

Organisational Renewal

The stability and peaceful growth of our society is linked to our ability to understand and develop appropriate institutions that can serve the basic purpose for which they are created. We have relied on institutions for serving most of the extra-family needs of society, including leisure. Societies have complex patterns that have to be sustained through complex and sophisticated institutional structures in order to fulfil and sustain the societal norms, values and altitudes. In another context, Kerr has described this need by saying:

The real problem is not the adaptability of man, which is almost infinitely greater than we once supposed, but the suitability of institutions and their policies. The contact of civilizations, the traditional and the industrial, can be managed well or managed badly. The social management of this contact, not the adjustability of individual man, is the heart of the matter.

I have included this chapter on IIPA in this volume to illustrate that development strategy of an on-going institution may be somewhat different from an institution in its early phases of life. The conceptual framework is the same but certain areas of emphasis vary. The assumptions remain unchanged. In broad terms they are:

- Changes are likely to sustain if all interdependent aspects of the institution are included in the strategy.

Note : This chapter was written in 1973-74 when I served the Institute of Public Administration as its Director. The paper is included to highlight the organisational issues that institutions face at different stages of their history. The chapter brings out the kind of question one needs to raise to provide new directions, at different stages of development of the institution.

- Change take place in the minds of people; hence a comprehensive plan for acceptance of the ideas, the process of internalisation is an important aspect of the programme.
- An organisation is a means to achieve results. Hence the organisation of work is contingent upon the characteristics of the tasks that the institution is required to perform. Relationships at work should facilitate the task-performance i.e. the social and the technical requirements of the work should be in harmony. Relationships at work cannot be independent of the organisational task.
- Authority and power structure should be based on the requirement of the task. In most development efforts, power and authority has to be redistributed.
- Every social organisation has its own characteristics and no standard formulae can suit all situations. Hence, experimental approach to development is necessary with the proviso that adjustments in the system should be made in the process of development as and when required.

In this chapter I am presenting an experience of working through some of the problems we faced at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) which I joined as its director. The questions that faced IIPA in early 1973 were: how could the institution be more effective? How should its members undertake the exercise of what Warren Bennis has called self-renewal? How should we go about determining the more fundamental questions of what we are, what we should be doing and why and how we should organise the institution to achieve its goals. This presentation is important for the Institute because it provides us an opportunity to analyse the situation that has developed over a period of time and to examine any lessons that one could learn in respect to continued viability of academic institutions.

The positive indices after one year of reorganisation are that the core activities of the Institute have increased substantially during year. No conclusion is as yet possible whether this is a result of the efforts of a few or whether the total system responded to change. At the individual level, the Institute has provided greater hope for some and created doubts and anxieties for some others. These aspects are discussed later. The paper is divided into four sections:

- (a) Analysis of the situation
- (b) Organisational Assumptions and the Approach to Reorganisation
- (c) Conclusions
- (d) Epilogue

Analysis of the Situation

From its inception in 1954, for the next dozen years until 1966, IIPA's primary concern was with a one-year course towards a Master's Diploma in Public Administration (MDPA) and research. After the abolition of the diploma course in 1966, the Institute began in 1968 to hold short courses mainly for administrators in their mid-careers. The research continued. The bulk of it was sponsored either by the Administrative Reforms Commission or the Pay Commission or the government. A large number of studies carried out by the Institute had not been published. Some that had begun were not completed.

In the 1960s IIPA's activities have characterised a reactive, as against a proactive, organisation. It generally responded to what the government or other agencies wanted it to do and was guided less by what the Institute believed to be important for developing knowledge and practice of public administration.

Through special grants in the 1950 and 60s, IIPA set up certain areas of study of current national concern such as planning, industrial and economic policy, financial budgetary systems, etc. Some of these, however, were not institutionalised. They terminated either with the end of the grant, or when the concerned individuals left the Institute. These activities were started, it seems, not by a deliberate policy decision of the Institute but through the efforts of individuals; in most cases the activities did not seem to form a part of the Institute's own convictions about their usefulness or otherwise. In Late 1960s training programmes of longer duration for middle levels of government officers were discussed, but these had not reached any stage of finalisation.

In the sense described above, IIPA's work in the past appeared fragmentary and limited in scope. It presented a picture of piecemeal tasks that government departments, or other agencies, offered it. There were only limited tasks which the Institute took up through the interest and initiative of individual faculty.

The strained financial position, due to the core grant in 1973 was being pegged at the present level for the last four years and IIPA's limited efforts toward generating funds independently, had also led to a gradual shrinking of the Institute's activities. Vacancies in academic positions had remained unfilled for long periods and there were no substantive plans of research, training or consulting in January, 1973.

The Prevailing Situation

I shall first analyse the system as I found it on my assumption of office in mid-January, 1973. These are my personal observations influenced inevitably by the market information prior to my joining the IIPA. I consider it necessary to discuss these observations because the strategy of development has to be seen by the situation prevailing at the IIPA before reorganisation. For convenience, I shall categorise the system into three sub-systems: the social system, the technical system and the administrative system.

The Social System

Several members of the faculty had voiced the opinion that director should be brought from an academic profession and had generally welcomed the choice. Some persons wanted a change from 'the past'. No one had thought about it in any concrete change term. There was a sense of expectation when the new director took over. This expectation, however, had no clear shape.. While there were clear signs of acceptance of the new director in the beginning, they were thin among some people in the course of certain changes in the months that followed. Some other characteristics of the social system at the Institute in January, 1973, were the following:

Sense of Neglect: The Institute had been under severe public criticism for several years and, after 1966 when the main teaching programme was dropped, it had lost the focal point of its activity and direction. Almost everyone complained about lack of funds for carrying out research and other worthwhile activity. There were clear signs of differences between the Executive Council* and the faculty and considerable distrust between them. The differences, or hostility, existed from one group to another, and rarely among individuals (Sherif, 1962). The reason for the differences appear to follow a near classic pattern of intergroup conflict (Kahn & Boulding, 1964;) Blake et. al. 1964; Dayal, 1969). The differences in certain objectives and approaches were inextricably mixed with personal feelings. The issues and the personal feelings no longer seemed separable to an outsider. There was limited contact between the Council and the faculty as groups; relations between individuals in either group kept the differences within reasonable bounds but no systematic effort was made to resolve the intergroup differences (Deutsch and Collins, 1957; Blake et. al, 1965). Most members of the Institute felt uncertain of their position and having no defined work for themselves,

* The Executive Council, elected from among a membership of about 2,500 has 29 members and has the highest decision-making powers in the Institute.

looked to more influential colleague for security. There was a clear sense of drift, lacking direction.

Institutional Relationships: There was an interesting mixture of unity and absence of team spirit. On certain matters that involved differences with other groups, the faculty was united. In the academic activities, there was little team work and many faculty members commented with concern on the lack of it. In non-academic matters, the social system consisted of an in-group which had two or three persons as power-centres held together by two dominant factors (Whyte 1943; Sherif 1965). One was a common 'opposition' to those who were seen to be imposing curbs. The second bond was an ambition to see the Institute become more effective.

Besides the in-group there were others who were passive supporters of the action taken and some who were indifferent. In offices, or at meetings, discussion was mainly confined to 'internal politics' and hardly ever centred on research, critique of books or writings, or topics of academic interest.

The society was also characterised by a system of hierarchy. The hierarchy was fairly rigid and seniority in service was regarded as inviolable. In all this discussion I would like to emphasise that I am discussing the more domineering trends in the system. There were naturally many exceptions from among the members of the Institute the patterns suggested here.

The Technical System

This system was characterised by defensiveness towards the work the institution had done. The achievements of the institution in certain fields were significant. The contribution of certain individuals had also been substantial. Its publication programme, case studies programme, the special projects undertaken from time to time, had all made significant contributions to public administration, a fact sometimes ignored in the heat of controversy. This is also a characteristic of an organisation which is under public criticism.

Over the years, however, the institution had tended to depend primarily upon the work that government or its agencies wanted the Institute to undertake. It had lost its initiative.

After the diploma course in public administration was dropped in 1966, the Institute ran short courses for public servants. These courses had become routine. Only limited effort was apparent to introduce new material, or the use of newer methods of teaching. The courses were run mainly on behalf of the Government of India and therefore had a captive audience.

The consulting division, started in 1970, had indifferent response and it had failed to grow as fast as it was expected to.

Most people within the institution had become inward-looking with little self-questioning. The tasks became casual and repetitive in nature.

Administrative System

The administrative policies and practices within the Institute have been modelled after the government. They were initiated by people from the government. Service conditions had been framed nearly fifteen years ago. Changes elsewhere had not substantially affected the system at the Institute. The characteristics of the administrative system were the following:

- (a) The organisation being under severe attack from a number of sources, the common reaction of the institutional management was to protect and to defend against criticism. In this process there was little effort to review the system. The rules had been set for a task system of the government; the pattern was unsuited to the Institute's academic situation. For example, travel rules suggested that anyone who stayed beyond ten days at one place on tour would be eligible for a reduced daily allowance. In research, training and consulting work, staying away for any length of time is governed by the task itself. In training programmes the person had to stay for several days beyond the stipulated limit. The rules disregarded the normal needs of a researcher or a teacher in field work. Because of the prevailing notion about shortage of funds, nonacademic symbols of achievement, and rules unsuited for the required tasks, few travelled from the Institute to do research or teaching.
- (b) Attitudes of the staff also seemed to belong to nonacademic systems. The stenographers, for example, wanted specific clarification whether typing a manuscript for a faculty member was an institutional task since the faculty member got royalty or payment for his paper. Each section was regarded as a closed boundary and would not normally help another section even when such help was needed.

The administrative sections were constantly under attack by the faculty and the staff. There are lapses in administration in any institution and there were many at IIPA also. But scapegoats have to be often found in a situation where the internal health of the system is poor (Dayal et. al., 1972). The administration was criticised for favouritism, for misguiding the director; and anger was severely directed towards the heads of administrative sections. The faculty had sought expression of this hostility in bitterly worded notes

to the director complaining against the mal- administration by certain individuals. The most dramatic representation of the hostility was that senior members of the faculty took on the leadership of the Staff Association and were elected to top positions in the Association.* These individuals were guided by a general human sympathy for the staff, and by their own hostility as well. The feelings of 'we' and 'they' characterised the relationship.

In times of personal need, however, people invariably cooperated and helped one another. People went out of their way to do so. At a specific request from senior staff members most people cooperated well, though ordinarily team working among the staff was not noticeable. Another symptom of poor peer relationship was the anonymous letters, to the director to complain about institutional members.

The dynamics of the relationships as discussed above are fairly common in most low-growth institutions in India and elsewhere. The insularity of the organisation, the frustration for not achieving growth, grievance against people for ignoring the achievement of the institution and internal rigidities are common for most low-growth organisations .

Organisational Assumptions & the Approach to Reorganisation

According to my judgement in January, 1973, the most significant aspects of immediate change seemed to be the following:

- (a) The people within the organisation must begin to think of the future and gain greater confidence in themselves and their abilities.
- (b) A shift has to be induced from a dissipatory work environment to one of concern for achieving high academic standards, and to reorganise the Institute to disperse authority and responsibility for its activities and to develop more participation in decision making at the Institute.
- (c) Hostility from administrative departments needs to be displaced in order that inter group differences are minimised.

Efforts towards change must inevitably involve people from within the organisation. A clearer direction for institutional activities and a greater sharing of tasks seemed necessary. In most of my discussions I was urged to examine the history to determine why things had gone wrong and who was responsible for the ethics of low achievement at the Institute.

* Displacement of hostility in organisations is a common phenomenon and has far reaching effects. See for example, Dayal and Sharma, 1971; Dalton, M., 1959.

This phase of pinning blame passed quickly enough to be replaced by a discussion on the perspectives and plans of the Institute. In this process the faculty's need to seek a new identity and stability played a significant role.

The second phase of reorganisation consisted of other aspects. It included reorganisation of administrative departments, developing adequate control systems, developing future plans of work and review of policies and practices at the Institute. The two stages were overlapping and not discrete.

The Approach

In a faculty meeting, we decided that an *ad hoc* group of ten members of the faculty and I work on the issues and prepare a working paper for discussion among the total faculty and research staff. After discussions the *ad hoc* group prepared a note defining the Institute's objectives and tasks. This note was also discussed by us with other members of the Executive Council, senior administrators and academicians, individually and in small groups.

The *ad hoc* group raised several issues such as the following:

- What is the role of IIPA and in what way is it different from a university or a government institution
- What is the Institute's objective and how should it measure its own performance?
- What IIPA should do and what it need not do. Such an exercise also required a clearer definition of the field of study of public administration.
- What should be the staffing and financing policy and the directions of the Institute?
- How should IIPA be reorganised?

After discussion in the faculty, the note was edited and circulated to approximately 80 people who were invited to a seminar to discuss the Perspectives and Plans of IIPA. Finally, the proposals were approved by the Executive Council of the Institute and they were implemented after May 1973.

The special feature of the reorganisation lies in the fact that the departments or units as they were known in IIPA no longer exist. Earlier the units were formed on the basis of a subject or a discipline. Each unit had a designated head and the members attached to the unit reported to him for work. The unit functioned in the same manner as do the departments in Indian universities. Each unit was autonomous and seldom collaborated with other units. The units maintained strong hierarchy and many younger

people felt dependent upon the unit head. The unit system had been abolished in late 1972 but no alternative system to replace it was evolved. Each member had to approach the director on all matters. As the director could not be available to every one of the forty-odd members of the academic staff, many felt totally uncertain of what they should do. The purpose was but vaguely defined and each person did what he pleased.

For reorganising the Institute, the nature of tasks were analysed. The most relevant characteristics of the task system at IIPA are the following:

- The study of the action system requires expertise from many fields of study. Given this requirement the organisation should facilitate team working consisting of several disciplines, besides expertise in a discipline at individual level. This aspect of work suggests temporary systems, and diffused discipline boundaries (Bennis and Slater 1968).
- Teaching the experienced administrators requires closer understanding of the ‘reality’ of the administrative situations. Research and consulting should be regarded as important components of the faculty member’s experience. Contribution to administrative theory requires intimate knowledge of micro or operative systems and therefore teaching, research and consulting should be an essential requirement of each faculty; separating these tasks would adversely influence the quality of work and contribution of the members of the institution.
- The organisation has to provide scope for the professional growth of the faculty member. The quality of his contribution to the Institute’s task would depend on his own growth. The growth may require peer level interactions, and association with other professions for self-growth (the sentient system).
- Given the innovative nature of the task, considerable effort to match the needs of the individual and the organisation are essential (the planning task).
- The hierarchy of the task system should restrict the evaluating role by the task leader so that individuals can function in their roles with considerable freedom. The system requires hierarchy based on the task and multi-role relationship (Kahn et. al., 1964; Brown and Jaques, 1965).

Keeping in view the requirements of the nature of work at the Institute, conceptually two separate systems were given shape. The sentient system was to facilitate interactions at peer level among people who shared similar interests in their academic orientation and in approach (Miller and Rice, 1967; Rice 1970). This system had no task responsibility and, therefore, no scope for the exercise of power and authority. It should be based on knowledge

or expertise and not authority, legitimised or otherwise. The chairmen of sentient groups were elected.

The task system requires authority and responsibility for performance of institutional tasks. It also carries the responsibility of achieving institutional goals. The responsibility for each of the activities rests with the respective activity head. The activity head for training had to develop long-term and annual training plans through wide discussions with faculty members, encourage the development of teaching material, appoint course directors and provide the logistic support, contact external agencies where required, and oversee how well the task is performed. The course director chooses his team, works with them to develop the programme etc. and is responsible for the planning, conducting and evaluation of the programme. Each course director is given the budget within which he should carry out his task.

Likewise, head of research keeps an overall view of the projects after they are assigned to a team or to an individual and provides such help as required. No member of the faculty is subordinate to anybody else. Each member is to perform his task of research, training and consulting according to his own needs and each of his activities had to be supervised and coordinated by the concerned activity head.

Activity heads have multiple roles. Their administrative responsibility should normally take 30-40% of their time; they function as faculty members outside the assigned role. And in their faculty role the members are both subordinates or peers, depending on the activity. A faculty member can be leader in one group and a peer or a subordinate in another group. Thus role relationships and role differentiation are extremely important aspects of the task systems at the Institute.

Each faculty member opted for his sentient group so that he could interact with other members of his choice. Peers could contribute toward the individual's personal growth and development (Dayal and Thomas, 1968).

The total activities of the institution have to be coordinated by the Planning & Advisory Committee which consists of all activity heads and chairmen of the sentient groups. The organisation design should achieve a larger measure of interdisciplinary activities and provide the necessary controls for performance of institutional task. The design should help in integrating the individual and organisational objectives to the extent possible.

The system evolved by IIPA requires sensitive appreciation of multi-role behaviour on the part of each member of the faculty and on the part of

the sentient and task heads. The demands on planning and on peer group relationships are heavy. If the director, the activity heads and faculty fail to recognise these sensitive areas of relationships, the social relationships become destructive to the task system of the Institute. The total Institute has to recognise and appreciate the central features of the organisational design to optimise.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of change within the Institute are inconclusive. Theoretically the concepts used in developing IIPA are sound (Dayal 1971, Bennis, 1969; Beckard, 1969). The human problems of adjustment to the new system, its capacity to accept and absorb change, and its capacity to sustain growth need time. As mentioned earlier, there are both supporters and sceptics about the proposed system within the Institute and outside. There are expressions of hope for its development and growth and there are also forebodings of doom. These I believe are the realities of organisational life and each must learn to live with the other. The coexistence would be productive for both provided each understood the logic of the difference. Lack of understanding of these differences, or malice in either group, could adversely affect the performance of the Institute. I am personally confident that after several months, the tolerance of ideas by people holding opposite views is greater than it was earlier. If these differences are not tolerated as I think they are beginning to be at IIPA, the teaching of public administration and the message that participants receive from the programmes would be sterile and based on an organisational reality that is Utopian in content. (Maslow, 1965).

There are many aspects of our working that needs improving. The sentient system has not uniformly generated the peer relationship need for personal growth and we have to seek reasons for this. The planning process is difficult and we need to develop more effective and more open negotiating situations than we have learnt to do yet. The role-relationships and multi-role relationships essential for the system are slow in developing, though more people now appear to gain the sensitivity required to understand these relationships. Some of us still derive pleasure in creating dependency relationships, or work through the exercise of power in various contexts. We may perhaps in time learn to appreciate the complexities of organisational demands. More time would provide a more conclusive picture about the

strength of the system. The achievements of the Institute in some of its activities may be due more to the appointment of new activity heads than the new organisational design. Or it may have come from a combination of both. Personally I hold the view that appropriate organisational design is essential for stability and growth of an organisation and for the development of leadership. An inappropriate design hinders its members from achieving results, though no design can obviate the need for satisfactory leadership. It is people who achieve results; they are helped if the design of work is suitable. Their efforts are often frustrated if the design is unsuitable for the tasks they perform.

There are certain questions that are open. How soon can people develop the type of relationships necessary for the system to work well? How well would people be able to shift from one set of relationships to a totally different set? How well would individuals be able to transcend the boundaries of their individual disciplines to study action situations with the perspective of the totality? The dynamics of using knowledge and applying it for the study of administrative and social situations is different from the study of a single discipline. It is difficult to say whether integrated perspectives have failed to develop because of organisational deficiencies or whether the technology of studying action situations is itself vague and illusive.

The most puzzling area of institutional study is how negative relationships and differences between the administrative and the academic staff could be reduced. Organisationally the differences can be reduced if both shared the same objective and goals. In an academic situation the members acquire status in academic symbols and prestige is unconsciously given to the academic staff. The status of the academic staff is automatically higher than that of the administration. The administrative staff often react to this negative situation by becoming aggressive and use the power of rules which they guard, to get even with the academic staff.

It would seem to me that unless the administration shared the same tasks as the academic staff, the low status value attached to administration would be difficult to reduce. This approach has its own weaknesses and is not possible until the recruitment policy of the institution changes.

Ours is a beginning. We need to raise many more questions than we have done. We need to review more seriously the processes of growth. I hope that the raising of the issues has itself made us aware of what we want to do and where we want to go. And perhaps this is a beginning with a potential for seeking knowledge about our own systems and about the

viability of an institutional frame for application of knowledge and eventually, for improving the administrative situation and the society in which we live.

Epilogue

In retrospect, strategy to involve people in the framing of the new system of working and its direction is necessary. It is however difficult to estimate whether a majority of people have internalised the requirements of the proposed system or not. One problem of considerable significance is whether individuals who had wielded authority and power would be able to shift to multi-role functions or not. It is also difficult to estimate whether individuals who followed instructions and functioned as subordinates would be comfortable in colleague-roles. The human dimensions of the adjustment to new system requires constant review and interventions.

After about a year or so I decided to take up another assignment and I learn that the system chose to revert to its old design of tasks-related centre and hierarchical relationships. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the proposed system would have achieved the goals, or not. It is apparent that people at the helm of the organisational task have to have faith in the system. They have to have conviction in respect to the assumptions underlying the re-organisation. Some indication of the relevance of the reorganisation could be found in the fact that many people who were involved in the exercise decided to leave the institution. On my part I am personally convinced of the logic and the relevance of the strategy.

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