

CHAPTER 8

IMPLEMENTATION

Previous chapters of this volume have outlined issues and options which policy-makers might consider when deciding what kind of decentralised system of government they would prefer to see set up. They have, with some exceptions – most notably, Working Paper 3.4 – not been concerned directly with the process of setting the system up. Working Paper 8.1 is concerned with aspects of this process, and with possible future reviews of the decentralised system. Its subject-matter is closely related to that of Chapter 9, which deals with legal implementation and, by implication, with the ease with which recommendations arising from future reviews might be put into effect.

Implementation ought not to be ‘divorced from policy’, as Pressman and Wildavsky have observed:

There is no point in having good ideas if they cannot be carried out (Pressman and Wildavsky 1973: 143).

But there is also little point in putting even the best ideas into effect if those who are responsible for the ideas either make no effort themselves, or do not arrange for others, to keep a check on what actually happens – to see, initially, how the programme of decentralisation is going, and, later, how the decentralised system actually works. Not only must the programme be capable of implementation but provision should be made for implementation. And sensitive implementation involves review, and possible amendment, of the programme as circumstances change.

Among the issues which are directly relevant to implementation are the questions whether the decentralisation programme should be introduced in some provinces before others, whether some elements in the programme should be put into effect before others, when significant events – such as Provincial Assembly elections – should be held, and how the process of implementation should be co-ordinated and monitored at the national level. Another issue concerns the degree to which the initiative for introducing particular changes or preparing provincial constitutions should be with individual provincial governments, or the national government.

In countries where the Government seems indifferent or hostile to the recommended programme of decentralisation, there is likely to be strong support for the appointment of a special body to oversee the process of implementation – perhaps a body like the committee of parliamentarians recommended by the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea:

experienced . . . , broadly representative of opinion in the House, and committed to the realisation of the recommendations ... (Papua New Guinea 1974: Part 1, 10/48).

But, then, the Government might try not to appoint the special body, as happened in the particular case.

By way of comparison, the Special Committee on Provincial Government seemed less concerned at the likely policies of the Solomon Islands Government, and more accepting of the possibility that its recommendations might be amended than the Constitutional Planning Committee in Papua New Guinea. It recommended the establishment of a group of public servants from relevant ministries and other people, among them politicians, to draw up a four-year plan for implementation of its *Report*

including any amendments,

and to oversee its execution (Solomon Islands 1979b: 90). The Committee recognised that individual functions and physical assets might be prepared for transfer at different times. But, because of a widespread feeling that the *Plan of Operations* had made some councils 'guinea pigs' for others, the Committee insisted that

a particular function or kind of physical asset . . . [must be] ready for transfer to all provincial governments at the same time (*ibid.*: 92).

Recognising that individual provincial governments might have difficulty in devising constitutions of their own, the Committee recommended that at least three model constitutions be prepared for provincial governments to choose from.

The Special Committee recognised that a comprehensive programme of decentralisation might encounter unexpected problems. Its members were committed to flexibility. They, therefore, gave careful consideration to the desirability of recommending a transitional period during which it might be easier to change aspects of the decentralised system than it might be later. They also examined the need for subsequent review both of specific parts of the decentralised system and of the system as a whole. On the one hand, they found themselves with -

- a constitutional provision which already provided for provincial boundaries to be reviewed by the Constituency Boundaries Commission (Solomon Islands 1978a: section 114(1)); and
- a proposal, already under consideration by the Government, to establish a special body to determine the salaries and allowances of members of the National Parliament;

while, on the other hand, they favoured –

- the appointment of a special committee, representative of carefully specified interests, to review the formula for untied grants from the national to provincial governments (Solomon Islands 1979b: 50);
- further reviews of public service posts which might be removed from Honiara (*ibid.*: 67); and
- the establishment of a special committee to review the entire decentralised system after five years (*ibid.*: 95).

The Committee recommended that the proposed body to look into national parliamentarians' salaries and allowances have its terms of reference extended to Provincial Assemblies (*ibid.*: 28). Although it did not specify that the body undertaking the general review should tour the country to consult the public directly – perhaps assuming that, like its predecessors, this body would surely do so too – the Special Committee on Provincial Government outlined its composition in general terms and specified to whom it should report, namely the National Parliament and the Premiers' Conference. While stating that the other specialised reviews should take place at regular intervals, the Special Committee left the question of whether there should be further comprehensive reviews to the body conducting the first review to consider.

Perhaps less fearful of centralising tendencies in the Government, and/or less fervently committed to decentralisation than the Papua New Guinea Constitutional Planning Committee had been, the Special Committee on Provincial Government left the appointment of individual members of the body conducting the comprehensive review to a national government Minister, the Minister of Home Affairs.

WORKING PAPER 8.1

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

1. Some aspects of the process of implementation and review have already been considered in earlier papers, including:

- whether provincial boundaries should be reviewed after a certain period of time (see Working Paper 1.1);
- whether the salaries and allowances of members of provincial executives and Assemblies should be set and periodically reviewed by an independent body (see Working Paper 2.1);
- whether the public service should be further reviewed to identify posts which might be removed from Honiara (see Working Paper 4.2); and
- whether the financial formula used for allocating national government grants to provincial governments should be reviewed periodically (see Working Paper 5.2).

Other issues are considered in this paper.

2. If provincial boundaries are to be reviewed, the review could be conducted in two ways:

Option (i): By the Constituency Boundaries Commission or some other special body

Advantages

- special body best
- all boundaries should be looked at together

Disadvantages

- not appointed by provincial governments
- should be part of general review
- provincial governments should be more autonomous

Option (ii): As part of a general review of provincial government

Advantages

- looks at provincial government as a whole
- might save money
- less uncertainty than with separate reviews

Disadvantages

- boundaries a special problem
- specialist skills necessary

- uncertainty if too much reviewed at once.

3. The Committee might like to consider whether:

- (i) it wishes to recommend that a plan for the introduction of one or all provincial governments in stages should be prepared

Advantages

- better not to do everything at once
- clear what should happen
- easier to spot changes and get explanation
- powers/functions built up gradually

Disadvantages

- might be politically necessary to act at once
- hard to predict future
- might be inflexible
- staffs/politicians should be encouraged to see provincial government as a whole;

- (ii) and, if so, whether it wishes to recommend how long it should take

Advantages

- recommendations should be clear
- Committee knows how much time people want
- planning easier
- might give national government greater urgency

Disadvantages

- Committee might not know administrative/legal problems
- better to see how things go
- might be inflexible
- should be national government's job;

- (iii) and what the main objectives/priorities should be

Advantages

- more flexible than timetable
- Committee knows what is most important
- planning easier
- priorities clear

Disadvantages

- less certain than timetable
- Committee might not know administrative/legal problems

- might be inflexible
- should be national government's job.

4. The Committee may also want to make recommendations about the timing of the next provincial government elections to provide safeguards against provincial governments seeking to extend their terms of office.

5. The Committee might also like to consider alternative ways of supervising the introduction of provincial governments:

Option (i): Supervision by the national government (through the Ministry of Home Affairs)

Advantages

- national government has relevant experience/expertise
- national government's job
- Parliament/provincial politicians can still check

Disadvantages

- national government not directly answerable to provincial governments
- national government might be centralist
- hard for provincial governments to do anything

Option (ii): Supervision by a Parliamentary Committee

Advantages

- would probably include non-Government members
- independent of executive
- members answerable to people
- members live in provinces
- direct access to Parliament

Disadvantages

- might be less expert than national government
- might be hard to influence national government
- should be national government's job
- national government might understand problems better
- might be too political

Option (iii): Supervision by periodic meetings of Premiers (and the national government?)

Advantages

- all parties affected involved
- national and provincial governments can exchange views
- widest experience

Disadvantages

- no direct access to Parliament
- could be too political
- should be national government's job

Option (iv): Some combination of the above

Option (v): A separate body for each province (chosen by provincial and/or national government).

6. If there is to be a review of the salaries and allowances paid to members of Provincial Assemblies and executives, the review could be conducted in several ways:

Option (i): By a special body

Advantages

- special skills necessary
- raises special issues
- should be removed from politics

Disadvantages

- uncertainty if too many separate reviews
- provincial government should be reviewed as a whole (especially financial matters)
- politicians should be answerable for decisions about pay

Option (ii): As part of some other wage-fixing procedure (such as the procedure for fixing wages for members of the National Parliament or public servants)

Advantages

- looked at with other wages
- special skills employed
- should be independent of politics

Disadvantages

- raises special issues
- may bring other bodies into politics
- politicians should be answerable for decisions about pay

Option (iii): As part of a general review of provincial government

Advantages

- same as for Option (ii) in para. 2 (above)
- may space pay-rises

Disadvantages

- same as for Option (ii) in para. 2 (above)
- may be too long between pay-rises.

7. If there is to be a general review of the provincial government system, who should decide when it should take place?

Option (i): The Committee

Advantages

- Committee knows issues/people's views
- Committee certain what will happen

Disadvantages

- future uncertain
- national/provincial governments should have greater autonomy

Option (ii): The national government

Advantages

- responsible for implementing Committee's report so knows what is happening
- answerable to Parliament and people

Disadvantages

- uncertainty when/if review will be
- might be too centralist

Option (iii): Parliament

Advantages

- can hold national government accountable
- answerable to people

Disadvantages

- uncertainty
- might be too centralist

Option (iv): provincial governments (perhaps at a Premiers' Conference -- at which national government is represented?)

Advantages

- know their own problems
- gives greater autonomy

Disadvantages

- national government's views might be ignored
- might not be able to agree.

8. The Committee might also consider:

- (a) whether the review should be repeated, and if so, how often; and
- (b) the terms of reference for the review.