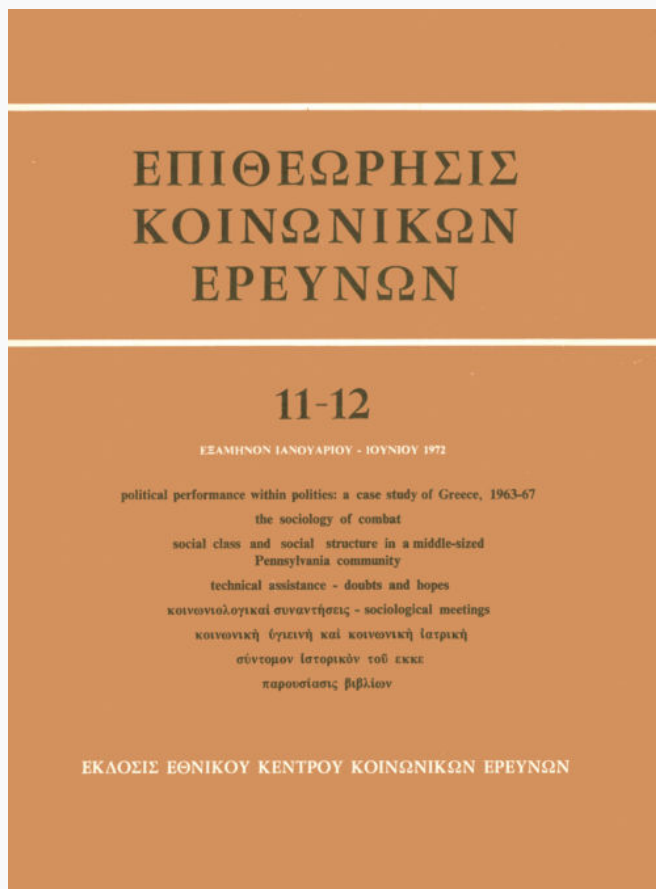


The Greek Review of Social Research

Vol 11 (1972)

11-12



Technical assistance-doubts and hopes

Evangelos John Rizos

doi: [10.12681/grsr.276](https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.276)

Copyright © 1972, Evangelos John Rizos



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Rizos, E. J. (1972). Technical assistance-doubts and hopes. *The Greek Review of Social Research*, 11, 37-45.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/grsr.276>

technical assistance- doubts and hopes

by
Evangelos John Rizos

*Doctorate in Public Administration
University of Southern California
Los Angeles*

Written at the East-West Center
Honolulu, Hawaii

A MICROANALYTIC APPROACH TO ADMINISTRATION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMMES

If we are to keep pace with scientific and technological as well as with institutional and social advancements, technical assistance is essential. In this article our focus of interest is on technical assistance rendered by the United Nations system of international organizations. How much has been achieved, and how well, may be glimpsed through such official records as the 1965 Anniversary Review of the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance¹ or through such research as that of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development² which represent a growing universality in technical assistance, in terms of contributors and recipients, as well as painfully accumulated experience of learning by trial and error.

The underlying reasons for the existence of the United Nations Development Programme were clearly stated by the Economic and Social Council in establishing the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance in 1949³ when it recognized «the significant contribution to economic development that can be made by an expansion of the international exchange of technical knowledge through international cooperation among countries», and expressed the belief that «A sound international programme of this character must combine and make use of the experience of many nations, with differing social patterns and cultural traditions and at different stages of development». This approach has remained. In 1965 the UN Secretary-General reaffirmed that the purpose of multilateral technical assistance is «to organize ourselves with enough courage, purpose and coherence to wipe out the most glaring disparities and create a world society in which both the fruits of progress and the burdens of responsibility will be more equally shared». In the words of the 1965 report of the Technical Assistance Board, the «Essential function of the Expanded Programme is to provide the means of giving technical assistance to countries which need it, according to priorities determined by themselves, to overcome specific problems standing in the way of their further economic and social development».⁴

1. Technical Assistance Board, *15 Years and 150,000 Skills: An Anniversary Review of the United Nations Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance* (New York: United Nations 1965), 139 pp.

2. Herbert H. Hyman, Gen. N. Levine and Charles R. Wright, *Inducing Social Change in Developing Countries: An International Survey of Expert Advice* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1967), 224 pp. For a summary of important findings see Annex I.

3. In the «founding» resolution 222A(ix) of 15 August 1949.

4. Technical Assistance Board, op. cit., p. 31.

During its fifteen years of existence, the Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance spent the equivalent of \$ 500 million. During the same period, United Nations specialized agencies dispursed \$ 200 million. In addition, the Special Fund, since its inception in 1958, has committed nearly half a billion dollars for technical assistance projects, to which recipient governments have probably contributed at least as much. Furthermore, Special Fund surveys and feasibility studies alone have generated, directly or indirectly, investments totaling over a billion dollars.

In the course of time, however, a contradiction became apparent. Although the processes of technical assistance have been set in motion, it has been felt that it has not fulfilled many of its sanguine expectations. One cannot help being aware of a certain feeling of discontent regarding the discrepancy between aspirations and realities, and of disheartening undertones about its efficacy. Popular assertions that technical assistance shows only sporadic signs of fulfillment are often persuasively expressed. And there are many examples, sometimes inelegantly referred to, reflecting uneasiness at the interminably slow pace of change.

But understanding is not advanced by concentrating on such matters. Though some of the criticism has merit, it should not obscure the implications of technical assistance for the future and the quality of dignity which should characterize it. The common weakness of such criticism contains a very simple but fundamental flaw. It reflects a concern not with how development problems are to be solved but only whether they are solved or not. In other words, it ignores not only the social and psychological factors that technical assistance is influenced by, but also many of the seriously sensitive variables which it brings into the picture. It overlooks the effects of the values built into the culture of the developing country that may foster or hinder change. More specifically, it ignores the capacity of individuals to absorb the change that technical assistance brings and to make such change a behavior of daily life, a matter of household concept and practice, so to speak.¹

The issue is further complicated partly by anxiety to over-emphasize the virtues of change and partly

by a desire to produce visible results which might manifest marginal rather than central phenomena of change. Much is to be said on the notion of rising expectations which holds that many of the economic, social and political problems of development arise from a faster expansion of expectations than of achievements. But we must be careful. Our argument does not infer that people in developing countries are ineffective in facing the problems and tasks of every day life. To employ a metaphor, were our Paleolithic ancestors less efficient in their environment than modern man? Is it not possible that if we were to live their lives, we would be less efficient than they were?

Without gaining much knowledge about the actual mechanism by which technical assistance leads to change, it may not be surprising if, for a variety of reasons, its tasks become seriously sensitive and, in a way, seemingly impossible. To understand the role of technical assistance, the relevant changes which it causes, and mode of its administration, there is a need to draw upon many fields which will help us understand the multiple forces at work. What follows is only suggestive: a set of reflections based on personal impressions deduced from many years experience in technical assistance.

a point of view

In the past, men associated the sources of change with the sources of power—a visible set of acts by a king or a lawmaker or a prophet. Gradually it came to be realized that behind their acts there is an intangible net of customs, institutions, and cultures, which subtly constrains and sets the boundaries of social action. At the same time it was recognized that there are social forces (whether impersonal processes such as demographic pressures, science and technology, or conscious efforts such as demands of depressed groups for social mobility and equality) which generate change. But change, particularly when there is not enough time to adjust to it is never an easy process. What we are concerned with here is that the absorption of technical assistance is accompanied by qualitative changes that tend to upset established ways. They may cause apprehension and disequilibrium, and thus generate complex tensions and conflicts.

In reviewing the changes which technical assistance brings, there can be no black-and-white judgements. It is not possible to predict specific outcomes or provide straightforward answers. Technical assistance is not carried out on an experimental basis but in a context which makes it difficult to establish external indices and to follow up and quantify its results. Expectations regarding the behavior of *homo economicus* in absorbing technical assistance are a myth. Patterns of values, preferences that affect choices, and

1. As Professor Kavadias of UNESCO has remarked, «It is not because they are intellectually deficient or different, but because the intellectual processes which then take place in their minds, and which should enable them to assimilate the innovation, prove to be ineffective». And he continues, «Indeed, if a message is to be understood and assimilated, it must find a place among the assembly of ideas which the person already has-and which, as far as the message is concerned, for, the logical frame of reference and, at the same time, «the psychological assimilator frame», according to J. Piaget's formula». George Kavadias, «The Assimilation of the Scientific and Technological «Message», *XVIII International Social Science Journal*, 1966, p. 363.

attitudes to life, with which a given country sets out on the path to development may not be suited to the immediate successful accomplishment of the tasks of technical assistance. Certain values and institutional behavior patterns, considered conducive to successful development, may have first to be induced by the process of development itself.¹ Considerations such as these lead one to pay attention to the effects which technical assistance has on values, motives and attitudes presumably because in the long run it is these factors that determine the extent to which technical assistance will be assimilated within the processes of country development.

This line of argument suggests that country development may draw new strength and new emphasis out of the tensions which technical assistance creates. And since it might not be feasible and, indeed, even doubtful whether it is desirable to suppress tensions and conflicts (change in any human society is a result of some sort of pressure), it seems necessary to place in a new context the difficulties besetting technical assistance. We must distinguish between expectations and reality, between intriguing ideas for old hands and the learnings from a situation as it actually exists, between what is said and what is done, between what one might like to do and what one is able to do, between a constraint and a removable stumbling block. How these are balanced in a given country will help determine the effectiveness of technical assistance.² Such an awareness reinforces a growing conviction that the first task in the administration of technical assistance is to derive a synthesis of operationally meaningful and manageable concepts. And this cannot be achieved without taking an anterior view of the combination of factors that make-up the technical assistance project.

the technical assistance project

On a microscale the project manifests a special quality. It is future oriented and as such it has come to occupy a central position in country development. At the centre of creativity, it has become the key unit in the organization of technical assistance, deriving its support largely from its commitment to development. Though not a «crash program», it represents a well defined and systematic attempt at communication in

1. As McClelland points out, «If the people want the benefits of the advanced material culture of modern civilization...then they must accept many of the values and other culture patterns which support such a civilization». David C. McClelland, *The Achieving Society* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1961), pp. 395-396.

2. For a very interesting article on the way in which people perceive themselves as competent or otherwise, see Elisabeth Colson, «Competence and Incompetence in the Context of Independence», *8 Current Anthropology*, 1967, pp. 92-111.

a particular subject. It provides the general perspective for understanding the issues that affect the administration of technical assistance, sensitive as they are to the attitudes, emotions, presuppositions and goals of the host country. Such an emphasis provides not only a convenient point of departure for analysis of the administration of technical assistance itself but also, by narrowing our attention, gives us a specific starting point for understanding development processes and the purposes of these processes.

At the project level, it is probably easier to find operational measures of change, even though here as elsewhere, it is not possible to generalize from a particular context and it is not feasible to arrive at a universally applicable diagnosis or a body of universal rules. As developing countries are at different stages of technico-scientific and socio-economic development, each with its own unique socio-cultural environment, it is not possible to anticipate and make accurate predictions for the administration of technical assistance in general. The matter is that technical assistance projects, each with a different frame of reference and with varying degrees of intensity, cannot be replicated; each project is different from all others in certain respects and the unique aspects of each must be adequately taken into account. In short, many of the key problems concerning the administration of technical assistance are related to the political, social and cultural matrix of the particular country at that time. Our viewpoint must be wider than the purely technical aspects of the project. The kind of questions we are concerned with here include: Given the importance of technical assistance in the processes of development, how is the technical assistance project absorbed within these processes? How does the process of penetration of technical assistance begin? More specifically, given the need to reach its full potential, what is happening in the microcosmic realm of the technical assistance project as it is assimilated in the processes of country development?

To illuminate the factors involved and understand the basis for the differential response to technical assistance, it is worth while to explore briefly five views which underlie all judgements in this paper. They concern questions of impetus, rationale, internalization, functionality, and evaluation regarding the technical assistance project. These views are not equal to each other in their level of generality or scope of comprehension, as they overlap and one view often subsumes some aspects of the others. Their function is not to predict, but to explain.

Regarding impetus. This refers to the central notion that a technical assistance project has an impetus which originates from the outreaching of socio-economic needs and technico-scientific problems of a developing

country. We are concerned here with social factors that tend to shape the flow of technical assistance prior to the operation of the selective processes that are examined later.

In the daily pattern of life, each major scientific or technological advance has, in its own period, created revolutionary changes. We can point to the electric light, introduced only in 1884, or to the telegraph as compared to other means of dispatch, to telephone over telegraph, to radio over telephone, to television over radio. Change of all kinds can be recognized and accepted as inherent in the historical process through which men and their societies have become what they are today.

This view holds that a country which is development-motivated will be more effective in coping with desired change and future attainments than one which is overwhelmingly oriented toward tradition and dominated by a role system structured on past experience. Furthermore, a country which places great emphasis upon human and cultural goals, will pay close attention to the impact of technical assistance from the view of its technico-scientific influence on man himself—his personality and his value systems. How then can motivation and commitment to development be obtained if basic values and attitudes preclude such behavior?

This raises the problem of social and cultural relativism. Many countries encounter great difficulties when their traditional ways of life are in conflict with modern aspirations. The value system of a peasant society can be deeply hostile to technical change. Traditional attitudes are often self-validating and respond to every question with conviction, and traditional techniques may be revered as ritual behavior; they may fit into a rhythm of life and ceremony and enjoy the support of all communal institutions. The phenomenon of «defensive ignorance» or «rejection pattern» is often practiced by communities warding off external influences.

In the administration of technical assistance, it is important to know not only the social structures and social institutions of the country, but also the assumptions behind the request for technical assistance. The influence of a technical assistance project is bound to be greater if men have been reinforced to endure the hardship and pain associated with change. It is not the flash of enthusiasm that we are concerned with here but the persistently sustained effort. Any move to change by individuals or groups will be helped or hindered by the approval or disapproval of the society concerned. The ingrained, partly unconscious and usually unchallenged ideas and values that make up a person's «reality world» are built into him from early childhood largely by the group of which he happens to be a part. The group not only creates a particular web of interaction but also influences the

basic premises of his thinking even when he makes a conscious effort to free himself of its control and to look at the world with fresh eyes.

One should not be surprised if the attitudes and practices that the project is designed to modify and which may appear negative and obscured at first glance, proved to be perfectly rational in a given situation. However, a developing country need not, and actually should not be considered either as static or progressive; both elements coexist. Rapid population growth and redistribution, inability of traditional ways to support the growing population, rapid spread of newly felt needs, including multiplication of demands for new consumer goods, mass communications, and so on, all make the problem one of influencing directions of change rather than of overcoming traditionalist obstacles.

Regarding rationale. An alternative way of looking at technical assistance is that each project has a rationale traceable to the government's policies which tend to shape the country's development: its articulateness, priorities and sense of direction. But as the project comes to grips with reality, its rationale becomes elusive. Conditions are rarely optimal. The view of the technical assistance project as a series of orderly steps intelligently directed toward an objective specified in advance seems to be both oversimplified and false.

At this point one runs the risk of the rationalistic fallacy of believing that there is an optimal path for any action. Rationality depends not only on the objective features, but also on the inherent abilities, emotions and previous experiences of those involved. The world is not made up of inert structures which may be pushed and pulled in a multitude of ways. We cannot assume that the decision-maker in the project is a rational man who knows all possible alternatives, understands the possible consequences of each alternative, and arrives at a clear understanding of preferences among them. For a variety of reasons he may not be content with the intrinsic attractiveness of the project.

This second view holds that if project goals are not comprehensible or if they are misunderstood (or poorly understood) the project is less likely to contribute to the country's planned development. Misunderstood goals can lead to a fanatic attachment to tradition which may practically nullify the chances of seeing the project absorbed into the processes of country development. Furthermore, project objectives rarely specify the required preconditions; the necessary institutions, attitudes, motivations and resources necessary to bring about change in the subject of the project are never all present. Fundamental inconsistencies often occur between project assumptions and project objectives which may be decided on the ba-

sis of chance or on transient political preferences.

In spite of the above reservations, it is useful to act as if the rationality of the project were correct. It allows for stretching beyond the narrow limits of the goals of the project. It helps us to understand that if any shift of attitudes and practices is to result from the new information that the project brings, the direction of the project would have to consider the views of the reference group affected by the project. If a particular project is supported over a long period, the normal social mechanisms in the country's development effort may suffice to correct the situation. Some adjustments will be easier if, instead of concentrating on project objectives, a broader and deeper time perspective is invoked. It will then be possible to develop an in-built capacity to adjust the subject of the project, on a continuing basis, to constant change.

Technical assistance calls for intelligence and logic, redefinition of the image of self, redirection of the cognitive categories, reformulation of questions and creation of new capacities in relation to task and time. But this is not enough. Something more is needed; a guiding purpose, a vital principle. Narrow project objectives can never replicate the phenomena of growth and reproduction, including reasoning, feeling, choosing. Such an admission reflects that the rationale of the project would have to be considered within the broad social goals of a country just as the impetus of the project is related to its social context. It sees the project in intimate contact with the shifting structure of events, not in isolation from them.

Regarding internalization. A technical assistance project has often been observed to begin in doubt and skepticism. This third view holds that a project cannot create and maintain self-sustained change without participation and responsiveness from within. Persistently sustained exertion is a function of attachment to a task, to the norms which govern its performance, and to the role in which those norms are embodied. This is what we mean by the ability of the project to be internalized.

Whether a technical assistance project will be internalized and induce sustained change cannot be foreseen. Though every country will respond in some way to outside stimuli, the precise nature of this response cannot be known with precision. The process of internalization often gives rise to tensions in many areas of human activity but, perhaps, they may be more obvious in rural communities where ways of doing things have been unfolded continuously from the experiences of the past. Land reform, for example, may be considered to be a necessary prerequisite to a project concerned with the introduction of new farming techniques. But the adoption of such techniques depends primarily on the willing cooperation (without external

enforcement) of the individual farmer.¹

The linkage of technical assistance with action gives the training aspects of a project high priority. The strengthening of a task-oriented, responsible stratum of a segment of the population may be the most important precondition for internalization of technical assistance. The question now arises: does one (and the above example—the individual farmer) wish to learn in order to decide between alternative courses of action, an achievement value, or in order to feel secure in the acts which tradition in any case has dictated? Changes in the ways of knowing can give rise to great uneasiness. The possibility is that traditional institutions may have validated explanations as they may have practices.

Another matter on which our understanding has improved is that a technical assistance project cannot take the form of indiscriminate replication of institutions and practices in developed countries, for imitation is not a matter of mechanical or passive reproduction. Imitation means mentally reliving the process which led to the creation of what is imitated. Many experiences have indicated that imitation, no matter how advantageous it may seem to be, is not accepted uncritically. Furthermore, a demonstration effect—a deliberate effort to show that change or improvement is both possible and desirable—cannot be taken for granted. Any reference group acting as the carrier of the new technico-scientific communication of the project and taking initiatives, can engender positive or negative reactions from other social groups who may admire or envy its capacity and achievements.

Response to technical assistance is complex. The time taken for the emotional and motivational forces of a technical assistance project to take effect, results in a gap which impedes its success. It may be possible to learn to tolerate what technical assistance brings, but not necessarily to internalize it. The message of the project may be accepted as authoritative, but it may be blocked out as irrelevant by refusing to adapt to it beliefs or behavior of daily life; for the ways of doing

1. For example, Buchanan and Ellis, in discussing the agricultural revolution in England in the early 19th century, point out that the improved methods and techniques of cultivation which had been developed spread rather slowly «because people learn slowly even when they have for an example the evident success of their fellows. Even with the benefit of demonstrations, lectures, and reading matter, the improved agricultural techniques only gradually became general practice over the decades. It took longer still for them to spread over Europe from England. The hard economic realities of cost, income and profit, or the necessity of getting a living probably had as much to do with converting the average landlord, squire, worker or peasant to new practices as friendly exhortations or the gracious patronage of royalty». N.S. Buchanan and H.S. Ellis, *Approaches to Economic Development* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1955), p. 131.

are not always identical with the ways of knowing. Though considerable effort may be made to introduce a certain new method, a vague resentment may exist at the same time, a secret hope that it will not work in «our milieu». Such feelings may lead to an ambivalent attitude which may bring the unconsciously desired results. When the cure seems no cure, a subtle apprehension about the consequences of accepting technical assistance can disturb even those most favorably inclined to it. They may be torn by conflicting emotions aroused by their awareness that they ought to adopt it but cannot in their situation; it may be contrary to the values and beliefs of the community.

Regarding functionality. This fourth view is of a different sort. In the conduct of technical assistance, the UN and its Specialized Agencies assume the responsibility to bring upon the developing country the knowledge, experience and insights of a leading expert or specialist, the technical assistance project officer. This view argues that whatever dedication and formal obeisance this officer makes to tradition, his ultimate aim is to induce change though, in practice, matters which entail policy preferences are usually beyond his control.

As change is often insensitive to the efforts of the technical assistance project officer, most of what was said previously about the processes of communicating technico-scientific information or skills, might be cast now in terms of his limited ability to bring influence to bear, though one should not deny the relevance and potential usefulness of his persuasive efforts. The receptiveness of his communication involves several elements of ambiguity variously reflecting on the degree of its comprehensibility, acceptability and reproducibility.

The first set of considerations stems from the professional and rational ideas that form part of the frame of reference of the project officer. His perspectives reduce his ability to adapt to the predispositions of his hosts. His attempts to apply criteria of his professional assumptions cannot be pursued beyond a certain point without confronting his hosts' values and behavior patterns. How does he know that his own «reality world» is any more realistic than that of his hosts? Each may see his own traditions as normative, and may see no possibility for entertaining any other point of view.¹

A project officer's communication may run counter to social reality and to an abundant evidence from

1. Hoselitz referring to some recommendations made by UN experts to promote economic development commented that, «These men envisage that economic development is only possible if the social relations of underdeveloped countries are reformed so as to resemble those of Western capitalist countries». He then continued to quote from Kindleberger who →

everyday experience that may leave no ground for even legitimate differences of opinion. There are not captive audiences that are even momentarily isolated from other forms of communication and experience. The dilemma is very real though it has bizarre moments. Active defenses will be called into play. His hosts may avoid advice which is not in accord with their pre-existing beliefs. The excessive enthusiasm with which a project officer is often greeted on arrival in his host country, is part of this ambivalent pattern. To the extent that the host country constitutes an «in-group», the project officer belongs to an «out-group». The problem in this relationship is that it is possible to acknowledge «some» validity in the project officer's viewpoint without really challenging the fundamentals of one's own group's thoughts.

There is not set of rules which a project officer could precisely follow in his work. To anticipate what steps or means would be most successful is hazardous. In his more statesmanlike role, which is usually implicit rather than explicit, often unrealized even by the actors, the principal impact of his communication is often not direct, but mediated by face-to-face influence, even on a non-verbal basis. In the morass of conflicting unconscious biases, the only hope for diminishing his own perpetual distortions lies in a combination of factors: a better knowledge and appreciation of the sources of change, a persistent search for values, a sincere effort to assure continuing re-examination and re-interpretation of supposedly firm project objectives, and an ability to maintain an understanding and sympathetic attitude while preserving that critical attitude necessary in his work.

Regarding evaluation. How can we make an inventory of change brought about by a given project? When we do not have quantifiable objectives, can we say that results are amenable to measurement? This fifth view holds that neither the determining of change nor the determining of social cost-benefit relationships for a given project submit easily to quantification. The number of variables are never exactly known; a desirable change may take place without knowing

→commented in a similar vein on the reports of the World Bank: «Essentially, however, these are essays in comparative statistics. The missions bring to the underdeveloped country a notion of what a developed country is like. They observe the underdeveloped country. They subtract the later from the former. The difference is a program. Most of the missions come from developed countries with highly articulated institutions for achieving social, economic and political ends. Ethnocentricity leads inevitably to the conclusion that the way to achieve the comparable levels of capital formation, productivity, and consumption is to duplicate these institutions». B.F. Hoselitz, «Sociological Approach to Economic Development», International Congress of Studies on the Problems of Underdeveloped Areas, Milan; Museo della Scienza e della Tecnica, 1954, pp. 19-42.

why. Vast amounts of correlations may not lead to the qualitative insight of the change that technical assistance brings.

The problem of evaluation is an offshoot of the problem of project objectives. Here there is a need to distinguish between lesser and larger objectives. When the lesser objectives of the project take precedence over its larger objectives and are viewed as ends in themselves aiming at the provision of short-range answers, the search for quantitative targets and criteria is not always far from the realm of feasibility. However, when the lesser project objectives are viewed not as ends in themselves but as means or as limited indications of the degree to which its larger objectives are pursued within the processes of development, such a search acquires a new significance. There is little which is easily accessible. There is no objective criterion for measurement of failure or success. There is no clear-cut set of stipulations which permit and invite comparisons as to the best methods for determining the results of a technical assistance project or, for that matter, for indicating and judging orders of their magnitude. Furthermore, measuring the rate of change due to the technical assistance project relative to the rate of other non-technical assistance change is exceedingly difficult. Technical assistance is not the only means whereby the processes of change are facilitated or modified.¹

The crucial assumption which strikes at the very root of technical assistance is that results are born of actions. As men are involved in their everyday problem-solving, in terms of the communication that the project brings, results consist essentially of carrying out operations, integrating and coordinating them among themselves by joining in a chain of decisions which encourage and facilitate change, understanding the process of modification and transformation of the communication, and, as a consequence, understanding with a greater degree of realism the way the subject of the project itself is constructed. Such actions and interactions are the essence of a technical assistance project, though, it must be recognized, they cannot bring results quickly. The knowing which technical assistance brings may remain functionally unrelated to doing for a considerable period of time. This mode of thinking points out that results are obtained only through practice, study, personal interaction, and

emotional adaptability, processes requiring time.

Once the process of development has begun, it does not usually move in a straight line at an even pace according to a plan, but it takes many unexpected twists and turns. It cannot be ascertained that change is exclusively due to technical assistance. It is often influenced by considerations and actions of other agents of change. Desirable results may manifest themselves as a non-planned effect, external to the project, building on unexpected new tendencies and influences. If we are to avoid the fallacy of irrelevant objectivity, such an unpredictable change or side effects, because they fall outside the influence of the project, cannot be taken into account in measuring its results. By implication, the temptation to make judgements regarding the change that technical assistance brings, without first making such discreet distinctions, serves only a heuristic function which may lead to pretensions. The important point is that a project's strength may not necessarily lie in the production of a desirable effect. It may grow instead out of something more subtle, as out of the exertion and struggle and even pains for that outcome, in themselves (unmeasured) benefits, or out of the induction of the growth of an unforeseen, but desirable, outcome which goes beyond the narrow framework of the project itself and which may turn out to be more significant than its original fragmentary, cut-and-dried objectives. Since the qualitative nature of such changes cannot be predicted or reflected in quantitative terms, the achievements of technical assistance are likely to be rather understated.

The process of development is not merely goal-oriented. As it prepares people for new roles, new responsibilities and new problems, it implies a growth toward a differentiated society. And in it, the new functions and new institutions, and the new jobs that have to be filled, are all associated with a continuously evolving social organization and role structure. The implication is that evaluating judgements regarding the results of technical assistance must be based on a thorough knowledge of the country as an entity—its structure, functions, culture, emotional adaptability. In this context, only with adequate explanation can one understand the results of technical assistance and consequently can seek to evaluate them. Without this explanation, evaluation becomes a matter of insight or, maybe, of luck.

beyond conventional analysis

Our concern to approximate development efforts and technical assistance more closely reflects a major problem which requires persistent efforts at several levels. We still do not know much about technical assistance; we have not yet come to grips with the prac-

1. In our search for some demanding criteria to judge the development merit of a given technical assistance project, the comments of the Executive Chairman of TAB prove us with a clue: «We must ensure», he writes, «that they (projects) are at or near the core and not on the periphery, of national development efforts; that they are directed towards development activities which can attract public and private support, both moral and material; and that they are fully co-ordinated with other related programmes.» UN Doc. E/TAC/L352, 15 June 1965, p. 16.

tical problems generated from development expectations. Little study has been directed to elucidating in detail what really happens. We are becoming increasingly aware that the time has arrived for a reorientation of technical assistance, which has yet to be sufficiently articulated, that will permit us to maintain the pluralism, integrity and enduring quality of United Nations efforts and to continue the search for new evidence relevant to the points at issue. It is hoped that such freshness of attitude will enable us to avoid the donor/recipient dichotomy and develop at a higher level of relevance and sophistication a new, more imaginative approach to the administration of technical assistance.

The significant thing here is that whether such a microanalytic approach to technical assistance is right or wrong, methodologically it does sensitize us to look for the sources of change coming from the aggregate and individual decisions, the influence of custom in the adaptation of standards of living, the role of emotional adaptability to change, the inevitability of technico-scientific growth, the appearance of new class styles and their relationship to the country's political maturity, and the sense of community between technical assistance project officer and his hosts. This kind of sensitivity probably conflicts with an unavoidable flavor of condescension. Each of the above views implies that there is no possibility of asserting success of technical assistance in absolute terms. The difficulty probably lies (a) partly in the lack of a common denominator and in our inability to make sweeping interpretations and clearly discern the effects of technical assistance which are likely to be different for different projects; (b) partly in the fact that technical assistance as a live and dynamic process is open, through self-adjustment, to fluctuations which, in turn, spring from the dynamism of the processes of development; (c) partly in the propensity of technical assistance to be manageable only to the degree that the exercise of orderly human intelligence can be brought to bear, to the speed of emotional adaptability to change and to the ways the present, past and future are perceived; and (d) partly in our emphasis not on achievement but on achieving, not on attainment but on attaining, not on perfection but on perfecting. With these qualifications in mind, it is doubtful whether technical assistance can easily replace, in the short-run at least, old with new certitudes. Instead, being the subject of inherent instability, considerations regarding the effects of technical assistance and assessment of its potentialities are likely to be vague and few, yielding increasingly tentative statements of probability.

In other words, technical assistance does not possess any miracle properties. It will continue to be confronted by the myopic limitations of the human mind

to grasp its multidimensional character and the uncertainties reflecting the limited capacity of human effort to quickly translate hopes into achievements. The inner changes and the new ways that technical assistance brings into being, despite the magnitude of the achievements to which they are likely to contribute, in many respects are echoed in the profound and disruptive effects which they bring on the prevailing culture. To overlook some of the factors that affect the internalization of technical assistance may lead to a failure to grasp its essence and appreciate the significance of attitude changes and its consequences. Furthermore, acceleration and expectation of quick results may lead to a failure to understand why a particular country may not respond to technical assistance so manifestly for its own benefit. It may not assist one who is looking for immediate and visible results to understand why familiar beliefs and practices continue to exist or why components that were largely self-centered become interrelated now, or even why change may not be considered desirable or helpful.

ANNEX I

Findings of the International Survey of Expert Advice conducted by the UN Research Institute for Social Development

This study (designed by Professor Herbert H. Hyman) was based on the opinions, beliefs, and experiences of 445 national and foreign experts who have worked under international or bilateral auspices on development projects in specific fields: agriculture, health, nutrition, adult education, home economics, and community development. It was carried out in close cooperation with the Bureau of Social Affairs of the UN in view of the preparation of the 1965 Report on the World Social Situation. The study was conducted in two stages. The first, 1964-1965, included persons who had worked in one or more of ten specified countries in three general regions of the world. The second stage, 1965-1966, was extended to include experts who had worked in Cambodia, Iran or Pakistan.

In the words of the report, this study was intended to be of «benefit to many governmental and non-governmental agencies and to individual workers interested in methods to be used in developmental activities in developing countries». Its purpose was not to establish guidelines to development policies or give definitive answers to questions of social change. Instead, its usefulness was stated as aiming to «increase the awareness of many factors which influence the outcome of development projects, of various aspects connected with success or failure of specific methods». This study «should therefore function as a kind of

'sensitivity training' for all those who have to design or implement development projects».

The principal findings have been stated as follows:

1. The method and approach used in approaching local populations is an important factor making for the success of development projects. Traditional practices and the low level of general education have been most frequently mentioned as the greatest hindrances to the success of development projects. The older (especially old men) are the typical local antagonists to development projects.
2. Regarding strategies for introducing social change, the experts largely agree that it is necessary to change the method and approach to suit special local conditions. And the largest proportion of them recommend that the approach be selective and slow. They largely agree that it is a safe strategy to use school teachers' as intermediaries in approaching the local population—but there is less agreement about the utilization of other types of intermediaries.
3. On the question of the tactics to be used in introducing social change, there are strong recommendations that persuasion and interpersonal influence are the most effective devices. And many tend to advise

the introduction of techniques that will evolve the local people actively in the work in progress.

4. Regarding staff qualities, the largest proportion say that the most serious deficiency in a staff member is inappropriate attitudes toward local population. The experts tend to favour the professional with many skills or even the person without any special training (but with common sense) over the specialized expert both in the early and in the later stages of project work.

5. A variety of techniques was used on the latest projects to achieve their goals. But far and away the most effective technique in the opinion of the experts is the demonstration, and the least effective the lecture.

6. Regarding project evaluation, nearly all the experts questioned make mention of major mistakes that were made on their latest projects. And the majority believe that such errors are avoidable. Even so, to a remarkable degree the experts rate their latest projects as successes. A thorough analysis of data has revealed that the degree of severity of local conditions had made remarkably little difference in the extent to which the informant's latest projects have been able to achieve their goals.

But, even more important, the outstanding characteristic of a well trained scientist is his ability to distinguish «significant» from «insignificant» problems and data. Good scientific training sensitizes one to important problems:... it gives the scientist a selective point of view. Research without an actively selective point of view becomes the dirty bag of an idiot, filled with bits of pebbles, straws, feathers, and other random hoardings. If nobody goes about endlessly counting throughout a lifetime the number of particles of sand along infinite miles of seashore over all the coasts of the world, why is this? Because there is no point to it, no need to complete this particular aspect of the jigsaw puzzle of the unknown.

Robert S. Lynd, «Knowledge for What?». Princeton University Press, 1939.