law which freezes the future.

Next meeting: Nov 7th, 4.00, Room 109. To discuss A. Israel, paper with Maggie. RM.

## **New Forms of Public Administration.**

Minutes of Meeting on 7th November 1989

### Arturo Israel's "Institutional Development" Incentives of Performance

Mick Moore led the discussion on Israel's book on Institutional Development. Israel's book provides a useful and operationalisable approach to institutional problems. Two key concepts were used by Israel's specificity and competition. Whilst specificity was a task - oriented feedback mechanism, competition was an institution - oriented feedback mechanism. Moore felt that the choice of the term competition was misplaced. Moreover, he suggested that Israel's book was incomplete in that the operational conclusions did not relate to specificity or competition. Moore questioned whether the tools were intended to be descriptive or prescriptive.

EdeK drew attention to the problem of specificity in social policy. If it was difficult to specify the tasks and duties in say health or education, did this then imply that institution building was not a feasible undertaking.

Several participants made the point that the main issue was accountability rather than specificity.

MG raised the question of the applicability of the concepts of competition and specificity to training in development projects.

TB stated that the problem lay not with the 'professionals' as such but with how to make the professionals responsible for their actions.

HS expressed concern with the unit of analysis, namely, 'activity'.

MG raised the point that projects were often determined by the need to spend rather than the need to respond to consumers.

MM emphasised that participation was only part of the solution and not the solution itself.

TB argued that a market-oriented competitive health care system would solve some of the problems in health.

#### Next meeting:

Tuesday, 14th November at 4.00 p.m. in Room 109.

Topic: Alan Fowler will discuss "The Political Economy of Indigenous NGO's in Africa".

## New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of meeting on November 14th

1. The paper was presented by Alan Fowler on the Political Economy of NGO's. His argument was that NGO's were now a substantial administrative sector, and were growing rapidly. NGO's received \$4.5b. p.a. one third of it from public aid, (see his paper New Scrambles). Aid donors encouraging NGO's since they saw it increasing pluralism and the density of civil society, against the state. AF said however that African states fighting back: the elites were taking control of NGO's; a number had insisted on registering NGO's; the politically threatening had been closed down; since foreign funding of NGO's usually required government agreement, this public gatekeeper role had led to NGO's becoming a new form of patronage. They were also being turned into arms of the state for service provision. He made a distinction between service NGO's (not controlled by those served), and mutual NGO's (controlled by the beneficiaries). Many of the latter had emerged from traditional forms of mutualism. The NGO movement threatened - by formalising them and increasing their dependence through funding - to erode their traditional effectiveness. Some authoritarian governments had developed NGO's as a means of mass mobilisation, and as a way of changing the status quo (e.g. in Nigeria). Aid agencies themselves moulded NGO's in their own image, and contributed to the general trend which AF described as the growing incorporation into/dependence on the state. His paper then suggested ways of maintaining NGO autonomy and effectiveness, particularly by adequate funding of consultation.

2. The first line of discussion was in defence of the state. Wasn't the state meant to mobilise? Was it not a force of modernity in non developmental cultures? Would it not provide the continuity and disciplines which NGO's might lack? The issue was not strong state/weak civil society, but weak state/strong civil society. It was the state which needed strengthening not civil society. NGO's had a mixed record in terms of effectiveness. In Bangla Desh for example there was bitter rivalry between them. Their incorporation into the state and political parties provided a means of nationally unifying them.

3. Another line was to suggest that the state was itself pluralistic, and uncentralised. Further, NGO players operate within the state; a distinction cannot be clearly drawn between the state and NGO's; they are forms, related closely to each other, through which classes, groups, and interests pursue their goals. NGO's are bit players in the drama being acted out within states.

4. Then there was a defence of NGO's, clearly distinguished from the state. NGO's were potentially accountable in a way that the state was not. Mutualist NGO's would lose their members if they failed to deliver to them, (quite apart from formal structures which in principle gave more say to beneficiaries.) Aid funded organisations might expect to lose the voluntary contributors if they did not deliver in accordance with the hopes of those giving the aid. Aid workers in NGO's were expected to conform to a modest, developmental culture and were subject to attacks if they behaved as 'Lords of Poverty' - (the title of a recent book (on the UN)). The key point is that there is a distinction between a) mutualist/non mutualist forms of service delivery; b) voluntary funded and tax funded forms of delivery. Tax was coercive; voluntary funding more dependent on performance. For this reason, while NGO's might be drawn into webs of intrigue, they were in principle less open to corruption than states.



5. Other administrative distinctions suggested themselves. The relation of NGO's to national or overseas states/agencies were based on the project rather than the wage relation. The project set out detailed ends, and the grant was paid at intervals giving greater autonomy to those working in NGO's relative to those working directly for the state. This is a first means of decentralisation. There was also a question of monitoring the work of NGO's, as a condition for maintaining grant. Part of the problem here was to have people who understood NGO's, and the problems they were dealing with: an example of the problems arising from the division of conception and execution. The themes examined here are of course also applicable to the organisation of the state itself. The formal independence of the NGO's forces some such system into being, however compromised it may become in practise for political or other reasons.

6. The question of the donor personnel and their organisational models was one area where a number of policy suggestions were made. At the moment overseas aid - e.g. that provided by ODA - was administered by foreign civil servants who knew little about the country or the local organisation, and the immediate problems. This was a common condition. One answer had been to employ intermediaries in the field, more in a position to assess organisations and their performance. It should be a condition that donors/grant givers are close to those to whom they give grants, indeed may well have come from the NGO community itself. Secondly, there were anomalies when organisational requirements in the donor country forced inappropriate institutions onto NGO's (example of the tax requirements in the US for charity, and impact on NGO recipients). There were problems in forcing formality onto effectively working groups, but the provision of public funds at least seemed to require formality as a condition of accountability.

7. Relevant here is the literature on the project as the central relationship of the grant economy. Hirschman's Development Projects Observed is an early contribution, but there are more recent ones - arguing for a move to programme funding. A relevant subject for IDS, as the ODS considers moving from to core to programme funding. What about the core funding model for NGO's, as against programme or project

8. A general issue concerned the way in which NGO's could be analysed. Could we distinguish them as an administrative unit, holding politics constant. Much of the discussion had been about ways in which politics came to dominate NGO's: but as with all public and private institutions, politics acts out its drama on a materially organised institutional base (whether market, private property, state, NGO's, etc). Do the institutional forms make a difference to the political outcome? Or put another way, if there is political consensus, then the administrative question - in terms of effectiveness - is posed sharply. We therefore needed to distinguish these two aspects of the NGO analysis. We need an administrative critique as well as a political economy of NGO's. It was hardly surprising that states should fight back against NGO's - particularly if they were devised to weaken state power. The question was whether the presence of NGO's was a beneficial counter to the prevailing conduct of power. Can they be seen as at least partially a democratic form?

9. Mick Howes study had shown how NGO's were of course very different, and resisted generalisation. Alan Fowler said their performance varied greatly. But overall the discussion contained a useful blend of totalising enquiry and post structuralist modesty. And AF finished still with a vision of NGO's as potentially democratic, and a Post-Ford foundation ~~was~~ sense that they were a means to accommodate the regional and ethnic diversity which ~~was~~ still so strong in developing countries, and so often ignored in their institutions.

## **New Forms of Public Administration.**

Minutes of Meeting on 21st November 1989

### **NOTES ON NEW FORMS OF ADMINISTRATION AND THE HEALTH SECTOR: G. BLOOM AND B. HADDON**

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As a result of significant changes in health policy in developing countries in the past twenty years, the health sector has become more dispersed and complicated. However, the management of the health sector has not kept pace with these changes. The paper proposed a mix of strategies to reform health management systems in developing countries, namely: getting certain aspects of the Weberian model to work, reforming and adding to these. These changes are to occur at both district and national levels.

#### Comments

1. It was not clear which countries the paper applied to or indeed what models of bureaucracy were being proposed.
2. There was perhaps a need for rethinking the role of the state in the centre and the locality with regard to health services.
3. What methodology of priorities was to be used in selecting from the numerous reform proposals. How were these various proposals to be operationalised?
4. The experience of Nigeria suggests that a decentralised, market model of health provision does not work. Hospitals have become short of drugs as they are diverted into private hands.
5. What do you do in a country such as Ethiopia where the ratio of doctors to population is very low. How do you ration health services? - according to price or need or social importance?
6. We need a more developed discussion of decentralisation. Does the market necessarily lead to malpractice?
7. The market can ration curative treatment but cannot deal with preventive medicine.
8. The problem may not be market vs. state but how to make a centralised state system more accountable. This also implies identifying the sources of demand for greater accountability in the health sector.

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, 28th November at 4.00 p.m. in room 109  
UN Administration.

## New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of meeting on 28.11.89

The United Nations.

1. John Toye and Jude Stoddart introduced the paper. Their argument was that a) the literature on the UN had focussed on its politics rather than its administration, and b) as far as UNCTAD was concerned (their case study) what was needed was more 'Weberianism' not less. The latter point was supported in terms of:

- recruitment and promotion; there was evidence that these did not take place on the basis of open advertisement and merit, but were subject to national and various internal pressures.
- the organisation of work. There were no clear job descriptions; nor division of functions; few sanctions if work was not carried out; there was an imperfect flow of information within the organisation, with barriers particularly at the middle level; and there was a lack of job discipline.

Part of the problem was that UNCTAD had developed as a compromise. National resistance from dc's to strong trade organisation, rather a conference with a secretariat. UNCTAD was thus allowed to develop its own role. Its terms of reference were permissive and discretionary.

What was required were a coherent set of policies, defined tasks, the identification of people who had made good and less good contributions, and an appraisal procedure to assess performance.

2. The first issue to define was the nature of the tasks to be organised. For UNCTAD they included servicing the conference, research and advocacy. Was a Weberian structure relevant to such tasks? Was a version of management by objectives the most effective means of organising research for example? This issue had been well researched with respect to agriculture where a task culture appeared most effective. But could culture be changed within such a structure?

3. A propos the Weberian argument, was it right to try and separate the bureaucracy from politics - to create a quasi international service? UNCTAD was deeply political since it was one of the agencies which was established to be a partial voice for ldc's - this is why it was a compromise structure to begin with. In these circumstances should there be any worries about political appointments? Politics itself was one of UNCTAD's outputs. Its task was not neutral implementation, but active lobbying and diplomacy on behalf of - or at least in defence of - the ldc interest. Would a more Weberian practise not stifle the organisation in one of its prime functions?

4. One reading of UNCTAD - and the UN more generally - was that it was already a flexible organisation, with a substantial amount of its TA and research work done on contract. The permanent staff represented a small core, part of whose job was managing the sub contracts. This gave substantial flexibility; it enabled the organisation to draw on people with a wide range of experiences. It allowed the mix of expertise to be changed promptly in response to changing requirements. The external staff were also not paid the high, untaxed salaries of the core.

5. There was some discussion of how effective the UN was as a contractor in this way. The approved lists of consultants were problematic. There was a tendency (in some agencies at least) to lean towards large multinational consultants. There were grotesquely formal procedures for the review of work, which - to ensure neutrality in relation to the project - often consisted of people with no knowledge whatsoever of the subject matter in hand. Hence evaluations tended to be overformalised, checking any report against the precise wording of the terms of reference, because of the incapacity to judge the substance. In form therefore the UN might be seen to have some flexibility: but its sub contract links were managed in a pathologically Fordist way.

6. One major theme was the distinctiveness of a multilateral organisation and its accountability. There was no national Parliament, or cabinet of Ministers. Instead there was a multi-national conference with an executive committee which met only intermittently. Such a structure found it difficult to set useful goals and targets, or hold the bureaucracy accountable. Particular difficulty in the range of countries. Notable by way of contrast that the Commonwealth Secretariat more effective because smaller number of member countries, who shared a common language, education, culture, and history. Also undertook TA for particular countries - and though there were some examples in UNCTAD - much of its <sup>UNCTAD's</sup> work was aimed multilaterally. User assessment and influence even more difficult. However, there were means by which political control enforced. First through appointment of the Director General who acted as a quasi Minister/politician. Secondly through the unWeberian political appointments. Thirdly, because many UNCTAD employees were concerned to represent national (or more generally third world) interests because of their ultimate return to national politics and their need to have maintained a political base there.

7. The distinctiveness of multilateral administrations was clearly a fertile theme to follow up, perhaps through comparative work: the UN, the EEC, the Bank and the Fund. The last two it was suggested were more accountable because of the dominance of a single state, the US. The relevance of the problem was that there was ever increasing pressure for international state functions to be performed, but a reluctance - even in Europe - to go beyond a multilateral way of doing them. As a result they were often more effective in reducing barriers (the EEC as an example) rather than constructing effective pro-active structures and policies.

8. More generally comparative research was favoured for the UN work itself. Would the Weberian argument be applicable to say WHO or FAO - whatever the outcome of the debate on UNCTAD? And what of UNESCO. How did its acute politicisation get mapped administratively? UNDP as a more decentralised and user related organisation seemed more effective as a result - certainly when compared to the core staff. And what about the decentralised research institutes like that attached to the ILO?

9. The major issue remained as to how any reform could be achieved. Would improvement of recruitment and work organisation along the lines suggested by JT/JS make a decisive change in the effectiveness of UNCTAD in its own terms; are such changes possible? What other devices might work: cutting salaries; introducing internal competition between sub units; using external assessors of the internal work, attached to members of the Conference Executive?

Next meeting. Andy Batkin on Administrative issues in an NGO: the case of the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service. Tues. Dec 5th, 4.00, Rm 10

## New Forms of Public Administration.

Minutes of meeting on December 5th 1989.

The NGO as an alternative state? The experience of the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service.

Introduced by Andy Batkin and Rosie Page (respectively Programme Co-ordinator, and Women's Development Adviser with the project),

1. The RDRS is a substantial organisation. It has 1,800 workers, 1,000 of whom are field workers. They work in the North of Bangla Desh in an area of 5 million people, of whom they have a target group of 100,000, all households with less than an acre of land. Currently they work directly with 50,000 people.
2. Their organisation is hierarchical, with five levels above the field workers. They organise rural works projects, and have a comprehensive programme administered through the field units. So the field workers will be simultaneously dealing with health, agricultural projects, education, non farm employment and technical advice. Previously these had been organised as separate functions, but they have now been united. There is an element of a matrix however with small advisory units on the functional areas (including women's development) who act as supports for the field workers, as trainers, and as monitors of performance, as well as contributing to strategy.
3. Fieldworker/household relations. The RDRS insists on only working with groups. To them it gives no relief/goods/ credit save in emergencies. All has to be paid for. What they offer is education, advice, support, ideas. They encourage group saving, and investment. RDRS originally a relief group, but have moved away from this, and limit even emergency aid to say 3 weeks at the most. Work with the groups limited to 5 years, after which the group 'graduates'. In October/November each group met on average 4 times with the field worker, a total of 12,693 meetings in the project as a whole.
4. Monitoring. The work of the group and fieldworkers has now been systematised in the form of a monitoring book. This is a large leather bound volume, one for each fieldworker. It has 47 items of information on such things as size of holding, family size, standard of literacy, availability of tubewell water, number of projects say on chickens, ducks, cattle; degree of immunisation; access to latrine; ORS competence; use of birth control; no of marriages in the past period, and numbers of those without dowries. Each household is detailed under each of the 47 headings, and then the group. These are then aggregated at each of the managerial levels, and computerised at the centre. The results are a two monthly reading of the progress of the project. For example there was an average of 9.8% functional literacy in the 3071 groups, 30.5% were engaged in cattle projects and so on. This was the type of use value statistics suggested by Dudley Seers in his criticisms of traditional statistics in the 1970's. They are simultaneously means of monitoring progress, a system of managerial control, and an operational tool, for the results are discussed within the group themselves. The Advisers use the results too in their work, and check them during the field visits, as do the researchers. They are becoming the informational spine of the organisation.

5. During the discussion, the question of the type of activity and its fit with the organisation was discussed. Were not the rural works projects and the comprehensive projects very different activities, the one infrastructural, the other educational/developmental? Though they were different they were organised in the same way. What was interesting was the relatively Fordist character of the developmental organisation: from the monitoring, the approach to groups, the things worked on, the common wage and grading systems, the size of the project as a whole, the centralisation of formal authority. One of the strengths of such an organisation was that it was able to switch rapidly in an emergency: say to undertake an immunisation campaign, saving lives in an epidemic or after a flood, digging tubewells, (they were undertaking to dig 65,000 bamboo tubewells over the next six months on behalf of the government). These tasks are relatively standardised.

6. On the other hand, the RDRS had many post Fordist features. It had multiskilled its field workers so they could deal with the range of functions involved in the comprehensive package. The field workers fed information back from their groups about priorities and major issues. This was parallel to a 'market' feedback. The organisational culture was participative decision making, with an emphasis on consensus.

7. One question was the difference between RDRS and the state.

Answer:

- a) the RDRS has enforced Western standards of efficiency and administrative behaviour. Any corrupt practise means immediate dismissal, as does persistent failure to perform. There were clear rules and procedures in each case.
- b) RDRS had better pay - or more generally a different form of wage relation. There was no job for life; there was flexibility between jobs; people were made redundant in the organisation if there was no longer work for them (e.g. the support staff); but with very generous redundancy provisions. There was now a provident fund.

8. Another part of the answer was of course the relation to politics. The RDRS was formally accountable to the World Lutheran Federation in Geneva, but lines of control were weak. It was unaccountable within Bangla Desh. In this sense it achieved the Weberian goal of insulating the bureaucracy from politics by having an international foundation as the barrier between them. This was the feature of the RDRS which caused most discussion. Should not the RDRS be required to fit into the government's development priorities? Was it not an example of neo-colonialism with expatriates running major development projects quite independently of any democratic control? Was there not an additional problem because of the multiplicity of NGO's and their falling over other, remaining un co-ordinated, duplicating, taking good staff from the state, and so on. (In Kenya there is a similar concern, with 240 NGO's in the environmental area alone). There was a strong view by some discussants that NGO's should be brought under strict democratic control - though this was only possible when the country was strong enough to say no. to the aid that went along with the NGO. Certainly, it was felt there should be registration, and integration of plans.

9. The other view was that the state plans often bore little relation to reality - that everything was a priority; that the RDRS was organised in such a way that if it was not meeting real needs the groups would dissolve since they were not dependent on the transfer of resources. That is to say there was a form of democratic control through the manner of working, even though there was no formal elected authority. RDRS acted as sub contractor for the state on a number of things, and was proposing to be administered a new bilateral/multilateral/central government backed credit project. So again, if it was delivering in terms of felt need it could not continue its activity level.

10. There was the option that the RDRS should become a local NGO. This was opposed by the indigenous staff. It should also be noted that there were only 7 expatriates out of 1800 workers.

11. The discussion tried to piece its way through the same issues. If the question was how an organisation such as RDRS kept in touch with local issues/sensitivities, then one should look at the nature of relations to users, and character of employees. The latter were mainly local, and highly integrated into local society. The users and employees were both channels of a daily discipline and connectedness. If it was a question of formally democratic control, this meant bringing RDRS into the political arena from which it had been distant. If it meant integrating RDRS into the local or national service in some way, then both these had to be evaluated. There was some intense exchange on effectiveness / corruption in state civil services, and evaluation of state administration. Seen from national government point of view, RDRS could be tolerated and even used, because it had clear, undisputed objectives, and did not cross particular political interests. In this sense worked under the political radar line. There was a question of the costs to having ill organised, and un-coordinated NGO's operating in a country, but RDRS was not one such.

12. This discussion again highlighted the significance of RDRS not delivering cash or free commodities. It was offering software rather than hardware, which depended on continuing relations between users and providers. It was less open to politicising/distributional struggles - let alone corruption - as a result. Would the adoption of a credit scheme not infringe these principles? Most of the evidence, being collected by Bolaji and Charles Harvey suggested it would. It was interesting that RDRS was described in terms of education rather than service delivery - a 'modern' way of looking at organisation and service/client relations.

13. The political issue might also arise if empowerment, and the federating of groups, took off into demands by the rural poor. This had not happened so far. Indeed the project put its emphasis not on political demands, but on collective self help, not only in agriculture but in small scale industry.

14. There was little discussion of the strategy itself. Of enabling the poor to get into the market, as producers and purchasers; of attempting to increase savings, for investment in types of goods which showed a higher return, or in small scale industry. What are the prospects of such a strategy, however well run? What were the barriers - in same way as question was raised about why the bamboo tubewells had not already been sunk given the long history of support for them.

15. Gender issues had been a key current in RDRS. Nearly half their field organisers were women; they worked with women, and the monitoring distinguished between women's and men's groups. It had been harder to get women in more senior positions: they found a tendency for women to leave for higher paid and greater responsibility jobs in other NGO's. The Women's Advisory Unit not only ran a wide range of women's training courses; but advised on - say - expanding a small sewing business.

16. Finally, there was the question of sustainability. AB saw RDRS's work as ratchetlike. They built rural works which were then maintained by local people. That would go on, whether or not RDRS continued. Their emphasis on education, skills, new ways of doing things, did not depend on RDRS continuing to work there. People would not lose those skills or experiences. The administrative cadre which was being developed in RDRS meant that there would be even less need for expatriates, and at the same time provided a reservoir of administrators to help in other parts of the economy, as well as the state. RDRS aimed to provide the social scaffolding not the building.

Address: RDRS, GPC Box 618, Dhaka 1,000, Bangladesh.