
Editorial

Development studies have become academically many-sided, a fact not unrelated to the possibility of earning a living from them. Hence in titling this guest issue of the *IDS Bulletin* "Development Studies at Birmingham" we make no claim of comprehensive coverage, even if Birmingham is understood to mean our own University. Interests in development could undoubtedly be located in numerous departments of that University. All we offer is a selection of current work in two institutions that may be said to have a primary concern with matters of interest to readers of this *Bulletin*—a Centre which is charged specifically with the promotion of knowledge about one part of the developing world, and a Group within the Institute of Local Government Studies that is professionally engaged in training, research and consultancy work relating to development administration.

The Centre of West African Studies

The Centre of West African Studies was established in 1964 as one of the centres of area studies in British universities for which the University Grants Committee provided for a time earmarked financial support. It is a multi-disciplinary department of the University of Birmingham with an academic staff, presently numbering 15, whose interests include the social sciences, geography, history and archaeology. Several other members of the University staff—in, for example, the Departments of Geography and Sociology and the Institute of Local Government Studies—are associates of the Centre. The primary responsibilities of the Centre lie in research and postgraduate training. A graduate school of about 50 has been built up, of which about two-fifths are engaged in coursework, mostly for Masters' degrees, and three-fifths in research. In the past five years students of the Centre have been graduating PhD at the rate of about five a year and MA or MSocSc at about 18 a year. First degrees partly in African Studies may also be taken in both the Faculties of Arts and of Commerce and Social Science, but the Centre has not regarded them as a major path of expansion. The bulk of its undergraduate teaching has been for students in disciplinary departments who are able to take African courses as options.

Contrary to initial expectations, a substantial proportion of the Centre's graduate students has been Africans, both from the West and other parts of the continent. Students have also come from North America and the Caribbean and from Europe, but the majority has been British. Most students taking higher degrees in the Centre have obtained appointments in universities, polytechnics and other institutions of further education and have continued to be associated with African studies. Former students of the Centre have been appointed to university posts in 17 countries.

The Centre is an academic institution and has not engaged in any systematic way in practical training or consultancy work. Further, it holds no brief for development studies, though much of its research and teaching falls easily under this heading—not only in economics, geography, politics and sociology but also, as conceptions have widened of the process of development (or underdevelopment), in history and social anthropology too. Perhaps studies of a developing area are inevitably contributions to development studies, and the reservation that ought to be made is that the Centre undertakes them without a necessarily prescriptive purpose.

The contributions by members of the Centre to this issue of the *Bulletin* give some indication of its interests in the social sciences and geography. Arnold Hughes reviews research in political science undertaken at the Centre and lists the theses bearing on African politics which have been completed or are in preparation, mostly under his supervision. One of his former research students, David Brown, draws on his own study of local politics at Kpandu in the Volta Region of Ghana to propose a conceptual framework within which similar studies of local-centre linkages in African politics may be related one to another. Two social anthropologists, Susan Benson and her research student Mark Duffield, contribute comparative material on women's economic roles in two widely separated Hausa populations and analyse the impact on these roles of historical changes associated with colonialism and new forms of commercialisation. Peter Mitchell and his research students Tony Airey and Tony Binns—all of whom have extensive

geographical fieldwork experience in Sierra Leone—have collaborated in a report on the Integrated Agricultural Development Project in the eastern area of that country, expressing both the hopes raised by this new approach to rural amelioration and the doubts arising in its execution. Margaret Peil has drawn on her considerable knowledge of West African urban sociology to provide a paper on the housing of the poor, in which she argues the greater effectiveness of private over public provision in satisfying tastes at standards that can be afforded. Lastly, as if to show that the Centre is capable on occasion of raising its eyes from its geographical area of specialisation, a paper is included on some origins of the longest-established development study, development economics.

The Development Administration Group

The Development Administration Group comprises members of the Institute of Local Government Studies, currently 15 in number, who specialise in third world studies. Their focus is upon the management of development programmes, rural and urban, at local level and upon the operation of local administrative systems. The Group is multi-disciplinary and all its members have worked for substantial periods in Asian, African or Latin American countries, mainly in administrative or planning roles.

The Group has developed a style in which training, research and consultancy are closely related and individuals regularly undertake work both at Birmingham and overseas. Most of its activities are financed by the Ministry of Overseas Development.

About 120 civil servants from third world countries attend Group programmes at Birmingham each year, including a Masters Degree or postgraduate Diploma in Development Administration, four-month courses in the Management of Urban Development and the Planning and Management of Rural Development, and individual study fellowships. Individual members of staff have been seconded to universities and institutes in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius and Nigeria. DAG teams conduct or contribute to training programmes overseas on a regular basis, in the current year in Malaysia, Sudan and Tanzania.

The articles in this *Bulletin* reflect a number of the areas—subject and geographical—in which research and consultancy have been undertaken

recently. Objects of study and advice have included:

—the structure and functioning of local administration in Malaysia, Nigeria, Philippines, Sudan and Turkey;

—the management of low income shelter and service schemes in urban areas in Kenya, Malaysia, Peru, Tanzania, Venezuela and Zambia;

—central-local financial relations in Indonesia;

—the planning, financing and organisation of water supply schemes in Central America, India and Lesotho;

—the monitoring and evaluation of district development programmes in India and of soil conservation projects in Indonesia;

—the relevance of popular participation to a basic needs strategy (a general study for ILO).

Common to all these interests and activities is a concern to promote the executive capacity of public agencies charged with selecting and implementing development policies and programmes at regional and local level.

Administrative reform has been as sought after and elusive as the philosopher's stone. It is widely believed that development policies and programmes are frustrated by defects in organisation and management. There is less agreement on the remedies. The history of administrative reform is characterised by several different approaches and fashions.

The first such approach is ideological—the attempt to imbue the bureaucracy with enthusiasm for public service and with the values and goals of the State. Ideology has on occasions evoked a high level of commitment and performance, but usually where particular qualities of personal leadership have coincided with especially receptive circumstances—a unique combination of the hour and the man. This begs prescription. Moreover it is not easy to maintain dedication over the long term. Ideological enthusiasm may create 'new men' but they too rapidly become 'old men'.

In direct contrast is the more conventional Weberian approach—the pursuit of a highly trained, specialised, protected, impartial civil service. This can be effective up to a point, but

impartiality turns too readily into apathy or insensitivity, and protection to immunity from discipline.

The social psychologists have provided another line of attack: the belief that men will work well if they can derive a sense of achievement from their job and if they can share in directing their own activities. It is related through the Business Schools to the doctrine of accountable management: the prescription of clear tasks, clear responsibility for achievement, clear boundaries of personal authority, and the conferment of rewards or penalties clearly related to success or failure. Again there are both relevant insights and limitations in these approaches. Is the striving for personal achievement common to all personalities and cultures? Do all jobs allow scope for individual initiative and discretion? How much emotional reward is open to the tax collector or prison warder? Are all objectives easy to define or performances easy to measure? How much freedom of action is open to bureaucrats when the public is sensitive not only over what they get done but also the way they do it?

The systems or procedural approach is beloved of consultants and trainers seeking to increase the rationality of public decision making through techniques such as development planning, programme and performance budgeting, management by objectives or cost-benefit analysis. Techniques are a help but not a panacea. They can concentrate attention on priorities but equally inhibit flexibility and reduce interaction between politicians and technocrats. They can stimulate output, but also degenerate into another time-consuming ritual if the underlying values and concepts have not been thoroughly absorbed.

Finally there are structural solutions to administrative reform—decentralising responsibility to local authorities or public enterprise, creating an ombudsman, setting up coordinating and planning agencies. This may be necessary to tackling a problem, but it may also be a way of avoiding it. Structural reorganisation is invariably costly in money, time and the disruption of working relationships, and is ineffective unless equal thought is given to operational processes and the allocation of resources.

The DAG contributions to this issue illustrate the multi-faceted nature of administrative reform. Davies and Norris' articles discuss attempts to promote integrated development of particular areas by structural reorganisation of local govern-

ment, in the case of Manila by creating a metro-politan authority to plan and control development, and services throughout a conurbation, and in that of Malaysia by establishing and reinforcing authorities to manage towns and their rural environs. Both emphasise the extent to which organisational design is influenced by political considerations, by the distribution of power between levels of government and between interest or ethnic groups. These factors can be viewed as frustrating the administrative purpose of reform. The Malaysian case, however, stresses the dynamic nature of institutional change. Delegating a limited range of functions to a nominated body headed by a civil servant may not sound like radical devolution. But nomination is not necessarily synonymous with subservience (as Henry II discovered); local institutions can be emboldened by limited powers to seek more, and minimising active political rivalry or mistrust between levels of government may remove the greatest impediment to their getting it.

Structural reorganisations of local administration in recent years have mainly aimed at integrated development—at comprehensive solutions to the overall problems of an area, whether a whole conurbation like Istanbul or Manila, or an individual slum as in Lusaka. Putting the relevant professions and agencies in a single organisation does not by itself achieve this. As important are the internal processes which enable administrators to perceive problems as a whole, to pursue common objectives and to adjust individual policies and programmes in the light of experience.

This is illustrated by the ensuing articles in a number of ways. Amos describes attempts to improve an archaic administrative system in Istanbul which makes it almost impossible for the 'managers'—the Assistant Mayors—to lift their eyes above the piles of routine paperwork. The Housing Project Unit, Lusaka, described by Pasteur, provides a refreshing contrast of an organisation in which regular consultation and programme review—both internally and with the squatter public—combine firm purpose with flexible operation. Watson discusses the processes of marrying administrative decision-making with an appreciation of programme impact in the case of the India Drought Prone Area Programme. Curtis looks at the use of field surveys to train administrators in appraising their responses to particular needs—in this case small-scale industrial development in Khartoum.

The planning of financial resources is another theme common to a number of contributions.

Experience in Istanbul and Malaysia reinforces the importance of accompanying any devolution of responsibility with realistically assessed financial resources—whether from central subvention or local taxation. Palmer describes attempts in Central America to underpin one particular local service—water supply—with revenues adequate for development, operation and future expansion. His article illustrates, however, the essentially political choices and conflicts over equity and acceptability which surround even so apparently technical an issue as the pricing of water tariffs. As with the very different issues of metropolitan government in Manila, the administratively desirable solutions have to probe the limits of political will.

Motivation is another critical dimension. Pasteur examines the ways in which the Lusaka scheme has attempted to engage the commitment of project staff and, through them, of the squatters whose cooperation is vital to improving settled sites. Pickering looks at the progress of soil conservation in Indonesia and the extent to which different technologies have succeeded or failed according to their compatibility with the understanding and interests of the farmers.

Management theory is increasingly turning from the application of general 'principles' to exploring the connection between organisational structure, leadership style and the nature of particular tasks. Soil conservation in South East Asia and slum improvement in Central Africa

offer many contrasts in task and environment. They exemplify a common experience, however, that in planning and organising a programme it is essential to determine whose decisions—planners, engineers, farmers, squatters for example—are critical to which operations. Popular or worker participation in decision making is not necessarily vital to the success of a policy or project; but it may be essential if active cooperation is required and the government lacks adequate rewards or sanctions to induce it.

Organisation, procedures, finance, training and motivation are different but closely related aspects of management, all rightly engaging the attention of a Development Administration Group. Looking at the content of the articles, however, and at the way in which the Group's own interests and activities have progressed in recent years, one sees a concern with management leading continually into the examination of policy. The more one studies the apparent success or failure of a particular programme, the harder it becomes to distinguish between the qualities of its management and the merits of its policy. To what extent does a good scheme—i.e. 'good' in the eyes of promoter and public—succeed because it brings out the best in its personnel and encourages them to overcome institutional hurdles fatal to projects invoking less enthusiasm? Administration is in itself many-sided; it can only be understood however as one facet of the broader frame of development studies.