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***THE IMPLICATIONS OF BUREAUCRATIC FACTORS
FOR AGRICULTURAL POLICY ANALYSIS***

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ABSTRACT

In formulating and implementing agricultural policies, it is necessary to take bureaucracy and public administration issues into account. It is obvious that the detailed task of administration and implementation of most agricultural development projects is left to bureaucrats or project staff. In the context of this paper, it seems sensible to give more emphasis on searching out people and situations within developing countries, where local thoughtful and capable policy makers and planners are getting on with the job of creating relevant and feasible solutions for reducing poverty.

I. INTRODUCTION

The basic theme of this paper is that it is necessary to take bureaucracy and public administration issues into account in formulating and implementing agricultural policies. Obvious, one might say, but equally obvious is the fact that it would appear that much agricultural and rural development policy analysis takes place in a vacuum where administration and implementation issues are seen as "minor details" to be left to bureaucrats or project staff.

Only too often we hear that an agricultural policy or a rural development project was well conceived but it failed or did not achieve its objectives because of the following type of reasons

- (a) lack of political will on the part of the government ;
- (b) lack of appropriate appraisal and management techniques and people to use them ;

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- (c) lack of coordination between agencies and too much rivalry between Ministries ;
- (d) lack of incentives to administration and other professional staff ;
- (e) lack of perceptions of the incidence, symptoms and causes of poverty ;
- (f) lack of physical infrastructural developments, such as roads and communication systems ;
- (g) lack of socio-economic and cultural "development" ;
- (h) lack of controls to stop "corruption."

Sometimes, it may be useful and legitimate to invoke some, if not all of these reasons, to explain why well conceived policies and plans failed to achieve expected outcomes. However, the use of these reasons may also, to some extent, be counter productive to public policy analysis because, although they have a popular and commonsense appeal, they may be diverting attention away from more basic and fundamental issues concerning the formulation and implementability of public policy.

These basic issues concern the role and behaviour of bureaucratic and administrative structures in rural development processes. These issues can be divided into two parts: first, the need for explicit attention to be given to implementation issues at the policy and programme formulation stage, and second, the need for monitoring for replanning purposes.

One must really ask the question : should so called optimal policies really be considered as candidates for achieving development goals if—for their implementation—political, institutional and administrative implications have not been taken into account when the policies are suggested as relevant options ? Furthermore, even with the most perceptive analysis and project formulation there is always present the planner's dilemma¹. This is the dilemma present to a lesser or greater extent, in all social policy situations, when the planner is never sure of how the policy will work out in practice. Replanning (sometimes of radical kind) may be necessary as soon as monitoring of the implementation processes takes place. As regards the implications for administrative structures this dilemma is particularly severe because restructuring may be very difficult as administrative and bureaucratic structures quickly develop a survival and a growth behaviour of their own which may be quite unrelated to the achievement of the original policy objectives. How often though do the proponents of optimal policies and plans ensure that the results of

monitoring are used to change policies and bureaucratic structures in the light of learning by doing and of experience ? From a social welfare point of view these issues of administration and programme feasibility are significant. The downgrading of bureaucratic and administration implications to the policy formation stage results in situations where apparent solutions, which may be "optimal" from a technocratic or theoretical sense actually result in very bad outcomes. Other policies which may have been more cautious and less glamorous at the policy formulation stage—but which considered issues of administration—may well have given better results than the "badly implemented" so-called optimal policies. In these situations society would have lost because so called "second best" alternatives which took feasibility, administration and caution into account, had not been chosen.

In the next section we will look at some experiences from agricultural policies to illustrate how implementation and administrative issues must play more of a role in policy formulation.

II. EXAMPLES OF THEORY AND PRACTICE OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Seed multiplication and distribution programmes

Behind the spread of high yielding wheat varieties of the Green Revolution there have been many programmes of seed multiplication and distribution. The introduction of 18,000 tonnes of Mexican wheat seed into India in 1966 provided the basis for rapid seed multiplication by farmers and public sector organisations in India. One of the most notable success stories of a public sector seed multiplication project is the Tarai Seed Development Project at Panthnagar, Nainital, Uttar Pradesh, India. This was established during the 1960's and by the mid-1970's the programme annually produced over thirty thousand tonnes of seed of rice, maize, millet, soybeans and wheat (Douglas 1980, p. 241). It was an export of 4,000 tonnes of Sonalika wheat seed from the Tarai Development Corporation (TDC) in 1975 which helped initiate the dramatic expansion of wheat production in Bangladesh during the 1970's.

The TDC, an autonomous body, grew out of seed multiplication activities started in the early 1960's. The operation involved in local development of administrative structures which coordinated the National Seeds Corporation, the farmers of the Tarai area, the Government of Uttar Pradesh, the Government of India, the Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board, the Exploratory Tubewells Organization, the Agricultural Refinance Corporation, the G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, the State Bank

of India, the United Commercial Bank and the World Bank. The administration of such a project is no mean task. Significantly the Tarai Development Corporation developed bureaucratic and organisational structures which were very specific to the local situation. The director of the programme, who was also the Vice-Chancellor of the University, was a notable administrator from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). Significantly the TDC was finding solutions to problems as they went along and were not having to revert to "a lack of X, Y or Z" to account for infeasible policies and programmes.

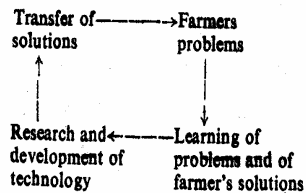
While recognising that the TDC has been a success, the outcome of many other seed multiplication programmes in LDCs have been less favourable. Only too frequently as in the case of high yielding hybrid maize varieties, supply programmes have not been viable in the situations for which they were recommended. Dr. Norton, an economist at the International Potato Institute, aptly sums up the predicament of the potato which, in particular, has been subjected to inappropriate and infeasible policy suggestions: "It is generally believed that, in order to increase the supply of high-quality planting material and reduce dependence on seed imports, developing countries need European-style seed potato certification programmes. Many attempts have been made to set these up, but little success has been achieved—because of lack of trained manpower and a long list of "institutional" problems. Gradually we are recognising that promoting seed potato certification may do more harm than good by channelling scarce financial and technical resources to a venture with little possibilities of success. Instead why not build on the existing, informal seed production and distribution systems, and supply them with healthy stock of virus-resistant varieties, including traditional local varieties?" (Horton 1981, p. 32).

¶ Indeed why not? The answer may lie in an approach to planning where policy analysts are not expected to be responsible for viability of their suggestions.

Agricultural Research Planning Programmes².

A number of factors are emerging from the increasing attention being given to the organisation and management of agricultural research systems. Many systems, or parts of systems, have been justified and rationalised according to a problem solving framework (Figure 1.). The problems of farmers are diagnosed by scientists who then conduct research on technology.

Figure 1. Problem Solving Approach in Agricultural Research



This technology is further adapted and developed and then transferred to the farmer by the extension agencies. The process is a dynamic one³.

However, agricultural research systems are not working like this 'ideal' model, although many countries have a science and technology policy which encompasses agricultural and rural technology, and public funds are allocated to research, a number of things are emerging.

- (a) The allocation of research funds between rural technologies, crops varieties, etc., do not appear in many situations to be related in any way to national development goals ;
- (b) the contact between applied research scientists, farmers and poor rural households is often very weak and tenuous ;
- (c) the organisation and management of research systems often do not reward scientists for cost-effective research which has benefited a large number of poor people.

Once again we come back to the issue of bureaucracy. In this case in scientific establishments, while an agricultural research policy and research resources may be a *necessary* condition for research and for developing technology to complement the informal R & D activities of farmers, they are certainly no *sufficient* conditions for the development of agricultural technology to meet development goals.

To understand why even the most elementary scientific principles are often not implemented, we have to analyse the relevance of "ideal" management and organisational structures which are "recommended" for the implementation of scientific policies.

Specialised Farm Credit Institutions (SFCI)⁴

The third area where many rural development planners are reflecting the administrative experiences of the 1970's is in the subject of providing institutionalised agricultural credit. The distinguishing features of many of these programmes have been :

- (i) a loan portfolio consisting almost entirely of only agricultural loans ;
- (ii) a narrow range of financial services offered.

In a particularly interesting and perceptive review of SFCI's, Von Pischke shows how and why government credit institutions respond in this area. He summarises : "each decision sets in motion forces which lead to succeeding decisions, however, the cumulative result is the opposite to the stated objective towards which decision makers are initially oriented" (Von Pischke 1980, p. 83)

The sequence starts with the political statement that farmers are poor (especially those with small farms), little agricultural development can occur without access to institutionalised credit, rural development and target group welfare programmes should be supported, and supply-leading finance can contribute to rural development and target group welfare. This philosophy leads to a farm credit policy with low interest rates. The results are that the rates are too low to be commercially viable so government subsidisation has to come in. Due to predictable access issues⁵ it is not the poorest farmers who benefit from the programmes. In addition, due to the continuing existence and viability of informal credit markets, funds are, in effect, recycled into uses for which they were not intended. Most of the articles in the book edited by Howell (1980), which review recent experiences of government rural credit schemes in many countries—stress two overriding "obvious" points. First, if government schemes are to replace or complement informal credit markets which *always* exist to a lesser or greater extent, then an understanding of the full nature of those markets is necessary if the government scheme is to have any chance of success. The second point relates to the institutions for implementing the government schemes. In hindsight it is "obvious" that models of commercial banking practice and administration, perhaps relevant to urban financial markets predictably have little chance of success in rural areas⁶. Again one cannot but ask, why were these "obvious" implementation issues not taken into account at the policy formulation stage ?

Increasingly it is being recognised that viable models for providing poor rural people with the full range of credit, savings and other banking services which they need, are to be found by an understanding of local credit systems, and by tailor making bureaucratic

structures for linking into commercial markets. One example of this approach where over five commercial banks are involved, is the credit and savings schemes for the landless labourers and poor rural women in Tangail district of Bangladesh (Yunus 1978 and Mohammadi 1981). Significantly this Grameen Bank Project has evolved cautiously out of locally conceived and locally initiated action research project by a university group supported by a national bank.

Other Areas of Agricultural Policy

There are numerous other areas of agricultural policy where one of the dominant lessons of the 1970's is that what were thought as optimal policies and programmes for achieving development goals were in fact non-starters. These include large and small scale irrigation projects, market intervention programmes, integrated rural development programmes, to name just a few.

It is useful therefore to ask if there is a framework of policy analysis which could help reduce the chances that major factors which will effect the outcome of policies, are omitted from policy analysis. It is to this framework that we now turn.

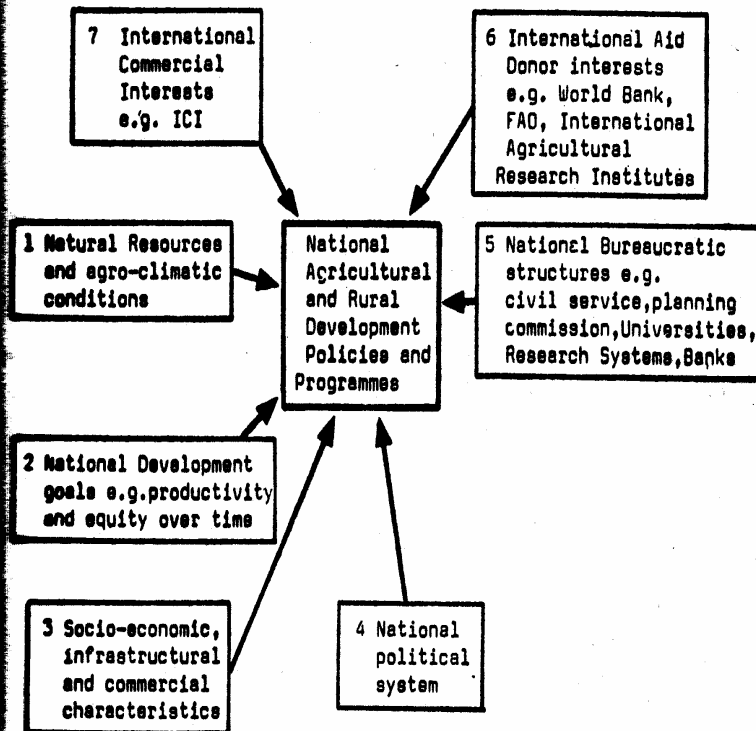
III. FACTORS AFFECTING THE OUTCOME OF AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Figure 2 has seven major categories of factors which influence the outcome of policies, programmes and projects in rural areas. Much of the technocratic planning literature by engineers, agronomists and economists place emphasis on natural resources (box 1), national development goals (box 2) and, to a lesser or greater extent the socio-economic infrastructural and commercial characteristics (box 3).

Although it is known that the items in box 5 (the bureaucratic structures of the civil service, Universities, the public sector institutes, canal authorities, the integrated rural development schemes, etc.), influence the implementation of policies dramatically, realistic appraisal of these issues is often not thought essential for policy and programme analysis. If recommendations are made they only too often seem to be of a normative type recommending what "should" happen, with little reference to the feasibility of such suggestions in the political (box 4), socio-economic (box 3) and bureaucratic (box 5), environment of the country.

At the top of the diagram we have the influences of international aid donors (box 6). These include such institutions as FAO and other UN agencies, World Bank, USAID,

Figure 2. Factors affecting the outcome of National Agricultural and Rural Development Policies.



the International Agricultural Research Institutes. These agencies certainly have their own bureaucratic structures which, in one way or another, can deeply affect whether the declared goals and intentions of the institutions are achievable or not.⁷

Finally, the international commercial interests of transnational corporations and trading interests of other countries is represented by box 7.⁸

Of course this figure is an over simplification of the factors influencing national policy formulation and plan implementation. Many of the boxes overlap. For example, the political system and the civil service are interwoven. However, as Blair (1978) demonstrates for Bangladesh, it is useful to show that in some areas of policy analysis it is relevant to distinguish the differential influences of local (village level political factors, national politics, and the bureaucracy.

Other studies have demonstrated the way in which interministerial rivalries and conflicts of interest have resulted in suboptimal plans. This is especially true for irrigation policy (Biggs, *et al.* 1978 ; Sian 1981). Thomas (1975), in an analysis of the World Bank involvement in a deep tubewell investment project in Bangladesh takes the analysis across the boundaries of aid donor influences (Box) 6) and the national bureaucracies (Box 5). He shows how conflicts between local ministries and the administrative structures and reward systems of the aid donor combined to result in the staff of both institutions meeting their narrow bureaucratic interests, but the irrigation policy and programme agreed upon was far from a policy which would meet Bangladesh's priority irrigation requirements. In addition, time has also shown that the deep tubewell scheme was not even feasible in the normal and predictable climatic and socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh. Although relevant and feasible alternatives were known and available in Bangladesh at the time, the nature and role of local public administration and that of the aid donor resulted in the suboptimal irrigation policies.

IV. A SUGGESTED POLITICAL AND BUREAUCRATIC FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY ANALYSIS

What is being suggested here is an alternative approach to policy analysis. It is an approach where political and bureaucratic issues are explicitly taken into account when policies and plans are conceived and discussed. In this approach not only are national development goals, natural resources and socio-economic conditions taken into account but also questions are raised and addressed about the relevance and feasibility of the policies in the light of national political and public administrative reality. What is not being

suggested is that all factors have to be taken into account in great depth. Politicians and applied policy makers and planners don't have time to wait for indepth analysis on everything. What is being suggested is that for a policy to be even considered as an alternative, then all seven items in the diagram must be given at least a minimum of attention.

The approach would help move us out of the trap of the approach where the list of political will, lack of managerial techniques and ability etc., are seen as legitimate reasons for why policies and plans are not implemented. As Schaffer(1981) points out, it is necessary "to recapture public policy for politics." The list of "lack ofs" can be an endless list which is forever avoiding political reality and the very nature of day to day resource allocation by the State and public sector institutions. The open ended nature of the "lack of" syndrome to development planning is demonstrated by a reading of the UK national press. We find even with a country as rich as the United Kingdom there is, according to many analysts, still a lack of political will, lack of management ability, lack of techniques, lack of coordination ! In an approach to planning where policy analysts can always use these "escape routes" for irrelevant and infeasible policy suggestions, it is not obvious or clear what would be enough political will and sufficient resources to make these policies and plans feasible.⁹

A checklist¹⁰ of questions which might be asked of a policy or plan would therefore include :

In the light of experience of this policy and its implementation procedures in this country and elsewhere, is it relevant and feasible with respect to the following criteria ?

- (1) natural resources
- (2) national development goals
- (3) socio-economic, infrastructural and commercial characteristics
- (4) national political system
- (5) national public sector bureaucratic structure
- (6) interests and administration of aid agencies
- (7) interests and behaviour of international commercial corporations.

If such a checklist was used to screen possible suggestions, many policies would be eliminated as a matter of course and there would be less recourse at a later date to the traditional list of "lack ofs".

V. PLACES TO LOOK FOR RELEVANT AND FEASIBLE POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

It has been argued that a narrow technical/economic approach to policy making and planning leads inevitably to policies which fail, and to an avoidance of responsibility to planning by recourse to a limitless list of reasons which lay the blame at the foot of a lack of political will, lack of resources etc. In most situations the analyst with this approach does not say what would be sufficient "political will" or other resources needed to make the policy feasible. One has an uncomfortable feeling at the amount of political will, resources etc., needed to meet these "unexpected" shortfalls will always be more whatever the circumstances. This is an approach to planning where the planner has some ideal model in the back of the mind where they abstract from the world of politics and the pragmatic details of policy implementation. In this technical approach, planning *within* the bounds of political bureaucratic and resource feasibility is not seen as a necessary condition for policy formulation.¹¹

An alternative approach considers it a necessary condition that political and bureaucratic factors are considered as integral to policy formulation and not seen as a minor set of details to be addressed by someone else or at a later date.

In this last section we make some suggestions of where to look for possible policy measures and programmes which can reduce rural poverty.¹² These are a number of possible sources. These include :

- (a) normative and "ideal" models from developed countries ;
- (b) models based upon empirical observations of developed countries ;
- (c) new ideas and methods being developed in special, action research projects, often with heavy expatriate inputs ;
- (d) ideas and methods being evolved within developing countries by local members of bureaucratic and administrative structures.

Of these it is suggested that source (d) is the most useful area to explore.

There are many examples of policies and plans being implemented in low income countries which come from this latter source. Sometimes they are not glamorous and do not catch the eye of international planners. When they do, only parts of the policy and plan may be taken and not the concomitant set of political and bureaucratic

considerations which may have made the policy relevant and feasible at a particular time in the original setting. It is probable that the target group programmes for poor people—which made a major trust in the World Bank philosophy on redistribution and growth (Chenery, *et al.* 1976) was influenced by the idea of Small Farmer Development Agency initiated in India in the late 1960's (Bihar 1969 and 1970). The original scheme and ideas came out of a very special set of circumstances where government perceptions of local farmers' problems was high, and there was a political and bureaucratic environment where the Indian Planning Commission could act to formulate a scheme.¹³ It would appear, however, even in this case, that in Uttar Pradesh an adjacent state to Bihar that a SFDA Scheme is not achieving its objectives because of "implementation" problems. Benefits are going mainly to bigger and influential farmers (Pant 1982).

Other examples of where it is clear that policy makers and planners in developing countries have not lacked a perception of poverty symptoms and causes is demonstrated by the minimum needs approach of the earliest of India's five year plans. Ten to twenty years later these fundamental ideas have been popularised by international agencies in the basic needs philosophy. It would be interesting to investigate under what political and institutional circumstances these policies are being successfully implemented.

In the context of this paper, it is suggested that more emphasis be put on searching out situations within developing countries where local policy makers and planners have been successful in creating relevant and feasible solutions for agricultural development. There are examples such as the Tarai Development Corporation in India and the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh.

Then, in those situations where the schemes appear to be successful, investigate the political and bureaucratic reasons for the success. This would seem to be a dimension which should be increased in policy analysis. Otherwise we are left with technical/economic approaches where political and implementation issues are treated as minor details when drawing up policies and plans, or are used as convenient excuses for when policies and programmes fail.

NOTES

1. For a development of the concept of the planner's dilemma, which is especially acute in large projects where there is a major impact on the environment or the establishment of a new bureaucracy such as in new canal systems, see Biggs (1981a).

2. For a review of literature and more detailed discussion of these issues see Biggs and Clay (1981), Biggs (1981) and Biggs (1981b). The way in which a triticales improvement programme has, in the light of experience, revised some of its breeding priorities and organisational methods is given in Biggs, 1982. The significance of re-establishing a fundamental linkage in a scientific programme (i.e. the direct contact between and the flow of information from farmers to scientists) is also well documented in a very interesting maize programme in Northern India (G.B. Pant University, 1978, 1979, 1981).
3. For a notable and rather exceptional case study of where this process has been working in an interdisciplinary R & D programme for the development of diffused light potato storage methods, see Rhoades and Booth, 1982.
4. This section mainly draws down on the work of Von Pischke (1980) and other articles in Howell (1980).
5. The phenomenon of access concerns "the relations between administrative allocation of goods and services and the people who need them, and for whom they are intended (Schaffer 1975, p. 3). For a detailed exposition of the theory and of the significance of access issues see Schaffer and Wen-Hsien (1975), and other articles in that volume, and also Harvey et al., 1979.
6. The mere cost of administering a large number of small loans in a widespread rural area gives rise to higher overhead costs than for urban banks. Bottomley (1967) well illustrates the economics of this financial problem. These issues are in addition to the special problems of agricultural credit which necessitate, on the part of the staff of the financial institution, a substantial knowledge of production and marketing economics, as well as access to sufficient local knowledge to be able to ensure that loan repayment and savings can take place.
7. In an interesting section of the Asian Development Bank's Second Asian Survey of Agriculture, it is significant to note that the report makes, not only recommendations to developing countries about the need for institutional reforms, but also recommendations on the need for bureaucratic and institutional reforms in the Bank itself (ADB 1977). Now that a few years have gone by, it would be interesting to see how feasible those recommendations were, and what lessons can be drawn !

8. The role and involvement of transnational corporations in agricultural and rural development policy and programmes in developing countries is not dealt with in this paper. For two alternative views and selection of experiences readers should see on the one hand, Frank, 1981 and Feder, 1977, and on the other, Phillips and Collinson, 1976, Goldberg, 1974, and articles in Agribusiness Council, 1975. In the context of this paper it would be interesting to see in detail the way in which the administrative structure of corporate companies actually work in developing countries, and the actual (as opposed to assumed) way in which these structures interact with the bureaucratic structures in socialist and mixed economies.
9. It is perhaps significant to note that we see a statement like "the lack of commitment and will on the part of the government, or lack of managerial ability in the public sector", it is clear that the statement is being made from a particular political point of view. When the same kind of statement is made in a development planning situation we are expected to believe that it is purely an objective appraisal of a situation which does not, at the same time, also reflect the the political stance and attitude of the beholder.
10. The use of a check list in planning rural and agricultural technologies has been discussed elsewhere (Biggs 1978).
11. Planners concerned with policy objectives to reduce rural poverty should bear in mind that "badly implemented" policies to help the poor, rather than the rich, often result in the opposite effect and pre-empt resources from going into policies and programmes which could have reduced poverty more effectively. The history of cheap rural credit and many rural cooperatives provides cases where badly implemented schemes have led to the opposite results to those intended (Von Pische 1981 and Khan 1971).
12. Radical policy measures such as land reform and other measures for the redistribution of wealth are not discussed here because the specific local and international political environment overrides any other consideration in the planning analysis. A general theory of land reform which does not recognise the specific political and historical setting is unhelpful for applied planners and policy makers.
13. For a more detailed analysis of these conditions see Biggs, 1981.

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