Chapter 22

Public Participation and Network Management

The last chapter focussed on network working and participation in parallel organisation activity *within* domains of professional activity. This chapter will concentrate on network-based *supervision* of the public service.

There are three sets of reasons why we need a new interface between the public and the public service.

Those in the first set have to do with enabling the public to obtain more individualised treatment suited to their own needs and priorities, to get better access to more information, and have more influence on what happens.

The second set stem from the need to find better ways of ensuring that public servants both seek out information which will contribute new insights into ways forward and act on such information in an innovative way in the long-term public interest.

A third set arise from the fact that the role of the public service in the management of modern societies is now much too great to be adequately directed and monitored by small groups of elected representatives. Such groups tend to take decisions which have wide ranging effects. Unfortunately, the wide range of topics on which they are asked to decide and the limitations of the human mind mean that such decision takers cannot possibly be well informed about more than a fraction of the issues about which they are taking decisions.

Because there are so many reasons for change, we have suggested that it is necessary, but not sufficient, for public servants' work to be more open to the public gaze. We must also find means whereby a wider range of people can initiate the collection of relevant information and feed it into public debate.

One of the things we need is a more transparent, "decentralised", bureaucratic and representative structure which will enable us to:

- Hold public servants accountable for such things as contributing to the creation of a pervasive climate of innovation and making good discretionary judgments about which activities are likely to be in the long-term public interest.
- Ensure that key information is collected.

- Ensure that many more deliberate attempts are made to experiment with, and evaluate, new options, and that information on the consequences of each is fed outward to the public (so that members of the public can make their own decisions) instead of being locked up in a bureaucratic hierarchy and at best only available to elected representatives.
- Ensure that evaluation results in appropriate action.

But there are other problems to be tackled. We need improved arrangements to enable people to influence the goals of policy, what happens in the public service, and the definition of problems. There is a need for means whereby the public can initiate enquiries into the value of apparently pointless or destructive activities and initiate activities which are likely to lead to the discovery of better ways of doing things or to the re-direction of effort from less important to more important tasks. It is currently too difficult to harness public expertise and to influence what happens in administratively separated domains both at home and in other countries.

Under the present system there is insufficient provision for members of the public, or even public servants, to permeate so-called "private" organisations - even the newly privatised Electricity Boards, Nuclear Fuel companies or bus companies - to satisfy themselves that they are acting in the public interest or actually maintaining the environmental standards they claim to have set themselves or had imposed upon them. The public usually have little opportunity to contribute to what is included in such things as "environmental charters", still less to find out what dysfunctional practices are being implemented by, or within, the organisations, whether intentionally or otherwise. The need is to get beyond "Quangos" - which typically spend more on creating a semblance of public responsiveness and accountability than they do on actually performing such a role.

Arrangements must be made such that individual public servants, and other members of the public, can be released from their day-to-day activities in order to initiate and participate in research programmes for which only they have noticed the need, and make time and resources available to allow these same people to work on the development of solutions to those problems.

A Solution to the Problems of the Himalaya

We have so far highlighted the developments that are needed in public participation and network management by reference to Western educational systems. Other issues emerge more clearly from a consideration of the developments that are needed to manage the Himalaya effectively. These have been discussed by Thompson and Warburton[22.1].

In the Himalaya, there is a rapidly expanding hill population exploiting increasingly marginal land in an attempt to produce more food and fuelwood. As agriculture expands, forest cover is destroyed. This results in erosion and landslips which decrease the productivity of the soil, pasture, and forest. Attempts by individual farmers to better their lot lead to a worsening of the overall situation both in the hills and the plains below. The changes result in mass movements of water, land, and people. Experts focus on different aspects of the problem such as population, land, food, or climate. The relationships between the components vary markedly from one part of the region to another and interact in complex ways. No one knows very much about any of these relationships or about what will happen in the future. Empirical estimates differ by enormous amounts. For example, some estimates of per capita firewood

consumption are 67 times other estimates. Predictions for the future range from complete soil loss to massive biomass accumulation.

Thompson argues that to move towards solution of the problem of the Himalaya we need radical change in our beliefs about the role of science in such situations. Most problems to which science is applied involve much certainty and some mess. Situations - like the one documented in the Himalaya - i.e. most of the problems we have been grappling with in this book - are *mostly* messes with very little certainty. Thompson suggests that, instead of asking "what are the facts", we should start by asking "what would we like the facts to be" (just as we have in fact done in our studies in education, urban planning, etc.). He argues that one should then proceed to the application of systems-science - i.e. we should identify all the components of a system and the connections between them. He argues that one of the most important activities required to do this is to encourage a variety of people with very different perspectives on what "the problem" is - including the various hill farmers in this case - to state the problem and the solution as they see it. Those who come with one definition (and who therefore, in their attempts to deal with it, contribute to its exacerbation in some circumstances and to its solution in others) cannot be expected to change their perceptions and behaviour simply because a solution to the problem based on others' definitions is introduced. Their own definition will continue to determine their behaviour. He shows that it is important not to reject these alternative problem definitions and the solutions they suggest: It is, for example, simply not true that, as those who focus on "overpopulation" advocate, there is no room for the traditional solution of opening up more land if present provision cannot feed the population. Likewise, "the problem" may be, not so much a lack of forest, as management of the existing forest. Starting from such a perspective, careful study of the situation will often reveal that centralised management is much less effective than traditional decentralised management because the latter embodies many more negative, or corrective, feedback loops linked to more subtle interventions.

Then again, "the clients of the policy" are astonishingly diverse. Some of their needs will be best served by one set of actions; others by another set. There is not a unified problem with a single solution. Those who benefit from one set of problem definitions and the solutions to which they point may be miles away - such as downstream or in Europe - while those most directly involved may suffer great hardship from precisely those problem definitions and solutions.

The policy-maker's task is to generate multiple perspectives on the problem area and make explicit the wide range of "solutions" to which these different definitions point. It is to help clarify the consequences which the different "solutions" are likely to have for different groups within the system. It is to contribute to the process of making clear the circumstances in which, the ways in which, and for whom, each "solution" will "work". More specifically, it is to organise - systematise - in his or her own mind the network of interest-groups, problem-definitions, and "solutions" (and the multiple effects of each) in such a way as to generate *systems* understanding[22.2].

Thompson concludes that policy development requires "clumsy", as distinct from "gainly", streamlined, or "efficient" institutions. That is, it requires a balance between step-wise, local, and often contradictory interventions, and systems-oriented, but not system-wide, experimental, monitored interventions. The latter involve the use of tentative systems understandings to introduce changes on a local (pilot) basis along with careful and comprehensive monitoring of the effects from the point of view of multiple interest groups.

The need is not for single and elegant definitions of "the problem" or of "the monitoring exercise". It is for a climate of innovation and a learning *system*.

The Problems of the Educational System

With this impetus to re-consider our assumptions about the desirability of streamlined, hierarchical management behind us we may now reconsider our Western, management arrangements. It is widely assumed that bureaucratic, management structures are, or should be, integrated and hierarchical. Nothing could be further from the truth. For example, both the formulation and execution of educational policy is dependent on the activities of at least the following groups:

Parents (as the most important educators of their children, as representatives of "consumers" in schools, and, perhaps with most influence on the formal system, as the Pre-school Playgroup Association).
Pupils (and pupil organisations).
Teachers (and teacher organisations and unions). (In view of the negative feelings often evoked by the mention of unions, it is not irrelevant to mention that it was the teachers' unions in Scotland who set up the first educational Research Institute in the world, that it was teachers themselves who carried out most of the original research conducted by that Institute, and that it was that Institute which somehow facilitated much of the forward-looking educational research summarised in this book.)
Employers (and employers' organisations).
Schools.
Local Education Authorities.
Ministers of Education.
The staff of teacher training colleges. (The educational priorities and research oversights of such personnel have had a marked effect on education.)
The universities (who exert a dramatic effect through their admissions requirements).
Students (and their organisations).
Adult Education Agencies.
The press and the mass media.
Social Services Departments.
Health Authorities.
Examination Boards.

Although it is apparent that neither the formulation nor the execution of educational policy is hierarchically organised, most people, and even such writers as Jaques, tend to assume that administrative structures are hierarchical and unified. Effective policy in reality demands some kind of concerted action on the part of all these groups, many of which have different geographical and social bases. That is to say, it depends on some kind of shared set of concerns or feelings - some kind of *zeitgeist*. The difficulties which this poses are exacerbated by the fact that the tensions between the manifest and latent functions of the educational system affect these groups differently. For example, pupils are much more acutely and explicitly aware of the latent, crudely instrumental, social placement functions of the educational system than are teachers, and social workers are more aware of the destructive and socially damaging effects of much of what goes on in "educational" institutions than are teachers.

Yet other problems stand in the way of unified policies and delivery systems. Even if we focus only on the manifest - educational and developmental - functions of the educational system, it is obvious that appropriate policies must provide for multiple programmes and types of activity which reflect the age of the students, the area of the country in which they live, the variation in their talents and interests, and the needs of the institutions in which they will live and work.

Internally diversified policies, which are hard to formulate as an integrated and consistent whole, are therefore required.

The *delivery* of education also rests with numerous agencies - parents, schools, colleges, playgroups, universities, the WEA, employers, training consortia, trade unions, professional organisations, and employers' organisations.

What educational agencies do is also seriously influenced by the actions of agencies without any explicit educational role. Thus the prison service not only has to cope with problems which may have been created, exacerbated, or neglected by the educational system, but also forms *part* of the educational system itself. Housing policy, by creating single-class communities, can create major problems *for* the educational system. It can also perform important social and educational functions by, for example, creating balanced communities which allow people to familiarise themselves with others' values and ways of life. Welfare policies which treat people in a demeaning and degrading mannner can destroy initiative, feelings of confidence, and the competencies required to cope on one's own. In this way they both deprive the community of crucially important human resources and generate much of the demand for medical care.

It follows that what any agency appears to need to do is very much affected by what other - apparently unrelated - agencies do and, in particular, that *the effects* of policy in any one area are very much affected by what other agencies do.

It also follows that the people who need to be involved in the determination of educational policy are not just the "clients" of the system in the way in which this word is traditionally used: As with policies concerning the Himalaya, what is done inflicts costs on, and impacts, *everybody* both in the immediate society and in the wider world.

Given what has been said, it is obvious that policies in the educational, environmental, and medical areas *cannot* be centrally formulated and hierarchically administered. No central agency could be aware of more than a fraction of the relevant issues. The complex net of activities which comprise "policy" in each of these areas can therefore only be developed and extended, both as a service and in relation to other services, by *networks* involving the participation of numerous publics.

Towards Network-Based Supervision

Most people have an interest and expertise on education, whether deriving from their experience as pupils, parents, employees, co-workers, employers, teachers, or researchers. There is therefore an enormous pool of expertise, experience, and goodwill available. A relatively fluid structure of monitoring groups could therefore be set up to examine the work of particular teachers, schools, and groups of schools, to look at provision in a geographical area, to examine links with other educational institutions, to examine links with national

educational provision and the national system itself, to assess international provision, to monitor advisory services, to initiate research, to monitor the outcomes of research, and to monitor research institutes. Groups could monitor the links between educational policy and other areas of policy and investigate alternative arrangements.

The work of the public servants involved, from classroom teacher to permanent secretary, would be open to inspection by whomsoever had the time and the interest. Such observers would not have the right to *demand* that public servants comply with their suggestions, but they could have the right to make their views and observations known, both to the public servants concerned and to the general public. The official, for his or her part, would be required to convince relevant monitoring groups that his or her behaviour was at least one of the justifiable options. Normally, of course, the procedure would simply serve to keep everyone on their toes and no heavy-handed intervention would be required. But if intervention was necessary both intervention itself and transfer of the official to a more appropriate post would be a great deal easier than it is today.

The necessity for a *network* of such groups can be clarified by considering the arrangements needed if teachers are to take more responsibility for improving the quality of education. To do this, they need to take account of what is being done by other teachers in the same and other schools, both in this country and abroad. They need to take account of both national and international developments. They need assistance in dealing with problems, in clarifying and initiating the coordinated action required to tackle the educational and social problems lying behind everyday difficulties in the classroom, and in making contact with other people trying to tackle related problems. Most of this *information* and assistance is to be provided through networking. But network working poses serious problems from the point of view of evaluating the work of any given teacher. If teachers' work is to be meaningfully evaluated it will be necessary to take into account all of the considerations which led them to behave in particular ways and the support - or the lack of it - available through his or her network. It would, of course, be impossible for any monitoring group to have any detailed knowledge of this (which is why attention will have to focus on the quality of the teachers' discretionary judgment and whether he or she has followed procedures that are likely to make for innovation). Judgments of even procedural rationality cannot be made in a vacuum. It follows that the monitoring network must, to a considerable extent, parallel the network that is required within the profession. Its objective is to lead to *informed* public debate.

A system of this kind has been instigated and evaluated by Howard[22.3]. His groups, made up of parents, teachers, pupils, administrators, and researchers, were set up to monitor and review the work of schools and individual teachers over an extended period of time. The groups were supplied with data which had been collected with the aid of professionally-developed questionnaires. Some of the questionnaires were designed in such a way that the information obtained would provoke those concerned to review educational goals, how they were to be achieved, and the barriers to their achievement. Other questionnaires documented what was going on in individual classrooms. Follow-up data were collected to find out whether the classroom climates had changed as a result of the changes which were introduced. Given this information, members of the monitoring groups were able to make useful suggestions for ways in which the classrooms and schools concerned could be improved. Overall, the process led to a marked improvement in the understanding of educational issues among parents, pupils, teachers, and other members of the community.

It is important that the direct contact between members of such groups be supplemented by effective media coverage of the issues and computer-based networks to allow communication between like-minded individuals in other parts of the world. We might envisage a media-based debate, with a guaranteed right to contribute and be heard. But the right to be heard is not sufficient on its own. People also need an assurance that assistance will be available to help them collect the data they need to substantiate their viewpoints. The debate must be linked to voting procedures, but the votes which are to count on any particular issue will in many cases need to be limited to those with an interest in that topic. If useful information is to be obtained from such polls, the questions will need to be much more carefully formulated than is typically the case in commercial surveys. However, the votes themselves should not bind policy making groups. Democracy is more about catering for variety, and allowing consensus to emerge, than establishing majority decisions binding on all. The pattern of votes should be looked upon as one source of information among many to be taken into account by public servants in the decision-making process. In the end, those public servants should be accountable to a monitoring network for the quality of their discretionary judgment as to what is in the long-term interest of the public as a whole and the publics of which it is composed.

The network of public supervisory groups needs to be designed in such a way that it will help people to clarify their ideas, initiate appropriate political activities, initiate research (including action-research), and keep up to date with the results of research. Members of these networks must not only be able to initiate the process of information-collection: They need to be able to contribute to the definition of problems to be investigated and tackled and able to ensure that it is carried though from that perspective.

It is important for researchers to be involved at all stages in this process. This is because it is researchers who are mainly responsible for generating the information needed to assess the effectiveness of provision, for identifying the barriers preventing the system reaching its goals, for clarifying the procedures required to reach those goals, for studying the effectiveness of different administrative arrangements and inventing better ones, and for developing the tools needed to do things more effectively. Encouraging researchers to participate in the network management structure is one way of helping to ensure that more relevant information is collected for formal evaluation purposes, that that information is used, and that steps are taken to identify, understand, and solve problems which are not immediately apparent. Their involvement is also desirable in that it brings into the decision-making process people who, because of their contact with ideas, the public, the problems, and potential methods of tackling them, are more likely than others to envisage radically new formulations of objectives, problems, and lines of development.

Many questions remain about how such groups should be composed, what weight should be attached to different people's opinions, how the work of the groups should be monitored, and what procedures will ensure that the groups disband when they have outlived their usefulness. However, the answers to these questions can only be obtained through monitored experimentation[22.4].

It is worth reiterating, however, that the main effectiveness of network-based supervision would *not* derive from power to hire and fire individuals. Rather, it would result from providing teachers and bureaucrats with a wealth of positive ideas on how to improve their performance and giving them access to those best able to assist them. They would help public servants to tap their clients', often considerable (if generally neglected) expertise. But the two most important benefits of the process would be:

1. To expose public servants' activities to the public gaze - this being a strong incentive to act in the public interest, and
2. To provide the public with the information they need to take informed decisions about their own lives.

The role of such groups in *staff appraisal* merits careful consideration. Building on best current practice as articulated by Jaques, it would normally be mainly the *manager-once-removed's* job to appraise the performance of subordinates and the functioning of the organisation and its policies. The supervisory networks would be mainly concerned with appraising the behaviour of senior managers. To do this effectively they would need information derived from (i) direct assessment of the competence of the individual manager, (ii) such things as organisational climate surveys (to find out whether the manager had been able to create a climate of dedication, enthusiasm, and innovation) and (iii) organisational performance audits.

It emerges, therefore, that such networks would form an essential part of the operational system as well as performing a more general supervisory role.

Network-based supervision should not be viewed as applicable only to the public service: It is essential to monitor the doings of so-called "private" organisations and politicians in much the same way. At present, both frequently act in ways which are not in the public interest.

There are, of course, objections to any such system. Among these are:

1. That it would take up a disproportionate amount of public servants' time. This objection can be countered by noting the enormous cost and inefficiency of our *current* accounting systems and the gross inefficiency - even counter-productivity - of the public service.
2. That the public are ignorant and uninterested. In response to this objection I can only say that it is my experience as a social survey worker that the public is both interested in, and informed about, aspects of the workings of policy of which public servants in their offices are ignorant. It is true that members of the public were often not informed about aspects of policy of which public servants were aware - but that is largely because, as with Thompson's hill farmers, little attempt was made to involve them in a discussion of the issues.
3. That "there must be an authority to dismiss incompetent workers". It is felt insufficient to expose the work of incompetent people to the public gaze, and to institute better staff guidance, placement, and development procedures without relying on more Draconian measures. This claim has a somewhat hollow ring given the evidence that our current hierarchical supervisory structures are typically unable to do anything when faced with incompetent teachers, doctors, and public servants - or even extremely destructive elected politicians. In fact, as Day and Klein[22.5] have observed, public service professionals are generally able to evade *any* form of accountability by arguing that the issues involved are so complex that they can only be understood by fellow professionals. The view that public servants can only be accountable to their peers is, however, seriously challenged by the data presented in the author's *Managing Education for Effective Schooling*[22.6]. The most widely prescribed remedy to the problem posed by unaccountable public servants - centralised prescription of goals followed by checking, tough staff appraisal, and devolution of "management" (but

with no right to determine goals or resources to tackle societal constraints on effectiveness) to local bodies - has been thoroughly discredited in earlier chapters of this book.

4. That we must have some central body to set priorities and allocate resources. This claim likewise has a hollow ring about it. Western society can hardly claim to have allocated resources efficiently, nationally or internationally. There has, for example, been vast over-consumption of fossil fuels and inappropriate deployment of human resources. The establishment of a national and international network-based management process which would seek out, collect, collate, debate, sift, and initiate a range of different kinds of action on the basis of information could hardly do worse.

Toward a "Learning Society"

In an important book, Emery[22.7] has discussed the arrangements that are needed to find a way forward in areas (like education, the environment, and society more generally) in which everything is always changing in fairly dramatic ways. Like ourselves, he focuses on education as an example. It is not just that there is new knowledge to be conveyed to pupils and students. There are also new kinds of students in the system - students who just were not there before. Examples include minorities who do not speak the language, and illiterate adults. Completely new demands are made on students because the encompassing society, environment, and work have all changed dramatically. The educational system has to cope with vastly *more* students because far more people have been "parked" there so that they do not show up in statistics on unemployment. And the sociological demands society makes of the system have changed: Because of other changes in society it has become more important to legitimise the social order by emphasising a single and unarguable criterion of merit and to ensure that only people with a conservative social philosophy find their way into influential positions.

Under such circumstances, it is not sensible to proceed in either of the two main ways favoured in the past. These have been to set up committees of experts to make plans, and to employ "Management by Objectives"[22.8] personnel.

In changing circumstances of the kind just described, committees of experts tend to be dysfunctional because those who are brought together tend to have established their claim to expertise in the past - when things were different. Further, they are most likely to have established their expertise by developing discipline-based thinking which ignores the wider ramifications of, the context of, and what is new in, the problem they have been brought together to examine. They have a reputation for *not* recommending politically unacceptable, "unrealistic", radical solutions.

"Management by Objectives" personnel have been trained to identify a single criterion of success and to search for the optimal strategy for achieving it. They find it difficult to function in the context of multiple and emergent objectives and partial and conflicting strategies.

Emery shows that in the context of significant change, and where - as is typically the case - outcomes are multiple, of varying importance to different groups, and incapable of being easily prioritised, what is needed is a "learning society" where learning comes from initiating multiple actions and studying the effects. The effects to be studied are *multiple* and emergent. Most of them cannot be specified in advance. Under such circumstances special sensitivities

are required to detect effects which no one had previously thought it was important to consider, let alone monitor. In these circumstances, one way to help ensure that there is some recognition of the multiple effects is to involve as wide a range of the public, and especially the clients of the system, as possible. However, expertise is also needed to formalise ways of detecting these outcomes and to bring to bear relevant up-to-date information.

He shows that the traditional division of broader issues into "manageable problems" results in:

a) The problem being shorn of its ramifications so as to allow an existing body of experience and expertise to be brought to bear on it.
b) Isolated aspects of the problem being defined as "the crucial issue" or the "core of the problem" and thus both demanding, and being amenable to, instant solutions. This results in "no time" being available to research the problem. It also helps to create an illusion of managerial dynamism which will command public applause.
c) The proposed solution to each "manageable problem" (i.e. isolated sub-problem) involving resources and social supports being more closely tied to each other (e.g. "social work activities") rather than requiring the kind of organisational re-design needed to tackle the systems basis of the problems. This not only results in the agencies involved making changes which exacerbate those aspects of the problem which show up as other people's responsibility, but also in blindness to what is new and emergent.

Emery gives examples of how the claimed effectiveness of "Management by Objectives" can be, and often is, undermined by the intervention of others who do not accept the basic orientation of the project, i.e. the single goal as identified by the MBO specialists.

He summarises the dilemma as follows:
"The more society changes the more we need to be able to plan but the less we have the knowledge with which to plan". Like Milbrath, Thompson, and ourselves he argues that what is needed is a development and learning process. Unfortunately, the word learning, having become too strongly associated with schooling, tends to evoke inappropriate actions.

Emery argues that the role of planners must cease to be one of experts riding with the powers that be. Instead, planners need to:

a) Help the main parties to the proposed change to identify and agree on the *values* the change is supposed to serve and the ways forward which are most in character with those ends.
b) Design a change process that will enable relevant learning to take place at an appropriate speed. The required timescale is neither instantaneous nor limitless. Its limits are set by the time within which change must occur to avoid intolerable costs of not changing and the time by which decisions need to be made if adequate resources are to be mobilised.
c) Devise participative arrangements which make it possible for the choice of paths to reflect both the end values to be achieved and *intrinsic value of the paths for those who will have to traverse them*. We have seen both how market processes drive down the quality of working life - one of the most important sources of a high quality of life - and how the "New Values" encompass both end-state and life-style values. Active adaptation which will avoid entrapment in the past requires some sense - if not vision - of desirable futures. These must be deliberately introduced (and are very much lacking

at the present time). Contrary to what MBO specialists would have us believe, the values that influence behaviour cannot be subsumed under a single goal. In this mode of planning, searching shifts from a quest for means to a search for ends. The search for means becomes more a field of experimentation with alternative ways forward - and learning from the results - than a search for the (single) "best" way forward. Implementation and selection of courses of action become inextricably involved in each other. The overall target is to develop a system which can learn for itself, not one which responds to information fed in by "experts".

Emery advocates that the planning process begin with a "search conference" focussing on goal clarification and the explication of different goals for different people. For such a conference to work, the participants have to agree to consider even mere possibilities. This differs sharply from an unwritten assumption embodied in most planning processes - namely that only "realistic" and "feasible" options will be considered.

If this is to be done it is necessary to create ample time in which to search, freedom from compulsion to arrive at explicit decisions, and freedom from outside interruptions such as work and family. The participants need to be brought together for as many days and nights as seem necessary for their work. Nevertheless the process needs to involve those with the highest operational responsibilities (echoes of Kanter) so that a wide range of experimental interventions can be initiated. The participants need to build up a shared picture of where the system has come from and a shared picture of its likely futures. It must involve all the processes necessary to develop "military intelligence"[22.9]. For its success it not only requires planning expertise to be available ... it also requires the currently neglected capacity to monitor and analyse the workings of emerging systems.

A somewhat similar viewpoint has been contributed by Coleman[22.10]. He discusses the assumptions made in different kinds of society about the relationships to be established between politics and social research. In our current, asymetric society, he argues, there is a tendency on the part of central government to see policy research as a means of finding out what to do to make its policies work more effectively. This coupling of centralised authority with bureaucratic hierarchy is not compatible with a notion of politics based on a balance of pressures from conflicting interests. An alternative is "pluralistic" policy research, in which interested parties have a dual role in shaping policy. The first of these involves participation in formulating the problems that are to be studied. The second involves participation in acting upon the results. Research does not, in this model, provide objective data to be interpreted and implemented in a disinterested fashion, but results to be used by different parties in pursuit of their own interests.

Before leaving the question of participation it is worth observing that Olsen[22.11] has noted that "participation" in government takes many different forms in different countries. Interactions may be formal or informal. Participation may involve fact finding and enquiry; advising; decision making; or implementation of policies. Arrangements may be temporary or permanent. Inter-organisational structures may span nations, regions, or local areas. Participating organisations may be selected by government or by the organisations themselves (and even what should be considered to be an organisation is problematic).

Summary

In this chapter we have underlined the need for new forms of public participation in the management of society. The main reasons for wanting a new interface between the public service and society are, first, to help to ensure that public servants are more likely to seek out and act on information in an innovative way in the long-term public interest, and, second, to enable the public to contribute more effectively to the pervasive social change that is required. The two objectives are closely interlinked.

The first of these objectives is basically to be achieved by exposing the behaviour of public servants to the public gaze. However, this is not as simple as it seems because the relevant behaviour of public servants can often only be exposed to the public through the medium of professionally-developed evaluation procedures. Furthermore, what is in the public interest can often only be clarified through widespread public debate of the effects of numerous, comprehensively evaluated, systems-oriented experiments.

The second objective - that of enabling the public to contribute to the creation of a pervasive climate of innovation - is partly dependent on the first. It can only be fully achieved if public servants fulfil their duty to sift information for good ideas, systematically set out to create variety, initiate numerous experiments (some of them based on ideas which have only the remotest possibility of working), ensure that those experiments are comprehensively evaluated, and feed that information to the public to allow it to make more informed choices and thus exert influence. The aim is to develop a *system* which is both a *learning* system and one which enables the public to contribute its expertise, ensure that personal priorities are catered for, and define common and individual goals.

In part because, as we have seen, public sector activities themselves need to be more network-based, the arrangements for public participation in the management of society also need to be more network-based. Other reasons for stressing network-based supervision include the fact that no centralised authority can direct and control the pervasive change that is required. In any case, there is no hope of any central authority controlling key activities of populations living on the other side of the globe. They *can* only be influenced through network-based arrangements which facilitate the flow of information across organisational and national boundaries.

But our emphasis on public participation in network management has still other sources. Thompson's writing was used to highlight the fact that the problems we face involve huge ranges of uncertainty. Getting good data on and estimating even such elementary things as per capita fuelwood consumption proves to be extraordinarily difficult. Beyond that, there are endless unknown connections between different parts of systems. These result in huge ranges of uncertainty. Under such circumstances one can have little faith in projections of the long-term effects of introducing alternative ways of doing things. And, if one cannot even trust data on per-capita wood consumption, what confidence can one have in the comprehensiveness of less concrete information?

Such considerations led both Thompson and Emery to suggest that the primary need is for a mechanism which encourages articulation of, and acceptance of the legitimacy of, multiple definitions of priorities, problems, and potential solutions to problems. Mechanisms are needed to promote multi-pronged, step-wise, system-oriented (but not system-wide), experimental changes, with adequate arrangements to evaluate their effects and set that information in the context of a variety of tentatative and emergent understandings of the workings of the system. A *cyclical* process of defining goals, mounting experiments,

attempting to make broadly-based evaluations of those experiments, seeing what did not work and why not, noting the limitations of the evaluations, advancing understanding, clarifying common and diverse goals, and starting again, is required.

This conclusion underlines the need to disseminate a much better understanding of the nature of appropriate evaluation methodology and the scientific process itself. Evaluations based on alternative definitions of desired outcomes and the nature of the problem need to be conducted. They need to set out to be as *comprehensive* as possible - i.e. to identify *all* important outcomes and the factors contributing to them. But getting comprehensive evaluations is problematic because no one really knows what it is most important to look at. To get these identified, pervasive debate is required and heretics and mavericks need to be helped to make their voices heard. What this means is that it has to be more widely understood that the objective of science is to build up an understanding of a hidden reality through public debate between positions. It is to use a few scraps of information to illuminate a broader picture. The scientific process should not be viewed as an avenue to obtaining one or two unquestionable "facts" to be used by administrators to solve clear problems.

In this context Thompson's emphasis on the need to avoid a quest for streamlined organisations and ways of doing things emerged as an observation of the greatest importance: Finding a way forward requires many apparently contradictory activities, based on different premises, and conducted by different people.

More fundamentally, we have, in this chapter, seen that traditional distinctions between employee, citizen, manager, public servant, and supervisor of public servant or manager have little relevance in modern society. Employees must carry out many of the functions that (public service) managers previously performed. Citizens must participate in supervisory networks to oversee the workings of the public service - and thus perform the role previously reserved for elected personnel. The public service must perform - and be held accountable for performing - the role that was previously expected of our democratic institutions.

Most fundamentally, we have seen that public participation in network working and parallel organisation activity both in their workplaces and in network-based supervision of the public service amounts to a new form of participative democracy. Properly implemented, it would fulfil the need for a mechanism through which people could initiate research into, and set in train actions designed to tackle, problems they alone had noticed. Given adequate societal commitment to innovation (itself to be, at least partially, created through a spiral effect by the public service), adequate recognition of the importance of active citizenship, and adequate acknowledgement of the fact that most of us are now, directly or indirectly, public servants and therefore merit the conditions of employment which public servants enjoy, such arrangements would permit people to devote their energies to tackling new and pressing problems.

Notes

22.1 Thompson and Warburton, 1985
22.2 Thompson suggests that one of the lenses which can be used to assist this process of clarification is to arrange the problem definitions, the data they suggest it is important to collect, and the facts to be publicised in such a way as to seek to expose the ends - and whose ends - they serve.
22.3 Howard, 1980, 1982a,b&c
22.4 See Raven (1982) for the problems in the evaluation of pilot programmes and a discussion of the stresses such experimentation can cause.
22.5 Day and Klein, 1987
22.6 Raven, 1994

22.7 Emery et al., 1974

22.8 As its name implies, the *Management by Objectives* movement sets about trying to improve their effectiveness by requiring managers to set clear objectives and montior progress toward them, avoiding distraction into activities which are not among the objectives.

22.9 To generate new insights and understandings ("intelligence") through a military or industrial intelligence service it is necessary to make sense of confusing and incomplete information. Intelligence officers frequently cannot know beforehand what to observe and report. They depend on their *feelings* ("intuition") and on recognising an emerging pattern to tell them what is significant. The qualities required to make sense of the incoming information include the ability to seek out, collate, re-interpret, and piece together, scraps of unreliable and incomplete information in order to perceive something that has not been seen before and to use what is then perceived to tell them what to attend to and observe next and what to report. The qualities required to do well also include the ability to discern what further information would be required to test initial impressions and the determination to collect that information - perhaps through overt as well as mental "experiment".

But much more is involved. The qualities required to establish military intelligence also include the ability to prise information out of other people and the motivation and the ability to do such things as set up and manage networks of contacts to obtain information, the ability to make good judgments about who possesses the sensitivities and persistence to do well in the field, and the ability to supply those contacts with appropriate guidance concerning the kind of information to be sought. The ability to carry out such tasks clearly involves general intelligence as commonly understood. But it also involves many other motivational dispositions and abilities and the effective use of accumulated specialist knowledge of military operations, people, and systems.

22.10 Coleman, 1974, 1982

22.11 Olsen, 1983

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