
SIDA and the approaches to development administration

AV LENA LINDGREN

1. Introduction

Any analysis of African countries in the world today indicates that the organs of the state play a remarkably active role in many spheres of the society. In most countries, this presence extends into the officializing of many activities which in other societies are undertaken by non-governmental bodies. The state is usually closely involved in the detailed running of many sectors of the economy, undertakes a complex directive role in development planning and its execution, as well as putting into effect public policy in areas such as investment, imports, finance, and taxation. Thus, the role of the public sector is vital and African countries are critically dependent on its capacity and efficiency.

Now, let us assume (as most people do) that the administrative practices and ideas accumulated in the Western world over the past few decades are rational and efficient instruments for achieving public policy goals. Then it would also be possible that these practices and ideas are transferred into the African world where the performance of the public administration is of utmost significance for the development of the countries.

As a matter of fact, people concerned with efforts to assist the less-developed countries to improve their lot in the world have long recognized the vital nature of the public sector. International development agencies such as the United Nations and the World Bank, individual donor nations, and various public foundations and private enterprises have shown considerable enthusiasm for the transfer of Western administrative solutions to developing countries.

Sweden started to engage in this type of activities rather late. Although development assistance geared towards the public sector has formed part of SIDA's activities for some twenty years now, it is not until 1984 that this type of activities

have become significant enough to form its own sector. This development has meant the transition of assistance to public administration from being a part of other assistance programmes to becoming a priority sector with the same status as rural development, education, or health. A factor which has contributed to this development is the increased emphasis that has been given to export of consultancy services from Swedish authorities and public corporations.

There can be no denying that some of these notable efforts have paid off. Some countries have recorded substantial economic achievements and others have taken significant steps to avert economic deterioration. Most countries have also made impressive advances in education and literacy rates have more than doubled. Certain amenities, such as clean water, electricity, latrines, and roads are now generally more available than at the close of the colonial era. One might also rate management in the public sector as substantially improved over what it was two, three decades ago. Nevertheless, mounting evidence has gradually made it clear that the consequences flowing from the application of Western methods may be quite paradoxical; they have certainly not been what was expected and hoped for. Often enough they have had little discernible impact or have led to results precisely the opposite of those intended.

The literature is full of descriptive evidence of inadequacies, dysfunctions, and frequent breakdowns in the performance of African bureaucracies. Such classical symptoms as difficulty in maintaining coordination among essentially related activities; the disinclination of higher level administrators to delegate, with consequent delays, overload, rigidity, and authoritarian style; the equal disinclination of subordinates to take initiative and accept responsibility; patronizing and abusive attitudes towards the public; legalism and

procedural formalism; the institutionalisation of corruption; etc, etc. Those familiar with African administrative systems can probably expand the list *ad infinitum*.

How shall we interpret these discouraging events? What can be done to improve the efficiency of these developing bureaucracies?

In order to search for answers to these questions I will examine the development of thinking that has occurred in connection with the transfer of Western public administration to developing countries. My main concern in this endeavour is to bring forth and explore the theoretical assumptions about the role of public administration in development underlying SIDA's sector aid, and to relate them to the international literature on the subject. Having done that, I will point to some realities that I feel have to be seriously considered by SIDA in the process of improving public administration in African countries with the help of Swedish development assistance.

However, to review the development of thinking that has occurred in relation to the transfer of Western public administration to developing countries (notably to African countries since these are the main recipients of Swedish public sector aid) seems to be somehow troublesome. First, the extent to which administrative practices and ideas are transferable has received too little attention generally in the literature, not the least in the literature on Africa. A number of scholars have analysed the problems associated with organizational structures, and some have also questioned the relevance of Western concepts and practices in African public administration. The problem is that empirical studies of this kind are scarce, if not extremely scarce. Secondly, even if one should rely on the more theoretical works (which I have done to a great extent), what is available are not uniform theoretical constructions, but rather trends of thinking emerging from individual authors. Hence, to talk about the study of administrative transfer in terms of the development of "theory" certainly gives the wrong impression since the subject is neither conceptually, nor empirically an established field of study.

Despite these problems, I will still try to make the broad trends of thinking quite clear to see. What strikes one when cursory reviewing the literature is that it is surprisingly normative, suggesting all kinds of advice. I will therefore sort out the kinds of advice that have been forthcoming in the

literature about the desirable directions of change and how these changes might be realized through external assistance. Apart from making the broad trends in thinking quite clear to see, such a classification would also allow me to analyse the theoretical assumptions underlying SIDA's public sector assistance within the context of the international literature on the subject.

Before starting the examination of literature, there is one word which is particularly important in this context and which could cause confusion if not properly dealt with right from the beginning. For the sake of clarity then, and to avoid confusion, let me first say a few words about the concept of "development administration".

2. The Concept of Development Administration

Although widely used for more than three decades now, the word development administration has never been given an agreed-upon definition, despite extended discussion and arguments on the matter. In the literature I have found at least two main conceptions of the word.

The original intent in coining and popularizing the word was to concentrate attention to the administrative requisites for achieving public policy goals, particularly in the developing countries. This purpose was linked to an assumption that the more developed countries could assist in this effort through a process of diffusion or transfer of administrative capabilities already possessed. The advocates of these ideas were calling for a distinct form of administration according to which the primary responsibility of government in a developing country is actively to lead, stimulate, and centrally coordinate the country's total development endeavour. (This distinct form of administration, hereafter referred to as the theory of development administration, will be further described in a subsequent section of this essay).

In more recent literature, the conception of development administration being regarded as a distinct form of administration for developing countries appears to have lost its meaning. However, the term has lasted as a common-sense designator of the larger set of writings directed specifically at public administration in developing countries, with the various authors insisting on their own definition of what types of changes are needed for administrative development. In this sense, development administration clearly covers more than specific reforms or projects, it also in-

cludes the study of more permanent characteristics and behaviour of public administration in developing countries. This is how the term is used in the present essay.

Without insisting on any particular, definite, meaning, let me also say a few words about the word development. There has arisen, of course, a substantial literature on what development is or ought to be. Luckily for the reader of this essay, no effort will be made here to recapitulate these voluminous discussions. I will simply make my position clear and underline George Gant's view that development is not an absolute but relative condition, with no country ever qualifying as fully developed.¹

3. Approaches to the Transfer of Western Public Administration

Since the end of World War II, donors and development experts have proposed a variety of strategies for addressing problems of public administration in the Third World. The record of their efforts is characterized by a periodically changing set of recommendations that has been proposed, emphasized for a few years, and then amended or discarded to be replaced by newly formulated approaches. In my endeavour to examine the development of thinking which has occurred in this context, I have identified three main approaches; the Standard Technical Assistance Approach, the Structural Adjustment Approach, and the Socio-Cultural Approach. It should be noted though, that the main concern is not the classification as such; my intention is not to force everything which has been produced into categories. Rather, the three approaches represent trends in thinking about the role of public administration in development, and I will exemplify these trends by reviewing a few of the most dominant thoughts within each approach. Having done that, I will bring forth and explore the theoretical assumptions underlying SIDA's public sector aid and discuss these in relation to the three identified approaches.²

The Standard Technical Assistance Approach

The school of thought that looks most favourable on the proposition that administrative transfer is intrinsically a good thing, without any regard for its political or cultural consequences, has been termed the Standard Technical Assistance Approach. Most of the works within this approach goes back to the period 1950-1970.

The advocates of this approach have confidence that developed societies in the West have achieved administrative capabilities that are transferable to less developed countries. The proponents also have in common an inclination to regard bureaucratic change as a precondition for political development. If such a change is achieved, it is expected to increase the prospect that development, both political and economic, will proceed more rapidly.

These views tend to correspond with what I have earlier termed as the theory of development administration. The basic idea of this theory is that the public sector has a decisive part to play in the effort to promote development. This, however, cannot be the traditional form of administration, geared towards status quo, but must be an administration new both in structure and in outlook. It must be dynamic and capable of bringing about and controlling change in all fields. It is the driving force behind development and must be able to cope with change. Attention is therefore turned to the most appropriate ways of passing from an administration which is essentially traditional in its functions to an administration which is also specially geared to development. The theory accordingly concentrates on specifying in detail the features, structures, machinery, attitudes and modes of behaviour of such an administration before considering the ways and means of establishing it in the most effective form.

The Standard Technical Assistance Approach (including the theory of development administration) emphasizes *administrative reform* in organizational structural arrangements, personnel management, budgeting, administrative planning, records management, and tax and revenue collection. Here it is assumed that *transfer of administrative technology from one culture to another is feasible, without any necessary concurrent reformation in political, economic, or social conditions*. The approach also implies the *separability of policy-making and policy-execution*.

Braibanti, for example, concedes that even though technical assistance efforts in public administration have been attacked on the ground that administration cannot be effectively reformed without stimulating politicization of the total social order, he still argues that "transnational inducement of administrative reform as a stratagem must proceed as an autonomous action, irrespective of the rate of maturation of the

larger political process." He also purports that it is beyond the capability of an aid-giving nation to directly and deliberately accelerate politicization. To engage in such activities is an "immoral aberration unworthy of the relationship of dignity and respect which should characterize the diplomatic intercourse of two sovereign states."

To justify this standpoint, Braibanti marshals several arguments; one of them being that the demands placed on the public administration apparatus in the development process are so urgent and crucial that they require the most rapid possible improvement in bureaucratic capability. To deliberately slow down such improvements in order to allow other sectors of political development to catch up is to run the risk of unproductive use of external aid or its consequent termination. A more significant and likely consequence would be a progressively deteriorating administrative capability in the face of escalating demands.³

Like Braibanti, Esman objects to emphasis on control of bureaucracies in developing countries as dangerously misplaced priority, one that might seriously retard their rate of progress. The concern instead should be to increase the capability of the bureaucracy to perform and to legitimize the bureaucratic role in shaping policy and sharing power.⁴

The Structural Alteration Approach

While the tendency of the first approach was to concentrate on advances in administrative technology and isolate these from other activities important for development, this second approach makes a direct connection between administrative technology and political and/or economic structures of the society. Within this approach, three views focusing on various relationships prevail: 1) Bureaucracy – Politics, 2) Politics – Market, and 3) Central – Local Government.

1) Bureaucracy – Politics

The first of these views is advocated by some of the most wellknown contributors to the study of development administration, including Fred W Riggs and Joseph LaPalombara. (7) The authors who share this view tend to see developing bureaucracies from a sweeping historical and societal perspective. They seek to fit the prevailing character of the bureaucracy to the state of development through which they perceive the society to be passing. Like in the Standard Technical Assistance Approach, they also consider *The bu-*

reaucracy as a crucial power center, but one that must be properly related to other power centers in the society. This frame of reference leads to an apprehension about the consequences of doing anything that is deliberately aimed at a further strengthening of the bureaucracy, an institution regarded as already dangerously overshadowing other institutions that should be sharing more equally in the exercise of power.

Riggs finds that typically in developing countries the power position of the bureaucracy vis-à-vis other state institutions is abnormal. The legislatures, chief executives, courts, political parties, and interest groups maintaining controls over the bureaucracy elsewhere are either non-existent or too weak to hold their own against the bureaucracy, much less keep it effectively in check. As this occurs, the bureaucrats themselves are increasingly tempted to give preference to their own group interests. According to Riggs, it is this absence of balance between the bureaucracy and other state institutions that causes the inefficiency, the abuse of power, corruption, etc. The degree of inefficiency within the administration is proportionate to its degree of political power. As the imbalance of power continues, administrative reforms are obliged to be ineffective.

Paradoxically, in this situation the burgeoning bureaucracy, as it gains in political dominance, actually retrogresses in its capacity to make productive use of available resources. Under such circumstances, it is argued, the course most obviously to be avoided is one which leads towards any further enhancement of bureaucratic prerogatives since the results will be counter to what was intended. Instead, the conscious aim of external assistance should be to curtail bureaucratic expansion and simultaneously to build up weak political institutions.⁵

In his earlier works, LaPalombara voiced considerable skepticism about the wisdom of helping bureaucracies already tending towards dominance. In later works, he seems to have moved towards a more discriminating approach in discussing alternative strategies for developing administrative capabilities in the Third World. His main argument is that there is as much important variations among developing nations as one can find in any other category of countries. Prescriptions of what ought to be done must therefore be related to variations actually found in developing countries and not just arrived at deductively from a stereotype of what such a country is like. Apart

from considering national variations, it is also important to realize that prescriptions cannot be based on simple extrapolations from Western experiences in economic, social, and political development. For any country we should be able to provide a profile which will depict its needs, resources, obstacles, and potentiality insofar as these involve or relate to the role of administration in development. Such a profile would then serve as a guide to administrative reform strategy and cast doubt on the general applicability of any single strategy for increasing administrative capacity.⁶

2) Politics – Market

While Riggs and LaPalombara see the balance of power between politics and bureaucracy as crucial for development, this view emphasizes the balance between politics and market as being important in the development process. Here, *the institutions of the state are considered to have too much control over economic activity, and the role of the state should therefore be tailored to a minimum while external aid ought to pay more attention to market forces.* Below, I will sort out the kinds of advice coming from the World Bank and from Göran Hydén who both, although from very different perspectives, are in favour of such an analysis.

As a rule, when the World Bank design structural adjustment programmes, they rely on three major types of policies which the recipient country must adhere to:

- demand restraint;
- switching of resources to tradeables; and
- policies emphasizing improvement of the medium and long term efficiency of the economy.⁷

Ostensibly, the policies above appear to have everything to do with raising the economic growth and little to do with change in the political system. However, when one takes a closer look at the policies demanded, it becomes obvious that what is required is political change. For example, to "dissolve or reduce powers of state marketing boards", "reduce or relimitate agricultural subsidies", and even the innocuous "budget policy" imply, taken together, a severe limitation on the reach of central government.

The short step from here to issues of administrative capacity building is recognized by the World Bank itself who consider weak managerial capacity in both the public and private sectors to

be at the very core of Africa's development crisis. Quoting the words of President Abdou Diouf of Senegal, the World Bank is of the opinion that what Africa requires is not just less government but better government.⁸ Recognizing the urgency of this problem, the World Bank advice the following key measures:

- new and clearer mandates for the public agencies with staff planning based strictly on need;
- staff testing to help select the best qualified candidates and the release of redundant staff with compensation and assistance to enter the private sector;
- better personnel management with competitive entrance examinations and promotions based on merit;
- selective improvements in the pay structure to attract and retain highly qualified staff.

If these measures are to succeed, the international environment must be supportive, and African governments and donors must forge a genuine partnership that builds on all these measures.⁹

The World Bank's policy has its roots in liberal approaches to economic development. A similar view (although according to the analyst himself "fetched straight out of a Marxist textbook") is the one put forward by Göran Hydén in his book "No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in perspective".¹⁰

According to Hydén, African leaders govern under conditions very different from other societies. Because they are placed between, on the one hand, a multitude of small producers whose structural dependence on other social classes for productive and socially reproductive purposes is virtually nil and, on the other hand, owners and agencies of foreign resources, they really operate in a social vacuum. Hence, the dilemma facing African leaders is that because the state is not structurally tied to the society, they are not in a position to exercise systemic power.

With the withdrawal of the colonial "guardian" class who had been able to draw support from their metropolitan base in order to pursue their historical mission and the natural inclination of political leaders in post-independence Africa to reverse things colonial, it is not surprising that the social base of the modern state system has eroded. The state has been left suspended in mid-air without an indigenous, bourgeois class diverse and strong enough to capture the state for its own ends. Thus, the economy of affection and the en-

suings clan politics – or attempts to cope with these – have been the prime determinants of the nature and the role of the state in post-colonial Africa.

As a result, the principal feature of the contemporary African development scene is that the mechanisms which enable a country to grow and develop as a macro-entity are very weakly institutionalized. In this respect, Africa differs from other Third World countries where a social class is in command of society and inclined to press its interest on others. To Hydén (and to Karl Marx) this is an inevitable prerequisite to development.

From this line of reasoning follows that there is an urgent need to strengthen those forces in society which enable the development of a ruling class who is free from the constraints imposed by the present pre-capitalist formations. The only force capable of addressing this issue in a relatively short perspective is the market. The market promotes the rise of a local bourgeoisie, encourages greater effectiveness in the public sector through the diversification of structural mechanisms for development, and promotes behavioural changes throughout society.

The international community can best assist the African countries by facilitating a diversification of institutional structures involved in managing development. Foremost of these measures is a greater attention to market forces. For instance, special incentives may be needed for ethnic groups or regions in order to compete more effectively with those groups who for other reasons start from a more advantageous position. In Hydén's view, it is important that such redistributive measures are not only in the form of more schools and health clinics or in the form of large industrial investments which are economically unfeasible. Instead, these measures must consist of select incentives and support for economically productive initiatives using private or voluntary resources in an organized and concerted fashion.¹¹

3) Central – Local Government

In the late 1970's, increasing criticism of African development performance and the shifts in development thinking from growth to poverty eradication, from big to small projects, from urban to rural development, led to increasing attempts to decentralize what was generally perceived to be highly centralized African administrative systems. Since then, the need to decentralize devel-

opment planning and management has become a recurrent theme in the literature as well as in the plans and policies of assistance agencies.

The assumptions behind this interest in decentralization is that the great majority of African people live in rural areas and nearly all of them depend on farming for their livelihoods. Notwithstanding considerable variation, African countries are urbanizing rapidly as the population pressures in rural areas and the opportunities of city life combine to draw people towards urban areas. But job opportunities in the cities are scarce and cannot meet the demand for employment because insufficient capital can be mobilized for industry and modern manufacturing creates relatively few jobs. This means, simply, that *the great majority of people in Africa must continue to live and work on the land and that, for the predictable future, rural areas must accommodate and provide livelihoods for more, not fewer people.*

The task of rural development presents numerous policy and institutional challenges. Strategies of rural development must aim simultaneously at augmenting economic productivity, increasing income, and expanding public services. *For such a strategy to be feasible, the government must provide opportunities for participation by rural people in decisions which govern their lives.* In this context, local government institutions which have accountability to a local constituency, which represent local interests, and in which local people enjoy opportunities to participate play the most critical role.

A number of scholars have great trust in assumptions like these. Dennis A Rondinelli is one of them. Having observed four East African countries' experiments of decentralization, he notes that the region has had rather poor results in implementing their policies. Many of the problems and difficulties encountered by the various governments have been quite similar. Rondinelli reviews these problems, not only to reveal the constraints under which programs must be carried out, but to suggest conditions that must be established to make decentralization efforts effective.

First, political commitment to decentralization has been relatively shallow, despite strong advocacy of government reform by dominant political leaders. A second obstacle has been the continuing resistance of central government bureaucrats – in both the national ministries and local

administrative units – to decision-making from below. Hence, decentralization policies are weakened by the "centrist attitudes" of many government officials that lead them to scorn participation of rural people in development activities. Third, local administrative units also suffer from serious shortages of trained manpower to carry out the decentralized responsibilities. Fourth, decentralization policies have been undermined by the insistence of central authorities on transferring planning and administrative functions to lower levels without providing sufficient financial resources or adequate legal powers to collect and allocate revenues within local jurisdiction. Finally, all of these problems are aggravated by the lack of physical infrastructure, transport and communication facilities, and the poorly articulated and unintegrated spatial system in African nations.

To Rondinelli, the experience in East Africa suggests that decentralization involves far more than simply declaring a policy of "bottom-up" decision-making, reorganizing the administrative structure and establishing local or district planning procedures. Rather, the ability of African governments to implement decentralization programs depends on the existence of, or the ability to create, a variety of political, administrative, organizational and behavioural conditions, and to provide sufficient resources at the local level to carry out decentralized functions. For example, favourable political and administrative conditions include a strong political commitment, support and acceptance from national leaders as well as within the line agencies of the central bureaucracy. Organizational factors include concise and definitive decentralization laws, regulations and directives that clearly outline the relationships among different levels of government and administration. Behavioural and psychological conditions supporting decentralization include changes in attitudes away from those that are centrist, control-oriented and paternalistic, towards those that support and facilitate decentralized planning and administration.

Now, what can international organizations involved in development assistance do to promote decentralization in African countries? According to Rondinelli, there is probably little that aid-giving agencies can do to influence governments that do not want to decentralize because, ultimately, the structure of government within a country is an internal political matter. Interna-

tional agencies can only make known the potential benefits of decentralization for achieving more equitable development. Nor should international agencies see – and sell – decentralization as a panacea for all of the weaknesses in planning and management in developing countries or as an inevitable stimulant or rural development.

At the same time, there is a great deal that aid agencies can do to assist those governments that are pursuing a policy of decentralization. These include: helping to strengthen national political commitment and central government administrative support for decentralization; providing technical and financial assistance in the design and organization of effective decentralization programs and procedures; assisting in building managerial and financial capacity within local units, and; providing technical and financial aid in creating the physical, spatial and organizational infrastructure needed for "bottom-up" development planning. Finally, much remains to be learned about the role of decentralization in stimulating development. International organizations must monitor the progress of nations adopting decentralized planning and administrative procedures as well as evaluating their effectiveness in expanding the participation of the poorest groups in the development process.¹¹

The Socio-Cultural Approach

A third and less common way of thinking about administrative transfer appeared in the late 1970's. Here, the emphasis is on the understanding and appreciation of the socio-cultural conditions and traditions which make up the context of public administrative practices and ideas.

The basic assumption behind this view is that management is not principally a matter of skill and techniques, a sort of high level craft tradition that can be taught in any socio-cultural context and hence subject to export. In defining management it is therefore important to make a distinction between techniques and administrative culture (viewed as a supportive socio-cultural system which is the outcome of a long process of informal work socialization and the interaction of complex administrative structures). Techniques are readily packed and, hence, subject to transfer by training. However, *all administrative techniques operate in specific cultural settings with which they are in continuous interaction*. In this sense, administrative action and behaviour are

usually determined not by the techniques, but rather by their manner of employment within the larger context of administrative culture. From this follows that *the surrounding administrative culture is just as vital to successful management as are the specific management techniques, if not more vital.*

The most recognized contribution here is probably Jon Moris' analysis of the transferability of Western management traditions to East Africa. In comparing Western administrative assumptions with those prevalent in Africa, Moris notices that there is an emerging consensus among Western observers about the diagnostic features of African administration which appear problematic from the standpoint of managerial efficiency. However, some of the distinctive features which to outsiders epitomize bureaucratic inefficiency, may appear as perfectly adequate in their local context. For example, African social systems tend to give greater primacy to human relationships – their expression, quality, importance and permanence – so that to individuals reared in such systems the arbitrary, organization-serving intent of Western predispositions seems extreme. It takes only a brief acquaintance with Western management to realize that operation in accordance with a greater primacy to human relationship will entail substantial private costs, and a willingness to continuously adjust personal preferences and relationships to fit the system. Even within the industrial nations, the administrative system could hardly function if very many people refused to accept the monetary value of time, did not observe arbitrary schedules, or diverted tied resources to meet urgent but unplanned needs; all behaviours which in an African context might be desirable and rewarding.

Moris' argument is that many of the weaknesses, as observed by Western analysts, prevalent in African bureaucracies tell as much about the expectations of the analyst as they do about the situation portrayed. The "weaknesses" are weaknesses only from the standpoint of the peculiar assumptions which underline administrative effectiveness within the Western management tradition. Viewed as functional prerequisites in a social system, these same weaknesses might become organizational strengths which help to explain the extraordinarily persistence of African bureaucratic forms under adverse conditions.

The prospects for achieving an effective transfer of Western managerial practice into such a dif-

ferent administrative system appear slim. For, according to Moris, the majority of African administrative "weaknesses" are of systemic origin. The administrative system itself is capable of rendering almost any input (whether trained staff, new equipment, sensible policies, or fresh techniques) ineffective. More specifically, deeply rooted attitudes towards authority and assumptions about communication tend to negate the intended impact of many Western managerial innovations. This suggests that at a minimum, future attempts to promote the transfer of Western managerial practice into African contexts should start from an inside understanding of how these systems actually work.¹³

Based upon an investigation on managerial thinking in Malawi, Merrick Jones is reasoning along similar lines. His argument is that strategies and methods used to educate and train African managers have generally been based on Western theories and practices with little, if any, consideration of the environments in which African organizations function. The adoption of these formal Western theories and practices tend to cause tensions and conflicts for African managers. Hence, the use of transferred administrative knowledge depends to a large extent on the acceptance of the "world view" and values which are its socio-cultural foundation.

Jones provides several examples of the tensions and problems which can occur when Western management ideas and practices are transplanted into a non-Western environment. There is, for instance, the apparent contradiction that most African countries are newly independent nations in the process of rapid change. Yet, the organizations which are to be instrumental in bringing about and managing change are generally bureaucratic, rigid and rule-bound. On the level of managerial motivation there is another apparent contradiction; African managers reflect in many aspects of their thinking African traditional, communalistic values, yet they stress the importance of their needs for autonomy and self-actualization at work.

What appears to a Western observer of African organizations to be irrational on closer examination can be seen to reflect a set of values which are different from, but no less valid than, those of the West. For this reason, Jones finds that it would be unrealistic and inappropriate to advance prescriptive proposals for changing the existing realities of African organizational life. In-

stead, it is important to recognize that the use of Western administrative techniques cannot be assumed to guarantee any anticipated outcome. African managers will need to reflect on experiences, since independence, and to identify the particular factors which have influenced success or failure. There is also a need to acknowledge the collectivist values which inhere in contemporary African society and to consider which Western management practices and techniques might tend to contradict them. Similar considerations apply to teaching African managers about the benefits claimed, in the Western context, for delegation of authority, sharing of information and a generally more participative management style. Such practices can be seen to contradict many African social values, and have little change at present of successful adoption.

Finally, just as Western management ideas must be critically examined in the light of the African socio-cultural realities, Western notions concerning the education and training of managers have to be understood in terms of the assumptions they make about people and the values which influence them.¹⁴

SIDA's Public Sector Aid: Guidelines and Theoretical Framework

The focus of this essay is the development of thinking that has occurred in connection with the transfer of Western public administration to developing countries. As stated initially, my concern in this endeavour is to bring forth and explore the theoretical assumptions about the role of public administration in development underlying SIDA's public sector aid. This is what I intend to do in this section. In the following chapter, I will discuss these assumptions in relation to the international literature on the subject, which I have just reviewed.

SIDA's public sector support is concentrated on a number of African countries with which Sweden has a long and well-established development co-operation. Presently, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Tanzania, Mocambique, and to a lesser extent, Botswana, Kenya, Cape Verde, Guiné-Bissau, Angola, and Sao Tomé/Príncipe, are receiving this type of assistance.

Over the past few years, SIDA has expanded its support to the public sector greatly. From an early stage, technical assistance to the public administration constituted part of Swedish development assistance, but during the second half of

the 1970's a more systematic assistance to the public sector was developed. The expansion which has taken place since then has meant moving away from technical assistance which main purpose was to meet the more immediate need for qualified staff, to a more multi-faceted institutional co-operation aiming to minimize administrative problems and shortcomings.

Before, SIDA took the attitude that "the country must decide for itself", but at the same time it was clear that SIDA is a government body with its own guiding principles, i.e. the five Swedish goals for development co-operation. This made SIDA realize that it had a weak basis on which to identify projects, choose among proposals for support, select priority areas for engagement, or dialogue with co-operation partners on possible administration development strategies. The expansion of public sector support has also made SIDA more concerned to understand directly the alternative consequences of supporting, or not supporting, one kind of programme against another, and to put its own position on the agenda. Since 1987, work is therefore under way to develop further the theoretical foundations for assistance in this field.¹⁵

In the following, I will use two sources. The document "Guidelines for Assistance to the Development of Public Administration" constitutes SIDA's official guidelines for support in this field.¹⁶ It fulfills mainly a practical, operational function and, naturally, does not contain any theoretical analysis. My second source has a more theoretical character and constitutes the latest stage in SIDA's attempts to develop its theoretical foundations for public sector aid.¹⁷ It should be noted, though, that this second source is still in draft and that SIDA, at this stage, consider itself to be guided and not bound by the principles and policy statements set forth in that document.

In general, SIDA regards aid as a way of increasing the capacity and efficiency of public administration in developing countries as not only well motivated, but indeed crucial. SIDA's assistance in this context aims at enabling governments to reform, improve, and perfect the existing systems, instruments and structures of government, execute policies and programmes more effectively.

SIDA's public sector assistance is concentrated on certain selected countries in Africa with which Sweden has well-established development co-operation programmes. The assistance is concen-

trated to certain fields of knowledge, the main fields being financial management, statistics, and public service training. Apart from these fields, SIDA is also engaged in debt management, administration of taxation and population registration, as well as decentralization and development of local government structures. These fields have been chosen partly on account of their strategic importance and partly because there are Swedish institutions suited for and interested in co-operation with developing countries in these fields.

Assistance to public administration is characterized by a large proportion of transfer of knowledge and development of competence, and for practical reasons it is therefore natural that Swedish experience and knowledge is used. SIDA recognizes that Swedish administrative solutions or models may not be transplanted directly to the administrative environments which are the results of radically different conditions and different historical backgrounds. However, it is still believed that Swedish models may be adapted to local conditions in certain fields and that Swedish experience can be used.¹⁸

Although the terms and conditions of Swedish aid have always been comparatively liberal seen in relation to the aid programmes of most other donors, SIDA's public sector aid must still be said to be conditional. In order to gain support, the recipient countries must formulate their policies and programmes in accordance with the basic principles for development aid, decided upon by SIDA and the Swedish parliament. Hence, support is offered in contexts where it: 1) contributes to economic growth; 2) develops economic and social equality; 3) furthers the democratization of society; 4) strengthens political and economic independence; and, 5) assists in environmental protection.¹⁹

In connection to these general objectives for Swedish development co-operation, some more specific guidelines for public sector support have also been derived. Such support should be concentrated towards public administration development activities which aim at:

- democratizing the structures and procedures of government;
- increases the accessibility and accountability of the public sector to the people;
- ensuring that government services reach out more broadly, more equitably, and more openly, to increase the well-being and participation of the people;

- improving the efficiency and effectiveness of government programmes and activities.²⁰

In its "quality of interaction" point between citizens and the state, *local government has been given a priority status* by SIDA for public sector support. *SIDA thus considers that decentralization of government can be an important step towards the achievement of the aims and guidelines for Swedish public sector assistance.* In principle, therefore, support is provided to programmes which enhance citizen participation in the making and implementation of development and/or improvement of representative, democratic, and accountable local government.²¹

SIDA recognizes that not all institutions within a country's public sector may contribute to fulfilling the policy objectives for Swedish development assistance, even though the policies of the country in general do so. On the other hand, some institutions may in fact contribute to the fulfilment of Swedish aid policies, even though the general development policies of the country do not do so. By strengthening some authorities or institutions, Swedish aid contributes to changing resource relations between authorities and institutions and, in the long run, also power relations. To SIDA it is therefore important to make clear, ahead of time, which institutions will be strengthened and how the work of those institutions is related to the objectives of Swedish development assistance.²²

To a large extent, SIDA organizes its public sector support as institutional co-operation between a Swedish institution and a corresponding institution in the recipient country. Here, it is important that the two institutions have a similar area of responsibility, comparable corporate skills, and thus a compatible working knowledge. SIDA assigns to the co-operating institutions broad contractual and implementative responsibility. Co-operating Swedish institutions then act as catalysers and supporters of change, in the context of a process controlled by the counterpart institution in the country concerned. Within this context, it is important that the Swedish contracted administrators ensure that they learn from their counterparts, evaluate existing achievements, and, most important, make their knowledge and experience applicable in the given local context.²³

According to SIDA, the emphasis within public sector assistance is above all that of *contextualization; each country presents a specific, real, so-*

cio-cultural, political-economic conjuncture in time, and support to the public sector must be sensitive to that reality.

An important aspect of this principle of contextualization is the fact that cultural conflicts easily arise in the context of administrative modernization, as this impacts directly on peoples' political life, relations and values. For example, government leaders in developing countries may propose modernizing administrative reforms which are based in the primacy of a set of values such as punctuality, individual initiative, prior loyalty to the employing organization, promotion by merit, efficiency, and individual responsibility. These values then conflict with other widely held values in the society, such as prior loyalty to the family, collective execution, centralization of decision making authority in the eldest, and so on. SIDA thus recognizes that cultural conflicts often lie behind apparently "ineffective" management, i. e., the management being done promotes other ends than the alleged ones. Such conflicts can be aggravated by the external involvement through aids programmes. On the one hand, the co-operating partners may not observe the conflicts or understanding the issues involved. They may, unwittingly or deliberately, take sides. On the other hand, the co-operators bring their own values, priorities, and issues into the arena. Hence, SIDA recognizes that foreign value systems will thus inevitably mark programmes of external support, but it is still believed that such ethnocentric perspectives usually fade away with increasing experience.²⁴

4. SIDA and the Approaches to Development Administration

Something of Everything?

Public organizations and management in the Third World have since long gained recognition by scholars of public administration, so much that a specialized branch of the administrative sciences – Development Administration – has emerged and a large amount of literature has been published. In this essay I have examined this literature. More specifically, I have sorted out the kinds of advice that have been forthcoming in the literature about desirable directions of change and how these changes might be realized through external assistance. I have also attempted to bring forth and explore the theoretical assumptions underlying SIDA's public sector

aid in order to be able to relate SIDA's preferred approach to the international thinking on the subject. The results from this endeavour is summarized in the chart on the following page.

As can be seen from this chart, SIDA has been included in two of the three identified approaches. What strikes one, though, when first trying to get an apprehension of how SIDA is reasoning in this context is that its theoretical assumptions seem to fit more or less into all the three approaches.

Firstly, SIDA regards public sector aid to African countries as being not only well motivated, but indeed crucial. SIDA has also pre-selected certain fields of knowledge (financial management, statistics, public service training, debt management, administration of taxes, etc), which it finds to be of strategic importance in administrative development. There is also a strong belief that Swedish administrative models and solutions may be subject to transfer, perhaps not in toto, but selectively and with some adaptation. These assumptions would suggest that SIDA could be considered to be going about the task of providing public sector assistance along the lines of the Standard Technical Assistance Approach, although the views of this approach are not all that well pronounced.

Secondly, although the terms and conditions of Swedish aid have always been comparatively liberal seen in relation to the aid programmes of other donors, SIDA's public sector aid can still be said to be conditional and, hence, tending towards the Structural Alteration Approach. The potential receivers of public sector aid must formulate their policies and programmes in accordance with the five Swedish goals for development co-operation. More important, SIDA seems to be well aware that its support may contribute to changing power relations between public institutions in the recipient country. In order for such a change to comply with the five development co-operation goals, SIDA finds it very important to make clear, ahead of time, what institutions will in fact be strengthened and what institutions will not.

Thirdly, I have also found reasons to believe that SIDA attempts at providing its public sector aid in line with the assumptions of the Socio-Cultural Approach. My argument here is the great emphasis SIDA puts on something called "the principle of contextualization". SIDA thus realizes that each country presents a specific so-

Standard Technical Assistance Approach

Western administrative principles are ipso facto efficient and desirable. Hence, they can and should be transferred to the Third World without taking into consideration the prevailing political and economic structures of the recipient country.

(Braibanti, Esman, "the theory of development administration"; roughly 1950-1970)

Structural Alteration Approach

Public sector aid must take into consideration and have influence on the political-economic structures of the recipient country.

1) The power position of the bureaucracy vis-a-vis other state institutions is abnormal and it is the absence of balance that causes the inefficiency. External assistance should therefore aim at curtailing bureaucratic expansion and simultaneously to build up political institutions. (Riggs, LaPalombara; early 1970's).

2) The institutions of the state control too much economic activity which result in inefficiency. The role of the state should therefore be tailored to a minimum while external aid should give greater attention to market forces. (World Bank, Hydén; mid - late 1980's).

3) The great majority of African people live in rural areas and must continue to do so for the predictable future. External aid should therefore support the development/strengthening of local government institutions in which rural people can participate in decisions which govern their lives. (Rondinelli; early 1980's).

SIDA:

The desired administrative change must comply with the five Swedish development co-operation goals. It is therefore important to make clear, ahead of time, what institutions should in fact be strengthened and what should not, since the public sector support may be contribute to changing power relations between public institutions in the recipient country. In this context, the support of local government is given a priority status.

Socio-Cultural Approach

Public administration is not principally a matter of skill and techniques. All administrative techniques also operate in specific cultural settings with which they interact. Techniques which are efficient in the West do not necessarily turn out to be efficient in Africa, and inefficient administrative practices in Africa (as observed by outsiders) may be perfectly adequate in their local context. If the transfer of public administration do not take socio-cultural factors into consideration, the prospects for effective transfer are slim. (Moris, Jones; mid 1970's - late 1980's).

SIDA:

Each country presents a specific socio-cultural and political-economic conjuncture in time, and public sector aid must be sensitive to that reality. Based upon the principle of contextualization, the Swedish contracted institution should act as catalyser and supporter of change in administrative process controlled by the counterpart in the recipient country.

cio-cultural and political-economic conjuncture in time, and that, therefore, the public sector aid must be sensitive to that reality.

Now, even though at first sight it might look as if SIDA's preferred strategy for public sector support fits more or less into all approaches, it is also quite apparent that there are two things which SIDA undoubtedly stresses more than others, i.e. local government reform and "the principle of contextualization". Hence, I believe SIDA provides its public sector aid according to both the Structural Alteration Approach and the Socio-Cultural Approach, even though the first of these latter approaches might be a bit more pronounced in the documents I have consulted.

How then does SIDA envisage that local government reform is supported, and how is the principle of contextualization to be realized?

In order to assist in the development of policies and in the implementation of local government reform, SIDA supports a process of policy dialogue and pilot activities. Preference is given to programmes which begin with an analysis of local needs and capacities, and which transfer in stages concrete government powers, functions, responsibilities, and resources to locally accountable public bodies. In this regard, SIDA could demand that a general decentralization reform be preceded by a series of representative pilot programmes. Support to local government reform could also take the form of helping to remove obstacles, inter alia through providing basic equipment, and/or assisting in the training of local politicians and officials. SIDA envisages that this kind of technical assistance should take institutional co-operation forms and concentrate on the development of general governing and administrative capacity, notably as regards financial administration and physical planning.²⁵

Despite the fact that the principle of contextualization is given a high priority, it is not clearly stated in any of the two documents I have consulted exactly *how* it should be realized. As I interpret these documents, it is through the work methods normally employed by SIDA – institutional co-operation – that this the principle of contextualization is to be realized. Within the institutional co-operation, the consultant Swedish institution is to act as catalyser and supporter of change while the counterpart in the recipient country is to be in control of what change is actually taking place. Here, it seems to be up to the two counterparts to make sure that the Swedish

models, practices and ideas are made applicable in the given local context. For the contracted Swedish administrator to do that, SIDA invests in language training and other training programmes about the issues and values involved in assisting a particular partner country. Furthermore, SIDA operates its public sector assistance on rather long-term basis and one of the reasons for this is that, with the passage of time, the Swedish administrators is expected to get a better understanding of the local socio-cultural setting.²⁶

Finally

Having reviewed the literature on development administration, including SIDA's work on the subject, it seems to me that (with a few exceptions) all contributions appear to share a naive faith in the rationality of transferring the organizational and the behavioural practices of the Western world to developing countries.

In the earlier mode of thinking, this faith is rather evident. It is assumed that whatever methods the industrialized nations use, these can be taught and transferred. What is more, it seems to be assumed that demonstrating how to set up and manage public institutions would automatically carry with it the will to make such new systems work in a practical way. In the various contributions of the Structural Alteration Approach, this faith is more vague. It might be that consideration is given to the prevailing political-economic configuration of the recipient country, but the final aim of this approach is nevertheless to alter these prevailing structures to better match the political-economic systems of the industrialized nations in the West. On this point, SIDA is a bit indistinct. On the one hand, the principle of contextualization is given high priority. On the other hand, the recipient countries must formulate their policies and programmes in accordance with the goals and principles decided upon by SIDA and the Swedish parliament, and these goals and principles have their roots in Swedish models and solutions.

However, what I am arguing against is not the use of Swedish models and solutions in SIDA's public sector assistance. Such use is probably very natural, for what else than Swedish administrative models and solutions could Sweden offer? The point I want to make is that even though one could accept the view that external influences *could* help to shape the role played by the bureaucracies in developing countries, it is too eas-

ily assumed that external influences *can* shape the organization and behaviour of these bureaucracies. It seems to me that remarkably little attention has been given to considerations of cultural values that may place limits on exogenous attempts to improve the performance of the public sector in developing countries.

Let me give an example. In most Western countries we find a bureaucracy based on the principles of formalism, officialdom and neutrality (impersonal relationships, cult of the written word, etc), efficiency and performance. In developing countries, we find local people who are used to the warmth of human relationships and informal, live, oral, "person-to-person" communication and who attach the greatest importance to social and cultural aspects of life that transcend quantitative or monetary expression. At the same time, one is struck by the rapid growth in these societies of what appear to be formal organizations set up on the Western model; political parties, legislatures, governmental agencies, private and public corporations, trade unions, and professional associations. In fact, one could even argue that the formal set-up of the Western model is even more prominent in developing countries. Yet, closer scrutiny often reveals the ineffectual character of these bodies. Although they might look like Western public organizations, they do not behave as we expect such organizations to behave. Many formally administrative structures in developing countries may in fact turn out to be mere facades, while the effective administrative work remains a latent function of older, more diffused institutions.

By this example, I do not wish to say that our administrative principles are universally irrelevant to governments in the Third World. Quite the contrary, I believe they might be quite relevant to some of these polities. But I do think that there are some cultural characteristics of the political systems in these countries which seriously restrict the relevance of using Western administrative practices and ideas. For, as Jon Moris has pointed out, the socio-cultural environment of the administrative system is capable of rendering almost any input ineffective.²⁷ Deeply rooted cultural values about politics and administration tend to affect, if not negate, the intended impact of many Western managerial principles. And unless public sector aid is designed to take account of the prevailing political-administrative cultural environment within which the bureaucracy func-

tions, it is likely to fall far short of its potential effectiveness.

Through the principle of contextualization, SIDA seems to be well aware of the importance of culture; i. e. training programmes about the issues and values involved in assisting a particular country, the method of institutional co-operation, as well as the long-term basis of public sector assistance. SIDA is also prepared to increase its knowledge about culture through the financing of research on organizational culture and management constraints in developing countries.²⁸ However, what I would also suggest is that in the effort to assist these countries, SIDA should also critically examine the cultural values underlying the *Swedish* administrative models and ideas that constitute the objects of transfer. By adopting the attitude of a cultural stranger, perhaps we would see our own public administrative organizations and behaviour in a refreshingly new perspective?

Notes

- ¹ Gant (1979), p7.
- ² In this effort I acknowledge my reliance on Ferrel Heady's review essay of some works concerned with the role of government in the development process. To some extent, my classification parallels his. See Heady in Riggs (1971), pp 459-537.
- ³ Braibanti (1965).
- ⁴ Esman in Riggs (1971), pp 41-71. It should be noted, though, that Milton Esman has also advocated decentralization as a strategy for administrative development. See for example Uphof and Esman (1974).
- ⁵ Riggs (1971), pp 73-108.
- ⁶ LaPalombara (1965).
- ⁷ Havnevik (1987), pp 10-13.
- ⁸ World Bank (1989), chapter 2.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Hydén (1983).
- ¹¹ Ibid, pp 57-79, 207-213.
- ¹² Rondinelli (1981), pp 133-145.
- ¹³ Moris (1977), pp 50-85.
- ¹⁴ Jones (1986), pp 202-216.
- ¹⁵ Interview with Mr Per Lundell, SIDA.
- ¹⁶ SIDA (1987).
- ¹⁷ SIDA (1989).
- ¹⁸ SIDA (1987), pp 19-20.
- ¹⁹ SIDA (1989), p 4.
- ²⁰ Ibid, p 5.
- ²¹ Ibid, pp 84-88.
- ²² SIDA (1987), p 10.
- ²³ SIDA (1989), p 10.
- ²⁴ Ibid, pp 11-12.
- ²⁵ Ibid, pp 84-88.

²⁶ Ibid, pp 11–12.

²⁷ Moris (1977), p 62.

²⁸ SIDA (1989), p 29.

References

- Braibanti, Ralph: "Administrative Reform in the Context of Political Growth", *Symposium on Research Needs Regarding the Development of Administrative Capacities in Emerging Countries*, Washington DC, Brookings Institute 1965.
- Esman, Milton J: "CAG and the Study of Public Administration", in Riggs (1971).
- Gant, George: *Development Administration: Concepts, Goals, Methods*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press 1979.
- Havnevik, Kjell (ed): *The IMF and the World Bank in Africa*, Uppsala, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1987.
- Hydén, Göran: *No Shortcuts to Progress*, London, Heinemann Educational Books 1983.
- Jones, Merrick: "Management Development: An African Focus", in *Management Education and Development*, vol 17/1986.
- LaPalombara, Joseph: "Alternative Strategies for Developing Administrative Capacities in Emerging Nations", in *Symposium on Research Needs Regarding the Development of Administrative Capacities in Emerging Nations*, Washington DC, Brookings Institute 1965.
- Moris, Jon: "The Transferability of Western Management Tradition into the Public Service: an East African Perspective", in *Management Education in East Africa: Prospects and Appraisals*, Arusha, East African Management Institute 1977.
- Riggs, Fred W (ed): *Frontiers of Development Administration*, Kingsport. Duke University Press 1971.
- Rondinelli, Dennis: "Government Decentralization in a Comparative Perspective: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries", in *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, no 2/1981, pp 133–145.
- SIDA: *Guidelines for Assistance to the Development of Public Administration*, Stockholm, SIDA 1987.
- SIDA: *Draft. Framework and Guidelines for SIDA Support to Public Administration Development*, Stockholm, SIDA 1989.
- World Bank: *From Crisis to Sustainable Growth*, New York, The World Bank 1989.