Applying Institution Building Concept to Field Research*

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1. I am not well aware of the contents and result of the formal discussions starting from the days of the graduate seminar at the Graduate School of Puplic and International Affairs of the University of Pittsburg to the research meetings of the Inter-University Program in Institution Building. I have not had the chance to read Hans Blaise's and Yong Whan Hahn's doctoral dissertations.

My reading is limited to such references as Milton Esman's "Institution Building and National Development," in *Dynamics of Development*, edited by Hambidge and published by Praeger, NewYork, 1964; and Esman and Hans Blaise, "*Institution Building Research: The Guiding Concepts*," published by Inter-University Research Program in Institution Building. I have also read in the past the research reports by my colleagues at the Graduate School of Public Administration who applied this model on the two national ministries of Korea. A few years ago, I also had the opportunity to skip through a colleague's copy of the interim appraisal of the Inter-University Program on Institution Building in an airplane from Seoul to Bangkok.

2. Iustitution building model has not matured enough to allow us a rigorous testing of causality between variables. Only correlational studies can be attempted either through surveys on measurable indices or through the collection of case histories.

3. The model as presented in the above Esman, Blaise paper does not explicitly contemplate on the relationships between categories and subcategories of variables. Only implicitly the relationshps are sometimes suggested. Such loaded terms as "political viability," "doctrine," "consistency," "stability," etc. all suggest the existence of some relationships between these variables and the relevant categories of institution building model. For more effective and efficient execution of research projects a wiser strategy will be to derive a series of explicit propositions on the relationships among the variables of different levels before launching field studies. This would mean that the field studies will aim at the testing of these propositions by proving either existence or non-existence of correlations among the variables.

4. The concepts of the model as they stand currently have not yet been operationalized to suit to the empirical testing of the theory in the field. For each variable, operationlized indices should be developed before embarking of the field study. Otherwise, each researcher in the field is likely to choose only those phenomena which will suit his purpose of either proving or disproving the relevant propositions. The other phenomena will be arbitrarily neglected by the researcher as irrelevant to the variables under consideration. There is even a danger that the researcher reaches

* Delivered at the Institution Building Research Seminar, Technology and Development Institute, East-West Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, April 3-6, 1972

his own conclusions based on a few unorganized initial data, and the manner of subsequent collection and organization of other data will be governed by the strong need to justify his initial conclusions.

5. Institution building model is built around the needs of the institution builders who are usually the leaders of the organization. In other words, the vantage point of the total society is not well reflected. Even when the building of a specific institution is a formally and substanively irrational venture for a total society, an institution which survives for a certain period of time will likely to be perceived by the institution builders, the relevant environmental units and researchers as having intrinsic value for the society.

In many cases of developing countries, a leader or a group of leaders can manipulate the values and norms of both the institutions and the environment and also they have the power to mobilize the resources. Thus it is easier for them to maintain the organization even at the cost of initial oppositions and various explicit dysfunctions.

In such case, is it still valid to say that the institution does have intrinsic value for the society? Or is it justified to neglect the societal viewpoint and keep focusing our concern only to the institutional needs?

6. Instituting building model does belong to the general category of organization theories with sociological orientation. Its basic orientation is very similar to those thinkers such as Weber, Parsons, Merton, Blau, Gouldner, Selznick and Etzioni, among whom Selznick and Parsons had greater influence on this model. In spite of this basic disciplinary orientation, all those theories of organizational dysfunctions are not considered in the model. And because of such sociological orientation, the model does not take into account psychological dimensions of individuals. Yet these dimensions sometimes have more explanatory power. For example, the variables of the leadership category are political viability, professional status, technical competence, organizational competence, role distribution and continuity. And leadership is viewed as a unit rather than in terms of each individual. I wonder whether there exists in most institutions a sense of group feeling among the leaders of the insitutes, which can be differentiated to a significant degree from the sense of organizational membership of the loyal members of the organization. Even if there exists such a feeling, political viability and organizational competence of the group as a whole cannot be determined empirically. These specific variables can be studied only in relation to the behavior of specific individuals who are playing leadership role. While the data for the indices of other variables may be amenable to some form of statistical arrangement for the group as a whole, organizational competence and political viability cannot be treated in the same manner.

Furthermore, political viability, continuity, role distribution, and organizational competence seem to be the minimum requirements for every institutional leadership. What makes difference among the leaders is whether they have other qualities on top of the above variables. Frequently, professional status and technical competence will not matter much in many institutions of developing countries. I would consider leader's style of perception of his role, his motivation and aspiration level, and his perception of the world around him as additional and more important variables.

Though it is true that organization theories have traditionally been concerned with the internal dimensions of organization, yet in the last decade a growing body of literature has been accumulated which concentrate on the environments of an organization. Society as a whole, other organizatons and groups, complexity and rapidity of change in the environment, etc. have been comceptualized and studied in relation to the focal organization's structure, rationality, autonomy and strategy, etc. These views and results of study may be incorporated for further refinement of the institution building model.

7. Time span to be ccovered has not been resolved.

Besides the initiation phase, what other phases are to follow in what sequence and how long for each phase has not been conceptualized. In addition, I wonder whether such conceptualization on phases or trends is possible at this stage or even worth while to attempt. When we know a sequence of phases for an organizational development, then our purpose of prediction and even prescription is largely accomplished.

Organizational theorists using very restricted number of variables identified iron law of oligarchy, routinization of charisma, bureaucratization trend, goal succession and even Parkinson's law for possible trends in organizations. Change theorists conceptualized the process of change from the idea origination stage to the stage of idea adoption. However, when we use the multitudes of variables in the institution building model, none of which seem to serve as the focal independent variable for all the other variables, then the conceptualization of trend for the whole institution becomes almost impossible task. Especially when we consider the uncontrollable influences of environmental stimuli upon the institution, this is even more so. The only advice I can make at this moment is for us to designate independent variable which will serve as the criterion of comparison over time, and also for the field researchers to break down the periods as small as possible so that in the later classification of data higher degree of flexibility can be allowed.

8. Institutional linkages are the variables which an institution is supposed to maintain with its environment. However, among its four categories of variables such as enabling linkage, functional linkage, normative linkage and diffused linkage, some linkages are not needed for certain categories of organizations. For example, those organizations whose prime beneficiaries are the organization members, both the input(ex. fee) and output(ex. benefit) retationships remain within the organizations. Such mutual benefit associations are labor unions, churches, clubs, veterans organizations, professional associations, and some political parties. These organizations may not need functional linkages. Even if we limit our concern to the developing countries, political parties, professional associations and labor unions are clearly the institutions which are needed for the dvelopment of these societies The same can be said about diffused linkage because the public will show little concern over the operation of these institutions as long as they do not trespass fixed boundaries. It is the business of their members. The environment does not show much concern even if there occurs an oligarchical tendency in this kind of organizations.

It is my feeling that the conceptualization of institutional linkage is somewhat biased toward the industrialized pluralistic society. In other words, an institution's environment is conceived as being composed of multitudes of other organizations which are in competition and in complementary relationships with the focal organization together with the more or less strong public opinion prevailing in the society. However, in developing societies this picture will not apply to many organization. An institution whose responsibility is development in some functional area is likely to enjoy monopolistic domain with strong support of the political elite who can provide both the enabling linkage and the functional linkage. The institution is also likely to perform more diffuse functions than its counterpart in a developed society. Public opinion is also likely to show little explicit concern about the operation of the organization.

The concept of environment as divided into four categories of variables will not provide a big help to the institution builders. The advice he will get from the model will be like the following:

"You have to have strong political background (enabling linkage), be friendly with the input providing and output consuming organizations (functional linkage), do not violate the existing norms including the legal provisions(normative linkage), and finally calm down the public opinion which turns against you(diffused linkage)." This line of advice is not much beyond common sense.

Even if we take into consideration the transactions between the institution and the enviornment as classified by purpose such as (a) gaining support and overcoming resistance, (b) resource exchange, (c) structuring the environment, and (d) transfer of norms and values, the advice we are giving to the institution builder will not likely to improve much. Institution buidling model purports to present strategies of development to the leader of an institution, and also its main contribution compared to the traditional organization theories should lie in the area of dealing with the environmental transactions. Therefore, refinement of the model in the area of dealing with enviornment should deserve serious consideration.

The model should be of help to a practicing institution builder in diagnosing his environmental contexts at the time he wants to do so, and based on this diagnosis, to decide his action in order to structure or change the environmental conditions. For this purpose an attempt should be made in the furtre to classify environmental contexts, and the strateges to move to different environmental contexts should also be made availabe.

9. "Doctrine is defined as the specification of value objectives, and operational methods underlying social action. The doctrine is conceived as the stable reference point of the institution and of its interactions with the environment, to which all other variables are related." While doctrine is to serve as evaluative criterion for the other variables and thus conceived as stable in its nature, this will not necessarily be so in the real world, because the doctrine and especially the objectives of an organization change over time. And sometimes such changes in doctrine are valued positively for the sucessful adaptation of the organization to the changing environment.

Once we admit the changing character of doctrine, then can doctrine still serve as the evaluative criterion for the other variables? In addition., there are more than two doctrines at a time conflicting against each other and without clear priority structure among them.

Among others "specificity" is a variable in this category of doctrine. By "specificity" is meant "the extent to which the elements in the doctrine supply the necessary foundations for social action in a given situation." If it is implied that such specifity is a required element of the doctrine, the opposite can equally be said, because from the standpoint of an institutional leader the high degree of abstractness and generality of doctrine is sometimes valued positively in order to accomodate conflicting demands, even elicit enthusiasm of the participants and to allow him with maximum degree of discretion in decision making.

10. In the selection of variables in institution, it seems the model builder purposely implicated propositions like the following examples.

Leadership Category

(1) The higher the degree of ***poitical viability***,

professional status, *technical competence* and *continuity of leadership*, the better the leadership.

(2) The better the *role distribution* among leaders, the better the leadership.

Doctrine Category

(1) The higher the degree of *specificity* of doctrine, the better the doctrine.

(2) The greater the conformiy of the doctrine to the existing norms, the better the doctrine.

(3) The more specific the *doctrine's relationship* to the preference and priorities of the society,the better the doctrine.

Program Category

(1) The higher the degree of consistency of program with the doctrine, the better the program.

(2) The higher the degree of *stability* of the output in terms of quality, quantity and in time perspective, the better the program.

(3) The higher the degree of *feasibility* of the program regarding physical and human resources, complementary production of other organizations and the absorbative capacity of the society, the better the program.

(4) The greater the degree of program's *contribution* to the needs of the society, the better the program.

Research Category

(1) The greater the *availability* of resources, the better the resource situation.

(2) The greater the number of available *source* of resources, the better the resource situation.

nternal Structure Category

(1) The higher the degree of *identification* of participants with the institution, the better the internal structure.

(2) The higher the degree of *consistency* of internal structure with institution's doctrine and program, the better the internal structure.

(3) The greater the *adaptability* of internal structure to shifts in program emphasis and other changing conditions, the better the internal structure.

With regard to the need for professional status and technical competence of leadership, I already made comments. A comment was also made as to the specificity of doctrine.

If we think of developmental activities as introducing changes into the society which is not very conducive to such changes, then an institution builder may frequently have to violate the exisling norms of the society. He will also frequently have to work under the situation of scarce resource and little demand from the society.

This means that the feasibility of program is not high in normal sense at the initial stage of institution building. An innovative leader should create new resources and societal demands rather than merely utilizing and adapting to the existing ones. What makes sense to him is the advice how to create such new resource and demands rather than saying resources are important and the program has to have feasibility.

Some propositions sound like common sense and some are even against common sense. What may be necessary are the further breakdown of these variables and the conceptualizations of the relatonships among the categories, variables and subvariables.

11. An institutional success is to be judged acording to the institutionality the concept of which is composed of such variables as survival, autonomy, influence, and normativeness to other social units. Among these variables, autonomy and influence seem to be the both sides of the same coin. In other words, the greater the autonomy of an institution, it is more likely that the same in-

stitution will be able to exercise greater influence. Furthermore, environmental forces are not totally within the control of the institution. Though an institution may strive for greater autonomy and influence, its environment will sometimes turn hostile and consequently it will decrease the autonomy and the capacity of influence of the institution. In such a case, the question a researcher has to face is whether he has to conclude that the institutionality of the institution has decreased in this dimension. For example, let us suppose a situation in which a banking institute which used to enjoy higher degree of autonomy is now controled in greater degree by the Ministry of Finance not because of its own fault but because another bank had malpractices in its operations. In this case is it faire to say that the institutionality of this innocent bank has decreased?

Survival is the minimum requirement. Therefore, it does not serve as a satisfactory criterion to judge the degree of success of an institution. Consequently, the import or spread-effect of the innovations to other social units is the only remaining and probably the most important criterion in view of the underlying motivation of this institution building research. However, to trace accurately the spread-effect of an innovation will not be easy, because in actual field situation the researcher will frequently find that the similar innovation adopted in other institutes are the functions of not only the innovations in the focal institution but also of similar ideas and practices at other places.

12. Let us assume that all the delicate works involved with the search for meaningful classifications of the universe of institutios are accomplished.

Then, restriction of the objects of study to a more or less similar kind will give us special advantage in disigning the research framework because the institutional aspects can he controlled or an in-depth analytical framework can be developed for the analysis of institutional aspects.

If we take a snapshot of the picture of the two institutions respectively, then we will have at our hands two pictures each of which is comprised of one environment and one institution. The two environmental context can be compared with regard to their similarities and dissimilarities. The same will be done with regard to the institutions. If the two institutional features are found to be generally identical as we expected at the beginning, then it will mean that the different element of environments are not associated wth the institutional features. Only the similar elements of the two environments may have some correlations with the institutional features.

On the other hand, if we find dlissimilarities between two institutions applying the refined in-depth analytical framework together with the dissimilarities in environmental contexts, then the suggestion we get is that the different features of the environments may have correlations with the different features of the two institutions.

Another approach is a slight variation of the above. Typologies of environmental contexts will be developed like E_1, E_2, $\cdots\cdots E_n$. The same will be done with the institutional features like I_1, I_2, $\cdots\cdots I_n$. Assuming we have two institutions under study, we take more than two snapshots at different times for each institute in two countries using the above typologies. This will enable us to know the correlations between the different types of environments and different types of institutional features. Let us suppose that at the time of the first observation, institute A had environment E_1 and the institute itself had I_1 feature. At the second observation, we found that E_1 and I_1 have changed to E_1 and E_2 respectively.

On the other hand, institute B which intially had E_3 and I_3 has changed to E_4 and I_4. Then, with regard to science and technology institutes, we can conclude that E_1 is correlated with I_1, E_2 with I_2, E_3 with I_3 and E_4 with I_4. This will enable us to make advice that, if an institution builder wants to change his institution from I_1 to I_4, he has to change his environment from E_1 to E_4 and vice versa.

Of course in actuality, the research results will not show such neat arrangements. If we repeat our observations, there will be different frequencies of I_1, I_2, ……I_n under E_1. Therefore, the above statement will hold true only in terms of probability of occurence. After series of such attempts, ***the second order typologies*** can be developed based on the different combinations of $I_1, I_2, \cdots I_n$ on the one hand and the combinations of E_1, $E_2 \cdots I_n$ on the other.

If the field researcher has in his mind the typologies of environmental contexts and instutional features, he can write a case history of an institution using these typologies. An ideal arrangement will be the one in which an identical researcher covers both institutions throughout the research period.