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INSTITUTION BUILDING MODELS AND PROJECT OPERATIONS

by

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INSTITUTION BUILDING MODELS AND PROJECT OPERATIONS<sup>1/</sup>

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The purpose of this paper is to relate basic constructs of institution building models to pragmatic problems encountered in the operation of technical assistance projects designed to bring about institutional change. The frame of reference is one of a public institution in a developing nation to which there has been appended a technical assistance project having as its explicit objective the creation of change in the indigenous institution. The analysis and discussion which follow relate to this specific situation; however, there exists a broader spectrum of social change phenomena to which certain of the conclusions, insights and inferences may apply.

The Milieu

Clarity dictates reference to the contemporary milieu in which the problem exists. The central issue is the widespread concern with and concerted drive for accelerated rates of economic development and social progress among nations which, for one reason or another, have lagged behind. A corollary issue consists of enlightened bi-national and

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multi-national cooperation in efforts designed to bring about social and economic change.

Some 20 years of international experimentation have yielded valuable insights into the nature of these phenomena. One such is of central concern to all that which follows. This is that there exist some minimal number and kind of public institutions necessary to but not sufficient for the creation of a modern and acceptably affluent society. The institutional infrastructure in virtually all backward nations is inadequate for development and sustained growth. Attainment of development objectives necessitates systematic change in existing institutions and/or the creation of new institutions.

A second basic element consists of the nature and scope of outside technical assistance to the developing nations. Analysis of this phenomenon indicates two things of particular relevance.

One is the simple relationship between the magnitude of technical assistance resources available, for all purposes and from all sources, and the magnitude of the modernization task facing the developing nations. The former is so small relative to the latter that it must be considered marginal. The scarcity of technical assistance resources limits greatly their rational and effective application in direct assaults on many problems impeding the growth of the disadvantaged nations.

A second characteristic of outside technical assistance is its unacceptability as a direct input into the resolution of certain policy issues of host nations. Even where possible, there remain ethical questions which should and do limit the utilization of outside expertise in certain sensitive areas.

For these and other reasons, enlightened technical assistance efforts tend to be concentrated on activities which are acceptable to host nations

and which have large, long-run payoff potential and significant multiplier effects. It turns out that many of the most promising opportunities rest with innovative change in public institutions.

It is not entirely by chance that a sizable fraction of international technical assistance efforts have consisted, wholly or in part, of institution building activities. From these efforts have evolved two things of importance. One is an extensive backlog of pragmatic experience with "projects" designed to bring about institutional change. The second is a substantive and expanding body of "theory" describing and explaining the institutional development process.

Unfortunately, "theory" and "practice" have not interacted as much as they might have. The practice of institution building has suffered from lack of conceptual guidelines; theory has suffered from inadequate testing against reality and subsequent reformulation and extension. Given the importance of institution building as a vehicle for technical assistance to the developing world, it is imperative that these shortcomings are not repeated.

The discussion which follows should be pursued with this conceptual gap clearly in mind. Specifically, it is concerned with the day-to-day operation of an institutional development project. It assumes an "outside" technical assistance group to be in place. This group, along with formal and informal participants from the host institution, constitute the project "staff". The project was created for the specific purpose of bringing about positive change in the host institution. The project is assumed to have finite life. It exists at the request of the host institution; it is appended to it in rather loose fashion. Project resources are marginal relative to the host institution's total resource base. The central task is to identify ways in which institution building models

might be useful in the highly dynamic process of operating a project of this type.<sup>3/</sup>

### Recognition and Acceptance of Project Objectives

Institution building is one specific approach, among several, to social change. It is concerned with deliberate, guided, induced change. It treats of innovation, not of the transfer of technology. This definitional concept holds a series of implications significant to project operations.

Conceptually, the objective of the project is single-valued. The only excuse for the existence of the project is to induce change in the host institution. The objective is taken to be completely specified. This is to say that the kinds of changes desired are known or can be determined with an operationally acceptable degree of accuracy.

These points hold highly significant implications for project operations. Success mandates that all parties important to the operation be brought to recognize and accept the project for what it is. This includes cooperating institutions, project leadership and project staff. Such recognition and acceptance by others, both individuals and institutions, exogenous but important to the host institution may be equally important.

Given the single-valued nature of a project's objective, it follows that all project activities must be directed toward this end; all resources available to the project must be allocated and utilized for this purpose. Further, project management must be capable of selecting the particular

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<sup>3/</sup> In fairness to theoretical models and to their authors, it must be noted that no claim is made to their being a set of operational guidelines for practitioners.

set of activities which will contribute most to the inducement of change and attainment of the specified end. Similarly, available resources must be allocated in the specific way which will maximize progress toward the project's single objective. To be sure, other outputs may result from project activities; such by-products are admissible only to the extent that they are complementary to and not competitive with the project's objective.

In the abstract, the case is clear. In the ever-changing, dynamic world of project operation, life is not so simple. It is not often that all parties involved hold a clear-cut, single-valued view of what the project is all about. Further, the actors important to the project, both within and without, keep changing. Not often is there unanimity with respect to the kind and degree of institutional change desired; seldom, if ever, is such articulated or articulable. The outcomes of alternative courses of individual or group action are seldom known with certainty nor is a probability distribution of possible outcomes easy to come by.

Herein rest some of the fundamental reasons for difficulties associated with institution building projects. Experience is replete with examples. A well-known classic illustrates the difficulty of obtaining complete understanding of the nature of a project. One of the early institution building projects involved a technical assistance group from a U.S. university assigned to a developing university abroad. Great pains were taken to assure complete understanding of the project's purpose. Among other things, it was billed as a pilot project. Understanding was thought complete. Great consternation reigned when the most persistent question faced by the newly arrived U.S. university team

team dealt with the most probable date upon which the airplanes would arrive!

Rapid personnel turnover, especially in leadership roles, is a much-documented characteristic of public institutions in the developing nations. The "two-year assignment" is one of the better known syndromes of U.S. and other technical assistance efforts. One needs but read a sample of reports by "expert" study teams, evaluation teams and planning teams dealing with a single institution to appreciate the difficulty of establishing ends and means-ends relationships in institutional development activities. Participating in indigenous staff or faculty meetings dealing with this same set of issues leads to the same conclusion.

Despite the above, the contributions of theory to project operations, on this point, are significant. It points up the importance of establishing and maintaining the "right" concept of the project's objective. It suggests that the project must continuously remind and educate itself and others important to its success of its reason for being. It must establish choice criteria based squarely on this reason and a decision-making mechanism which will make these criteria operational. The project, in both the individual and corporate sense, must exercise constant surveillance over its activities and over the allocation of its resources to assure maximum progress toward the established end, no matter how imperfectly perceived this end might be. It must evolve an evaluation mechanism which will accurately reflect the degree of coincidence between plans and realized events. Effective utilization of these concepts by practitioners would yield substantive increases in efficiency and productivity.

Risk, Uncertainty and Project Management

Institution building theory explicitly recognizes the institutional development process as being dynamic and operating in an environment of imperfect knowledge. Established models, however, are essentially static and provide few guidelines directly applicable to the dynamic process of operating a project. They do, however, provide a basis for a number of inferences of significance.

The prime contribution, here, is articulation of the fact that institution building projects operate under conditions of highly imperfect knowledge, risk and uncertainty. Attainment of the project's objective necessitates a decision-making unit capable of making "right" managerial decisions under situations of imperfect knowledge. The management function must be applied systematically and continuously to project operations. Decisions made and plans elaborated prior to the initiation of project activities can be no better than the highly imperfect knowledge and set of expectations upon which they were based. They are subject to an extremely high rate of obsolescence engendered by change in the host institution's environment. Projects will be successful only to the degree that there is freedom for managerial decision-making and action-taking and to the extent that the project's management element is competent to learn, analyze, decide and act in meaningful fashion.

Managing an institutional development project is a highly complicated affair. It may well constitute one of the most difficult management situations of all. Let us examine, briefly, what is involved.

### Identification of Required Institutional Changes

In the pure case, the project's objective is taken as the single one of changing the host institution, including necessary elements of its environment. The first responsibility of project management, then, is to determine the nature and degree of change required. This involves determination of both "what ought to exist" and "what does, in fact, exist". Such determination must be accurate enough and specific enough to give the project its fundamental sense of direction, to serve as a basis for resource allocation decisions and to permit evaluation of the degree to which project resources are appropriately utilized.

In theory, this is reasonably straightforward; in practice, it is most troublesome. Determining what ought be the role of the host institution in the life of its society presumes knowledge of goals and desires of the nation and the way in which the host institution must participate if such are to be attained. While simplistic assumptions about economic development and social progress goals are helpful in this respect, reality dictates recognition of the fact that societal goals are always far more pluralistic and that the weights associated with the multiplicity of goals of a society can seldom, if ever, be determined with any degree of accuracy. The situation is further complicated by the fact that neither societal goals nor their associated weights remain constant through time. They wax and wane and, at times, appear to be akin to the vagaries of the weather.

Most public institutions contribute, or have the opportunity to contribute, in a multiplicity of ways to the public good. Relationships between alternative institutional activities and the attainment of societal goals are difficult to establish with any degree of accuracy

or certainty. Yet, knowledge of such relationships is essential to the determination of the optimal role of the institution. It simply is not possible to define adequately "what ought to be" without in-depth knowledge of these relationships and of their changing character through time.

The other side of this particular coin consists of current, comprehensive and sufficiently accurate knowledge about "what exists". This is to say that the project must be knowledgeable about all relevant aspects of the host institution's current operations and the way in which these relate to the larger society. While this tends to be somewhat easier and more concrete than the former, it still poses problems of important magnitude. Included here are problems associated with identification and measurement of the relevant variables and relationships. Many of the more important variables turn out to be difficult or impossible to quantify. The process is confounded by the facts that institutions are constantly changing and that successful project operations accelerate internal change.

Despite the complexity of the situation and the difficulty of determining "what exists" and "what ought to exist", there is no way for responsible project management to avoid the issue. Implications for effective project operation are clear. First, information of this type constitutes the fundamental basis for determining the substantive nature of the project's program and for evaluating, through time, the rate at which the project is progressing toward its goal. Second, maintenance of an adequate state of knowledge about these matters will be neither automatic nor costless. Effective project management necessitates a specific, built-in mechanism for learning. This mechanism must be capable of systematically seeking out and providing the managerial

component of the project with usable information on all variables and relationships relevant to the development of the institution. In this respect, institution building theory does provide guidelines about the broad groupings of essential information. These tend to lack sufficient specificity to be as useful in project operations as might be desired. Third, availability of information, alone, is not enough. There must also be a mechanism for careful and systematic analysis of such information. The objective of the analysis, of course, is to provide the project with an accurate, up-to-date picture of the dimensions of the problem that it has set out to resolve and to measure its accomplishments through time. When the "gap" between "what is" and "what ought to be" disappears, the project may, in good conscience, fold its tent and quietly steal away!

Operationally, the problem of problem identification in the institution building context is of major concern. In all probability, it has been one of the great stumbling blocks to successful project operation. Some groups have correctly recognized the issue but, lacking the tools to confront it meaningfully, have ignored it and/or circumvented it through the adoption of easy conventions. In a fundamental way, this explains the oft-noted and seldom-justified tendency for projects to impose the doctrine, program and structure of their home institutions, or other equally non-relevant ones, on the host institution. Others have struggled with the issue in forthright manner but have been severely handicapped by lack of conceptual guidance, appropriate empirical tools and the resources to do the job well. For the same reason, certain attempts at project evaluation and determination of institutional maturity have been quite barren. It is this issue which constitutes the foundation of the

often-demanded but rarely-comprehended clamor for projects to have a research component capable of "researching the environment" of the host institution. This is not a question of desiring to generate information for information's sake; it is an absolute essential to effective project operation.

#### Management of Project Resources

In a similar but somewhat different vein, institution building models provide insight into another highly important aspect of project operations. They focus on resources and on programs. In the present context, the institution building project has a bundle of resources at its command. It must decide on a course of action or program which will maximize the project's contribution to change in the host institution. Alternative courses of action are available. Some are more productive than others. All are shrouded in risk and uncertainty. The project must select the particular program which will have the greatest payoff.

The inference is straightforward. The project must have a managerial component capable of allocating its resources in optimal fashion. The decision-making process must involve a problem identification function; i.e., a means of knowing when project resources are not being utilized appropriately. It must have a memory and a learning function; i.e., a means of capitalizing on past errors and successes and of obtaining new information about all variables and relationships relevant to decisions affecting allocation and utilization of the project's resources. It must have an analytical component, including useful analytical models, capable of utilizing objectively information available to it. It must possess a set of decision criteria to serve as choice indicators among alternative courses of action.

Existing institution building models provide some broad framework for learning and analysis and suggest appropriate decision criteria. These are not yet developed to the point where they are adequate to the analytical and decision-making requirements of an institutional development project. It would be extremely useful to extend the models in these functional directions.

The project must have specific provision for operational decision-making and action-taking so that analytical efforts become something more than academic. This means that the project leader must have the authority to make decisions relative to project activities and the allocation of project resources in a manner consistent with analytical findings. He must also be vested with authority to take action. This may involve rather continuous revision of project strategy, tactics and program in order to cope with the constantly changing conditions of a developing institution and the environment in which it exists.

The importance of the management function in project operations cannot be overemphasized. It appears that many institution building projects have not, historically, been blessed with the managerial skills requisite to performing this function with the degree of excellence required. U.S. and other institutions accepting responsibility for such technical assistance activities must recognize this and do better in the future. By the same token, sponsoring agencies must be willing to work out cooperative arrangements which will attract highly-skilled

managerial talent and provide the freedom for such people to exercise these talents as required.<sup>4/</sup>

Institution building models make a major contribution to effective project operation through identification of several groups of variables important to the attainment of institutional change. Given the fact that an institution building project exists only for the purpose of inducing such change, these variables, by definition, are significant to project operations.

#### Doctrine and Project Operations

The models identify doctrine as an element of central concern to the process of institutional change. While somewhat difficult to define and even more difficult to measure, there seems to be little doubt of the relevance and importance of this concept. In essence, doctrine concerns itself with the way in which an institution and its component parts look at their justification for existence. Included are notions relative to the things in which the institution believes, what it hopes to get done and the means that it employs in doing so.

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<sup>4/</sup> It is significant to note that the Agency for International Development and the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges recently developed a new operational format, the International Development Agreement, in response to this and related issues. While experimental, this format seems to hold a great deal of promise. For additional information see the report of a Joint Committee of the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges and the Agency for International Development entitled "The Institutional Development Agreement; A New Operational Framework for A.I.D. and the Universities", November, 1969.

### Project Doctrine

In terms of project operations, doctrine is a critical element in two major respects. One of these is the doctrine of the institution building project, per se. Inadequate recognition and treatment of this somewhat nebulous concept may very well explain many project shortcomings. It is important to recognize, again, that an institutional development project exists for a single specific purpose. If this purpose is to be achieved, the doctrine of the project leadership, staff and the project's parent institution must be consistent with this purpose.

Achieving viable project doctrine seems to be one of the more troublesome issues associated with the operation of many institution building projects. Evidence of this is found in many quarters. Several studies have surfaced the problem. Vagueness and variability on the part of project staff when asked to articulate the nature and purpose of their activities tend to be common. Project staff who insist on doing their professional "thing" in the host institution in the same manner as in their home institution without reference to institutional development objectives are not uncommon. A general dearth of well-specified individual and project strategies has been documented. One could go on but it would serve no useful purpose.

It is not surprising that this situation prevails. Projects have been mounted by outside institutions characterized by doctrines tuned to an environment completely or significantly different than that of the host institution. That such environments should be similar enough to matter would seem to occur only by most improbable chance. Further, principal and normal activities of many such institutions do not include significant programs dedicated to the direct promulgation of social

change. In fact, such, in many cases, is the antithesis of established doctrine. Adjustments are required in home institutions and these are hard to come by.

Projects tend to be staffed by highly competent professionals whose deeply-held concept of their reason for being is based on a set of professional values which emphasize the importance and significance of their professional output, per se, and exclude or minimize the importance and acceptability of changing the institution of which they are a part. At the former, they tend to be very good; at the latter, they tend to be rank amateurs. This is not to be critical; rather, it is to emphasize the importance of establishing doctrine which conceives of professional outputs as means to other ends rather than as ends in themselves. This is a most difficult task.

The creation of project doctrine consistent with the purpose of the project is a necessary condition to successful project operation. In light of rapid personnel turnover characteristic of most such projects, changes in the project's parent institution and changes in sponsoring institutions, the establishment and maintenance of project doctrine turns out to be a continuing task of extreme importance. The implication for project management, of course, is one of evolving means whereby all individuals and institutions important to successful project operations develop and maintain an appropriate concept of the project's reason for being. Concepts of institutional linkages provided by institution building models are helpful in this respect; they do not provide, however, comprehensive means of achieving this state in an operational sense.

### Host Institution Doctrine

The second major respect in which the doctrine concept bears on project operation relates to the doctrine of the host institution. Here, it appears crucial that there exist, on the part of the project, complete recognition that the doctrine of the host institution must be consistent with the role which the institution must play in the affairs of its society. It is virtually certain that there will exist major differences between the host institution's traditional doctrine and that which must prevail if it is to be successful in its redefined role. In the case of new institutions, doctrine at the outset is nonexistent. It must be developed consciously as the institution is built.

Examples of conflict between existing doctrine and institutional services essential to modernization abound in the developing world. Adaptive agricultural research programs have difficulty in flowering in scientific communities guided by doctrine which eulogizes fundamental research and damns the applied. Modern, efficient graduate programs have difficult rows to hoe in academic communities honestly wedded to the belief that true scientists can be developed only through the archaic and highly inefficient "disciple" system. Institutionalizing tax reforms in societies where not only taxpayers but also tax collecting entities adhere to the doctrine that taxes are bad, by definition, and that minimizing tax revenue is good, also by definition, is not the easiest of assignments. Establishing institutions which will promulgate public policies conducive to a modern agriculture in situations where the prevailing doctrine opts for the status quo is no bed of roses. Again, one could go on and on; however, the point is made.

Implications of the above to project operations seem reasonably clear. It must determine, with some degree of specificity, the elements of institutional doctrine which must prevail if the host institution is to perform its identified role. Equally, it must be fully cognizant of the nature of existing doctrine. The project must develop specific, systematic strategies and tactics to bring about change in existing doctrine to make it consistent with that which is required.

Doctrine is an institutional characteristic not subject to immediate or easy change. It tends to be rooted in tradition, culture, ethics and, on occasion, in religious beliefs. Yet, this aspect of institutional change is so central to the success of the entire exercise that it cannot be relegated to happenstance; rather, project resources and talents need be directed specifically to this end.

Project leadership and project staff must be alert to changing external conditions which may necessitate changes in internal doctrine to assure the creation of an institution which will not only survive but also continue to be innovative. Effective project operations demand the articulation of institutional doctrine and the promotion of awareness, both internally and externally, of this doctrine.

Some would object quite strenuously to the above. Objections find their basis in the fact that bringing about change in doctrine may involve change in values and beliefs on the part of individuals and institutions in the host nation. Be this as it may, it seems important to recognize that such changes may be essential to the attainment of the end for which the project was created. Further, there is no reason to conclude that bringing about change in doctrine must be onerous in any way. Rather, it most often involves an educational process in which doctrinal

issues are articulated, alternatives and their consequences specified with individuals comprising the host institution reserving complete freedom of choice. This process, appropriately done, usually yields the desired result.

### The Program Concept

Institution building models focus attention on the institution's program. Here, emphasis is on the activities in which the institution involves itself, the things which it does and the way in which it utilizes its resources in attempting to achieve its perceived goals. This constitutes a useful contribution to understanding and managing institutional change. However, it does more than this. It surfaces some critical aspects of operating a technical assistance project designed to bring about institutional change. It draws attention to the program of work of the project and, secondly, to the relationship of the project to the program of work of the host institution.

### The Project's Program

Institution building projects have been severely criticized for lacking well-defined and well-articulated strategies. Whether such criticism is justified or not rests outside the scope of this paper. It is necessary for our purposes only to recognize that the project's program of work is the heart of the operation and that success or failure will depend on the nature of its program.

Institution building projects have at their command limited resources in the form of people, commodities and money. In the usual case, these

are minuscule in relation to the total resource base of the host institution and to the objective of the project.

Conventional wisdom to the contrary, projects normally have or can arrange considerable freedom to deploy the resources at their command in those ways which will contribute most to the attainment of their objective. In each case, there is probably some optimal way in which the limited quantity of resources should be used to maximize contributions to the desired end. The name of the game, of course, is one of discovering and mounting the particular program of work which will assure this happy event.

#### Relationship Between Project and Host Institution Programs

It is helpful to take as a guideline the use of project resources to influence the host institution in a manner such that it will maximize its long-run contributions to the attainment of the goals of its society. Institution building models make a major contribution by articulating a comprehensive list of activities of relevance to institutional development. Included here are such things as the development of an adequate leadership component, influencing the institution's external and internal environment to make it more compatible with the institution's objectives and the evolution of a viable institutional doctrine. The models also flag the importance of the institution's program of work, its resource base, its structure and its linkages to exogenous individuals, groups and institutions.

These elements constitute focal points upon which project resources might be brought to bear. All are legitimate; all should be considered, systematically, in developing a project's program. Two points are of

significance here. One is that the particular mix of project activities which will make maximum contribution toward a project's objective is situation-specific; a second is that the optimal mix of project activities will change through time as the host institution and its environment change.

It follows, in the context of project operations, that there are several broad categories of activities which are logical contenders for use of project resources. One is the learning activity. This involves the specific task of learning enough about the institution and its environment to assure project effectiveness. The second is the analytical activity. This involves the systematic use of project resources in assessing the probable consequences of alternative courses of action open to the project. The third consists of use of project resources for decision-making and strategic program planning. This includes the continual evaluation and adjustment of project strategy and programs of work. The fourth consists of utilization of project resources directly in the host institution's program. Here, the appropriate concept of the host institution's program is not restricted to traditional professional inputs and outputs but includes all elements essential to the creation of a useful institution.

In the usual case, the host institution's program provides a multiplicity of opportunities for investment of a project's limited resources. Each of these opportunities has a different "payoff" when reckoned in terms of the project's objective. The decision rule is that project resources be invested in the host institution's program and in other legitimate categories of project activities in a manner such that returns at the margin, measured in terms of the project's objective, be equated.

Decisions relative to a project's strategic program are always difficult and always made under conditions of risk and uncertainty. It seems doubtful that a single "best" program is ever achieved. On the other hand, there is absolutely no doubt but what careful, thoughtful, hard-headed analysis, decision-making and program planning will contribute greatly to project effectiveness.

All projects encounter problems in establishing effective programs of work. This is not surprising. Some important part of this is undoubtedly due to the simple fact that doing so is just plain difficult. To sort out all relevant variables in a strange institution, in a strange culture and environment, in a non-familiar task, with few guidelines and little experience, takes a lot of doing. It is probably more surprising that such projects come out program-wise as well as they do. There are other reasons, of course. One is the tendency to restrict project vision to internal issues. Both theory and experience tell us that, in many cases, external issues are equally or more important. Another is the tendency to conceive legitimate program areas to be restricted to the technical input/output relationships of the institution when these, in reality, can be nothing more than means to other, more significant ends. A host of other reasons exist.

The contribution of institution building models, in terms of project programs, is one of describing the elements of institutional development in terms which expose the gamut of activities which constitute alternative investment opportunities for project resources. The models, admittedly, are nonoperational. They do not constitute a decision framework. Despite this, they are useful.

The Question of Tactics

There is another element of significance to project operation implicit in institution building models. This is the element of tactics useful in the attainment of project and host institution objectives. The point is that strategic programs, from both the project viewpoint and the host institution viewpoint, must be implemented. Implementation means that people must do things and, in this context, things which may be quite different from those which they have traditionally done or which they desire to do.

Program implementation may require the employment of tactics of several kinds. One broad group may be identified as interpersonal tactics. These are employed or employable by project staff members and their associates in the host institution. The object is to influence individual behavior so that it conforms to the pattern essential to program success. Another group involves tactics of a personal-institutional kind as individuals seek ways to influence the behavior of institutions and vice versa. Institution building projects typically involve a relationship between two primary institutions--the host institution and the donor institution. At this level, too, situations important to the success of the project arise in which appropriate inter-institutional tactics are called for. In the context of foreign technical assistance, inter-governmental tactics may have an important bearing on project operations.

Practitioners of institution building have long known that appropriate tactics are essential to success. For the most part, they have had no conceptual guidance in this area. Some practitioners have been remarkably good tacticians; others have been remarkably bad. Whether good or bad has been largely a matter of chance and historical accident rather

than good management. Institution building models contribute little in this arena. It is an important aspect of the dynamic process of bringing about change. It constitutes an area in need of concentrated conceptual and empirical work.

#### A Final Word

Examination of institution building project operations against a backdrop of institution building models yields important insights into both theory and practice. Most significant is the need for a more meaningful wedding of the two. Practitioners must become knowledgeable about these concepts and join with the theorists in their refinement. Institution building projects abroad offer a unique laboratory for such endeavors. The results could be most valuable to a host of other situations--both domestic and foreign.

Institution building models identify groups of variables and relationships relevant to institutional change. These constitute an essential frame of reference for operational decision-making. The theoretical concepts focus attention on the significance of the management function. They correctly cast project management in a decision-making role under conditions of risk and uncertainty. This opens the door to meaningful extension of institution building theory through appropriate adaptation of decision-making theory and practice. This appears to be a promising route to making institution building models more operational.

Successful institution building efforts are essential to progress in the developing societies. They may be equally essential to appropriate adjustments in our own and other affluent societies. Theoretical

understanding and practical knowledge of the process of institutional change have expanded sharply in a short period. Yet, neither is adequate to the needs of today's world. Both scholars and practitioners have a great deal more to contribute. We must somehow create an environment in which such contributions will be forthcoming.