

CHAPTER 4

STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS

One of the issues considered in Chapter 3 was decentralisation of control over government staff. A decision to decentralise such control raises issues which are discussed in greater detail in this chapter.

The first Working Paper opens with a brief discussion of one possible way of strengthening the policy-making capacity of provincial executives: allowing them to employ advisers other than public servants. But most of the paper is concerned with the kinds of sanctions and organisation which might give provincial governments greater control over staff performing provincial functions, and facilitate co-ordination between such staff and public servants performing national functions. It also deals with some of the problems and advantages of allowing provincial governments to employ certain staff directly.

Table 1 in Working Paper 3.2 showed how staff performing provincial functions were distributed between the national capital and the provinces. Table 2 in the same paper indicated which staff performing national functions were located in, or toured, the provinces (neither table showed how many staff were actually stationed in rural areas or how evenly they were distributed there). Working Papers 4.1 and 4.2 discuss options which might be available to help bring staff performing provincial functions under more effective control by provincial governments. It also deals with the problems of recruiting staff to work in the provinces and of encouraging them to remain there, whether they carry out national or provincial functions or, as in some cases, a combination of both.

Despite the sequence of the relevant chapters in this volume and the *Report*, the Special Committee dealt with the issues involved in dispersing staff (that is, with geographical decentralisation) before deciding on the distribution of functions and powers. Committee members (as well as staff and consultants) found it easier to deal first with staff, then functions (that is, with decisions about which staff should be brought under the control of provincial governments), and lastly with powers (that is, with deciding who should make policies and laws about particular functions). They then checked back to see that recommendations they had made about the distribution of powers, functions and staff formed a coherent system.

The recommendations contained in Appendix 4.1 were prepared by the Secretary to the Special Committee on Provincial Government, working with terms of reference which required him –

To make a preliminary survey to identify further posts in central government [that is, posts additional to those already dispersed to the provinces] that could become responsible to, and/or re-located within provinces, or pooled between a group of provinces; and in particular to identify –

- posts which might be national in scope, but whose work happens to take place in one or a few provinces;
- posts which might be provincial in scope, but are centrally located because not enough staff are available for each province;
- groups of posts, whose work might be reallocated within the group so that the posts can be divided up between provinces;
- posts whose work takes place in Honiara, but might become responsible to the Honiara Town Council rather than central government.

The Committee paid little attention to a further possible form of geographical decentralisation, distribution of national government departmental headquarters throughout the country, because of the probable costs involved, as well as the likely consequential loss of inter-departmental co-ordination.

The recommendations made to the Committee by the Secretary provide no more than a first approximation to the kind of geographical decentralisation which Committee members had in mind. But they were precisely framed, so that they might have a better chance of being taken seriously by the national government than the kinds of general injunctions to re-organise, reduce and disperse national government staff contained in the *Final Report* of the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea (Papua New Guinea 1974a: Part 1, 10/20, 10/48).

The prime objective of the kind of geographical decentralisation recommended in Appendix 4.1 is to improve the size and quality of government staff in the provinces, both staff performing national functions as well as staff performing provincial functions. Geographical dispersal of staff performing provincial functions makes an obvious contribution to the capacity of provincial governments to carry out their functions and to use their powers, provided that it is carried out with due regard for equity between provinces. Geographical dispersal of staff performing national functions improves both the quality and accessibility of government services, subject to the same condition. The latter process increases the likelihood that staff carrying out such services will acquire relevant local knowledge and be responsive to local needs and aspirations.

However, geographical dispersal of staff can also lead to conflict between staff performing national and provincial functions, or exacerbate such conflict where conflict already exists. It is, therefore, important to ensure that the activities of dispersed staff are co-ordinated.

Co-ordination is likely to increase the efficiency, economy and effectiveness with which government services are provided, thereby generating resources which can themselves become additional sources of power to the authorities in the provinces and assisting decentralisation. But, despite the overtones of co-operation and collegiality implicit in use of the term 'co-ordination', it is as well to remember that co-ordination involves the use of power:

Telling another person to co-ordinate . . . does not tell him what to do . . . Everyone wants co-ordination – on his own terms (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973: 134)

– hence the emphasis on reporting and discipline in Working Papers 3.2 and 4.1.

Much of the material in this chapter can be used to raise issues or to provide models in countries where there are programmes of either political or administrative decentralisation. The material on moving staff out of the national capital might be equally relevant in countries where neither political nor administrative decentralisation is at issue, only geographical dispersal of government services and staff. But the working papers and Appendix were written for use in Solomon Islands, where there had already been a fair amount of administrative decentralisation. Because of the way in which the Special Committee chose to build on existing institutions, they do not deal directly with a number of basic issues to which we now turn.

As has already been suggested, decentralisation of control over staff may take place without political decentralisation: but it is vital to effective political decentralisation. Such decentralisation of control has two basic components. The first component is the actual transfer of control over staff from ministerial or departmental headquarters to some body at provincial level, whether the body is an elected provincial assembly – as in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, a semi-political body under national political control – as, for example, in Tanzania and Zambia, or a purely administrative body – such as a committee of civil servants or even an individual senior civil servant. The second, and

inter-related, component is the achievement of closer co-ordination between the various government departments or agencies operating at provincial level. The two components are integrally related to the kinds of issues which have to be considered when determining how to organise staff at provincial level. The most important of these issues are the following:

1. WHICH STAFF SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE DECENTRALISATION PROGRAMME?

It may not be feasible to decentralise control over all staff physically located in the provinces. This is particularly likely to be so when powers are being decentralised to semi-autonomous local political bodies, since the national government will normally wish to retain control over staff performing functions which are to be retained under its control. However, it may also be the case if there are administrative or technical reasons (such as the need for close specialist supervision of provincial staff) for retaining national control over certain specified staff. In either case, a detailed analysis of the operation of government agencies at provincial level is needed in order to determine which staff should be kept under national control.

A related question concerns the need and/or desirability of retaining a senior national government representative in each province, such as the Government Agents (formerly District Commissioners) who were kept on for a time in Solomon Islands while the *Plan of Operations* was being implemented.

2. WHAT SORTS OF CONTROLS SHOULD BE DECENTRALISED?

It is very easy to say that control over staff should be decentralised, but it is much more difficult to determine exactly what sorts of controls should be decentralised. The most important forms of control which should be considered are control over staff movements (including establishments, procedures for appointment and promotion, and transfers), the power to give policy directions to staff, the power to direct staff to administer or implement national policies, and control over disciplinary matters.

3. HOW SHOULD THESE CONTROLS BE ADMINISTERED AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL?

Having determined what sort of controls will be decentralised, it is then necessary to consider how these controls should be administered at provincial level. For example, what role should the provincial political body (if such exists) play? Should there be a senior civil servant in the province with overall co-ordinating powers over all decentralised staff and, if so, what should be his status, background and precise role? Should there be committees of senior civil servants and, if so, what powers should they have? And what changes in routine government procedures are needed to formalise these controls?

4. WHAT RELATIONS SHOULD PROVINCIAL STAFF HAVE WITH HEADQUARTERS MINISTRIES?

It will be necessary to consider what sort of relations provincial staff should have with the headquarters of ministries or departments to which they were formerly responsible, particularly with regard to national policy issues, technical or professional matters, and training. It will also be important to ensure that the responsibilities of individual provincial staff are clearly defined and that they are not placed in the awkward position of not knowing to whom they are responsible — national or provincial authorities. The last issue is particularly important when control is decentralised to semi-autonomous political bodies, since it seems unlikely that policies made by the national and provincial governments will always coincide.

5. WHAT SHOULD BE THE FORMAL STATUS OF PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS?

Even after detailed arrangements have been made for the organisation of government staff at

provincial level, a further question still remains: what sort of administrative structure is the structure at provincial level? The question is, in some respects, less important than the question of how the system actually functions, but it warrants some discussion. It does so because it deals with the capacity of national bureaucracies, including the employers (Public Services Commissions, etc.), to cope with decentralisation of control over staff – specifically with the problems whether, and if so how, the bodies or offices exercising such control fit in with, or relate to, the national public service.

There appear to be four main options:

- Option (i):** *Provincial civil services:* This is the most extreme form of decentralisation, in which each provincial administration operates as a separate civil service, as in a federal system of government. It is only feasible in cases where the provincial administrations are sufficiently large and well developed to function autonomously. It is unlikely to receive encouragement in countries where there is strong support for national unity, and for mobility within a larger public service.
- Option (ii):** *Provincial ministries or departments:* A less drastic but still fairly radical step is the creation of provincial ministries or departments. In this case, the change in channels of communication from a vertical (or sectoral) basis to a horizontal (or area) basis is recognised by forming a ministry or department for each province. The provincial ministry/department includes all those staff who have been decentralised, and is headed by a senior civil servant who has the status and powers of a permanent secretary. The former sectoral ministries are thus reduced in size, consisting only of headquarters staff and any staff in the provinces who remain under national control. This system has been adopted in Papua New Guinea, and there have been moves towards it in Zambia.
- Option (iii):** *Creation of one omnibus ministry or department:* An alternative to the creation of provincial ministries or departments is to transfer all decentralised staff into one central ministry. Such an arrangement has the advantage of breaking the control of individual sectoral ministries over their field staffs, while at the same time retaining overall national control over provincial administrations. However, it is probably only feasible in a small country where the total number of staff is not too large to constitute a single ministry.
- Option (iv):** *No formal structural change:* The last alternative is to make no formal structural changes, but merely to change procedures. In other words, staff performing provincial functions continue to belong formally to sectoral ministries/departments within a single public service structure, but the actual control of staffs by their headquarters is significantly reduced. Such an approach, which has been adopted, for example, in Tanzania, allows greater national control over provincial administrations than the system in option (ii), at least in theory, but it can also cause some confusion because, although national ministries/departments continue to exist officially, they do not really operate like ministries, because the headquarters have relatively little control over their field staffs.

In Solomon Islands, administrative staff employed by the central government and performing provincial functions under the *Plan of Operations* were transferred to the Ministry of Home Affairs, where they were divided up among the provinces and placed under the control of Council Clerks ('Pro-

vincial Secretaries'). Provincial governments were able to employ staff directly – mainly in clerical and labouring occupations – up to the equivalent of Level 4 in the eleven-level Public Service hierarchy (more senior staff had to be employed by the Public Service Commission). But the Malaita Council/Provincial Government, for one, preferred to put certain jobs, such as grass-cutting and house-painting, which might have been performed by directly employed staff to tender – and drew up simplified tender- and contract- forms to assist local entrepreneurs in applying.

The Special Committee on Provincial Government was concerned with identifying whether there were further staff and functions which should be brought 'under' provincial governments, whether additional controls should be decentralised to the principal administrative officers of provincial governments ('Council Clerks'/'Provincial Secretaries'), and what sorts of controls Provincial Assemblies and political executives should have over policy.

It also gave careful consideration to existing arrangements for direct employment of provincial government staffs. Policy-makers in countries where there has been less administrative decentralisation than in Solomon Islands, or where fundamental reforms are being considered, should use the following working papers and Appendix in conjunction with the preceding questions.

In countries with larger provinces or greater resources than Solomon Islands, policy-makers might usefully pay greater attention to staffing arrangements at sub-provincial (or 'Area Council') level.

WORKING PAPER 4.1

CONTROLLING STAFF

1. There have been complaints that at present provincial government staff do not always work effectively for their political leaders. This paper looks at relevant problems and considers ways in which they might be solved.

2. One problem seems to be the way the principal administrative officers of Councils (the 'Clerks') work for the political heads of Councils (the 'Presidents'). There are two main ways in which the problem might be approached:

Option (i): The political leaders of provincial governments could be allowed to have their own advisers

Advantages

- the advisers would be trusted
- they would be loyal
- they could be sacked if they were not satisfactory
- they might have special skills

Disadvantages

- there might be favouritism in appointments
- the advisers might conflict with senior public servants
- only senior public servants can have disciplinary powers over other public servants
- they might not be as experienced as senior public servants

Option (ii): Provincial governments could be allowed to choose their senior staff from a list of eligible public servants

Advantages

- they would be experienced
- they would be able to exercise disciplinary powers

Disadvantages

- they would still be loyal to the national public service
- they might not be good at giving political advice or at preparing options
- they might still lack needed skills in accounting, law, economics or administration

BUT

- they could be trained
- they could be made to prepare options for provincial leaders by, say, being removed if the provincial government asks.

3. Another problem seems to be conflict between Presidents, Clerks and the national government's representatives in the provinces (the 'Government Agents'). This might be solved by removing Government Agents from the provinces:

Advantages

- there are already no full time Government Agents in some provinces
- less conflict

Disadvantages

- public servants carrying out national functions might not work together
- staffs of individual ministries might conflict with Presidents and/or Clerks.

4. Another problem seems to be making sure that seconded staff do what political leaders want. Members have suggested that Provincial Secretaries/Clerks should be given certain disciplinary powers over provincial staffs:

Advantages

- staff would have to do what they were told by a person working closely with political leaders
- staff would not answer directly to ministries

Disadvantages

- staff might feel cut off from their ministries where people understand what they do
- there might be resentment
- control by a Provincial Secretary/Clerk is not the same as control by a politician.

5. Provincial Secretaries/Clerks might be given certain powers over staff performing national functions:

Advantages

- provincial and national staffs might work together

Disadvantages

- divided loyalty for staff performing national functions
- interference in the work of staff carrying out national functions.

6. Control over transfers of public servants between provinces:

Option (i): By contract

Advantages

- provincial government and public servants would know how long an officer was available
- local knowledge
- less cost in moving staff
- less disruption to staff/family life

Disadvantages

- might make promotion difficult
- might mean unsatisfactory staff have to be kept on
- provinces and ministries short of good staff could not get them easily
- staff might not move as often as they like

Option (ii): By allowing people to be promoted on the job

Advantages

- would keep staff on the job

Disadvantages

- might cost more in salaries
- might need to be limited so staff effectively used

Option (iii): By allowing provincial governments to hire their own staffs

Advantages

- might get who they want
- might be able to offer them better pay, conditions and promotion

Disadvantages

- might lead to favouritism
- might not be able to get good staff for certain places and jobs
- might restrict promotion opportunities for staff.

7. Direct employment of staff by provincial governments:

Advantages

- staff would have the skills wanted
- staff would be loyal
- pay etc. might be dealt with locally

Disadvantages

- staff might be hard to get for some places and with some skills
- promotion and transfer to other places might be limited
- favouritism possible
- dismissal might be easier.

8. Pay and conditions of staff hired directly by provincial governments:

Option (i): Could be set by national guidelines

Advantages

- similar system in all provinces so less competition and expense

Disadvantages

- less easy for provincial governments to compete for staff they want
- less control over money by provincial governments

Option (ii): Could be left to provincial governments:

Advantages

- provincial governments can get the staff they want
- might save money with staff who want to come
- difficulties could be settled at provincial level

Disadvantages

- provincial governments might compete for staff
- might cost some more
- some provinces might not get sufficient/appropriate staff
- might make transfers between provinces harder for staff.

9. If members think that provincial governments should be able to hire staff directly, they will have to decide whether there should be restrictions on the numbers, levels and skills which could be hired. Expatriate staff would have to be hired or at least cleared by the national government.

10. The Committee might like to consider the reactions of public servants and/or the public service union to an increase in direct employment of staff by provincial governments and the future of public servants who might be displaced.

11. Some provincial governments do not directly employ people to do some jobs. They contract some jobs out. The Committee might like to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this, and make recommendations on its use in the future:

Advantages

- economy and efficiency
- puts money into local communities
- shares available work around

Disadvantages

- there may be little continuity in employment of contractors or in maintenance
- speed rather than overall efficiency in getting the job done.

WORKING PAPER 4.2

MOVING STAFF FROM THE NATIONAL CAPITAL TO THE PROVINCES

1. There is a feeling that too many senior and skilled public servants are in the national capital, Honiara. The Committee considered several ways of dealing with this problem:

Option (i): The Committee could recommend which staff should be posted to the provinces

Advantages

- more certain what will be recommended

Disadvantages

- time
- expertise
- recommendations might not be acted on, anyway

Option (ii) The Committee could recommend a thorough review of the public service by a special body with specific terms of reference

Advantages

- could specify the kinds of people or the body
- experts could be included on body or be advisers
- might be more thorough

Disadvantages

- less certain about political direction

Option (iii): The Committee could also recommend similar reviews in future – perhaps at specified intervals

Advantages

- as for (ii)
- also makes decentralisation of staff an ongoing process

Disadvantages

- as for (ii)

Option (iv): The Committee could recommend guidelines for establishment of new public service positions

Advantages

- could be combined with (i), (ii) or (iii), above
- ministries would have to explain why staff posted to Honiara

Disadvantages

- reasons can often be found, even when doubtful
- could be time-consuming for government
- jobs at different levels (administrative and national policy-making) must be done in Honiara to keep capital running
- some jobs (for example, Foreign Affairs) cannot be done anywhere else.

2. The Committee eventually decided to obtain further information about which positions could be moved out of Honiara and requested its Secretary to carry out a survey. The results of this investigation are given in Appendix 4.1.

3. Some public servants cannot be sent to work full-time in provinces because –

- supporting staff/facilities are needed;
- staff is short;
- certain skills are not effectively used full-time in one province (for example, certain technical specialists).

This problem can be dealt with in several ways:

Option (i): Such staff could be shared by two or more provinces who consult where and when they should work

Advantages

- under control of provinces who use them

Disadvantages

- consultation can be expensive and/or time-consuming
- could lead to conflict between provinces
- different provinces might share the services of different personnel (for example, forestry officers in Western and Eastern Outer Islands; officers dealing with plantation purchases in Guadalcanal, Isabel and Western)

Option (ii): Such staff could be placed in a special pool under the control of all provinces:

Advantages

- consultation might be more regular/cheaper

Disadvantages

- provinces not directly affected might become involved/might find some consultations irrelevant

Option (iii): Such staff could be placed in a special ministry (for example, Home Affairs)

Advantages

- under department concerned with provinces

Disadvantages

- the special ministry might grow too large
- specialist staff might be cut off from professional colleagues and supporting staff/facilities

Option (iv): Such staff could be left in present ministries

Advantages

- system need not change, though consultation could be strengthened

Disadvantages

- ditto.

4. Public servants can be made available to work in remote or difficult areas in a number of ways:

Option (i): They can be ordered to go there

Advantages

- costs no more

Disadvantages

- they might be unhappy and resign

Option (ii): They can be offered special allowances or rapid promotions

Advantages

- more attractive to staff concerned

Disadvantages

- cost more
- unfair to people with town jobs

Option (iii): They can be required to work in provinces/rural areas before they can be promoted

Advantages

- costs no more

Disadvantages

- does not apply to people with town jobs
- staff might be unhappy or refuse promotion.

5. The Committee also considered alternative ways of preventing the growth of 'mini-Honiaras' at provincial centres:

Option (i): This could be left to provincial governments to control

Advantages

- preserves provincial autonomy

Disadvantages

- might not work
- if it does not work, might affect whole country or whole provinces, including ability to get aid

Option (ii): There could be national guidelines, which might be enforced through financial grants

Advantages

- control over provinces which develop provincial centres

Disadvantages

- weakens provincial autonomy.

6. In considering moving staff to provinces, it is also necessary to bear the following in mind –

- will it cost more?
- how quickly can it be done (for example, houses, etc. have to be made available)?
- how will public servants feel?

7. It is also necessary to consider:

- whether there are national government posts in Honiara which might be abolished and the money saved used to create new posts in the provinces;
- whether there should be special procedures to control the creation of additional new posts in Honiara.

APPENDIX 4.1

REVIEW OF STAFF WHO COULD BE MOVED OUT OF THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

1. Working Paper 4.2 mentioned a proposal that public service posts should be identified which might be moved from the national capital, Honiara, to the provinces. This paper reports the results of a study undertaken on the Committee's behalf to identify such posts.

2. The following list is only preliminary:

- it deals only with posts at or above Level 5;
- it does not distinguish between posts which come under the control of provincial governments and those which might remain under national government control; and
- it does deal with posts which are under the control of national government ministries in Honiara and might come under the Honiara Town Council.

Ministry	Section	Staff Position
Ministry of Youth and Cultural Affairs	—	
Ministry of Transport and Communications	—	
Office of the Prime Minister	Central Planning Office	Only 6 staff, but possibilities of one or two, or any extra being assigned to provinces, maybe for short periods, or fairly continuous touring.
Ministry of Home Affairs	—	
Ministry of Agriculture and Lands	Extension	Possibilities of reorganising the 6 posts above Level 5, to release one or two senior staff to larger provinces
	Land	Possibility of reorganisation of lands administration section (15) staff to base officers in 5 or 6 provinces.
Ministry of Education and Training	Teacher Training	Slight possibility of finding a few advisory teachers from teacher training to be based in one or two provinces.
Ministry of Health and Medical Services	Central Hospital	Possibility of relocation of very few medical staff out of central hospital and into provincial hospitals. But existing medical and health structure not well-established, vacancies very high, and best equipment in Honiara – depends very much on level of services to be provided.

Ministry	Section	Staff Position
Ministry of Works and Public Utilities	Engineering Branch (includes design, building, electrical, water supply, roads, and bridges)	Strong possibility of reorganisation to relocate some of 7 qualified engineers and other engineering staff to provinces. Depends on sorting out how much of central government work is really in Honiara, and reallocation of the rest; and on decision about future of provincial transport pools (Mechanical Branch).
Ministry of Finance	—	Possibility of relocation of some accountants from Treasury, depending on Committee's decisions about decentralisation of accounting (see Working Paper 5.5).
Ministry of Natural Resources	—	
Ministry of Law and Information	—	
Public Service Office	—	Possibility of relocation of a few posts for personnel management in bigger provinces.
Police	—	(investigation pending).