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Perceptions of the Usefulness of Analysis
in the Pakistani Educational System

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Perceptions of the Usefulness of Analysis
in the Pakistani Educational System

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This is an inquiry into the utility of data and analysis in the educational system of Pakistan. It grows out of a USAID-sponsored project at Harvard University that aims to develop educational data systems and to conduct research on schooling and school administration in a number of Third World countries, including Pakistan. The expectation of the sponsor, and perhaps of the ministries in the host governments, is that better information on such matters as school enrollment, teachers' classroom practices and student achievement, and trends in student dropouts will help officials design and manage more effective educational policies.

This inquiry looks at the extent to which Pakistani officials have data, use data, and want further analysis to assist them in their work. It also compares the situation in Pakistan with the extent of data use in the U.S. and tries to explain the differences -- and the similarities. Finally, it makes a few tentative suggestions for improving the use of relevant data in the Pakistani educational system.

What We Know About Research Utilization

For at least the past half century, social scientists have written about their hopes for the influence of social science on public policy and the disenchantment they have experienced. They have itemized the pitfalls and the constraints that limit the

influence of social science on policy decisions. For the past 15 years there has been a stream of empirical inquiry investigating the effects of social science research, data, and evaluation on both policy and practice. This work has been done almost exclusively in countries of the First World, primarily the United States.

The main findings about government use of analysis are that even the best-managed and best-staffed agencies do not universally and systematically base decisions on data. Agencies dealing with economic policy come closest, usually paying careful attention to the national system of accounts and the component statistical series, such as consumer price index, unemployment rates, and national debt. But even in economic policy, considerations of ideology, interests, and politics often determine how these data are interpreted and what their consequences are for decisions. In other areas, attention to data is more haphazard. In the exceptional case, analysis leads to significant policy change, but more often, analysis has an effect on the details of policy. The contemporary configuration of values, coalition politics, and prevailing ideas sets the major policy direction, and analysis is drawn upon for designing details and finetuning. (For a recent example, see Birman and Kennedy 1989.) Of course, many details have important consequences, so that the contribution that analysis makes can be significant.

Another frequent use of analysis is to support policy positions that people have already chosen to support on other grounds. Analysis provides legitimation for their stands and ammunition to use in the policy wars. They use analysis to advance their cause.

Inquiries have disclosed that officials are influenced by analysis in more diffuse ways as well. They become aware of the findings of numbers of studies over time, and gradually they put the bits and pieces together in their minds and build up a picture of how things are working. Through this kind of undirected percolation of findings, they gain a sense of the problems that exist and possible ways of dealing with them. This "enlightenment" use of analysis can in time contribute to major shifts in policy. But on a day-in, day-out basis, analysis, data, and research generally play a subordinate part in government decision making in the United States.

When we look at the uses of data and analysis cross-nationally and over time, we see two other critical themes. Briefly put, they are these: History matters. Institutions matter. How a government responds to data systems or analytic reports depends to a considerable extent on the historical development of that nation and the nature of its institutions. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, welfare state interventionism led to a call for more information by nations in North America and western Europe. In the U.S., universities and independent research organizations were well equipped to answer

the call. On the continent, university social science departments were small, oriented more to theoretical than to empirical or applied scholarship, and were unprepared to provide relevant analysis. Nor could independent organizations fill the gap (Wittrock, Wagner, and Wollmann, forthcoming).

The character of the institutions that comprise the public sphere also influences response to data and analysis. In a highly centralized state, data has to make its way into decisions through the established hierarchical channels that lead to the decision-making echelon. There are few channels to carry information, and they are apt to be clogged by claimants. In more decentralized systems, many avenues of entry exist for data and many decision points are available within the institution. Another institutional feature is the nature of officials' professional training. Where bureaucratic leadership is dominated by lawyers, the decision-making process is likely to be dominated by adherence to legal rules and legalistic interpretations, whereas in a system with subject-area specialists at the helm, they may be more ready to rely on scientific evidence and expert analysis. The configuration of institutions, too, whether the system is national or federal in organization, where in the system decision-making is formally lodged, the relationship between executive and legislative powers -- all will have an effect on the influence of research on policy.

When we turn to developing countries, we find that they tend to share a number of historical and institutional characteristics (Riggs 1964). First, data systems and analytic resources are recent imports, which have not had time to take root in the governmental structure. Usually data systems are being promoted by foreigners, often donor agencies such as the World Bank, and being installed by consultants from abroad. Neither the need for them nor the capacity to use them is being generated from native sources. Second, the bureaucratic culture is not generally hospitable to analysis. In many developing countries, Kochanek's description of Pakistan holds true: "One owes employment to one's relatives regardless of competence, support in feuds and conflicts regardless of the justice of the issues involved, and favours if one happens to be in a position of authority" (Kochanek 1983:31). The prevailing familistic orientation, where public office is viewed as a means to increase family prestige, reputation, and honor, manages to survive the meritocratic rules of the civil service.

Third, little analysis is done, and that which is done (often by local researchers under the sponsorship of international donor agencies) may be neither germane to the issues at hand nor of sufficient quality to be credible. Finally, in order for data to have an effect, government officials have to be able to understand it and see its relationship to the issues they deal with. They also have to have sufficient latitude to make the decisions for which the data

are relevant. For there to be appropriate use of data, an important need -- and one that may be in short supply in developing countries -- is a good fit between accessible data and decision opportunities.

In all these ways, developing countries are at an early phase in learning to use analytic resources well. But like developed countries, they differ among themselves. To understand the situation in Pakistan, we must look at the particulars.

History Matters

History matters. In Pakistan relevant history can be traced back to British colonial rule, when a small elite civil service, the Indian Civil Service (ICS), governed a nation of teeming millions. The British tradition established norms of honesty, hard work, fair dealing with the population, and strong reliance on common sense and generalist know-how. The other side of the story was an "overbearing attitude of public servants to the public," a "lack of public accountability of bureaucrats" (Kennedy 1987), and class distinctions within the bureaucracy accompanied by ethnic discrimination. Civil servants were accustomed to special station and privilege.

One of the most serious and lasting characteristics of the Indian Civil Service was its independence from legislative control. There was no policy-making legislature as a collateral branch of government. The civil servant in British India had "no experience of working with the politician as an equal partner let

alone of accepting him as a superior" (Muneer 1964). The bureaucracy ruled.

After independence from Britain and partition from India in 1947, Pakistan established its own civil service, originally (and still popularly) called the Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP). Interestingly, at the time of the Partition there were 1157 local ICS officers, of whom 101 were Muslims and 83 chose Pakistan as their homeland (Hussain 1979). Many of the norms from the colonial period survived, such as the emphasis on generalists, the careful delineation of ranks, and the insistence that rank has its privileges. A recent observer writes, "The dominance of the generalist administrator still prevails, despite some concessions to participation by specialists" (Haider 1987:15). However, much of the British culture was overlaid by local values, such as the view of government office as a source of personal and family standing, reputation, and occasionally enrichment. The structure of the civil service, in which entrants were assigned to cadres throughout their careers (i.e., occupational groups such as foreign service, police service, income tax, customs), encouraged bureaucratic politics (Kennedy 1987), with cadres intriguing to secure advantages, seniority, promotions, and prize postings. After Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto abolished the cadre system and introduced other reforms in 1974 aimed at breaking the stranglehold on power of senior bureaucrats, partisan politics became more intrusive in the civil service. Currently, many Pakistanis see the civil

service as weighted against specialists and technicians such as educators, as highly politicized, often as corrupt, with its officers more interested in hiring loyal subordinates than competent public servants. In these and many other ways, the Pakistani civil service is much like the civil service in other countries that are making the transition from traditional societies to modernism.

After a review of repeated attempts to reform the bureaucracy, Charles Kennedy (1987) concludes that "Bureaucracy in 1986 is more egalitarian than in 1973" (p. 223), but it is more politicized and no more technically proficient. There is "a persistent shunning of responsibility for making administrative decisions" (p.224), and "the prevalent complaint by senior administrators [is] that even the most mundane matters are 'duly noted' all the way to their desks" (p.224). "'Noddors' [yes-men] are more prevalent in 1986 than in 1973" (p.224).

Another important element is the legislative history of the country. While Pakistan's constitution provides for a National Assembly of elected representatives, democratic norms are fragile. In the 42 years of the nation's existence, there have been four different constitutions, and leaders have imposed martial law on three different occasions for lengthy periods. At several points the national legislature has been dissolved and political parties have been harassed, regulated, or abolished. Even when the National Assembly functions, its members are hardly representative of the citizenry. Of the four provinces in the

country, Punjab and Sind have a largely feudal history, with peasants in debt to their master and subject to eviction on whim; such peasants have voted as their masters instructed. Large landowners are heavily represented in the National Assembly. In Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province, the predominant organization was, and remains, tribal. Tribesmen listen to their tribal sardars (chieftains) and tend to elect them to office. In the period 1947-78, over 25% of members of the inner circle of power, the Central Cabinet, were members of the landowning elite; 16% had been high-ranking bureaucrats; 13% were military officers; 5% were members of the industrial elite; and 40% were professionals, such as lawyers, physicians, engineers, journalists, and educators (Hussain 1979). The professionals were largely from East Pakistan, which is now Bangladesh (Kochanek 1983). West Pakistan, which is now Pakistan, more often gave office to landowners and bureaucrats. With modernization and the growth of industry, the old patterns are changing, but slowly.

One procedural feature of administration is necessary for background. Pakistan operates with two budgets, a recurrent budget for ongoing expenses and a development budget for investments in modernization. The development budget is about one-quarter of the total, and much of the money comes from loans and grants from multilateral and bilateral donor agencies such as the World Bank. In education, the development budget pays for construction of schools, additional rooms, and furnishings, and

for innovative projects to improve teacher performance and class instruction. Teachers' salaries are paid out of the recurrent budget, except under exceptional circumstances.

Because of the high priority currently being placed on primary education in development, about 43% of the education development budget is earmarked for the first five years of schooling. However, considerably less money is actually spent on primary education than is planned each year. Universities usually spend more than planned, because elites in the country exert pressure for added university facilities and because large university organizations can spend money expeditiously, whereas construction of dozens of small schools in dispersed rural areas often falls behind schedule.

The development budget is planned and administered by a special ministry through a special set of procedures. The government adopts a 5-year plan, and each year there is an annual development plan (ADP). The federal Ministry of Planning and Development, and the departments of planning and development in each of the four provinces, coordinate and review the plans of all agencies of government. For education, plans are initiated in the planning wing and other units of the Ministry of Education for new and continuing ventures; they are reviewed by the education section of the Ministry of Planning and Development and by higher-level councils as necessary.

The Inquiry into Data Use

Harvard's project to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of basic education in Third World countries is called BRIDGES, which stands for Basic Research and Implementation in Developing Education Systems. The BRIDGES project began working with Pakistan in 1986, with the explicit aim of improving educational planning, policy, and implementation. The emphasis was on primary education, because this is a country in which only 48% of youngsters aged 6-10 are enrolled in school. Enrollment is lower in rural areas, where 40% of children are enrolled, and lower still among girls, of whom only 32% are in school at these ages. Among rural girls, the figure is 20% (World Bank, 1984). These numbers are shaky, because data systems are rudimentary and riddled with errors (a situation that BRIDGES intends to address), but they give a fair indication of the dimensions of the elementary school problem in the country.

BRIDGES worked with officials in the federal Ministry of Education to set up a data system and train technicians and researchers to operate the system. Researchers did a national survey of elementary schools and examined such variables as teacher preparation, availability of textbooks, size of class, and student test scores. An anthropologist did an observational study of 40 [?] classrooms, analyzing the behavior of teachers and students in urban and rural schools. Much of the work is still in progress, and progress reports only now being written and circulated and given at conferences, meetings in the

Ministry, and in personal interchanges with officials in the provincial departments of education.

My work in Pakistan was to scout the terrain. I spent March 1989 in the country, a time four months after the election that returned the Pakistan Peoples Party and Benazir Bhutto to office. I inquired about the kinds of data that officials wanted to have available, what existing data they knew about and where they got their information, what information they actually used in the course of their work, for what kinds of decisions and activities, and their general assessment of the utility of data in the current situation. All officials spoke English; some of them had received part of their education in the U.K. or U. S., so interviewing in English posed no problems. I tape-recorded the interviews, but because government offices tend to be noisy places, with three or four extra people sitting around the desk (either serving as aides or observers or simply waiting for their turn for the official's attention) and with phones frequently ringing and being answered at the corner of the desk, the transcripts had large unintelligible segments. Fortunately I also took extensive notes on each interview which were as close to verbatim as I could make them.

I interviewed about 35 officials in the federal and state departments of education and the federal and state departments of planning and development. I also interviewed researchers and statisticians in bureaus of curriculum research and in statistical offices; faculty members in university departments of

education; directors of internationally supported educational projects (such as the science education project sponsored by the Asian Development Bank) and officers of donor agencies; and heads of teacher training institutions. I asked to interview members of the national and provincial legislatures who were interested in education, but I was told that the only elected representatives who cared about education were the federal and provincial ministers of education. I was told that they were too busy to see me. I supplemented the interviews with extensive reading about history, administration, education, and development in Pakistan, from books, journals, and agency reports and working papers. However, the findings I report come largely from the interviews. My reading did alert me to the characteristics of what Fred Riggs (1964) has called "prismatic society," societies like those of Pakistan, which are part-way between older traditional societies and the modern societies of the West. One of Riggs's cautions is that the communicative mode in prismatic bureaucracies is "double-talk." He writes:

The "true" meaning is always hidden...The prismatic mind requires cynicism more than skepticism; statements are evaluated in terms of their authorship rather than their intrinsic meaning...What one says is couched more in terms of anticipated audience reactions than in response to reality." (pp. 279-80)

Although I recognize the wisdom in this statement, I report interview responses as they were given, without much interpretation.

The Findings

Just about everybody said that data on education were very important. Almost to a man, they said planning should be based on data. And they were all men, with the exception of one woman in the planning and development department of Punjab. She was an economist whom I interviewed because her boss was unavailable, and she, too, thought data were important. But she said that more important was the capacity to analyze data, which was in very short supply.

One set of questions I asked education and planning officials was what kind of information they wanted about education, what kind they had available, and what uses they put the information to. Almost all officials stated that they wanted to have data on school enrollments, by gender and by urban/rural location, and number of schools, by level (primary, middle, secondary, higher secondary). Most of them also wanted data on numbers of teachers, and some wanted to know whether or not teachers were qualified (through attaining the proper educational diploma). The next most frequent response, although from fewer than half, was a need for data on drop-outs: how many, at what grade, at what ages, why students dropped out. Beyond that, answers to the question were scattered. Among the other responses were: condition of buildings, population of the age groups that should be in school, number of unfilled teaching posts, capacity of teacher training institutions, number of additional teachers required, Pakistan's standing on education

vis a vis other countries, numbers of schools with science labs, achievement test scores. As an aside, I was accompanied on most of the visits by an educational researcher from the Academy for Educational Planning and Management, our counterpart agency. One of these accompanying researchers was so embarrassed by the answers of his countrymen that he began prompting one official: "But you want to know about drop-out rates, don't you, and you want to know how many students complete the fifth grade, and what their test scores are, don't you?" Even with such provocation, interest was limp.

Note that almost all of these responses call for fairly simple data. Straightforward counts would supply most of the information people want. There were a few people who raised issues that would call for more analysis or for research. One wanted to know how good the curriculum is. (The curriculum is centrally developed.) Three people were interested in how effective special interventions have been, such as mosque schools and after-school classes for drop-outs, and one wanted to know how good the teacher training programs are. These issues would require evaluation research. There were one or two other people who explicitly asked for research, for example, on how well vocational training matches the needs of the labor market, and on unit costs of education, but they were the exceptions. I will say more about them later. One official in the planning cell of a provincial education department said that research showing that things are wrong is no use at all; what is needed are explicit

recommendations, definite prescriptions, for how to improve teacher performance.

I asked the officials what data they had available. Most of them said that they had data on enrollments and on school buildings. They had exactly the information they were asking for. The trouble was, most said, that the data were out of date, usually several years old, and they weren't very accurate. Almost everyone in the education departments complained about the quality of the data available.

When asked how they used information, three answers predominated. The most common was that they used data to decide on the location of new schools and the upgrading of existing schools to higher levels. (In Pakistan, new schools are built as primary schools for grades 1-5, and middle and secondary schools are constructed by adding classrooms and facilities to primary schools.) If data pinpointed an underserved area and sufficient population to sustain a school, then a school would be built. The second most frequent response was puzzlement; they couldn't think of any specific way in which they used information. Third in frequency was the response that evaluative data helped them decide whether to continue an innovation. If evaluation showed that a scheme was successful, it would be extended. If not, it should be dropped. All the main innovations in education, such as the introduction of learning coordinators, mosque schools, and teaching kits, have been sponsored and funded by donor agencies. These agencies have insisted on evaluation, which is often

carried out in cooperation with Pakistani government units, research bureaus, and consultants. Results of the evaluations are sometimes regarded with suspicion by officials, a few of whom said that they weren't convinced that the schemes were as successful as evaluations suggested. But, they said, if the donor wished to continue supporting the project, on whatever grounds, that was all right. However, if the province is expected to support the scheme, that is another matter. The Secretary [top civil servant] of Education in the Punjab said about a project for out-of-school youth, "Even if evaluation showed the Nai Roshni scheme for drop-outs is successful, the province is not willing to take it over. We would have to pay for it out of the recurrent budget [of the province which pays teachers' salaries]. It's a matter of resources. We'd still need federal help for the salaries of teachers."

With a very few exceptions, and almost all of the exceptions were among officials in the federal planning ministry and provincial planning departments, the only real use for data that people identified within their own domain (rather than largely on the initiative of the donor agencies) was the selection of sites for new primary schools and for "upgradation" of schools to middle or secondary level. With the encouragement of foreign advisors, all provinces have engaged in an exercise of school mapping, which identifies the number of school-age children in each area, the location of existing schools, their enrollment, distance to the nearest schools, and for upper levels, the number

of graduates of sending schools. Since schools are strictly segregated by sex, school mapping has to be done for both boys and girls. These are the data that officials overwhelmingly claimed were useful -- and used.

However, as the interviews proceeded, I learned that in all provinces to some degree, and in some provinces to a great degree, the decision on where to build or upgrade a school is not made primarily by the bureaucracy. It is a decision that is made, at least in part, by politicians, the elected members of provincial assemblies (MPAs) (It is worth noting that MPAs are not only elected officials but also often wealthy and influential people in their own right.) Political leaders want schools in their districts in order to win the support of their constituents and to increase their own prestige. Upgrading a school to a secondary school seems to bestow particular repute.

Of the four provinces, Baluchistan is the one where politicians seem to exert the most influence on schools. One official in the planning and development department there explained, "MPAs decide on the location of schools. We haven't looked at locations for the last three years. We indicated areas without any services, but we accepted the MPAs' decisions." In the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), an official in the planning cell of the education department laid out their procedure. The planning cell prepares a tentative annual development plan (ADP) for expenditures from the federally supported development budget. After review by the provincial

Planning and Development Department, which reviews ADPs for all agencies, the education department convenes the MPAs from each district to discuss the ADP for their districts. The MPAs can ask for changes. "Then the education department finalizes the ADP. The Provincial Cabinet and the Provincial Assembly finally approve the plan, both the development plan and the ongoing budget."

In Sind, a planning official in the education department told a colleague of mine that he and his deputy control the location of about 50% of the schools and politicians put the other 50% where they want. In Punjab, the most populous and [better word?] advanced of the provinces, the Secretary of Education said something similar but made the procedure sound somewhat more rational. He said that the department decides on the location of schools, but department decision making includes the politicians. "It's a matter of politics and feasibility. If an MPA wants a school opened or upgraded in his constituency, we prepare a feasibility study. There are set criteria of population and distance. If the MPA's school is marginal, OK we let it go. If the school he proposes is hopeless, we prepare our case and place it before the Chief Minister (of the province), and he decides...In most cases, he agrees with the department."

So at best, data about enrollments and school-age population strengthens the hand of the bureaucracy against the intercession of politicians. It gives them evidence to make a logical case for or against political demands. It provides the basis for

"professional expertise" and for claims of rational administration. The necessary precondition for the effective use of data in this way is that bureaucrats must want to use it. They must be willing to contest the particularistic demands of politicians for local and personal advantage. In many cases, this precondition did not obtain. Bureaucrats only occasionally seemed willing to oppose the demands of individual politicians.

The governmental system in Pakistan gives the bureaucracy a great deal of authority, even allowing civil servants to make many policy decisions. Because of the British heritage of a strong civil service, the weaknesses in democratic legislatures and parties, and frequent changes of regime, the civil (and military) bureaucracy is the repository of unique expertise. (Ziring et al. 1977, Nyrop 1984) Bureaucrats have great latitude in deciding which laws to enforce, when, and upon whom. But while there is considerable administrative assumption of policy making, there is also the kind of political interference in administration that is evidenced in the matter of school building. Similar incursions of politicians into administration are seen in hiring. Teachers are often hired not because they are qualified but because an important person provides a recommendation. Klitgaard et al. (1985) found in a study of hiring of graduates of Karachi's largest teacher training schools that what mattered was connections. Being a member of the "right" political party is important in some places today.

A number of important policy decisions are being made in education these days. For example, Baluchistan has decided to teach primary school students in their mother tongue. The decision was made at the political level. Officials in the education department are aware of all the practical problems involved, such as the lack of textbooks in local languages, the fact that teachers often do not speak the local language, the fact that one school may have students who speak several different languages, the fact that Baluchi is a language without a written orthography, the costs that will be incurred, etc. They said that they had made these difficulties known. I asked whether any studies had been done on the advantages or feasibility of teaching in the local languages, and the answer was that there was no evidence at all. But language policy is a highly emotional issue, and the Chief Minister announced a political decision.

So what of information? Almost everyone I spoke with pronounced a firm belief that decisions should be based on good data. Many of them insisted that better data led to better decisions. But it was difficult to find any evidence that data played much of a part in educational policy or administration. The reasons officials offered were several. (1) Existing data are flawed. They are old; the most recent are usually at least two years old. Data are collected by people in the field who have to do the collection over and above their regular job and have little incentive to be accurate; made-up numbers will do

just as well as accurate ones and take much less effort to report. None of the basic data systems relies on sampling; each asks for a total count. Data are collected from teachers and principals, passed on to supervisors, subdistrict education officers, assistant district education officers, district education officers (there are two separate structures all along the line, one male and one female) and so on, up to the provincial level. There are often double-counting of schools and omissions, particularly when there are floods or schools are closed or posts are unfilled. In Punjab, two departments collect statistics on schools, and their numbers do not agree. When figures come into Islamabad from the provinces, the Ministry of Education compiles them without critical review. Some officials said to me that when the system changes from the current manual system to a computerized one, the data will be more accurate and timely, but that is obviously a triumph of the computer mystique over common sense.

So, one reason that officials say they do not use educational data is because the data are poor. And one reason that the data do not improve is that nobody uses them very much, and there is little incentive to put in the time and expertise that it would take to reform data collection from the classroom level up. Since nobody in the schools sees much pay-off in giving more accurate figures, they do not invest the effort to improve validity. It is a classic vicious circle.

(2) A second reason that much data about education is not used is that the shortfall between the hoped-for universal primary education and the current situation is enormous. The most optimistic of current figures show that only about 48% of primary-school age children are in school -- 63% of boys and 32% of girls. Therefore, the need for extension of schooling is great. It doesn't much matter whether the shortfall is 50% or 20%. There is much more to be done than the system can handle, whatever the figures. On any overall basis, refining the data will not increase the movement of progress.

(3) As we have seen, the bureaucracy does not have the authority to make some of the decisions for which data could provide direction. Members of the provincial assembly and in some cases members of local councils have a say, often a controlling say. One provincial secretary of education described this situation to me as "democratic." But it represents a confusion of policy-making and implementation responsibilities. A provincial legislature can be democratic when it sets policy for the province. It is hardly democratic when it interferes in administration to secure benefits for MPAs and the constituents whose interests they want to advance.

Of course, this kind of legislative interference is not unknown in the U. S. Many members of the Congress seek to get a share of the pork barrel for their districts. But the situation in Pakistan is extreme. Popularly elected legislatures are only an intermittent part of the political scene. Their functioning

has been suspended during long periods when the country was ruled by military officers under a system of martial law. The norms of democracy are relatively young and fragile, and the appropriate functions of popularly elected officials and legislatures are not always clearly understood.

(4) Indigenous organizations that do research and analysis are few and of questionable quality. Several officials with whom I talked went out of their way to describe the lack of qualifications of Pakistani research organizations and their lack of commitment to reasonable standards of work. Three people recounted horror stories of interviewers' manufacturing data and interviewing supervisors filling in forms themselves without doing interviews and laughing with their interviewers about the practice. In my travels however, I collected a great many research reports, and a number of them seemed to be quite good pieces of work. Nevertheless, the research sector is small and weak, and whatever its other strengths, it does not supply a push to officials to pay more attention to research, statistics, or analysis. It does not have much visibility or clout to encourage officials to apply research or data on their jobs.

An American can be forgiven for expecting that faculty members in Pakistani universities, particularly those who teach and do research in schools of education, will provide research and analysis to civil servants and nudge them to attend to it. In Pakistan, however, universities are an autonomous system, funded by the federal government, with no relationship to schools

or teacher training institutions, which are funded and administered by the provinces. Faculty members in university departments of education seem to pay little attention to the educational system of their own country. While many of them are well educated, some holding doctorates from first-rank U. S. universities, their attention is rarely directed at local schools and their problems. More often, they are attuned to fashions in the international education community, particularly the American research community. The ambition of many is to publish in American journals, and consequently their interests have little to do with expanding access to education for rural Pakistani girls or improving the caliber of teaching in primary schools by teachers who completed only 10 years of school and were themselves taught largely by rote methods of instruction. Faculty in university departments of education are more apt to be talking about school-based management or the principal as instructional leader or whatever the current American fad may be. Educational planners and managers can expect little help -- or analysis -- from the universities, still less any pressure to attend to data.

Those are important reasons for a weak demand for analysis, even a weak demand for elementary statistical counts. If data can't make much difference to decisions, if existing data are unreliable, if there is already more to do than the government can cope with, and if there is no external pressure for use of data, it seems perfectly rational for bureaucrats to content

themselves with lip service. That good data could help to set wiser priorities or point to more efficient strategies would have to be a matter of faith.

Institutions Matter

But institutions matter. There is one federal ministry where interest in research and information is high. It is the Planning and Development Ministry. The heads of the education section within that ministry were the only people who named a series of specific studies that they had commissioned, who mentioned five or six other studies that they want to see done, and who evinced obvious knowledge of the research process and sophisticated concerns about the validity and reliability of data.

The Planning and Development Ministry is responsible for the development of five-year development plans and the annual development plan. By the nature of its assignment, it is concerned with modernization. By virtue of its planning function, it is forward-looking. Its staff perceive themselves as planners, and they have absorbed the planning orientation that sets stock in basing plans on data. Because a large share of the development budget comes from international donors, it regularly deals with international agencies and is subject to pressures to act in accord with canons of "rational management." Therefore, it is not surprising that its allegiance to norms of information use is stronger than those of other government ministries.

Because the Planning and Development Ministry is on the cutting edge of modernization, it tends to value staff whose interests and operating style are consonant with the organization's objectives. [CHECK] Less weighed down with the dailiness of ongoing operations than, say, the Ministry of Education (although clearly planning and re-planning impose their own ongoing procedures), officials have greater opportunity to think about the kinds of knowledge that would increase the relevance and success of resource allocation decisions. Furthermore, the education unit within the Planning Ministry has to contend with other units for a share of the development budget. In order to further the case for education, it finds it useful to have good evidence about need, cost, and effectiveness. Planners in other units within the Ministry will expect, and respond to, well-supported arguments.

Planning and development departments in the provinces respond to some of the same incentives. However, there appear to be large variations among provinces.

In the Ministry of Education and in the provincial departments of education, a planning unit exists to do internally much the same kind of work that the Planning and Development Ministry and provincial departments of planning and development do on a broader scale. However, situated within the educational bureaucracy and responsible to its leadership, the planning units appear to be more constrained. Their orientation is more toward the current realities and current concerns that animate their

organizations. The planners in the Planning Ministry and departments seem to have a freer hand, a more open stance, a willingness to take a broader look.

Of course, a modernizing orientation, a forward-looking approach, and a concern with development do not mean that officials in the planning departments adopt a strictly data-based procedure. Although they know the rational planning rhetoric, they temper it with "ordinary knowledge" (Lindblom and Cohen 1979). As an official in the planning and development department in Baluchistan said, "There are no rigid criteria or information on which we say that this project is OK or this one should be rejected. We accept some proposals, we reject others, based on our general experience."

Most of the push for data, research, evaluation, and analysis has come from foreign donors. While the international community's insistence on data has effectively conveyed the esteem that should be accorded to it, data systems are out of tune with the culture and the standard operating procedures of the bureaucracy. When I asked officials how they spent their time, some in even the highest positions indicated that much of their day goes into special cases, individually negotiated changes in budget allocations, personnel decisions such as personal leaves for individuals, and reviewing the ubiquitous folders that are passed on by their subordinates for their signatures.

Tentative Suggestions for Improving the Use of Data

The developed world has been exporting its respect for data-based planning to developing nations along with its loans and grants. Education officials in Pakistan have learned the rhetoric. But they seem to have little opportunity, and perhaps little need, to translate the rhetoric into performance. Still, a heightened concern with data -- how many students are enrolled, the conditions of school buildings, the age of dropouts, the match of vocational training to the needs of the market -- is advantageous. It keeps in the forefront of their minds what the problems are and what kinds of effort will be needed if primary education is to become effective and accessible to all and if middle and secondary education is to reach a larger segment of the population.

How data can be of greater help to Pakistani educationists is a subject I approach with caution, given my short acquaintance with the country. However, not only the analysts of the BRIDGES project but Pakistanis as well (and more insistently) ask that I make recommendations. Therefore, although with some reservation, I'll offer a little advice.

Individual civil servants can do something to improve the use of data in education. In those units run by capable officials who keep abreast of information and are willing to take responsibility for their decisions, much appears to get accomplished. It might be useful to offer more training to

officials about the kinds of analysis that have been done and can be done, and how to apply the results of analysis to current problems. Such skills are not obvious. BRIDGES ran a three-day conference in Islamabad in July 1989 presenting the results of their research to high-ranking education officials. After two days of data presentation, which was received with lively interest, BRIDGES researchers asked the conferees on the third day to come up with recommendations from the data. According to a colleague, there was no connection between the research reported and the recommendations. Officials recommended what they have been recommending all along, just as if the first two days had never happened (Reimers 1989). With more training and experience, they might be enabled to make connections. People probably need to see practical demonstrations of the ways in which good data can help them do a better job. One BRIDGES analyst is showing officials in Sind how disaggregated data on the condition of school buildings can help them set priorities for repairs (Cassidy 1989).

Recruitment of capable people is needed. There is a standing conflict within the Pakistani bureaucracy about the relative importance of generalists and specialists. The top civil servant in education in each province, the Secretary, is always a generalist, and there are good reasons, as well as historical tradition, for generalists in top positions. But well-informed specialists are also needed. It might be possible

to recruit people with analytic training and skill and to help them form an analytical beachhead within the bureaucracy.

It is tempting, although not very practical, to recommend an overhaul of decision-making loci within the bureaucracy and between the bureaucracy and the legislature. It is clear that political intrusions lessen the capacity of the civil service to serve effectively. Changes in structure seem to be called for.

I am also engaged by current suggestions to move many decisions to lower levels in the system. Much could be decided at the district level, instead of clogging up decision channels in the provincial department -- or at the federal Ministry. If local districts had more responsibility for school-level decisions, such as the location of schools, overseeing the attendance and performance of teachers, provision of in-service training for teachers, and so on, some of the inefficiencies in the bureaucracy could be reduced.

Whether moving the venue of decision making closer to the people would increase the use of data and analysis is highly doubtful. Local people would no doubt have strong feelings about when and where schools should be built, and would have little desire to turn to technical analysis. The local MPA and representatives of the local district would be at least as influential as they are now, and probably more so, without the countervailing force of the provincial bureaucracy. But I have long thought that the real question is not: "How can we increase the use of analysis?" but "How can we improve policy decisions, and

in what ways can analysis help?" (Weiss 1978). It seems to my (still-amateur) eye that devolution of decisions would make sense. And in time, analysts may be able to educate local citizens in the use of data. Perhaps experts from the province could become consultants to the local "school board," helping local people to make wiser and fairer decisions. That would be an advantage for policy, and it would also contribute to the education of the citizenry on an important matter -- how to reach decisions after careful review of relevant evidence.

Therefore, a corollary of decentralization would be the strengthening of analytic capabilities in the provincial civil service. People with the requisite skills are currently in short supply, but if they could be recruited and trained, they could lay appropriate data before the competent forum, and perhaps in time encourage local people to use data as part of the decision-making process.

Comparison with the United States

The situation in Pakistan regarding data and analysis is not different in kind from the situation in the United States, but rather in degree. Our country, too, has officials who consider their own knowledge and experience perfectly adequate bases for making decisions. Many decisions, even those of considerable moment, are made without recourse to research, analysis, or even simple data. When data are used, the use often tends to be to legitimate a course of action that the decision maker already wants to take or to craft specific details of legislation or

rules, such as revisions in allocation formulas or eligibility criteria. But the U. S. does have a legion of trained analysts, who press for attention to data. We have offices of research and analysis within the bureaucracy at every level, and we have university faculty and independent research and consulting firms on the outside. The mass media have been trained over the past generation to pay attention to analysis in their reporting, and news stories often carry results of research, quotes from qualified researchers, and attractive graphics that display analytic data (Weiss and Singer 1988). Therefore on the supply side we are much better endowed than is Pakistan.

On the demand side, too, experience has developed a receptiveness to analysis in federal and state bureaucracies and, increasingly, in legislatures as well. U. S. policy makers are learning the extent to which analysis helps them understand which policies are likely to have better results, what the trade-offs are between what they get and what they give up when they adopt a policy, and the extent to which analysis provides a protective screen when they want to do something that they know will be unpopular.

The U. S. also has a bureaucracy that, in general, regards a job as a public trust, where people want to do as good a job as they know how. The lines between policy and administration, although nowhere so crisp and clean as public administration experts once thought, are at least well demarcated. The intrusions of bureaucrats into policy making, and the intrusions

of legislators into administration, fall within a limited range. Over all, they are not anywhere as pervasive as these phenomena are in Pakistan.

Therefore, part of the solution to Pakistan's "analysis" plight is improvement of its basic institutions. Which of course is a reform of infinite difficulty in a nation without strong democratic traditions. It will take great effort, skill, political will -- and time -- to improve political and administrative structures and procedures, but there are enormous incentives and rewards for so doing, although perhaps some losses as well.

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