

DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN THAILAND: CHANGING PATTERNS?*

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Introduction

Recently, I had the privilege of listening to Edward Weidner explain the origins of the concept of development administration. The experience was illuminating, to say the least. I recount the tale here, because it sheds perspective on what the fuss was all about then, and also because it is highly suggestive as to why the notion of development administration has failed generally to attract theoretical interest since. To quote Professor Weidner, "The 1966 Seminar (on development administration in Hawaii) was the high point of our innocence. And then nothing happened."

But this is anticipating matters. The story should properly begin in the summer of 1956, when the export of technical assistance from the United States to developing countries was beginning to be very much in vogue. George Gant, in Pakistan for the Ford Foundation, and Weidner, also in Pakistan as a consultant for Ford, began conversations about the concept of development administration, a phrase actually coined by Gant. Both of these Americans, then young men in their thirties, were struck by two facts. First, they had "discovered" the cultural context of administrative systems in developing countries to be entirely different, and not at all well understood by foreign technical assistance "experts," who were expected to perform miracles of technology transfer. Second, the concepts, tools, and techniques of American public administration in the 1950s appeared entirely inadequate to the task of the public administration in developing countries.

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From these two basic premises, a number of conclusions emerged. The chief conclusion, which we well know today, was that development administration (i.e., the administration of development) is somehow different from the field of public administration. Development administration is said to be distinguished by the following characteristics: 1) administration is not neutral; 2) the devices and procedures of administration are pragmatically determined on the basis of goal maximization; and, following from the second point, 3) it is important to gain a clear understanding of the cultural context of the administrative system, as well as understand the administrative culture itself.¹

To understand why development administration had such appeal in the late fifties into the mid-sixties, let us think back a little on the state of the art of public administration during this period. The conventional public administration wisdom of the time would have had us treat organizations as essentially closed systems, whose decision making was (or ought to have been) entirely rational and synoptic. Bureaucracy was conceived in Weberian ideal-typical terms. The politics/administration dichotomy was still an issue. Statements such as, "Administration should be 'value free'" seemed to make good sense.

Nowadays, of course, we know that all of this "ain't necessarily so." The literature on organizations as open systems interacting with their task environments abounds. Systems theory alerts us to pay attention to political, economic, and social factors in the environment that affect policy decisions and policy outcomes. Decision theory commands that decisional strategies be situationally determined, and that they take into account value orientations as well as "the facts." Bureaucracies, in the United States as elsewhere, are recognized as having their own agenda. Empirical studies of implementation show that successful implementation is not merely a matter of having the right intentions, money, manpower, and tools and techniques. And the politics/administration fact/value issue is now dead, or ought to be.

Most of the theoretical issues that development administration in the mid-sixties attempted to grapple with are now part of the standard repertoire of public administration. Which is not to say that public administration has all the answers. It doesn't. Nevertheless, it should be sufficiently obvious by now that the distinction between development administration and public administration serves little useful theoretical purpose. Insofar as the term development administration has been applied almost solely to Third World countries, there is danger of misconception. The fact of the matter is that "development"-type activities are carried out by public bureaucracies the world over, in developed as well as in developing areas.

Other than to acknowledge that development administration refers to the management of planned change with focus on external administration, it is only in deference to this Panel that the words "development administration" appear

on the title of this paper. Actually, my purpose here is to review past and current development policies and implementation strategies, make some assessment of the past experience, look at possible future issues, and attempt some suggestions regarding the kinds of administrative arrangements that may prove conducive to developmental goals.

Thai Public Administration : Context and Issues

To understand the context of Thai public administration is to gain insight into the question why development administration as the management of planned change, or, as Siffin (1976) puts it, the "ability to design and implement arrangements involving technologies," has failed to evolve a great many of the necessary structures, strategies, and mechanisms in Thailand. The first key feature about the Thai political and administrative context is that Thailand remains a bureaucratic polity. The salient characteristics which Riggs observed twenty-five years ago still predominate today: an arena of politics located within the bureaucracy, despite the embryonic emergence of political parties and interest groups; bureaucracy operating in the relative absence of regulatory control or monitoring by external institutions.²

The second key feature of the administrative system is entirely consonant with, and one might add, is virtually demanded by, bureaucratic polity. Control of the various bureaucratic factions and cliques, arranged in a hierarchical structure of patron-client linkages, requires centralization of authority.³ Despite the lip service paid to the concept of decentralization, despite various development programs that are supposed to foster decentralization, it is quite apparent that the Thai administrative system remains as strongly centralized as ever. In fact, the structure of administration is essentially unaltered from the highly centralized apparatus that was created as a result of the Great Reformation of 1892. Policies at the national, provincial, and local levels are determined in Bangkok, whose control extends to budgetary and personnel decisions at all three levels of administration. Moreover, there is every indication that the trend is to concentrate decision-making authority even more heavily in Bangkok.

Given these two key features of the Thai political and administrative system, it hardly comes as a surprise that policy directions and policy design are set by the central bureaucracy. Macro/national policy guidelines are contained in Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans, of which there have been five to date. At the various administrative levels there exist Ministry Plans, Provincial Plans, District Plans, and Tambon Plans, in addition to the annual budget plans and work plans.

Not only does the bureaucracy set policy. It is also responsible for policy implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation. In the virtual absence

of external control and regulatory bodies, any adjustments or revisions to existing policies, including the decision to terminate, must perforce originate from within the bureaucracy itself. The Thai bureaucracy faces a task nothing short of the superhuman -- the more so because, despite the highly centralized structure of authority whereby Bangkok effectively controls the periphery, within the central bureaucracy itself, jurisdictions are partitioned out among a number of virtually autonomous agencies. By and large, the National Plans are the creation of the National Economic and Social Development Board, whereas implementation is left to the discretion of the line ministries. Moreover, funding and budgetary approvals must be secured from the Budget Bureau, while the Civil Service Commission must approve the creation of new positions and the hiring of new personnel. A minimum requirement for effective implementation of development policies and programs calls for coordination among these various bodies, but the fact of the matter is that problems of coordination continue to loom large.

Many Thai academics and public administrators have tended to view problems of development administration as problems in administrative development. Thus, the solutions they propose by and large have to do with one aspect or another of administrative development and reform. Bidhya (1985) identifies two different models as having currency. The "Personnel Administration" model proposes as its solution that personnel administration should be based upon the merit system, and that the institution of training programs will cause Thai bureaucrats to give up their traditional attitudes in favor of more modern ones. The "Bureaucratic Development" model assumes that the key problems facing the Thai bureaucracy are ones of coordination, decentralization, planning, information, and participation at the grassroots level. The solutions offered by this model are the "nuts and bolts" tools and techniques of public administration, imported directly from the United States. These two models are, of course, entirely compatible with each other, although each focuses on a different set of key variables.

Bidhya identifies in addition a third model, one that views problems of development administration as deriving not so much from deficiencies in administrative development, than as a consequence of the political system. Proposed by Thai political scientists, rather than by public administrationists, the Bureaucratic Polity Model suggests that political reform and a diminishment of the power of bureaucracy are necessary prior conditions for effective development administration.

We will return to consider these three alternative models in a later section of this paper, after having reviewed the past experience and probed a little into the future.

Review and Assessment of the Past Experience

To discuss the administration of development without reference to the goals of development is rather pointless. For strategies and structures are determined by goals -- or ought to be, ideally. Moreover, when one comes to an evaluation of development administration, the results must be assessed against goals. The more fundamental question is not whether strategies have been implemented successfully, but rather, to what extent have the goals of development been achieved.

This section, then, examines briefly Thailand's track record. The most succinct statements of national development goals are probably those to be found in the National Economic and Social Development Plan (Thailand is in the final year of its Fifth Plan).⁴ It is to these Plans, therefore, that we shall turn to review the experience of the past twenty-five years. The First Plan (1961-66), in keeping with the conventional wisdom of the day, aimed to achieve economic growth through investment in basic infrastructure and construction works: large scale irrigation projects, a national highways system, and large scale hydroelectric power projects were all initiated during the First Plan. The Second Plan (1967-1971) was essentially a continuation of the First Plan, extended to include remote and previously inaccessible areas.⁵

Both Plans can be considered to have met their targets, as far as economic growth is concerned. Under the First Plan, Thailand achieved a growth rate of eight percent per annum, with a balance of payments surplus. In the Second Plan period, the growth rate was 7.5 percent, still a respectable accomplishment. By the early 1970s, however, it was becoming apparent that economic growth models of the Domar-Harrod type, together with their assumptions about trickle-down effects, were simply not achieving developmental goals of "growth with equity." Empirical studies by Thai economists revealed clearly that the gap between rich and poor, between urban and rural, and between the regions themselves, was becoming greater, not smaller (Meesook, 1976). Of course, in this Thailand was not an isolated example. What was taking place could be observed in other developing countries, worldwide.

What is sometimes forgotten nowadays is that Thailand's development goals throughout the 1960s and early 1970s were influenced primarily by national security concerns, as well as by the usual kinds of economic considerations. Translated into practice, this meant that some of the key implementing agencies in charge of rural development programs -- the Office of Accelerated Rural Development and the military's Mobile Development Units are two notable examples -- were created for the express purpose of combatting the communist insurgency through development activities at the village level. Because of the overriding preoccupation with security, however, the idea of encouraging self-determination at the local level was

considered dangerous. Thus, while people's participation in development projects and programs was encouraged, local autonomy with respect to decisionmaking was definitely not. Quite apart from the potential security risk, it may be added that grassroots democracy in the Western sense is quite alien to the Thai traditional political culture. The traditional culture is, if anything, paternalistic. Since 1892, centralization, not decentralization, has been the chief defining property of the political and administrative system.

Nevertheless, the growing realization that the gap between rich and poor was widening gave cause for concern. The Third Plan (1972-76), therefore, attempted to remedy the deficiencies of the previous Plans through the introduction of strategies aimed at reducing income disparities. In addition to setting the usual economic growth targets, the Third Plan specified the need for more equitable income redistribution and delivery of social services, especially to the rural poor. The Plan period coincided with the burgeoning of a new "era of democracy," following the Student Uprising of October 1973 and the overthrow of the Thanom-Prapass government. Although this era was to prove short-lived, ending precipitously in October 1976, it generated a genuine preoccupation with development programs, and with achieving growth with equity. A series of programs were launched, most notably what is now known as the Rural Employment Generation Program, directed at income redistribution to rural areas and the strengthening of local self-government, especially at the commune or tambon level.

The Third Plan period coincided with severe economic recession caused by the huge rise in OPEC oil prices. The domestic situation was further complicated by the rise and fall of a succession of politically weak governments. All told, there were eight governments in the period 1972-76, the longest lived lasting only twelve months. Nevertheless, during the Third Plan, Thailand managed to achieve an average growth rate of 6.2 percent. In terms of the various development strategies that had been promulgated, however, the picture was more confused. Frequent policy shifts, accompanying each government turnover, resulted in lack of clear direction and, at the very least, led to time-consuming delays in implementation.

Just as the Third Plan had been a response to the deficiencies of its predecessors, so was the Fourth Plan designed to rectify the economic ills encountered in the previous Plan period. The Fourth Plan (1977-81) had two primary focuses. The first concentrated on the administration and development of natural resources, especially of indigenous energy sources. A major investment was made in the form of feasibility studies of petroleum and natural gas, notably in the Gulf of Thailand.

The second major focus was on increasing agricultural productivity and adjusting the structure of the industrial sector to facilitate exports. The need to maintain viable levels in the balance of payments and in the budget deficit was

given priority. At the same time, the Plan reaffirmed the intention to continue income redistribution policies and creation of employment in rural areas.

The Fourth Plan met with mixed results. Although the growth rate for this period climbed back to 7.1 percent per annum, both agricultural and industrial production failed to achieve their targets. The balance of trade deficit increased over threefold over the previous Plan period to Baht 45 billion per annum, while the Consumer Price Index rose an average of 11.5 percent a year. Income redistribution policies failed to make significant headway, while delivery of social services fell far short of stated goals, especially in regard to reaching outlying areas.

By the end of the Plan period, it had become increasingly apparent that the notion of social equity, and of income redistribution as a more concrete form of that rather abstract concept, remained precisely that--a notion, nothing more. No serious efforts were made to introduce necessary changes in tax structures, and sporadic attempts to introduce a land reform act in parliament ended in failure.

In passing, we raise the following question: if government purposefully fails to adopt any number of alternative means to achieve a given stated ends, is that ends to be considered one of its goals? Is assessment to be made of all stated goals, or only of those goals that are actively pursued? Judging from Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Plans, which at the very least should be regarded as indicative of policy guidelines, quite different priorities attach to the various developmental goals. In terms of the past experience, economic goals have taken precedence over other goals, and distributive and regulatory policies over redistributive policies.

Current Status and Issues: the Fifth Plan (1982-86)

The Fifth Plan (1982-86) represents yet another shift in developmental goals, with increased emphasis on eradication of rural poverty, integrated area development, and development of selected target areas. By 1984, the number of officially designated poverty amphoes (districts) had decreased from 286 (out of a total of some 550) to 197. Schools and health facilities were expanded rapidly during this period. Ninety-six percent of school-age children now have access to primary school; 83 percent of amphoes have hospital facilities, and all tambon have health stations.

Economic growth has been respectable. In spite of deteriorating conditions in the world economy, a growth rate of 5.3 percent has been achieved. This compares quite favorably with growth rates in other developing countries, including Thailand's ASEAN neighbors.

At the same time, there is no question that planning and implementation decisions have become increasingly centralized. In theory, Thailand attempts

to achieve a mix between "top down" and "bottom up" planning. Translated into practice, what this means is that tambon councils consisting mainly of village headmen put together their own lists of projects and submit them to the District Office, which screens the projects before passing them on to the provincial administration. The provincial administration then draws up a provincial plan that is sent to Bangkok for approval. All projects and programs contained within the local plans must conform to the policy guidelines and directions of the National Plan. There is less discretionary authority at the local level than this account implies. The fact of the matter is that all tambon plans contain far more project requests than can ever be funded out of the government budget, and the amount of revenue generated at the local level is for all intents and purposes nil. Whether a project is funded often remains the discretion of the individual line ministry in Bangkok, so there is little point in going through the time consuming exercise of setting project priorities. Local plans become little more than "wish lists."

Moreover, the vast proliferation of instruction manuals, operating procedures, approval procedures, and reporting requirements issuing from Bangkok leaves little leeway for individual initiative. A provincial governor, formerly a deputy director-general of the Community Development Department and secretary-general of the Rural Employment Generation Program, states that, "Implementation of rural development plans has become nothing more than carrying out a checklist of activities."⁶ Detailed specifications regarding construction of everything from roads, to wells, to fishponds are drawn up in Bangkok, for uniform execution nationwide. Officials in the field become nothing more than automatons, by implication. Efficiency in project implementation is to be achieved through standardization and control from the center.

Two major rural development development programs serve as illustration. The Rural Employment Generation Program was originally conceived of as an income generation scheme for villagers during the dry season, as well as a means to develop local leadership capacities in the selection and implementation of small scale projects. In the early years, perhaps not unexpectedly, it was discovered that there had been widespread abuse of Program funds, allotted directly to tambon councils according to a "needs formula" devised by the program secretariat in Bangkok. In an attempt to clamp down on graft and other irregularities, central control and supervision increased.

Moreover, the types of projects that are permitted under this program are strictly regulated from Bangkok. In field interviews that I conducted in 1984 in five provinces in the northeast, tambon council members reported almost unanimously that they had been advised to select water resource projects, specifically, the construction of urns for storing water. All of the tambon councils visited appeared to have followed this advice.⁷

The second program is the so-called Rural Poverty Program, instituted under the Fifth Plan, which attempts to integrate a broad range of government development efforts in some thirteen thousand villages (there are approximately fifty-three thousand villages in Thailand). The general objective is to alleviate rural poverty by making government activities more responsive to local needs. The program is specifically informed by the Basic Needs Approach.⁸

Other than this specific orientation which determines project selection, two distinctive features of the Rural Poverty Program should be mentioned. First, the creation of tambon advisory committees, consisting of officials of the four Core Ministries (Interior, Agriculture, Health, and Education), in effect means that project selection is guided by government officials, rather than by the tambon councils. Which is not to say that projects selected in this manner run counter to the interest of the locality. We merely note that *de facto* decision making authority rests with officials, namely, the community development worker, the agricultural officer, the health officer, and one of the local schoolteachers.

The second feature of the Rural Poverty Program is that funding is administered directly out of the line ministries in Bangkok. The Rural Employment Generation Program, by contrast, places its funds at the provincial level. In terms of authorizations, therefore, the latter program vests greater discretionary power in the hands of provincial administration.

In recent years, there has been widespread talk of the possibility of merging the Rural Employment Generation Program to the Rural Poverty Program. If this indeed takes place, and if the administrative procedures of the Rural Poverty Program are extended to both programs, we anticipate that decision making authority with respect to project selection and control over funds will revert to the central line ministries.

Which brings us to consideration of the issue of decentralization. Just as economic development strategies have shifted from an emphasis on growth to the currently fashionable basic needs and human resources development approaches, so have administrative strategies kept abreast with trends occurring in the developing countries worldwide. The earliest approach that focused on community development is still going strong. In addition, however, there have been experiments with integrated area development, and with decentralization. The Rural Employment Generation Program can be viewed as one experiment in decentralization. The Decentralized Development Management Project, initiated and funded by the United States Agency for International Development, can be viewed as another. Both programs are noteworthy for their failure to decentralize decision making authority to local levels, although their proponents might argue that decentralization is a relative concept, and relatively speaking, these programs are more "decentralized" than other rural development programs.

This begs the question, "Decentralization for what?" If decentralization is to be regarded as a worthy ends in itself, that is one matter. Reference is then appropriately made to the value system to see if desired ends (i.e., decentralization) are consonant with dominant values. If, however, decentralization is to be regarded as purely instrumental, as a means toward achieving some given ends (presumably, as the most effective way to achieve developmental goals), then that is an entirely different matter. Whether or not one "ought" to decentralize has to be empirically determined. To prescribe administrative decentralization as a uniform solution before the evidence is in, is to program in advance with insufficient data. Current decision theories would argue against the notion that all things can be pre-programmed, that synoptic decisions are feasible in the face of uncertainty. But the well-argued and logically impeccable thesis that "to manage is not to control" has so far not caught on as far as the administration of development in Thailand is concerned.⁹ We shall return to this point later.

Future Directions: the Sixth Plan (1987-1991)

Thailand's Sixth Plan contains the acknowledgment that its five predecessors had placed *de facto* emphasis on the development of basic economic infrastructure, and in so doing, had left a legacy of imbalance between urban and rural, and among the sectors themselves. In response, the Sixth Plan incorporates three principles: optimal utilization of resources, social justice and social equity, and self-reliance (Pakdi, 1985). The goals of the Sixth Plan are to achieve economic growth at a rate of five percent per annum, which is expected to generate employment and enhance income distribution; and to maintain a stable economic equilibrium for Thailand (*Business News Summary*, Aug. 1985). The Plan consists of the following ten Workplans :

- a. A national economic and financial workplan.
- b. A natural resources and environmental development plan, which includes speeding up the process of legalizing land holdings.
- c. A rural development workplan, which specifies continuation of ongoing activities and extension of development programs to include areas other than poverty areas; and improvement in administrative mechanisms, including participation from the private sector.
- d. An urban development plan, which designates new economic zones to serve as growth centers and as bases for industrialization in the provinces.
- e. A social development plan, which emphasizes: a decrease in population growth rates; extension of rural primary health care to the cities; people's participation; and the principle of self-reliance.

- f. A production, marketing, and technology plan, aimed at meeting economic goals through the use of appropriate technology.
- g. A basic services plan, to provide basic services in transportation, communications, and energy, and to provide basic public works.
- h. A state enterprises plan, with the objective of transforming state enterprises into competitive and self-sufficient businesses.
- i. An administrative reform plan, to achieve compatibility with the preceding plans.
- j. A science and technology plan. (This last was at the recommendation of the cabinet.)

(Business News Summary, Aug. 1985)

So much for the goals of national development for the next five years. But a question one might well raise at this point is, Has anything really changed? And the answer, I think, is, It has and it hasn't. The record indicates clearly that there has been an absolute increase in income levels, that the economic and social infrastructure in place today is a far cry from what existed two decades, or even one decade ago, that there has been a noticeable improvement in the quality of life in rural areas, and that public officials responsible for implementation of development activities appear more task-oriented, certainly better educated, and more mindful of their role as servants of the public, than their predecessors a decade ago--on the whole, that is.

These accomplishments notwithstanding, it is more difficult to give a response in the affirmative as to whether we are doing as well as we "ought" to be doing. Many practitioners and academics who have been following development trends in Thailand would have us believe that all is not as it should be, that a state of suboptimality prevails--worse, that true development and the efficient attainment of developmental goals cannot occur unless there is sweeping administrative reform first. The next section continues this discussion.

Development Administration: the Issues

A well balanced perspective on the issues of development is given by Medhi Krongkaew (1986). As Medhi indicates, if success is to be measured by reduction in the incidence of poverty, then Thailand can be counted successful (see Table 1). Whereas 50 percent of the Thai population (38 percent in urban areas, 61 percent in rural) was living in poverty in 1962, by 1981 this figure had been reduced to 24 percent (16 percent in urban areas, 27 percent in rural). In terms of income distribution, however, there is somewhat greater income inequality now than twenty years ago (see Table 2). The Gini coefficient was .414 (.405 and .361 for

urban and rural areas, respectively) in 1962. By 1981 it had increased to .473 (.447 and .437 for urban and rural, respectively).

A point worth noting is that income inequality in rural areas is now almost as great as in urban areas. In this connection, Chartchai (1985) makes the salient observation that the structure of power as it presently exists at the local (village) level facilitates enormously the diversion of the benefits of development to local leaders and wealthier villagers, at the expense of those less fortunately situated. In his critique of the so-called "new approach" to rural development in the Fifth Plan (1982-86), which involves application of effective criteria for identification of dense poverty target areas, Kraiyudht (1983) questions its ability to generate sustained development within the existing institutional framework. The inference to be drawn from Chartchai and Kraiyudht is that income inequality given current development approaches will in all probability become greater, both intra- and inter-village.

As Medhi points out, Thai academics have tended to focus not so much on assessment of the extent to which development objectives have been achieved, as they have on perceived structural defects in the administrative system. Thinapan (1984) identifies the following key problems facing the Thai politico-administrative system in the 1980s: lack of efficiency and a sense of responsibility, and uncontrolled growth of the bureaucracy. Amara urges the need for reform of four key systems: personnel administration; budgeting and finance; inventory and procurement; and delivery of public services (cited by Voradej and Vinit, 1985).

Let us return to consideration of Bidhya's three models of bureaucracy that were outlined at the beginning of this paper. The first model essentially has to do with changing existing value systems with respect to personnel promotion and with changing value orientations of civil servants. The second model, not incompatible with the first, calls for application of the tools and techniques of public administration to solve problems of management of development. The third model, quite different from the previous two, sees problems in the administration of development as deriving primarily from the political system, i.e., from the fact that Thailand is a bureaucratic polity, with the civil and military bureaucracy acting in pursuit of its own interests in the absence of external regulatory institutions.

If the third model is correct, as many Thai academics believe, then it necessarily follows not only that little effort will be made to decentralize decision making authority, but also that any attempts must fail in view of the constraints imposed by the political environment. And in fact, notwithstanding pious pronouncements emanating from time to time from top echelon officials regarding the need to decentralize certain kinds of development activities in the interest of effective planning and implementation, there is little evidence that this has been translated

into practice. The blame for shortcomings has been attributed variously to: lack of political will on the part of government; security considerations militating against grass-roots self-determination; the cumbersome procedures of enacting legislation; and, last but not least, reluctance on the part of the powerful line ministries in Bangkok, the Ministry of Interior in particular, to cede power. All of these reasons fit the bureaucratic polity model.

With all due respect to bureaucratic polity, my own view is that the current situation is less a consequence of a malevolent bureaucracy intent on retaining power for itself, than it is the result produced by a well intentioned, though often misguided, strongly paternalistic bureaucracy, muddling through as best it can in the face of uncertainty, with relatively few resources, and seemingly answerable only to itself. Quite recently, the eminent statesman and former Prime Minister, M.R. Kukrit Pramoj (1985), gave a most insightful and thoughtful analysis of the legacy of paternalism. According to M.R. Kukrit, the centuries old tradition of paternalism is still very much the dominant feature of government today. From the paternalistic standpoint, it is the duty of government to look after the well-being of the Thai people, who are incapable of looking after themselves. The government is to the people as a father is to his children--loving but autocratic. The modern technocrat who offers the familiar argument that effective planning and implementation had best be left to those with the requisite skills and education, is merely reflecting the traditional paternalist attitude that "Father knows best."

Assuming that the paternalist bureaucratic polity model, or some variant thereof, correctly describes Thailand, what can be said about the first two models of administration (Personnel Administration and Bureaucratic Development)? Two things, basically. First that each has its merits, and there is no reason not to implement the recommendations contained in both--we are not in an either/or situation. Second, the contextual environment of bureaucratic polity imposes an upper limit, and acts as a constraint, on the extent to which reforms can actually be carried out, and also places a limit on the extent to which they can be effectively utilized.

The most challenging part in all of this is to proceed to identify the boundaries of the system--what kinds of administrative reforms fall within the zone of acceptance or zone of indifference, to borrow Simon's term, of bureaucratic polity, and what kinds do not, i.e., are doomed to failure from the very start.¹¹ Pragmatically speaking--and successful public administration is, above all, pragmatic in its selection of strategies and modes of decision-making and implementation--there is little sense in either advocating or selecting courses of action that will be fiercely resisted and subjected to sabotage at every turn.

Yet nowhere in the literature do the advocates of reform make reference to the strategy of satisficing within system boundaries--perhaps because this

concept, now central to organization theory, gained credence too late to inform development administration theorists of twenty years ago.¹² And the path that development administration has chosen to pursue since then is not at all conducive to theoretical innovation or breakthrough, focusing, as it does, on reporting of the empirical facts on what happened where, but failing to make the appropriate theoretical derivation. Or, development administration exhorts and prescribes the universal adoption of a fixed set of strategies as a sure-fire cure for all ills. Decentralization, people's participation, basic needs, administrative reform--these are the standard remedies nowadays. But as with all medication, they are not to be swallowed unconditionally.

To return to a point previously made, strategies and solutions have to be tailored to fit each development situation--and due consideration must be paid to the constraints imposed by the existing political and administrative framework. The task of development administrators is largely a problem in management. In the absence of powerful theories or proven technologies, the public administrator must not only proceed pragmatically with so-called strategic choice models (incrementalism and redundancy theory are two examples), he must also play the role of experimental scientist.¹³ For it is only through experimentation--used here in the scientific sense, which includes adherence to the principles of experimental design--that we will learn for sure what works, what doesn't and why. Experimentation is not trial-and-error; still less is it "muddling through." The methodology is well-known, although it has seldom been applied in the domain of public administration. And the advantage of experimentation is that it should not be threatening to public administrators or to the bureaucratic elite. Yet there is no indication at all that experimentation is about to inform developmental trends in Thailand.

Concluding Remarks

A gap exists between the planners (mainly economists) who not only plan but also set policy directions with respect to development goals, on the one hand, and public administrationists, both practitioners and academics, on the other. Planners and public administrationists seemingly inhabit separate worlds, with no overlapping of mind sets, to the detriment of the administration of development. As things were in the past, so they continue in the present, and inexorably into the future. Our examination of National Development Plans reveals that while policy emphases may have shifted somewhat over the years, no significant changes have been wrought in the administration of development.

Contemporary writings uniformly endorse the desirability of decentralization and of promoting grassroots participation in the development process. As we have indicated, however, it is questionable whether either is a viable alternative given the bureaucratic polity culture.

If the past experience is anything to go by, developmental goals have been more or less achieved (some more, some less) without too much attention on management or administration. In other words, the present system seems to work, after a fashion. But there are errors, and they are costly. There is waste, and that is costly too. Above all, there is the general, albeit inchoate feeling in certain quarters that we are not doing as well as we ought to be doing.

Our prescription is clear cut: first, identify what kinds of reforms the politico-administrative system will tolerate; then, through process of experimentation, specify the particulars-- what kinds of strategies work, under what conditions and in which kinds of settings, taking risk and uncertainty (internal and external) into account. This, in our view, is what the management of development entails.

END NOTES

¹Professor Weidner's comments were made during a meeting with the faculty of the School of Public Administration, NIDA, on March 7, 1986.

²Pisan Suriyamongkol in a paper given at the 1985 APSA annual meeting entitled "Bureaucratic Polity at Bay" argues that times have changed, and that the bureaucratic polity model with its assumptions about the Thai bureaucracy's seemingly inviolable status is no longer valid. While Pisan makes an interesting case, my own view is that little has in fact changed; that the arena of politics remains dominated by bureaucratic cliques, of which the military is one (actually several). The only difference is in the methods: increasingly the bureaucratic elite is legitimizing its political role through participation in the political party system. It is possible that this will lead to the eventual demise of bureaucratic polity, but the process will be very gradual, and its effects almost imperceptible in the short run. For full elaboration of the bureaucratic polity model, see Fred W. Riggs, *Thailand: The Modernization of a Bureaucratic Polity* (Honolulu: East-West Center, 1966).

³This was suggested to me by Bidhya Bowornwathana, who is currently doing research with Clark D. Neher on the subject. A publication is expected in late 1986.

⁴This paper treats Plans as indicative of national development goals. The review is not to assess the success or failure of planning; it is to assess the extent to which stated development goals have been met, without necessarily attributing outcomes to planning and implementation activities undertaken by government. Also, although some scholars consider development administration to extend to the

consideration of what the goals of development ought to be, we will not do so in this paper, given the fact that the goals of the National Plans are consistent with improvement in the quality of life criterion advocated by George Gant (1979, pp. 1-9) as a key requisite of development administration.

⁵Review and assessment of Thailand's National Development Plans is taken from the *Business News Summary* (Aug. 1985), Medhi (1986), Narongchai (1982), and Pakdi (1985).

⁶Quoted from a lecture given by Dr. Pairat Decharin, Governor of Chainat, to MPA students in a course on Public Policy at NIDA, October 1985.

⁷A NIDA MPA student who is a deputy district officer in the northeast gives exactly the same account. He adds, moreover, that planning and implementation of development projects in the field is all "programmed" from the center, so that there is little point to training officials in the field to become "change agents," because they have little opportunity to exercise discretion.

⁸An excellent account of shifts in developmental focus is given by Wattana (1984).

⁹See Martin Landau and Russell Stout, Jr., "To Manage Is Not To Control, or the Folly of Type II Errors," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 39, No. 2 (March/April 1979), 148-156.

¹⁰For purposes of comparison, in 1969 the Gini coefficient for the United States as a whole was .439. The Gini coefficient or Gini index ranges from 1.00 (theoretical perfect equality) to 0.00 (theoretical perfect inequality). See Thomas R. Dye, "Income Inequality and American State Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (March 1969), 157-62.

¹¹See Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, Second Edition (New York : MacMillan, 1957), pp. 12, 18, 116, 131, 133, 150, 204.

¹²The notion of satisficing also originates, of course, with Simon, *op. cit.*, For his discussion of bounded rationality, see Herbert A. Simon, *Models of Man* (New York : John Wiley, 1957), p. 198.

¹³On the concept of incrementalism, see Charles A. Lindblom's seminal article, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 19 (1959). A later article is entitled, "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 39, No. 6 (Nov.-Dec. 1979). On redundancy, see Martin Landau, "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. 29 (1969), 346-358.

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*TJDA = Thai Journal of Development Administration

APPENDIX

Table 1
Incidence of Poverty in Thailand

| Region Urban/Rural | Poverty as a Percent of Population | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1962/63 | 1968/69 | 1975/76 | 1981 |
| North | 65 | 36 | 35 | 23 |
| - Urban | 56 | 19 | 31 | 23 |
| - Rural | 66 | 37 | 36 | 23 |
| Northeast | 74 | 65 | 46 | 36 |
| - Urban | 44 | 24 | 38 | 36 |
| - Rural | 77 | 67 | 48 | 36 |
| Central | 40 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| - Urban | 40 | 14 | 20 | 24 |
| - Rural | 40 | 16 | 15 | 14 |
| South | 44 | 38 | 33 | 21 |
| - Urban | 35 | 24 | 29 | 18 |
| - Rural | 46 | 40 | 35 | 22 |
| Bangkok | 28 | 11 | 12 | 4 |
| Thailand as a whole | 57 | 39 | 33 | 24 |
| - Urban | 38 | 16 | 22 | 16 |
| - Rural | 61 | 43 | 37 | 27 |

Source : Medhi Krongkaew (1986), p. 21.

Table 2
Income Distribution in Thailand

| Region Urban/Rural | GINI Coefficient | | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| | 1962/63 | 1968/69 | 1975/76 | 1981 |
| North | 0.359 | 0.370 | 0.422 | 0.456 |
| - Urban | 0.460 | 0.440 | 0.453 | 0.462 |
| - Rural | 0.308 | 0.345 | 0.368 | 0.422 |
| Northeast | 0.344 | 0.379 | 0.405 | 0.438 |
| - Urban | 0.422 | 0.450 | 0.457 | 0.456 |
| - Rural | 0.264 | 0.347 | 0.343 | 0.395 |
| Central | 0.391 | 0.401 | 0.399 | 0.430 |
| - Urban | 0.384 | 0.399 | 0.425 | 0.445 |
| - Rural | 0.375 | 0.392 | 0.376 | 0.418 |
| South | 0.402 | 0.401 | 0.449 | 0.456 |
| - Urban | 0.360 | 0.450 | 0.465 | 0.443 |
| - Rural | 0.370 | 0.325 | 0.402 | 0.426 |
| Bangkok | - | 0.412 | 0.398 | 0.405 |
| Thailand as a whole | 0.441 | 0.429 | 0.451 | 0.473 |
| - Urban | 0.405 | 0.429 | 0.435 | 0.447 |
| - Rural | 0.361 | 0.381 | 0.395 | 0.437 |

Source : Medhi Krongkaew (1986), p. 27.