

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRAINING
RESEARCH PROJECT

by Bernard Schaffer

a) Administrative Training: Problems of Research and Evaluation

Several members of the Institute of Development Studies have been engaged since the beginning of this year in a research project on Public Administration Training. The project is being directed by Colin Leys and the author. Working with them is Theo Mars, also in the Institute. According to the plan of work drawn up before the project itself started operation in January of this year, the first batch of case studies are now under way in the field. A number of colleagues are involved in this side of the work, which this year is primarily concentrated on African Institutes and next year is planned to go further afield into Asia and the South Pacific.

The project is concerned to look at the work being done about the training of public servants for higher administrative duties, particularly where that training is conducted with fairly set programmes in specifically created Institutes. The importance of that sort of training is already recognised explicitly in many aid programmes. It is relatively costly in terms of manpower and other resources, but it raises many other interesting questions: for example the very obvious difference between francophone territories where there was a clear domestic model to be followed, and the anglophone territories where there was no such model, and where there was much more openness to very important influences from powerful sources of American aid and of American ideas and theories about public administration itself. Administrative training in institutes has been an obvious focus for technical assistance. The number of institutes over the last generation has grown rapidly from barely anything to a very high number indeed.

Secondly, however, the attempt to evaluate administrative training raises in an especially sharp form the whole difficulty and, at the same time, the interest of evaluation in technical assistance and development programmes. Training is typical of the sorts of programmes which are inherently

difficult to evaluate, since the costs are diverse, the supports variegated, and the most important outputs difficult to determine, cost or measure. At the same time, training itself provides relatively easy escapes into a merely apparent evaluation process.

Looking at training programmes, then, had, at least, two points of considerable importance. One was the very significance of administration for development and its improvement itself. Great resources were flowing into training as one of the most attractive strategies for administrative development. Secondly, training provided programmes which clearly required evaluation, partly because of the resources and hopes going into it, and yet was inherently and in many ways characteristically difficult to evaluate. Can any steps forward be taken about this particular matter of evaluation?

It seemed that the actual efforts at comparative work itself would be one step forward. But more than that could be done. In the first place, it seemed to me that administrative training was not one process but a series of processes in which a number of events and decisions occurred each with several participants. For example, there would be decisions to set up particular institutes and programmes, decisions to select and recruit trainees for a particular course, decisions about the actual methods and content of a course, and decisions about posting policy in general and particular postings and career outcomes for any trainee after any one course. In each phase, as it were, of the training process, different people would be contributing. What needed to be done, then, was to sort out the different types of material or evidence which would be relevant to each stage of the whole training situation.

As soon as one began to break down the types of data, it became clear that against each sort, different questions, methods, and techniques would be relevant. Looking at the setting up of an institution or programme was not going to be the same sort of exercise as looking at the syllabus, curriculum, and actual content of any particular training course. Looking at training courses, again, was not going to be the same sort of exercise as seeing what happened to members of a public service after they had been through training.

It followed that a fairly eclectic approach to the field

methods would be required. Some of the work would consist of the analysis of documents. Some of the work would be measurement of time and costs, some of it would be observation, some interviews, some questionnaires. It also followed that the methods which would be most useful and most available, case by case, would no doubt vary, just like the actual shape of the institutions and programmes, the sort of technical assistance which had occurred, the aims and staffing, the scales and major objectives. The comparisons will in the end, then, certainly have to be selective rather than complete. What we do hope, however, is that a careful break up of training into its constituent parts will enable us to get farther forward with the effort at evaluation than has, hitherto, been possible. We also hope in that way that we are going to get a clearer picture of what contributions administrative training is now really making to development and what the main costs, obstacles, and changes have, so far, been.

b) The Project's Aims and Progress

Finance: The project is being financed by a research grant of the Ministry of Overseas Development.

Progress of research: Following some introductory theoretical surveys, notably by Colin Leys, work started in January 1968 along two main lines:

a) a survey of the growth and spread of training institutes in Asia and Africa
 b) a series of theoretical papers working out the relations between the training process and other political structures. The aims of the project are developed in Bernard Schaffer's paper. In brief, they are to provide:

a) a reasonably comprehensive picture of the development, distribution patterns and costs of such training in developing countries since 1945; and

b) a detailed study of how such training may be evaluated and what is the value of the training studied.

Field studies have been undertaken as follows:

Nigeria (Institute of Public Administration, Zaria) by David Chenoweth, (May - August 1968)

- Zambia (National Institute of Public Administration, Lusaka),
by Geoffrey Wood and Bernard Schaffer (August 1968
- March 1969)
- Kenya (Kenya Institute of Administration), by Colin Leys,
(first part, July to October 1968: in progress).

It is hoped to carry out further field studies next year in Asia and the Pacific area, including specifically Papua and New Guinea and India.

The conduct of the fieldwork is guided by a manual of operations papers: in preparing this manual a considerable amount of time and thought has been applied to designing questions of a practical kind. Furthermore, a number of interim reports are envisaged. For example, a ten page report has been written by Colin Leys in response to a request from the Principal of the Kenya Institute of Administration. Thus the project is already beginning to provide specific, practical results.

Personnel: The project involves the following members:

Directors: Bernard Schaffer, Fellow in Public Administration, I.D.S.; Reader in Politics, University of Sussex.
Colin Leys, Fellow in Politics, I.D.S.

Research

Assistant: Theodor Mars, I.D.S.

Research

Workers: David Chenoweth, Principal, Administrative College, Territory of Papua and New Guinea.
Gabriel Iglesias, research student, University of Sussex, and lecturer Graduate School of Public Administration, University of the Philippines.
Geoffrey Wood, research student, University of Sussex.
