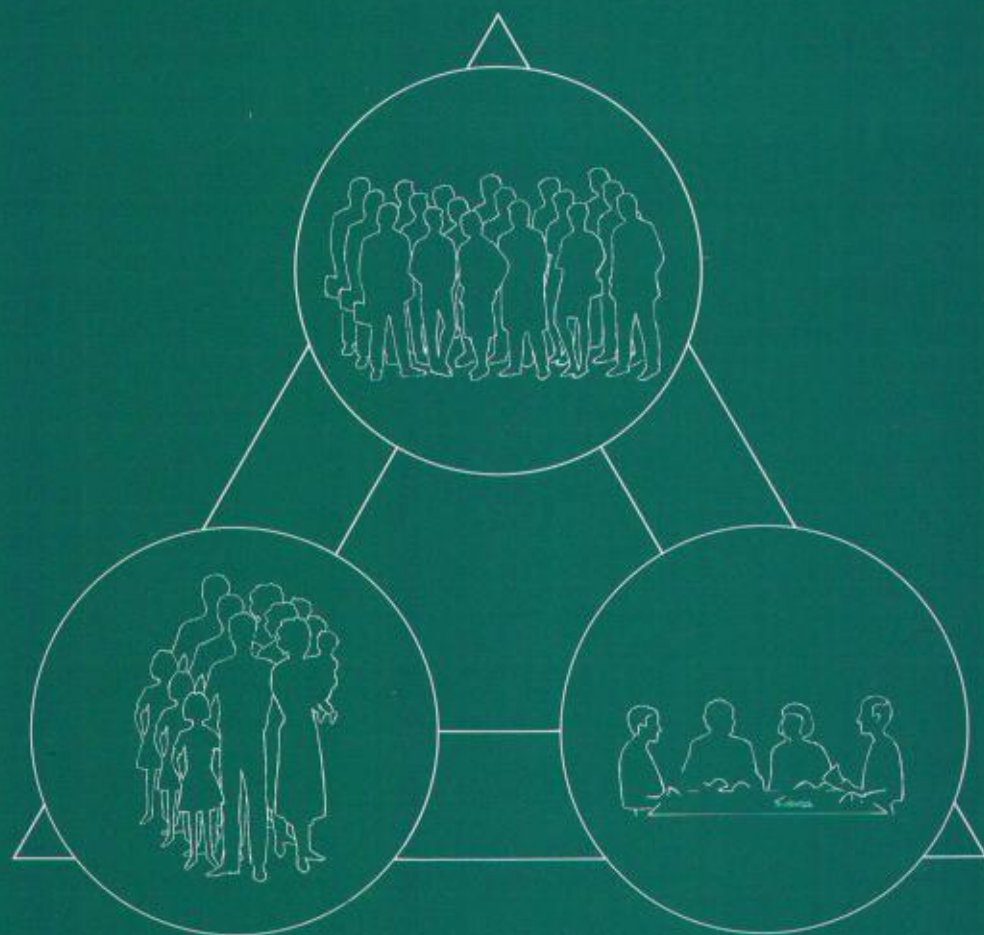# PROCESS
PAPER POLICY
and
PRACTICE

A case study
of the introduction of a formal extension policy
in Queensland, Australia
1987-1994

J.A. Coutts

Process, Paper Policy and Practice

A case study of the introduction of a formal extension policy in Queensland, Australia 1987-1994

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures and Tables

Notes

Direct quotes are in *italics*. Page numbers related to quotes from published works are included where appropriate and available. In the first instance, they are included with the author and date, separated by a colon (for example, Smith, 1994:25). Subsequent quotes from the same text, in close succession, have page numbers only indicated (for example, (26)).

Quotes from interviewees or from incidental personal interaction are also in italics, but are not acknowledged. Quotes from internal memoranda or similar documentation are identified by way of date or year, but in most cases more precise identification is not provided. This is to maintain confidentiality for those involved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It will be obvious to anyone reading this book that I have been influenced by the work that my supervisor, Prof Niels Röling, has pioneered. It was Niels' challenge for extensionists to come to grips with the policy component of extension which provided a strong motive for this book. His papers in the areas of extension science, knowledge systems, and more recently 'platforms' have provided key points of interaction during my research. His sharp mind and challenging insights assisted me to better think through the issues emerging out of this study, and to capture them more clearly. Dr Lynda Davies from Griffith University opened my eyes to the wonderful world of Foucault and Vickers, and provided me with a base on which to launch my research.

This book is based on experiences occurring within the Queensland Department of Primary Industries. It was through the far-sighted 'SARAS' scheme - a departmental program of assisting staff to undertake further studies in Australia and overseas - that I received the financial and administrative support to complete this book in the Netherlands. Not only was my professional development supported, but there was a willingness to permit the department itself to be put under the microscope in the interests of learning. I would particularly single out Beth Woods, John Childs, Shaun Coffey, and Gus Hamilton who encouraged me in this endeavour. They cannot, of course, be held responsible for the content or any conclusions which I have drawn. My other colleagues at the Rural Extension Centre, Dick Fell and Maria Murray have also provided much assistance and encouragement. Bob Mijnarends, who has since left the department, provided a valuable service in translating work from Wagemans, a key background paper for my research.

It is easy for a researcher to come in and clinically analyse a situation such as the development and implementation of an extension policy - the subject of this book - and forget that the actors are real people caught up in challenging events. I hold the highest regard for those managers and extension officers who continue to grapple with the changes occurring within public sector extension. I hope that this book will contribute to a better understanding of the issues and processes surrounding extension policy, and will assist those endeavouring to improve the contribution of extension to the community.

1. INTRODUCTION: EXTENSION POLICY AS A CONFUSING CONCEPT

1.1   The problem stated
1.2   The definition of extension
1.3   The role of public sector extension
1.4   The meaning of formal policy
1.5   The need for, and content of, public sector extension
1.6   The process of developing extension policy
1.7   The implementation of extension policy
1.8   The impact and potential consequences of extension policy
1.9   Queensland as an entry point

1.1   THE PROBLEM STATED

The 1980's saw the development of a vigorous debate about the definition and role of extension in the agricultural and rural sector throughout the world. This debate has continued and intensified as we have moved into the 1990's.

There appear to be as many definitions of the term 'extension' as there are extensionists, with as many diverse views about its function, operation, and desired outcome. As the more developed countries moved from food shortages to food surpluses, rural dominated communities and industries to urban, and profitability issues to sustainability, extension officers have increasingly had management, government, and the community attempt to impinge on their freedom to operate as they thought best. In the aftermath of the Green Revolution and its apparent failure to impact on marginal areas, aid agencies, donors, and governments in developing countries have also questioned extension approaches and activities.

Attempts by organisations and governments to impinge on the operation of extension have evolved into the emergence of what has been termed **Extension Policy**.

The process of defining - or redefining - extension policy as it relates to rural and agricultural policy has been a significant feature of government activity as the debate progressed.

The designing of a formal written 'extension policy' is a fascinating idea. Not only is the term **extension** under contest and lacking a collective definition or role, but the notion of **extension policy** itself - as opposed to agricultural policy - has been poorly defined and understood.

This was raised as an issue by Jiggins (1989:3) in the introduction of the proceedings of the *International Seminar on Rural Extension* (Wageningen, 1989) where it was noted that, considering...*agricultural extension is recognised as a major instrument for increasing agricultural productivity and farm incomes...remarkably little attention has been paid to the formulation, content, and implications of extension policy, or to what should guide its*

definition in the future. It was pointed out that...*few national extension services and external agencies have officially set out clear extension policies, targets, and goals,* and it was suggested that...*principles and ideological preferences that underpin extension policy were being hidden away in debates over methods, approaches, and management.*

In the same proceedings, Röling (1989:106) argued that...*the area of expertise (extension) is slowly coming to grips with extension management that is supervision, management, and information systems* but that...*it has not gone very far in the area of extension policy.* Röling agreed that... *we are confronted with extension policy as an important area of concern, without really having developed a meaning for it.* He suggested that as a result... *we run the risk that some major policy issues are neglected because we have no framework for discussing them.*

Herein lies the importance of the notion of extension policy.

In his report of a visit to study commercialisation of services in the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF), Thomas (1990:10) highlighted the issue. He suggested that... *the government has sought to address its budget difficulties by cutting MAF budgets and requiring fee for service without, it seems, a real appreciation of what this might do to agricultural output either in terms of individual farmers or the nation's economy.*

Without an adequate framework for debate in which alternatives and implications can be explored, planned and implemented, how was the New Zealand government - or any government - able to come to such an appreciation?

A related concern was expressed by Baxter, Slade, and Howell (1989:38) when reviewing aid and agricultural extension. They concluded that there is a need for...*any investment in extension to be framed in the light of particular national policy and economic circumstances.* They considered that...*systems of extension are introduced without adequate attention being given to policy...with the consequence that adequate commitment remains elusive.* They stated that...*the reform and development of extension brings with it an obligation not only to address the technical issues of good extension practice and organisation but also a responsibility to address complementary policy and institutional issues.*

It is time to further the development of such a framework. The aim of this book then, is to explore this policy element of rural and agricultural extension, or as Röling (1989:106) put it, to...*develop a meaning for it.*

> **The output will be a framework for thinking about and acting upon the policy element of public sector agricultural extension.**

Such a framework should assist more meaningful discussion and debate about the process and content of extension policy among the many individuals who wish to partake and influence directions. It should provide a structure to ensure that in the total process of formulating extension policy, major policy - or operational - issues are not neglected.

There are a number of issues surrounding the notion of extension policy that need to be explored as we enter into the debate. Each of these muddy the water when policy is being discussed and add confusion to any collective notion of extension policy. These issues are:

(i)   the definition (models and paradigms) of extension - and what it can do;
(ii) the role (relevance, objectives, funding, and relationships) of public sector extension;
(iii) the meaning of formal policy;
(iv) the appropriateness and content of extension policy;
(v)   the process of developing/modifying extension policy;
(vi) the implementation of extension policy; and
(vii) the impact (potential consequences) of extension policy.

The route which I have chosen to untangle these issues and develop a framework for thinking and acting upon the policy element of public sector extension is a case study of the development of extension policy in Queensland, Australia. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI) for the first time went though the process of developing, designing, and commencing to implement an **extension** policy. This process occurred during a period when the future and role of public sector extension was in contest world-wide. Such a study provides valuable insights into the surrounding issues of public sector extension, and lessons for developing an extension policy framework.

Before examining the Queensland situation further, the issues raised above need to be explored. Without a basic grasp of these, even starting on this road to discovery will be difficult.

During the course of this book, I will progressively interact with the literature and developments concerning these issues. As such, the following sections are not comprehensive but intend to provide a basic background and starting point for these issues.

1.2   THE DEFINITION OF EXTENSION

Definitions become important. Without a collective understanding of the term extension, policy debate is confusing if not impossible to conduct.

Definitions also imply a point of view as to what extension can - or should - achieve. A common understanding centres around the **interactive** nature of extension - between extension agents and those with whom they are working and/or the facilitation of interaction between a number of people - to achieve a 'positive' outcome. The viewpoint of the nature and purpose of this interaction is where the differences lie. (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1988; Röling, 1988) Two ends of a spectrum could be labelled **persuasive** extension on one extreme, and **facilitative** extension on the other.

Persuasive extension implies that there is a predetermined 'correct course of action' that needs to be taken by extension's target(s). The role of extension is to influence 'voluntary'

behaviour, so that the innovation (a new technology, management procedure, environmental practice) is adopted by the target population (as Röling (1988:22) described it...*how do I get them where I want them?*). It is out of this viewpoint that the concept of the Diffusion of Innovations (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1988) and categories of 'innovators' and 'laggards' developed which labelled those who were quickly persuaded as the 'good' farmers and those who for whatever reason, were slow - or failed to adopt - as 'bad farmers' (or ...*Why don't they do as I want them to do?* Röling, 1988). Research centred on discovering 'blockages' to adoption (attitudes, knowledge, availability of capital and other resources, etc) so that they could be minimised and allow a greater rate of adoption.

Facilitative extension at the other end of the spectrum implies that, given the right conditions, information, mutual interaction, and opportunity, people can develop solutions to problems and take steps in directions that improve their situation. Agricultural Knowledge Systems (described in chapter 2) and the notion of platforms (described later in this chapter) are concepts to assist extension agents to facilitate such interaction.

These descriptions also provide insight into viewpoints about extensions's rationale for employment, its capabilities, its possible impact and consequences, as well as its ethics.

If one believes, for example, that extension **can** persuade - or 'cause'/increase the rate of 'voluntary' decisions in a predetermined and desired direction then extension becomes an option to be used for this purpose. Public health campaigns, for example, are based on this premise, as are extension campaigns directed at increasing farm efficiency or decreasing environmental damage through the promotion of new technologies or management practices. Public extension based on the effectiveness of the persuasive element, becomes then an issue of ethics and cost-effectiveness (that is, is the economic/social impact worth the cost of providing the public extension?). By ethics, I simply mean 'how certain the public body is that the message is valid and morally correct to 'impose'.' What are the implications of such a 'voluntary' change for the individual or for society?

A facilitative approach is not without its own dilemmas. There appears to be some logic in employing public extension if one believes in a direct cause - effect relationship. But what about a less directive, open view of extension? Without some underlying belief that the employment of extension will result in some positive benefit to the wider society, why should the public support it? On one hand, the facilitative approach could be considered a way to ultimately cause more effective 'voluntary' change in certain directions because it better overcomes the obstacles encountered by a less subtle and more directive persuasive approach. On the other hand, it could be considered a way of human development, essential because the government/experts don't know the 'best' way, and a choice has been made to empower non-experts to break new ground which could ultimately benefit wider society. This would also include facilitating interaction within the public arena, and between the public arena and the private arena so as to mutually learn from each other over time. (Van Woerkum, 1994)

A parallel issue about extension emerges from this discussion - the benefits and beneficiaries of extension. As a young extension officer, my first year was considered 'successful' for the reason that... *we* (the department/government) *did not receive any complaints from farmers*

about your work! From this statement, the perceived role of the extension agent as serving the interests of farmer - or client - was clear, as was the role of extension as achieving a political purpose of 'keeping the farmers/clients happy'.

The privatisation and commercialisation debates, however, have focused on more concrete outcomes related to benefits (or impact) and beneficiaries. Both have significant implications for a notion of extension policy, and are dealt with in detail later in this chapter.

So far I have considered the two extremes of a persuasive/facilitative continuum. Other perspectives that are found between these extremes need, also, to be understood. I have found a useful framework for considering the range of perspectives and paradigms about extension to be that proposed by Bloome (1991). His proposal was that the views of extension could be classified under four paradigms: technology transfer; problem solving; informal education; and/or human development. In brief, these can be described (my wording) as follows:

Technology Transfer	Extension is a means of pro-actively changing voluntary behaviour in the form of the adoption of new (externally developed, already available and tested) technology or management practice by providing information, opportunity, and persuasion. The assumption is that the scientists or experts have developed solutions to problems or new ways of doing things that, if adopted by farmers or 'users', will improve farm output and living standards. The manner of achieving this change is mainly persuasive by nature, that is, convincing people of the value of adoption by use of extension material, presentations, demonstrations, discussion groups etc.
Problem solving	Extension is a reactive expert (advisory/consultancy) function which is a means of assisting individuals to find solutions to technological or management problems which arise and are inhibiting their desired unit performance. The adoption of new technology/management practices (or the purchase of goods and services provided by the agency) are an indirect, though 'inevitable' consequence of this process.
Education	Extension is a means of pro-active informal education which seeks to assist individuals to better understand their situation, and so enable them to make choices and take action to improve their situation. The assumption is that an adult education approach (action learning) both assists people to make better choices, and results in better choices being made.
Human Development	Extension is a means to facilitate and stimulate individuals and communities to take the initiative in problem definition and seeking solutions to individual and societal concerns/opportunities. The assumption is that given the

> opportunity and interactive framework, individuals and communities will and can best improve their situation. It encourages people to govern themselves.

Even these broad definition categories understate the differences in interpretation of the role and definition of extension. Having worked as an extension officer and discussed these issues with colleagues, one could also develop a category called **farmers' friend,** for example. Under this category the extension officer aligns him/herself with a small group of farmers and develops loyalty and friendship (rather than directing loyalty to the organisation or researchers). The officer then uses his/her official position and resources to provide whatever technological, management, educative, and even personal support that would help this circle of 'friends'.

The use of the single word 'extension' in a debate about extension policy when individuals perceive extension as operating under such a range of paradigms, with differing potential impacts, for different beneficiaries, inevitably results in confusion and angst. A discussion about the pros and cons of user-charge for extension will flow very differently if the focus is on 'problem solving' as opposed to 'education' or 'human development'. Where protagonists fail to appreciate the different paradigms of others, total confusion can - and does - eventuate.

An extension 'policy' then, must somehow deal with these differing perspectives.

When proposing these categories, Bloome (1992) saw these differing paradigms as complementary rather than in conflict - each relevant to different needs and situations. Van Beek and Coutts (1992) conceptualised this complementarity in Figure 1.1. using the level of (social) complexity to distinguish between appropriate extension categories (the persuasive/facilitative continuum could be thought of as bisecting the axes).

Van Beek and Coutts supported Bloome's assertion that it was not an 'either or' choice of paradigm, but rather that:

...the range of required people-oriented skills expands when the (public sector) department becomes involved in more complex situations with multiple perspectives and goals....it is not a matter of substituting skills in technology transfer by people skills....more complex situations require both: more technology transfer from disciplines and sciences and more education and human development. The full range of intellectual skills and tools must be present in the Knowledge System as a whole, if effective development is to take place. However not all need to reside within (the public sector organisation), provided they can work together. (Van Beek & Coutts, 1992:4)

Human   development

increasing
people skills

Education

Problem   Solving

technical
know how

Technology
transfer

Increasing   complexity   of   situations
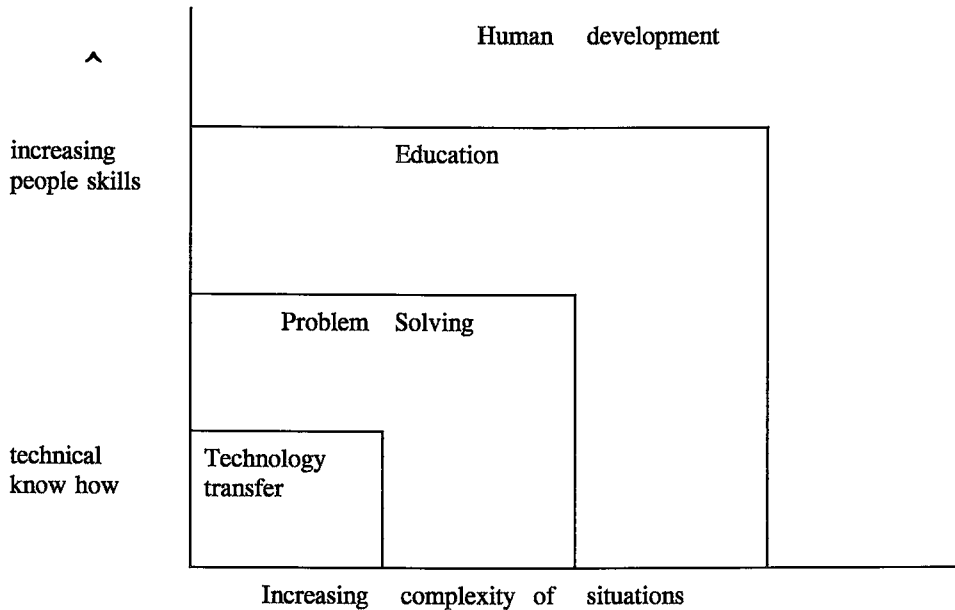
Figure 1.1 Complementarity of differing extension paradigms.

Even given this all inclusive argument, the public sector is left with the dilemma of deciding on its own specific extension objectives. It must consider these within the broader context of other extension providers, community needs, and desired outcomes. Vanclay (1994:10), for example, argued that in the Australian context, as well as facing a fiscal crisis, public extension was facing an effectiveness crisis (...*extension practices are not working...farmers fail to adopt many recommended practices, particularly in the area of environmental management*), and a theoretical crisis (...*agencies have had to reject the traditional extensional model, but have no cohesive, coherent or widely accepted alternative*).

These definitions also deal little with the outcomes to which extension should contribute. Extension under each of these paradigms could be used to assist change in a number or areas - production, food quality, product development, international competitiveness, environmental sustainability, rural development, social improvement - although at different levels of 'control/agenda setting' for those initiating the extension activity. The issue of outcome of extension will be dealt with in more detail later.

1.3   THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SECTOR EXTENSION

(i)   Extension under attack

When extension services were emerging earlier this century, their role (at least in retrospect) appeared to be very clear.   Scientific research was producing exciting advances in the production of food and fibre in a world hungry for these resources. In Australia, following the World Wars, many new people were entering farming. Communication opportunities were limited, and there was little private provision of technical assistance or training for farming families. It appeared to be nationally profitable and to make sense to provide trained people at public expense to ensure that rural products were produced at cheap prices to meet growing national demand and to be internationally competitive.

Enter food surpluses, increasing urbanisation, a strong private sector, and advances in communication and the role of extension started to lose its clarity. As Patton (1987) put it, extension was... *going through a period of transition*, with the symptoms being... *organisational soul searching, strategic planning, reorganisations, retrenchments, and defining new priorities.*

Two factors emerged in the debate at this time as having a significant contribution to this soul searching.   Firstly, the proportion of people directly involved in agriculture had decreased dramatically in much of the more developed world. In the United States, for example, farm populations had fallen from 30% in 1914 to less than 2% in 1991 (Bloome, 1991), having an inevitable impact on the provision of traditional services (decreased political support base).   Secondly, and as a consequence of the previous point, reduced government funding of extension forced some rethinking.   Feller (1987), for example, reported a significant decrease in the United States Federal funding contribution to extension over the twenty years between 1966 and 1986 (from 37% of the total Federal/State/County extension budget to 31%).   A similar trend of pressure on budgets for agriculture/extension was occurring in other countries, as well.

Rivera (1991:3,5) described public sector agricultural extension as arriving at a...*worldwide turning point* in the 1980s. He identified this budgetary pressure as one of the key reasons. He described this as an 'institutional attack'...*by politicians and economists concerned with the costs and financing of public sector extension* and *heightened competitive interests from the private sector.* He outlined the criticisms put forward to reduce funding and other support for public sector extension as including...*not doing enough, not doing it well, and for not being relevant, insufficient impact in effectiveness, in efficiency, and for not pursuing programs that fostered equity.*

This resource competitiveness issue was highlighted in Australia at the 1987 Australasian Agricultural Extension Conference held in Brisbane, Queensland.   In the report on the conference, Miller (1987:6) observed that...*while farmers may require the services of extension agencies more than ever before in the present economic climate, the ability of governments to continue funding such services at past levels may be placing greater demands on extension services as a vehicle for the promotion of government policy.* A strong input

from New Zealand at the conference focused the debate on user-pay. Miller referred to the paper by Hercus (1987) that reported on the recent commercialisation of New Zealand's research and extension arms. The producers's representative at the conference was reported to have responded to this commercialisation trend by saying that...*while charging for extension has a superficial attractiveness to governments...this needs to be carefully thought out.* (Miller,1987:5) Arguments based on equity and the public benefits that accrue from government extension were used to justify continuing free extension.

Such public benefits then became a crucial question in the debate.

(ii)   Competitiveness and inter-relationships

The traditional argument centred on the role of public sector extension in increasing productivity and international competitiveness.

Holt (1987:1401) in looking at...*a competitive R&D (Research and Development) strategy for US Agriculture*, argued that...*the United States should create and maintain a superior delivery system for its agricultural production technology and farm management information, so that information is used earliest and most effectively by US farmers and agribusiness people.* He proposed that...*site - and situation - specific research and extension programs benefit other nations relatively little* and that *through such programs, the US can capture propriety benefits from investments in basic, developmental, and adaptive research and from related extension programs.* Here was a very strong view on the causality of extension, with the result being improved competitiveness!

Feller (1987:313) quoted a 1986 USA presidential budget message as saying...*(Extension) Program priorities should focus on the transfer of basic agricultural information to farmers.* He cited evidence that this federal policy mirrored the cooperative extension service's own emphasis on its successes in technology transfer as a justification for its existence.

However, extension's capacity to achieve in this role was not accepted by all and this role was challenged.

Feller went on to claim that...*extension's historical contribution to increased agricultural productivity is not in question: its current contribution is.*(315) Patton (1993) argued that society was asking extension the question...*what have you done for us recently?* He suggested that extension's inability to provide the answer resulted in US AID - an agency for international development, to...*stop funding international extension efforts because they believed it was a waste of money!*

Looking at the future of the Co-operative Extension Service in the US (under the paradigm of extension as technology transfer), Feller (1987) pointed out that it was some of the changes that had occurred both technologically and economically that question the role of public sector agricultural extension. These changes included:

> *...increased complexity of agricultural production; production being concentrated in a small number of farms; availability to farmers of multiple information sources; increased educational level of farmers; and the bypassing of county agents by producers who seek direct contact with extension specialists or researchers.* (Feller 1987:315)

Bloome (1991) echoed this last point by quoting a farmer, and then administrator of an Agricultural Stabilisation and Conservation Service, as saying in testimony before an Extension Futures Task Force:

> *I'm afraid that the time has already arrived when the innovative farmer no longer depends on his County Extension Agent for timely information. (Bloome, 1991)*

The point Bloome was making was not that 'extension' was not needed, but that the traditional technology transfer role of **public sector** extension was also being carried out through extension in the private sector and through other mechanisms (for example, information technology).

Bennet (1992) described his vision of such a new relationship in terms of an 'interdependence model'. Bennet argued that extension may be viewed as...*one agency in a complex comprised of several types of public sector agencies, numerous types of private sector organisations, and millions of individual and group users of these agencies and organisations.* He described these complex of agencies as meeting the needs of the public and users primarily through...*the generation and voluntary adoption of improved practices and technologies.* The examination of the elements of his interdependence model (processes and other agencies etc) can help extension's...*distinctive capabilities and comparative advantages.* Bennet argued that extension should...*place a high priority on performance of roles for which it has a comparative advantage.* He particularly highlighted a future for extension in performing the role of **education** - beyond transferring information and adoption advice.

Had transferring information and adoption advice been the only role for public sector extension, then its demise was only a matter of time, and this book unnecessary.

(iii)   Environment and facilitation

While the issue of reaching disadvantaged farmers provided an argument to continue a public sector technology transfer/advisory extension role, it had been the public interest in environmental and sustainability issues that had kept the debate - and public sector extension(?) - alive.

The US government, for example, moved from the position of extension's value in technology transfer, in 1987, to introducing a new perspective in the 1990 Farm Bill. It contained the proposal that...*the overall federal extension system - which comprises the USFDA (United States Federal Department of Agriculture) extension service in partnership with the state cooperative extension system - must become a more effective agent for*

agrochemical source reduction and environmental protection. (Ayres, 1988:7) It argued that broad public interest in alternative farming systems should be supported through publicly funded extension.

Bloome (1991) became one of the advocates of a changing relationship between extension and agriculture and hence a changing public extension role. He accepted the decreased need for extension agents as technology transferrers or farm advisers, but argued for a more 'mature' relationship between extension and commercial agriculture. He asserted that American agriculture...*desperately needed to develop and implement strategic plans to reposition industry with respect to the global market place and the social and environmental context within which it will operate*. Public extension then had a role in helping to bring this about. Rather than a technical support or advocacy for traditional agriculture, public sector extension then could be in a position to take an overall societal perspective in bringing about changes in farming practice that went beyond interest in improved productivity and competitiveness. But what could this mean in practice?

Van Woerkum (1994) challenged (public) extensionists (or 'communicators') to go beyond its traditional roles in providing information and developing extension programs, to developing a role in the communication process between policy makers and the community. He saw a specialist (and apolitical?) facilitative role to allow learning to take place in both spheres (government and community) over time - particularly in the case of sensitive issues such as the relationship between agricultural practices and environmental sustainability.

Röling (1993) provided a potential direction with his call for the facilitation of 'platform' formation. These platforms could be described as the coming together of different stakeholders (including hard and soft science) in mutually constructing an understanding about an area of overlapping interest. The platform which concerned Röling related to the sustainable management of eco-systems, which he placed in the context of...*being of great interest for the survival of mankind*. He posed such questions as...*How do stakeholders come to the joint appreciation that the sustainability of the eco-system in which they operate is a priority problem? What coercive and non-coercive interventions are taken with what effects? How can one facilitate joint learning of stakeholders on platforms as they move to joint problem appreciation to collective action?...What role does hard science play in such processes?* (Röling 1993:8)

(iv)   Allowing diversity

Van den Ploeg (1992) argued the need for society to permit and encourage diversity - rather than convergence - as a future oriented strategy. This is based on a recognition that ...*whereas the 'future' has been represented quite often as the unfolding 'logic' of scientific laws (or as the leftist interpretation goes: the unfolding logic of capital), today it is, probably more than ever, the object of social debate and challenge*. Arce (1993) also called for rural polices to facilitate such diversity...*rather than forcing its good intentions down upon them ...and so allow rural development to take place.*(in Bolding, 1994)

It was this future uncertainty and lack of answers, that prompted Woods, Fell, & Coutts (1994) to argue that key strategies in rural extension should include: developing a willingness to adapt to rapid change; developing self reliance as an action learner, and an action orientation.

Extension policy, to be of benefit, must be able to provide a way to clarify the role of **public** extension in relation to societal goals and the plethora of other extension providers.

(v)   Market failure

This section would not be complete without raising the issue of **market failure**. The term emerges throughout this study as a logic for determining the legitimate role of government - or public sector - extension. The market failure concept is not without its own debate about meaning and implications for government involvement. This debate was comprehensively documented by Joseph and Johnston (1985) in a paper entitled *Market Failure and Science Policy*.

In their paper, the authors ascribed the initial use of a market failure argument to include the generation (and dissemination) of technical knowledge to the early 1970's, when the argument was proposed that...*markets can fail to work as adequate mechanisms for allocating resources to science and technology because decisions made by firms and individuals are based upon private profits and gains and those differ from social gains...Where private and social costs (or benefits) diverge, the operation of the market will lead to a non-optimal allocation of resources.*(139)

In reviewing the proposed sources of market failure, and hence arguments used to justify government activity, Joseph and Johnston drew from Arrow (1970), Tisdell (1977), Kaplan, Ijiri, and Visscher (1976), and Pavitt and Walker (1976). These sources were described as follows:

Indivisibility: This occurs either where rapid diffusion of technology amongst many small competing firms would increase social or economic benefits but individual firms do not have the resources or capacity to introduce technology on their own account, or where the costs of developing technology are beyond the capacity of even the largest private company.

Inappropriability: This occurs when benefits from technology development can be captured by firms not originating the technology, leading to a reluctance to invest in such technology.

Uncertainty: This occurs when there is a high risk of failure inherent in development, resulting in under-investment in the private sector. (Arrow, 1970 in Joseph and Johnston, 1985)

Lack of property rights: This is the reverse of the affect of inappropriability, where the lack of property rights causes over-investment as firms try to maximise their advantageous use

of the common resource of undiscovered knowledge resulting in a dissipation of much of the social benefit. (Tisdell, 1977, in Joseph and Johnson, 1985)

Imperfect markets: This occurs when the output of projects are not traded in perfect markets (for example, health and defence), leading to inefficiencies between social benefit and private benefit. (Kaplan et al, 1977, in Joseph and Johnston, 1985)

Other Imperfections: This occurs in the cases of management imperfections resulting from a lack of technical competence; knowledge imperfections amongst potential buyers of innovations; external social costs in terms of safety, health, and job satisfaction; inadequate or inappropriate economic incentives; and inadequate investment by industrial firms in longer term, more radical innovations. (Pavitt and Walker, 1976, in Joseph and Johnson, 1985)

Despite this long list of market failure potential, Joseph and Johnson (1985:152) pointed to some major shortcomings of using the concept of market failure as a basis for defining the role of government. These were:

- *no clear cut criteria for identifying a market failure or whether it should be corrected;*
- *little guidance on the extent of intervention necessary;*
- *difficult to use in practice as the notion of measuring private and social costs (or benefits) is not well developed; and*
- *an implicit assumption of zero administration costs.*

Joseph and Johnston went on to argue that market failure provided a...*pre-emptive judgement on the desirable mix between private and public support for science and technology .... preventing consideration of the wide variety of organisational structures that may be necessary in a modern economy.*(152)

This market failure debate surrounding the use of extension services appeared to be one based on economic rationality - an implicit view that extension's role was essentially a direct economic one. The discussion earlier in the chapter raised other perspectives on the meaning and outputs of extension that go beyond this economic one.

Despite these warnings about the difficulty of basing policies intervention on market failure, the argument for market failure as a justification for public sector extension services continued to dominate policy development in the 80's and 90's. The Extension Policy Review in Queensland, the initial focus of the case study dealt with in this book, concluded that ...*these services* (public sector extension) *aim to redress market failures...hence the community as a whole is the principal beneficiary.* (Wythes, Woods & Gleeson, 1990:xii) A similar review of 'field based services' in the Victorian Department of Food and Agriculture (Watson et al, 1992:1) also recommended that...*the field based services of DFA should concentrate on areas of market failure where the private sector is unwilling or unable to provide services to farmers.*

Joseph and Johnston had focused on the area of technological innovation giving little attention to issues such as the environment and sustainability which could also be argued as a key area for market failure. The shortcomings listed, however, indicate that the concept of market failure is not going to provide a neat framework on which to hang extension policy!

(vi)   Choices and options

A number of argued roles for public sector extension, then, have been proposed. This very diversity of arguments interlinking with the differing definitions and perspectives on the meaning and capability of extension results in no easy conclusion about the role and future of public sector extension. Add, also, the fact of (public) extension competing for resources from a reducing budgetary base and the tensions in the debate rise. Discussions about extension policies become clouded. The need for **extension policy** is raised.

1.4   THE MEANING OF FORMAL POLICY

So far I have considered different definitions and perspectives on extension, and the debate surrounding the continuing role and direction of public extension services. The issue at stake, however, is the meaning and role of formal **extension policy.** Everyone involved in extension in some way has views on the above issues, and organisational changes are taking place in response to changing circumstances and debate. But why bring the term 'extension policy' into it? Is the issue arising one of true 'policy' or an issue for organisational management?

This research explores the notion of **extension policy**. The meaning of the term **policy** per se, however, has also been subject to confusion and lack of clarity.

Bardes and Dubnick (1980:102) highlighted this problem when attempting to approach the phenomenon called public policy: *We face the fundamental fact that there is no widely accepted definition of public policy which acts as a substantive link among policy analysis.* They described the various definitions as ranging from 'government action' to including *...stated intentions and symbolic acts of public officials.* They argued that the debate over a definition of public policy...*could itself fill a volume.* For their purposes (looking at motives and methods in policy analysis), they made the assumption that...*in very general terms public policies are government actions or statements, although we acknowledge a lack of a definitive boundary or substantive core for the field.*

House and Coleman (1980:183) defined government policies as...*a governing principal, plan, or course of action made by an authority in a government entity.* They used a sailing analogy to describe its purpose...*the purpose of public policy is to make "steering corrections to the ship of state" and to change them as the "weather requires".* In the same vein, Schaffer (1984) referred to the **public policy agenda,** which he described as...*the constrained list of the items or issues about which choices have to be made.*

The issue of public policy and the accompanying field of **policy analysis** is one that occupies considerable energy and resources. Fischer and Forester (1987:10) claimed that...*millions of dollars are spent each year on policy research....policy analysis work in governmental agencies, policy think tanks, academic departments, private consulting firms, the staffs of interest group associations, and legislators.*

My purpose in examining the meaning of public policy is to look for clues to understanding the term **extension policy**. An exploration of policy analysis methods and issues, provided little in the way of a firm base for developing such an understanding.

Thirteen years after Bardes and Dubnick's (1980) assessment, a generally accepted definition for public policy appeared to be just as elusive. Colebatch (1993:30), in reviewing changing policies in Australia in the late 20th Century, highlighted this continuing lack of clarity on the meaning of (public) *policy*:

> *In all of this discussion, there has been little attention given to "policy" as a concept: its meaning, and its relation to other terms, and to political activity.* (30)

He pointed out that this 'conceptual fuzziness' was also evident in American texts. He argued that...*"policy" is being used in place of terms like "government" or the "political process".* In an effort to avoid a definition that is...*so broad as to be meaningless*, Colebatch attempted to clarify...*what it is about political and social processes that the term (public policy) is seeking to illuminate.* He went on to describe policy in three dimensions:

i.   *policy as decision making*

Colebatch argued that there is broad consensus that... *"policy" consists of the decisions made by those in authority in response to public problems.* He went on, however, to point out that this gives rise to a number of questions. He described three major categories as :

- the decision process used in arriving at a response;
- the extent to which policy decisions are implemented (an issue of organisational dynamics); and
- the actual impact of policy decisions made.

ii.   *policy as the structuring of commitment*

Commitment is contrasted with *intention*. Colebatch described establishing *"policy"* on a particular question or issue as a...*way of building commitment, and building it across organisational boundaries.* He went on to say that...*in this context the policy rituals - decisions, policy statements, etc - are important, but they are important because of the part they play in building commitment, and they are not the only way of doing this.* The concerns that arise from seeing policy then as...*a pattern of structured commitments secured ambiguously on contested terrain* were given as:

- the actions not being limited through the formal institutions announcing the policy;
- the difficulty with intentionality when policy is arrived at by...*some sort of trade-off between conflicting understandings*; and
- what makes for commitment and how does this change over time.

iii.   *policy as the interpretation of action*

Colebatch, also, argued that the evidence points to a...*perception of policy as a discourse among a range of participants in the process - the "policy community" - rather than as a record of authorised decisions,* so that the "policy" process is... *about the management of interpretations of social life.* (39)

It is this latter definition of policy by Colebatch that highlights the essence of this book and the interest in exploring a framework for extension policy. What authorised decisions about extension is meaningful in the context of **extension** policy?

Beyond attempting to attribute a meaning to **public policy**, lies the issue of **formalisation**. As I record in the case study in subsequent chapters, a senior manager in the QDPI rebutted the claim that the department had not previously had an extension policy, with...*we have always had an extension policy, we just haven't written it down before.* Why this need to formalise? What needs to be formalised?

Mintzberg (1994:384), in exploring the 'rise and fall of strategic planning' described formalisation as part of the catalyst role to bring about the implementation of new directions because...*programmed tasks tend to take precedence over unprogrammed tasks.* He described formalisation as pertaining...*to time, to location, to participation, to agenda, and to information, as well as, but with only the greatest care, to process itself...it can help focus attention, stimulate debate, keep track of issues, promote interaction, and facilitate consensus.* He warned, however, that although formalisation...*may be necessary to strengthen some loose edges,...*it has *its own delicate edge beyond which planners should not go...formalisation is a double edged sword, easily reaching the point where help becomes a hindrance.* (387)

What level of formalisation is needed for public extension then? Why the need for a formal policy? Where is the delicate edge beyond which formalisation becomes a hindrance? The idea of a framework for thinking about and acting upon extension policy appears to be even more critical!

1.5   THE NEED FOR, AND CONTENT OF, PUBLIC SECTOR EXTENSION POLICY

To date, I have considered the difficulty of defining extension, the broader debate over the role of government in providing extension, the difficulties with the term 'policy' itself, and the possible value and pitfalls in formalisation. And that is before considering the need for, and if need, useful/meaningful content of extension policy. I will consider these issues in this section by separating out the debate around whether extension as an instrument of broader agricultural and rural policy requires its own formalised policy, and the content that could be argued to be useful to include in an extension policy.

(i)   Extension as an instrument of broader agricultural and rural policy

Röling (1989), in attempting to further explicate the area of discourse of extension policy argued that there are limitations in looking at extension policy on its own. He referred to the Dutch government having one policy covering agricultural research, extension, and education because it considers them...*elements of one agricultural knowledge system.* At a later time, Röling used the analogy of the stupidity of a house builder having a separate policy for a 'hammer' as opposed to his other tools in building a house (Röling, 1990 pers com). The question remains, however, as to this overall policy framework which impinges on extension operation.

Van Woerkum (1990) argued strongly that extension is only one of the instruments that governments can use to both **enact** wider rural/agricultural policy - and to **facilitate** policy development. He proposed that extension's relationship with policy can be considered under the categories of:

  (i)   the policy process (problem definition through to evaluation);
  (ii)   the choice of available instruments (extension used on its own or in combination with other instruments);
  (iii) the interaction between the policy makers and the community in arriving at mutual understanding about the issues and solutions; and
  (iv)   the structure (an understanding of where extension fits in to the total organisation).

The use of extension is then a choice made by the organisation depending on the need or problem. It is a matter of choosing the right instrument for the task.

The other roles Van Woerkum envisaged for extension (or rather the communication arm of government) - in the policy process and facilitating interaction and learning among and between policy makers and the community - go beyond the role of policy implementation.

The argument for seeing extension in this complementary and facilitative role in developing and enacting broader agricultural and rural policy is convincing, and the flexibility it allows is inviting.

The issue then returns to the need - and content, if need - for a (formal) extension policy, as opposed to extension being embedded in, and dependant on, broader rural and agricultural policy. As I pointed out in the introduction, it is a fact that extension policy is a term that is being used, debated, written, and implemented with resulting consequences within and outside of the organisation. If it is not 'policy' that is needed or being formalised, what is it? What is being discussed? How is it being formulated? What does this mean for the use of this instrument as opposed to other instruments?

If policy is indeed a...*discourse among a range of participants in the process - the "policy community"*, and *about the management of interpretations of social life* as Colebatch (1993:41) concluded, then what is triggering the discourse around the term extension policy, and to what social or organisational management is the discourse contributing?

One could perhaps argue that because extension has been the visible and publicly active arm of government agricultural policy over such a long period, that specific articulated policy became necessary. The large numbers of extension officers, their clients and their political organisations demanded to know how and why the rules were changing!

The view of extension as an instrument then, does not diminish the need for an inquiry into the meaning of extension policy, or the need to develop a framework for better thinking and acting on it - it makes it even more intriguing and necessary!

(ii)   What content?

Conway (1994:3) looked at the possible outputs from an agroecosystem in terms of its "social value" (*the goods and services produced by an agroecosystem and the degree to which they satisfy human needs.*) The four ecosystem properties that he described were:

> (1)   productivity - the output of valued product per unit of resource input;
> (2)   stability - the constancy of productivity in the face of small disturbing forces from the normal fluctuations and cycles in the surrounding environment;
> (3)   sustainability - the ability of the agroecosystem to maintain productivity when subject to a major disturbing force; and
> (4)   equitability - the evenness of distribution of the productivity of the agroecosystem among human beneficiaries.

In the pursuit of sustainability in agricultural development, Conway argued that...*inevitably there are trade-offs between the levels of the properties.* Drawing from Conway's argument, Röling (1992:10) proposed that...*knowledge management and technology policy have an important bearing on the achievement of politically acceptable trade-offs between food security, export, equity and sustainability. Balancing these trade-offs is one of the main challenges for agricultural policy makers today.*

Clearly, broader choices made in this area of trade-offs will have an impact on the use, management and operation of extension.

In looking at the overall content of national policies, Baxter, Slade, and Howell (1989), when reviewing aid and agricultural extension from the evidence of the World Bank and other donors, highlighted the national policy framework as *a basic concern* in developing effective research and extension systems. They argued that policy should:

> *...indicate the national agricultural development priorities; outline the organisational structures necessary to implement these priorities and the necessary institutional linkages; and the extent and nature of the commitment to encouraging farmers to act in a manner supportive of national policy.* (Baxter et al, 1989:38)

They suggested, however, that the role of extension in agricultural development policy is not usually explicit in national policy statements because of the *difficulty of effectively organising and managing an extension system and attributing to extension an impact on production; confusion over different approaches;* and *limited resource availability.*

This relates to the earlier discussion on perpectives, capabilities, and outcomes of extension. What content should be included in extension policies?

Rivera and Gustafson (1991) described a combination of new and old issues confronting policy makers in relation to extension services. They described the old issues as: (a) who should be served by whom through what programs and the supporting environment for extension; (b) organisational questions - structure, system planning, and institutional development; and (c) field methodology and program development - strategies for program development, program planning, feedback and participation. The new issues facing policy makers were given as: (d) the allocation of responsibilities and resources amongst public and private extension providers; (e) the co-ordination of extension activities..with respect to agriculture and natural resource conservation; and (f) the ways of enhancing the accountability of extension services.

In reviewing these old and new issues, Rivera and Gustafson arrived at...*three major concerns at the forefront of the debate on extension policy.* (258) These were:

(1)   the control and purpose of agricultural extension;
(2)   the right mix of public and private extension; and
(3)   the decisions to privatise or commercialise some or all of public extension services.

They defined **extension policy** to a large extent by the responses to these questions, and claimed that...*frameworks for considering these questions can aid in that definition, both with regard to the more traditional concerns of what a specific extension service should do as well as defining the various roles and responsibilities for the components of the entire complex of providers...ideally these frameworks must determine the match between national goals and clientele needs, define specific targeted clientele...and clarify long and short term agricultural and rural development goals.* (259)

This appears to be a tall order for one of the elements of a policy implementation mix! The other issue it raises is that of 'whose policy'? Can a public extension policy define the roles

of the entire complex of providers, public and private as in Bennet's (1992) Interdependence Model? Or can it only define the role of public sector extension within the context of broader public policies and a recognition of other providers?

Röling (1989:109) contended that extension policy should be viewed from this perspective of *whose policy*. He distinguished between various 'donor organisations' whose policy is...*to affect national policies* and national governments extension policies intended to...*affect the behaviour of farmers and others to the extent that they are the key actors in achieving national agricultural policies.* These issues of whose extension policy must impact on the way it is developed, the content, and the agreement or ownership of the policy arrived at.

If extension is part of the instrument mix for implementing a wider agricultural or rural policy, then what is useful and necessary to include? What is the level and specificity of objectives? What are the details of structure, staff, location, funding and resources? How prescriptive should programs and activities be? What is useful? What is meaningful?

In this book, these issues become central.

1.6   THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING EXTENSION POLICY

Assuming that some logical and meaningful content objective can be arrived at, a number of questions remain: How are the components chosen? Who decides what choices are made? What process can best ensure that the most effective content of an **extension** policy is arrived at?

The issue of 'whose policy' becomes critical when considering this process. Is the policy one that should be decided and articulated by the government, the extension agency, the traditional clients, the suite of extension providers, or the wider community? And if this is clear, how can relevant parties be included in the process of canvassing and determining policy content?

Taking an institutional view of the process of determining extension policy content and organisation on agricultural research and extension linkages, Nogueria (1990) described the role of the state (including the development of agricultural policies) in each historical situation as determined by:

- *how power is mobilised within the state and broader society;*
- *the main problems confronted by the state;*
- *the repertoire of accepted solutions; and*
- *the available economic, political, administrative, social and environmental resources.* (Nogueria, 1990:77)

Nogueria used the phrase *policy context* to encompass these factors. He attributed change from one period to another as being dependant on the...*prevailing political and socio-economics of the government*, and considered that these objectives...*determine the role of the*

state in agricultural development, the degree of autonomy it allows agricultural institutions, the importance it attaches to research and extension and what it considers the research and extension priorities should be. (79)

It was concern about this type of political dictation that prompted Birgegård (1991) to propose a more facilitative approach to (extension) policy development.

Because of this concern about undue influence of donors (or we could read governments - the primary funding body) Birgegård (1991:3) proposed a process approach to policy and project analysis. His concern was both the undue influence of external bodies and the resultant lack of commitment of those left to carry out resultant changes in policy.

His process approach had four basic characteristics:

(1)   active participation and leadership role of local staff to...*give commitment and local knowledge on the social, political, and cultural dimensions;*

(2)   a wide participation in the analysis to...*add knowledge and range and build consensus and commitment.*;

(3)   external input primarily in a facilitating role (with or without analyst role) to... *minimise external influence;* and

(4)   ˉde-linking the analytical role from the money to...*prevent sabotage should the process arrive at an outcome at odds with the expectation of the 'donor' (or government? or treasury?).*

Although Birgegård (1991) acknowledged that the process to achieve this outcome would vary according to the situation, he described the following basic steps:

(i)   the 'donor' has to have endorsed the concept;
(ii)   the approach must be thoroughly presented to those involved;
(iii)   a core group should be appointed (not more than 5 to 7 members, external facilitator, co-ordinator from within) to discuss the approach, identify potential members for a reference group, and agree on substance and timing of next step;
(iv)   analytical work is entered into (combination of informal group sessions, workshops, seminars, commissioned studies or papers) to identify and elaborate nature of problem(s), to suggest relationships between problems, to assign priorities, and to identify important information needs (both core and reference group); and
(v)   the process is allowed to evolve as the core group decides with respect to information collection, analysis, and formulation of proposals.

Birgegård (1991:10) considered this proposal *state of the art* at a stage when the art is hopefully in its infancy, and as a result not without problems or without scope for improvement. The limitations as he saw them were in terms of:

- resource and time demands (up to a year) with implementable projects to yet to be developed;
- risks of an impasse developing, risk of take-over of process (by 'donor'/recipient government) or undue influence; and
- the possibility of unsuitable facilitators or participants.

These limitations highlight some of the difficulties with designing a logical step by step approach to the process of designing extension policy from the providers or user's perspective. Neat logical processes have the complication of the involvement of people, and their individual and collective influence on the process. It is this that Wagemans (1987) explored when looking at extension policy issues in the Netherlands.

Wagemans (1987) considered the roles of individuals rather than institutions in the process of determining extension policy. He described decision-making and planning processes as ...*not in conformity with most normative models.* He described it as a process of compromising to accommodate conflicting interests:

> *Conflicting interests have to be dealt with in such a way that the final plan is acceptable to all actors involved in the formal domain. The draft plan is a compromise. This might explain why very general formulations often are chosen, because any further specification would give rise to objections from one actor or another.* (Wagemans, 1987:80)

Weiss (1986), had a cynical view of the policy process. She suggested that...*policy making is first and foremost a political process, where the major task is to arrange an accommodation among competing interests. It is usually less important to reach some scientifically "best" policy than it is to reach a decision that at least minimally satisfies the demands of the multiple ideological and interest constituencies in the nation.* She argued that although most people think of policy as a rational process - that is involving a sequence of stages seeking the 'best' solutions to problems faced - much policy comes about...*in the absence of this kind of rational chronology and, in fact, in the absence of the main presuppositions embedded in the standard concept of decision making.* She argued that... *organisations do things - and fail to do things - without pre-existing goals, purposiveness, consistency, rationality, boundness of participants, time, and events, or calculations.*

The meaning of extension policy, the appropriate content, and the question of whose policy, will have significant consequences for an appropriate process for development, particularly if one wishes to move beyond Weiss's cynical view of policy development process, and Wageman's claim of generality in response to the need for compromise.

Therefore, many questions remain about an appropriate process for determining extension policy content, foremost of which is the question of whose policy. Having determined this, ho is provision made for those owners to develop their policy?

1.7   THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EXTENSION POLICY

Formal policies are pieces of paper - albeit official pieces of paper! As discussed earlier in this chapter, the meaning of such formal policy is by no means clear. If we make the assumption that formal extension policy is developed to make a difference with the way extension is operationalised, we need to consider the matter of policy implementation. Just as the process of policy development appears to be fraught with potential for subversion, the expectation of a smooth transition from a paper policy to practice would perhaps be naive.

It is the lack of a perfect world of adequate resources, free flow of information, and of dependence on other organisations, that Colebatch (1993:35) suggested...*gives rise to the problem of implementation, and the interest in it*. He described concepts of **moral hazard** (agents pursuing their own purposes rather than those of the policy makers), **organisational inertia** (commitment to doing the same thing), and **interconnections** (links with other organisations which impede the extent to which they respond) as where that interest lies.

Röling (1989:113) distinguished between national policies encompassing extension and actual field realities - *the interface between the two is by no means straightforward and clear*. An example of the Training and Visit System was referred to earlier in the proceedings by Jiggins (1989). The example, drawn from a number of sources, described how extension workers, rather then seeing themselves as messengers of information delivered at the regular training meeting, saw the training meeting as 'refresher courses' to equip them for their situations that might arise in the future. Jiggins (1989:14) referred to Professor Thimm in the International Seminar on Rural Extension Policies as suggesting ...*that the interface between policy and field reality could be better managed if the process of policy formulation began with a diagnosis of field reality and if farmers and field workers participated in the policy dialogue*. This takes us back to the importance of process!

The difficulty of translating extension policy from the national level to the field is addressed by Baxter et al (1989:33) when reviewing aid and agricultural extension. They proposed that... *indeed a national policy is likely to be only as successful as the degree to which it coincides with the interests of (and incentives received by) farmers*.

It is this issue of 'success' that is in itself interesting. Mintzberg (1994:359), for example, in looking at the implementation of strategic plans and strategies, called for a recognition of the existence and importance of **emergent** strategies. These emergent strategies combine with the 'deliberate' strategies in the implementation process. Rather than viewing such emergent 'distortions' of deliberate strategies as failures in implementation, the argument lies in recognising their presence, and tracking them, as well as the 'deliberate' strategies when monitoring the implementation process.

This has much to do with the inevitable gap between the ideal world of the paper policy and the real world of people who have to implement such policies.

Wagemans (1987), when analysing the distribution of decision making powers within the then Dutch extension service, concluded that:

> *The power of decision making with regard to the determination of goals and the provision of resources for achieving those goals is concentrated in the top of the organisation.*

but   *...for the actual execution of the extension activities, I can propose that the decision making is located at the lower level of the organisation.* (Wagemans, 1987:143)

He described this as the difference between 'formal' and 'real' decision making powers.

Wagemans then explored the area of the importance that extension officers attach to directives of the extension organisation of which they are a part. One way he approached this was to examine a number of conditions which need to exist if tension - a result of differences between 'directives' and the extension officers own wishes - were to occur.

He distinguished between management decisions that are general enough to allow the extension officer to exercise considerable freedom in the interpretation and practise of those decisions and those which are formulated in such a way that the consequences may impinge on the beliefs of the extension officer. In the latter case:

The extension officer finds him/herself...in a situation in which on one hand (s)he is confronted with guidelines in regard to his/her activities, on the other hand (s)he finds that (s)he has some manoeuvring space to diverge from the guidelines. How (s)he acts under these circumstances depends on the significance which (s)he attaches to the guidelines. If (s)he gives priority to the guidelines rather than personal intentions there is in fact, no conflict situation... The conflict situation is real....when the particular extension officer has different priorities in relation to his extension activities which leads to divergence of actual activities and extension policies. (106)

Wagemans (1990/91:85) also looked at the difference between the *formal domain* and the *real life or field* domain when analysing the role of information in town and country planning.

He also distinguished between the two domains in terms of differences in type of knowledge, knowledge processes, quality of knowledge, and information needs, and hence argues that *...the decisive question is to what extent subsystems are able to communicate effectively with each other.*

Wagemans pointed out that a plan (or policy!) is only a piece of paper, and its meaning is dependant on subsequent change in behaviour. He suggested that...*for actors in the field domain, the plan only has meaning as far as it forbids some activities or the execution of individual plans*, and that...*one can hardly expect that citizens will make efforts on a voluntary basis in order to realise a plan that is, to a great extent, meaningless to them.*

For this reason, the need for motivating (field) actors to make voluntary changes is as (or more) important than espousing 'rules'.

This issue is not confined to the agricultural policy area. In describing strategies to make schools more effective, McGaw et al (1992) drew on work by Schon (1973) to explain a major obstacle in implementing change:

> *While it is axiomatic, therefore, that institutional change will be resisted, at least by some of those who feel threatened by it, it would be a mistake to interpret such resistance solely, or even principally, in terms of inertia. Rather the more typical institutional response is what Schon (1973) refers to as* **dynamic conservatism**. *...Typically the first response...is* **selective inattention**: *the threatened change is ignored or marginalised...the next strategy is* **counterattack**: *the change is discredited, or argued to be ill-timed...or inappropriate. Subsequent strategies involve* **containment or isolation** *...co-option - the threatened change is absorbed into the system and effectively defused; and finally, when all else fails,* **the least change capable of neutralising or meeting the intrusive process**. *(McGaw et al, 1992)*

This view implies that the change is good, is made external to the staff, but the difficulty is with lack of co-operation! Perhaps it is the content policy that is wrong - or the process in developing it! Perhaps it is the issue of ownership.

Considering the issue of changing organisational culture in extension agencies, McKenzie, Packham and Wilson (1993) posed the question *Is Education the Answer?* Their concern was the link between the behaviour of extension staff and the changing policies occurring at an organisational level within the New South Wales Department of Agriculture in Australia. These changes were listed as: redefinition of core business; changed management structures and operational arrangements; and a greater emphasis on marketing, policy development, communication, commercialisation, and sustainable agriculture.

In an attempt to answer their posed question, the authors examined the impact on extension officers who undertook a Master of Applied Science program at the University of Western Sydney. While recognising the limitation of a small sample, the authors concluded that participation in the program had influenced thinking and behaviour:

> *It has caused them to question their values particularly in regard to the value of technological solutions to all types of problems and raised awareness of the need to access a range of perspectives including those of the primary stakeholders. Most participants now value a participatory and learning approach to extension involving clients, technological specialists and facilitators.* (McKenzie et al, 1993:2)

Despite this positive assessment, the authors were left with the logistics of encouraging such a cultural change throughout the rest of the organisation. They suggested that...*there is a need to foster debate and critical thought about new ideas. The challenging next step for those involved will be to share their learning...and to promote this debate and critique in a way which supports further personal and organisational development.*

It is the types of issues raised in this section that caused De Vries (1992:117) to conclude that it is...*not possible to construct a general theory of the 'implementor' on the basis of his/her*

structural location or political system...we have to focus on (the) intervention ideology ('a set of pragmatic beliefs and social practices through which front-line workers and administrators deal with a series of conflicting situations in the process implementation')... *that underpins front-line workers styles of operation.* (in Bolding, 1994)

This section has focused on the difficulties of effecting practice change in response to policy change **within the organisation.** What about policy changes that imply/require/'demand' changes in the way non-government/private organisations/individuals do things? The difficulties could be expected to increase significantly! This issue will also be explored in this book.

1.8   THE IMPACT AND POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF EXTENSION POLICY

Earlier in this chapter, the issue of the extension definitions and perspectives was examined, including the belief in what extension is capable of achieving and the desired outcomes for extension intervention. There are two categories of interest when looking at the outcome of the introduction of policies relating to extension : (i) the intended outcomes; and (ii) the unintended consequences. These aspects are considered below.

(i)   The intended outcomes

Patton (1993:646) concluded that extension has...*historically been weak in evaluating its programs...and...in demonstrating impact and outcomes.* and that this has contributed to its crisis. Patton described this as an **impact crisis** - about...*what difference we really make!*

The past emphasis on the role of extension in increasing production efficiency and international competitiveness has resulted in a focus on cost-benefit studies. A recent review of the major studies on the cost-benefit of public extension (including: Huffman 1976 - USA Corn belt; Evenson 1980 - USA; Norton, Coffey and Fry 1984 - Virginnia; Huffman and Evenson 1993 - USA; Zentner and Peterson 1984 - Canada; Mullen and Cox 1994 - Australia; Scrimgeour 1991 - New Zealand; Evenson and Kislev - India; and Evenson 1987 - various developing countries) showed an enormous variation in concluded rates of return to extension (Bartholomew, 1994). These rates of return ranged from negative to inconclusive to 110%! The difficulties in measuring and defining the benefits resulting from extension intervention are highlighted through this variation. Bartholomew pointed to the problems of...*subjectivity, large data requirements and a large range of observations, need for variability in the values of explanatory variables, and the need for the absence of any relationship among explanatory variables as key reasons for the problems of economic analysis.* (16) He quoted Scrimgeour (1991) as claiming "given the fragility of estimates..it would be possible to carefully choose a model estimated over the data set and "prove" that extension has been or has not been, a very productive investment". Bartholomew argued, however, that the later US studies indicated that, from an economic return to investment perspective, the rate of return to public extension...*has fallen as the level of farmer schooling*

has increased,...and...that the returns of public extension varies according to the structure (size, technical base) of the different agricultural sectors. (17)

It would appear that basing the justification for extension on the economic benefits may be a step of faith. On the other hand, once diverging from an economic justification - for extension services, for example, towards a facilitation/human development/policy interaction role - the ability to 'prove' societal benefits could be expected to be even more difficult!

(ii)   Unintended consequences

When looking at the role and content - in terms of extension objectives - of extension policies, I have considered the possible planned or desired outcomes of extension intervention. The supporting elements of a policy could be expected to allow these desired outcomes to be achieved. However, what about other possible consequences of policy decisions that accompany desired outcomes? What happens if there are inconsistencies between stated desired outcomes and other policy elements - or between paper policy and practice? What is the impact of changing certain elements of a policy without full regard to consequences as Thomas (1990) suggested of the New Zealand government?

A framework for extension policy must provide scope to consider and account for such possible consequences.

When looking at the implications of the introduction of a user-pay pricing mechanism to public sector agricultural services, I concluded that a major policy change such as the introduction of a pricing mechanism into a traditionally free Public Sector Agricultural Service could have a significant impact on information relationships in the rural sector and hence viability of farms. (Coutts, 1990)

I based this conclusion on an exploratory study of the changes in mission and operational strategies of the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Development and Advisory Service in England and Wales. I explored the linkages between components of the Poultry Knowledge and Information System following the 1987 introduction of charges for extension and adaptive research. Some changes indicated included:

- revenue earning impinging on the mission of improving agricultural efficiency and community concerns;
- the promotion of free knowledge flow within the knowledge system changing to limiting information flow based on payment;
- greater concern with meeting the felt needs of potential clients;
- improved professionalism in, and resourcing of, the extension service;
- strengthening of the two-way informational relationship between paying clients and ADAS, and weakening of the information flow between ADAS and non-paying potential clients; and
- a possible increase in the viability gap between larger/ progressive farms and smaller/conservative farms.

I concluded that the user-pay imperative impacted on the mission, information flow, and comparative farm viabilities:

> *The need to maintain commercial advantage, and the need to have contracts with individual components (groups or individuals), meant that it became in the organisations interests to restrict the free flow of information, rather than promote it. The tendency to target components who are able to afford bigger contracts, also has the potential to restrict the flow of information in the medium and small farming components. Systems management aimed at achieving the desired output of the one component, then, can have a negative impact on other components.*
> (Coutts, 1990:115)

Röling (1989) pointed out that even a 'free' advisory extension service is selective in its operation and impact. Clients who have literacy difficulties, who live long distances from centres with extension officers, or who are uncomfortable or unskilled in accessing advisory services are neglected. Extension officers' time can also be captured by those who make the most noise and demands. They also tend to seek out those of similar educational and cultural backgrounds with whom they can better relate.

Nitsch (1988:1) described the Swedish Public Extension Service as then facing a...*serious legitimacy problem*. Because of the public perception that the public extension service has contributed to the serious problems facing agriculture (costly overproduction, pollution, food safety, degradation of rural communities and deterioration of the Swedish landscape), he claimed that government funding had been cut and that...*it has even been suggested that the services should be discontinued altogether*. Nitsch quoted US writers as supporting these failings of extension. Claims included those that extension had... *contributed to the liquidation of a rural way of life and the development of corporate farms as well as having failed to achieve a 'good life' for rural people* . The answer for agricultural extension, he argued, was to...*learn more about the complex and ecological systems of which agriculture is a part.* (6)

These types of claims about the consequences of public sector extension (policies) cannot be ignored and have significant implications for the design and implementation of extension policies.

With this background into the issues that impact on the extension policy debate, the Queensland case study can be examined.

1.9 QUEENSLAND AS AN ENTRY POINT

The confusion and 'fuzziness' surrounding the notion of extension policy leaves the policy makers in somewhat of a dilemma. Where does one start? What process does one use? What content do you include - in what manner? How far do you go down the track of formalisation - how close to the 'edge' do you go before formalisation becomes a constraint? How do you develop a paper policy which will result in practice change? How do you account for the range of possible consequences?

I propose that these questions can only be addressed by studying actual situations where extension policy is being developed, designed, and implemented. It is from these situations that insights can be gained - where the **meaning** of extension and policy and its elements can emerge in practice - and hence clues to developing a framework in which to better think and act upon the policy element of extension.

The changes occurring in Queensland between 1987 and 1994 in the context of changes occurring worldwide in extension provides such an entry point into the issues surrounding extension policy development, design, and implementation.

Queensland is a specific case both in the agricultural and policy areas. It is a state within the federation of Australian States and has responsibility for its own department of agriculture (or Primary Industries in Queensland's case). There is a Federal Department of Primary Industry and Energy which makes policy decisions which impinge on that research and extension environment, however the organisation, core funding, and management of research and extension in the state comes under the state government. Queensland has a strong agricultural and rural base and has had a department of agriculture with an extension service since 1887. In the years leading up to 1990, a strong rural based political party had been in government, resulting in a large and relatively unquestioned department of agriculture and extension function.

What makes Queensland an extremely useful entry point into the realm of extension policy, is that when the wider debate on extension policy impinged on the state's extension service, it had to deal with the issues from a position of relative naivety. This very naivety - both in the organisational and political domains - forced a comprehensive exploration of, and argued response to, the forces gathering against the extension status-quo. This exploration is highlighted by strategies such as:

- In 1987, the Queensland Department of Primary Industries was the chief instigator of the first Australasian Agricultural Extension Conference - specifically convened to focus on the policy environment of extension.

- In 1989, the department commissioned a comprehensive Extension Policy Review out of which it developed strategies to reform its extension function.

- The department had actively encouraged extension staff to pursue post-graduate studies in extension in other countries to explore emerging paradigms and policy developments.

These strategies provided at least the basis for the development of an extension policy largely driven by argument rather than a unilateral politicly based imperative.

Despite the specificity of the Queensland situation, then, the issues that were canvassed and impacted on the process of extension policy development, its design and implementation, have the potential to overlap those in most other countries with an agricultural extension tradition. A framework developed from an exploration of developments in Queensland will have a degree of conceptual applicability in other state and national situations grappling with extension policy issues.

I must stress that the object of my research and this book was **not** to make judgement on the Queensland extension policy process, content, or implementation, but to explore the notion of extension policy itself. The confusion surrounding the meaning of this term, permits me to enter in to the exploration with a relatively open mind. The combination of my entry into the situation after two years absence, followed by a period of being near the centre of the turmoil, provided a unique opportunity for such an exploration.

In order to start this exploration of a real life and inevitably messy situation, a basis on which to gather and analyse information that arises during the study is needed. In Chapter Two, I describe my tools and approach to the study.

2. EXPLORATORY PERSPECTIVES AND TOOLS

2.1   REITERATING THE PROBLEM

In Chapter 1, extension policy was described as attempts by organisations and governments to formally impinge on the operation of extension. It was argued, however, that extension policy as a concept lacked clarity. The surrounding issues that confused the notion of extension policy were described as:

    (i)   the definitions (models and paradigms) of extension;

    (ii)   the roles (relevance, objectives, funding, and relationships) of public sector extension;

    (iii)   the meaning of formal policy;

    (iv)   the need for, and content of, extension policy;

    (v)   the process of developing/modifying extension policy;

    (vi)   the implementation of extension policy; and

    (vii)   the impact (potential consequences) of extension policy.

I contended that the lack of an adequate framework to account for these surrounding issues left policy makers in a dilemma when attempting to formulate **extension** policy as opposed to a broader agricultural or rural policy. In the absence of an adequate framework, I concurred with Röling (1989) that there was a danger that major policy and operational issues could be neglected.

The lack of a clear general definition of the term 'policy' itself adds to the difficulty in attributing a normative meaning to **extension** policy. Also, formalising policy for what could be considered an instrument to implement a broader agricultural and rural policy adds to the conceptual difficulty. None the less, extension policy is being developed, and is impacting on the operation of extension and those with whom extension workers are interacting.

We therefore have a confusing concept - extension policy - being used in practice! Extension policy is being developed. Processes are being used. Content is being included. Implementation is taking place. For this to occur, individuals must be engaging in discourse and negotiating process steps, elements for inclusion, and strategies for implementation. A meaning must be emerging!

Herein lies the research environment for exploring the meaning of extension policy, and hence providing a basis for developing an improved framework for thinking about and acting on extension policy.

2.2   EXPLORING THE APPRECIATED WORLD OF EXTENSION POLICY

I chose Queensland as an entry point because it was a situation where extension policy issues were largely driven by argument rather than a unilateral politically based imperative. It has provided a basis for exploring the 'appreciated world' of extension policy, an opportunity to study the discourse associated with a major upheaval of the public sector agricultural extension service in Queensland.

The value of studying this organisation in transition is based on Wolf's (1989) assertion that...*the arrangements of society become most visible when they are challenged by crisis.* This could be paraphrased into the context of 'extension policy' to read...*the framework of extension policy will be most visible when it is challenged by crisis.* The need to design a formal extension policy in Queensland in 1989 indicated that extension as an instrument of government policy was under challenge.

The Queensland case provided an opportunity to see who 'spoke up' and what prompted them. My entry into the situation at the end of the initial review, and my involvement in the development of the formal policy itself resulting from that review, provided a unique opportunity. It was an opportunity to explore the issues that arose and discover where contention was evident. It was an opportunity to explore the emerging meaning of extension policy, and to provide clues to piecing together the structure of a framework to allow participants to better think about and act upon extension policy.

Foucault (1976) approached his thesis on *The History of Sexuality* in this way. He argued that:

> *...the central issue...is not to determine whether one says yes or no to sex, whether one asserts its importance or denies its effects, or whether one refines the words one uses to designate it; but to account for the fact that it is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue..is the over-all "discursive fact," the way in which sex is "put into discourse".* (Foucault, 1976:11)

It is in this way that I have approached my study of the extension framework. I have looked to discover *who spoke up* and what prompted them. I have used this knowledge to explore the notion of extension policy.

To paraphrase the earlier quote from Foucault (1976:11), it is not the account of sequential events in Queensland extension that is of interest but...*to account for the fact that...extension policy... is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the positions and viewpoints from which they speak, the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said. What is at issue...is the over-all "discursive fact" the way ...extension policy... is "put into discourse"* - and hence its implications for practice.

It is this appreciated world developing through discourse - and demonstrated through action - that will provide the clues towards an effective extension policy framework. I take the view that meaning comes about through shared experience and discourse.

Vickers (1970) distinguished our 'appreciated world' in this way. This is the world of 'represented contexts', resulting from the 'power to communicate' dependant on the *...possession of a shared viewpoint - as distinct from a shared view - of the matter under discussion.*

> *Our appreciated world is given meaning by our standards of judgement, ethical, aesthetic, political and other. However these standards are generated and changed, there is no doubt that they give meaning to our experience.* (98)

Further he described this *appreciated world* as both *composite* and *inexhaustible:*

> *It is composite because it is composed of views seen from different viewpoints, which cannot be simply added together. It is inexhaustible because these viewpoints may change and multiply without any obvious limit.* (98)

Because of this:

> *Each view needs to be described from its own viewpoint, sometimes in its own language - as a sociologist, a rioter, a bystander and a policeman need to give different accounts of the 'same' riot...... the differences between them are due not only to ignorance and error but to a difference in viewpoint which, by making different facts and values relevant, ensures that the resulting accounts will at best be neither conflicting nor cumulative but complementary.* (99)

It is not so much the words themselves that provide the definitive meaning, but the context in which they are used, and the reason for their use at a point in time. As Vickers put it... *at best, they (the descriptions) are complementary. I have already observed that the hierarchical nature of reality calls for a series of descriptions, each valid at the appropriate level.* (113)

Foucault (1969) also grappled with this issue of building up meaning, history, and relationships from texts and documents. He recognised that in disciplines such as history, documents have always been...*used, questioned and have given rise to questions*:

> *Scholars have asked not only what these documents meant, but also whether they were telling the truth, and by what right they could claim to be doing so, whether they were sincere or deliberately misleading, well informed or ignorant, authentic or tampered with.* (6)

He went on, however, to describe the emergence of a *new history* with its view of *documents* going beyond a mere 'reconstruction': *The document is not the fortunate tool of history that is primarily and fundamentally memory; history is one way in which a society recognises and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked.* (7) In questioning the traditional linear relationships and continuity between documents (texts) and emerging 'history' or events, Foucault declared:

> *We must be ready to receive every moment of discourse in its sudden irruption; in that punctuality in which it appears, and in that temporal dispersion that enables it to be repeated, known, forgotten, transformed, utterly erased, and hidden, far from all view, in the dust of books. Discourse must not be referred to the distant presence of origin, but treated as and when it occurs.* (25)

This underlines the value of entering into a situation and experiencing the discourse in the context that it was used!

Foucault took the examples of observation within the...*unity of discourse like that of clinical medicine, or political economy or Natural History* (and could we include 'Extension Policy'?) as dealing with a *dispersion of elements*. It is valuable to look at his view of the difficulties of developing a cohesive view of such a field:

> *This dispersion itself - with its gaps, its discontinuities, its entanglements, its incompatibilities, its replacements, and its substitutions - can be described in its uniqueness if one is able to determine the specific rules in accordance with which its objects, statements, concepts, and theoretical options have been formed: if there really is a unity, it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of the elements formed, it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation.* (72)

The challenge, then, is to discover motives and intentionality of discourse - to discover the underlying rules that are being negotiated by those involved in the process of enacting extension policy.

It is a matter of recognition of what one can actually seek to achieve in studying, describing, and analysing the dynamics and discontinuities of a field of discourse. Foucault put it this way:

A discursive formation, then, does not play the role of a figure that arrests time and freezes it for decades and centuries; it determines a regularity proper to temporal processes; it presents the principal of articulation between a series of discursive events, transformations, mutations, and processes. It is not an atemporal form, but a schema of correspondence between temporal series. (74)

Edwards and Potter (1992) described this issue of meaning of discourse in the context of what it is intended to achieve, that is:

...discursive remembering, factual reporting, descriptions of events and so on, are socially occasioned phenomena, sensitive to their placing within contexts of communicative action and rhetoric...One way of looking at this is in terms of the kinds of understandings and inferences that such versions are designed to afford. (Edwards and Potter, 1992:76)

We need to go beyond the face value of texts and discover motives and intentionality of those providing those texts at that point in time - to discover the emerging 'rules' as they are negotiated by those enacting extension policy, and to understand the 'reality' being constructed. As Röling (1993), drawing on Giddens (1984) asserted, people are not only intentional, but...*sense makers: they actively construct their own realities ...with...realities constructed in social processes.*

In understanding these constructed realities, Edwards and Potter (1992) proposed the value of looking to the resultant social actions:

As soon as we begin to study situated discourse, abstracted models of rational thought soon diminish in explanatory significance, as we discover how versions, explanations and inferences are constructed, implied, and embedded in talk. It is in the accomplishment of social actions, rather than the display of underlying cognitive representations, that we find orderliness in discourse. (Edwards and Potter, 1992:102)

Edwards and Potter developed a comprehensive 'Discursive Action Model' around this concept. It is this focus on action, not cognition alone, however, that I believe is relevant to this research. In exploring the meaning of extension policy, the formalised policy itself is an action around which to ground the discourse. It is a product of the discourse, power relationships, and is intended to permit further action. The process, however, is circular. Examining the 'document' without the surrounding discourse will fail to explain the meaning of the document. Attempting to understand the emerging meaning at a cognitive level in the absence of such *social action* becomes an elusive exercise!

My research was based on experiencing, recording, and analysing the discourse - and evidence of 'social action' that irrupted during the process of introducing a formal extension policy into QDPI in the context of debate and changes elsewhere in Australia and the world. The study focused on the period between 1987 and 1994.

This study does not attempt to provide an historical account of the changes in QDPI extension during the period of study. The historical context only provides a basis for

exploring the notion of extension policy through the study of discourse. As Wolf (1989) put it:

> *What attention to history allows us to do is to look at processes unfolding, intertwining, spreading out and dissipating over time.* (Wolf,1989)

My research is the generation of theory to explain these unfolding processes, and contribute to the future enactment of extension policy. My intention is to develop an improved theoretical framework to facilitate a more effective discourse, and hence an improved process, design, content, and implementation of extension policy. This role of social research in feeding back findings to their 'subject' matter for interpretation and action (Giddens, 1984, 1990) is well documented - it is hoped that in this case the practical outcomes will benefit both extensionists and those within the society they serve.

This theory has been developed through a grounded theory approach. Such an approach has enabled the capturing and analysis of data in this complex and dynamic research environment.

2.3   A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

I have used a grounded theory approach largely based on the principles described by Strauss & Corbin (1990). In this section, I will outline their approach and indicate where I have differed or made modifications for the purpose of this study.

Strauss and Corbin described grounded theory as qualitative analysis with the purpose of building theory. They asserted that...*formulating theoretical interpretations of data grounded in reality provides a powerful means both for understanding the world "out there" and for developing action strategies that will allow for some measure of control over it.* (9) They described it as being...*inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents, that is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomena.* (23)

In assessing the value of the theory produced, they warned that it...*should be comprehensive and make sense both to the persons who were studied and to those practising in the area... should provide control with regard to action toward the phenomenon...(and)...furthermore, the conditions to which it applies should be spelt out.* (23)

They described grounded theory as one of developing *statements of relationships*. Creativity and skill of the researcher is called for in developing and 'aptly naming' categories and in coming up with associations and comparisons that add to our knowledge and understanding in the area under research. To be able to achieve this, research questions are needed which ...*give us the flexibility and freedom to explore a phenomenon in depth.* (37)

These questions become progressively narrower as categories and relationships are developed.

In grounded theory studies, you want to explain phenomena in light of the theoretical framework that evolves during the research itself; thus, you do not want to be constrained by having to adhere to a previously developed theory that may or may not apply to the area under investigation. (49)

They offered three important guidelines for researchers developing grounded theory:

1. Periodically step back and ask 'what is going on here? Does what I think I see fit the reality of the data?'
2. Maintain an attitude of scepticism.
3. Follow the research procedures - the data collection and analytical procedures are designed to give rigour - break through biases.

In the pure application, the process is one of developing a theory based on emerging relationships rather than testing a previous theory or hypothesis. Elements of previous theories are incorporated but...*only as they prove themselves pertinent to the data gathered in the study.* (50)

Strauss and Corbin described the process of developing categories through *open coding* as:

...the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualising, and categorising data (so that)...the naming and categorisation of phenomena through close examination of data...ones own and others assumptions are questioned or explored, leading to new discoveries. (62)

Selective coding on the other hand was described as...*the process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development* (62).

For the purposes of my research, I have entered into the data collection with a tentative structure and some selective categories for sorting the data for analysis (described at the end of this section and developed in subsequent sections). These were open to modification or becoming redundant should emerging analysis demand it. Despite the risk of imposing my preconceptions on the analysis, such a strategy had been essential to effectively enter into the infinite possibilities presented by the research environment.

Strauss & Corbin (1990:63) described the process of selecting the core category and systematically relating it to other categories as providing the grounding, building the density, and developing the sensitivity and integration needed...*to generate a rich, tightly woven, explanatory theory that closely approximates the reality it represents.*

This claim is perhaps overly optimistic. Rather, it could be argued, the process provides a means to develop theories that increase our understanding of the 'reality' it represents, and

provides a tool to better intervene in that reality. I believe that a more useful understanding of the role of grounded theory development was contained in the earlier work by Glaser & Strauss (1971:28). They warned that the recognition of the goal of...*developing new theories* as *their purposeful systematic generation from the data of social research* must be kept in mind when viewing acceptable data collection methods...*when generating theory is not clearly recognised as the main goal of a given research, it can be quickly killed by the twin critiques of accurate evidence and verified hypotheses...evidence and testing never destroy a theory (of any generality), they only modify it. A theory's only replacement is a better theory* and as a consequence:

> *Since accurate evidence is not so crucial for generating theory, the kind of evidence as well as the number of cases, is also not so crucial. A single case can indicate a general conceptual category or property: a few more cases can confirm the indication. ...the pressure is not on the sociologist to "know the whole field" or to have all the facts "from a careful random sample". His job is not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour.* (30)

It is this argument that adds to my confidence that a case study in Queensland can and will contribute positively to the world-wide enactment of extension policy.

Further, in dealing with appropriate theoretical sampling for generating formal theory, Glaser (1978) stated:

> *No one kind of data on a category, nor any single technique for data collection, is necessarily appropriate. Different kinds of data give the analyst different views or vantage points from which to understand a category and to develop its properties...There are no limits to the techniques of data collection, the way they are used, or the types of data required. The result is a variety of slices of data that would be bewildering if one wishes to evaluate them as accurate evidence for verifications. However, for generating formal theory this variety is highly beneficial, because it yields more diverse comparative information on categories than any one mode of knowing (technique of collection).* (Glaser,1978:229)

It is this approach to sampling and data collection that provides the strength of the grounded theory approach, and lends itself so well to the messy situations of human interaction.

Strauss and Corbin (1990:111) described the...*discovery and specification of differences among and within categories, as well as similarities*, as being...*crucially important and at the heart of grounded theory*. Importantly, they pointed out that...*your final theory is limited to those categories, their properties and dimensions, and statements of relationships that exist in the actual data collected... not what you think might be out there but haven't come across.*

This appears to limit the scope to reflect on the developed theory and draw inferences. My view is that a well developed theory of human interaction should provide a basis on which to move forward into relatively uncharted territory!

Strauss & Corbin described a procedure of developing categories, linking categories, integration, and arriving at a grounded theory. They argued that these procedures are designed to give rigour, and to break through biases. As well, they also stressed the need to look at a phenomenon in relation to conditional relationships with other levels (for example, international, national, community, organisational, sub-organisational, group, individual, collective), and described the establishment of 'conditional paths'...*by systematically tracing a path from action/interaction through conditional levels and vice versa, the irrelevant is less likely to be pursued. You should only go after the pertinent.* (1990:167) In this way, research is more directed and develops interesting 'specificity': *It is not enough simply to say that broader conditions (like social status or gender or beliefs and values) greatly influence interaction.* (172)

In particular, the authors addressed the issue of organisational phenomenon, which is very pertinent to this study of extension policy:

> *The phenomenon under study would be located in the middle of the matrix, with conditions seen as bearing on it from above and below. Even when studying such abstract ideas as information flow or decision making in organisations, one would first want to locate them in action/interaction. This is because they represent the expressive forms that information, decisions and so forth, take. For example if we were studying decision making, one would want to know what decisions were taken. by whom, in response to what actions and interactions and with what potential and actual consequences? One would also want to know something about the organisation's past decision making, in terms of who, when, and with what outcomes. Then too, one must not forget the individuals within organisations who make the decisions and whose careers and identities are often at stake in the decisions that they make. Also one would want to determine the impact of still broader conditions on decision making, such as: economic and political considerations, national and international competition, federal and state regulations, and so forth. Unless consideration is given to at least some of these conditions, at each matrix level, an accurate picture of decision making at the organisational level cannot be obtained.* (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:173)

The process of linking categories, integrating, and developing conditional relationships was also carried out in the light of the 'new history' as described by Foucault (1969) earlier in this section. Discontinuities and the context of discourse must also be explored and allowed for in describing the phenomenon under study.

The purpose of this research, then, is the generation of theory through a **grounded theory** approach. I have not entered into the data, however, with a totally blank slate. I have pre-selected a small number of categories to provide a framework for the initial selection and collation of data. These are:

(1) Hierarchy of Extension Objectives
(2) Information and Knowledge Systems
(3) Power

The logic for entering into the data with these pre-emptive perspectives, is included in the following sections as they are discussed.

2.4   HIERARCHY OF EXTENSION OBJECTIVES AS A TENTATIVE STRUCTURE FOR DATA COLLATION AND ANALYSIS

One of the key questions that I posed in section 1.5 on the content of public sector extension, related to the level of objectives that should be incorporated in **extension** policy. If extension is viewed as one of the possible instruments which could be used to bring about a broader agricultural or rural policy, what is then useful to define as extension's objectives and at what level? On the operational end, formal extension policy is a relatively new phenomenon. In Queensland, for example, the extension service had been part of the agricultural department for almost a hundred years without requiring a formal policy for extension workers to go about their tasks. How prescriptive then should a formal extension policy be? To what level of detail should it go as opposed to allowing organisational and individual flexibility in achieving the objectives set? These are key questions when considering the meaning and consequences of formal policy.

Röling's (1988) *Hierarchy of Extension Objectives* provided an excellent structure for collating and analysing data to examine these content questions. During the course of data collection and analysis, this hierarchy was tested and modified as necessary to provide a structure for considering the issue of extension policy content.

One of the difficulties with using the term 'hierarchy', is that it implies a linear or causative perspective of extension - that is: if we employ extension in this way, **then** "y" will happen. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are different perspectives on the role and capacity of extension, and disputed evidence on the impacts of extension. I, therefore, use the term 'hierarchy' in terms of 'layers'. At what level of aggregation - or layer - is discourse centering in extension policy development? In what layer is formalisation required? Why?

The hierarchy levels that Röling (1988) identified were (my description):

(i)   **Ultimate Objective:**

        The Ultimate Objective is the overall outcome to which the organisation (with its mix of instruments) is expected to contribute in the general societal context. This may be couched in very specific, physical terms (for example, increased food production or international competitiveness) or in more abstract terms (for example, contribute to the overall 'well being' of the community).

(ii)   **Intervention Objective:**

        The Intervention Objective is what the extension intervention is able to achieve as a direct result of its own effort, or in combination with other functions/agencies. This can also be in specific output oriented terms (for example, increase the rate of

adoption of new technologies, management practices) or in less pre-emptive (for example, facilitate interaction between policy makers and the community).

(iii)   **Conditions for Effect:**

The Conditions for Effect are those conditions which must be satisfied if the stated intervention objectives are to be achieved:

-   Steps which must be taken within the organisation to allow necessary extension processes and activities to take place. This includes using other instruments to support extension, as well as providing a consistent level of organisation, management, training, motivation, reward, and employment criteria.
-   Factors outside of the organisation that will directly impact on the potential success of extension intervention - for example, available capital, resources, markets, or co-operation required to make voluntary change possible.

(iv)   **Activities:**

The Activities are the specific extension methods employed - the way extension officers actually carry out their day to day task (for example, extension methods, facilitative techniques, guidelines on farm visits, reporting procedures..etc).

(v)   **Means:**

The Means are the people, skills, equipment and facilities available for use.

As I explored the situation in Queensland, then, I looked for discourse which related to these hierarchy levels. I was interested in who raised - or reacted to - issues relating to the various levels: where the concern was being expressed and where conflict was occurring. I also looked for modifications or additions to these categories which emerged from the data and helped in the interpretation and usefulness of this hierarchy.

2.5   AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS AS A TOOL FOR MAPPING GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS

My experience with the emergence of Agricultural and Knowledge Systems (AKIS) as a relatively new concept was extremely positive. The concept provided new eyes in which I could make better sense of the complex world in which I operated as an extension officer. As I started to construct my own cognitive systems made up of individuals and institutions (elements), I discovered elements that previously I had not been aware of (I had not 'looked' for them), or I had previously ignored. It made what was previously invisible (to me),

visible! I found I could better think about the differing but overlapping perspectives and goals of these elements and the interactions between them. It changed my perspective. Firstly - and most importantly - I began to gain an appreciation that my own organisation/projects were not the centre of the rural universe, but one of the many interacting - and competing - interests within it. Secondly, AKIS provided a tool to think about how interaction between these elements could be improved to benefit mutually desired objectives.

For this reason, I brought an AKIS perspective with me into the study. I wanted to ensure that I had eyes to see the individuals, interest groups, and individuals pertinent to the issue under study - extension policy - and I needed a framework in which to examine their competing interests and interaction.

In analysing...*the role of information in planning*, Wagemans (1990/91:73) used a Knowledge Systems framework in this way. He argued that...*Knowledge System theory offers good opportunities to understand this complex process and provides a framework that enables a more integrated approach to the role of knowledge.* He pre-empted criticism of the framework based on the great variety of processes to be expected and the lack of...*harmony, similarity, and unity that the term 'knowledge system'* generates. He explained that he used the concept *not in a normative sense but as a tool for analysing the role of information in the process of planning* and further that...*the concept of a knowledge system is used just to see how processes are going in practice and whether there is some coherence among the processes...Attention is paid to all processes, regardless of whether they are interconnected.*

Röling (1992) wrote that...*more and more I am beginning to feel that we should distinguish AKIS as a diagnostic framework (ie a conceptual framework that provides guidance and 'eyes' with which to see) from the messy world of problem situations.*

An **early** description of Knowledge System was proposed by Röling (1988). An AKIS was then described as:

> ...*the persons, networks and institutions, and the interfaces and linkages between them, which engage in, or manage, the generation, transformation, transmission, storage, retrieval, integration, diffusion and utilisation of knowledge, and which potentially work synergistically to improve the goodness of fit between knowledge and environment, and the technology used, in a specific domain of human activity.* (Röling, 1988:33)

Röling and Engel (1991:125) described this approach as new in the...*sense that the concerted effort to understand and improve existing configurations of institutions and design better ones, is relatively recent.* They concluded:

> ...*such actors as research, technology development, extension and farmers formed a whole, with emergent properties over and above those of a mere collection of actors. The combined contribution of these actors is more than the sum of the individual contributions. Policy, research, technology development, extension and farmers*

should be seen as a system. This concept promised analysis of phenomena, interesting far beyond the boundaries of conventional extension science, as well as a practical contribution in terms of knowledge management and policy.
(Röling & Engel, 1991:130)

The development of AKIS as an analytical tool has undergone further evolution in more recent years. A revised description proposed by Röling in 1992 was that a Knowledge System was:

> *...the articulated set of actors, networks and/or organisations expected or managed to work synergically to support knowledge processes which improve the correspondence between knowledge and environment and/or the control provided though technology use in a given domain of human activity.* (Röling, 1992)

Engel (1994) highlighted the implication of this description as...*the boundaries of the system are not given but tied into its objective or function...They depend upon the perspective of the analyst (and) are therefore bound to vary with the function or purpose this analyst has in mind for the system to perform.*

Much of the concern with the concept of Knowledge Systems focuses around this issue of the construction of the system - and the value or meaning of imposing attributes to that constructed system by individuals. This is an issue of the link between the cognitive system of the analyst and the 'actual' intention of those individuals and organisations included in this mental construct.

In 1993, Röling offered an alternative view of a system 'to demonstrate constructivist thinking':

> *A system is a construct with arbitrary boundaries for discourse about complex phenomena to emphasise wholeness, inter-relationships and emergent properties.*
> (Röling, 1993)

The point is that an AKIS constructed by an analyst - or a group of analysts - is a way of entering a messy situation of complex individual and organisational relationships and provides a basis for organising data to assist discourse about improving a situation in a specified direction. To use the words of Vickers (1970:98) referred to earlier in this chapter, our appreciated world is that of...*represented contexts, resulting from the power to communicate and dependant on the possession of a viewpoint - as distinct from a shared view - of the matter under discussion.* The value of constructing a cognitive system then lies in its contribution to discourse and assisting the development of shared viewpoints. It does not imply that those in your system model possess the same viewpoint as yourself or the arbitrary intentionality you have given it.

It is not my intention to delve deeper into the AKIS theory and its developments. As I have stated earlier in this section, my use of AKIS is to assist me in making visible, and representing, the many individuals and organisations who impinge or are impinged on by this notion of formal extension policy, and to explore their competing interests and interactions.

It is this expectation of competing interests that has caused me to enter into the data collection and analysis experience with a category of **power**. This concept is developed in the following section.

2.6   A POWER PERSPECTIVE AS A WAY OF COLLATING AND ANALYSING DATA ABOUT INTERACTIONS OVER COMPETING INTERESTS

Power is a concept that is used concurrently with policy and policy development. In Chapter 1.6, I quoted Nogueria (1990) as attributing the design of policy as primarily to...*how power is mobilised within the state and broader society*. It was this aspect of power and control associated with financing extension that lead Bigergård (1991) to propose his process approach as a way of reducing undue influence of external donors in policy development.

I have also referred to Weiss (1986) who described policy making as...*first and foremost a political process, where the major task is to arrange an accommodation among competing interests*. Wagemans (1990/91) also described policy as being arrived at through accommodating conflicting interests. He attributed the power of policy formulation to the top of the organisation but then argued that it was those at the lower level of the organisation who had the power of **operationalising** policy decisions. (Wagemans 1987)   McGaw et al (1992) described a number of ways that power could be exerted at the operational level of an organisation to frustrate the implementation of policy. Wolf (1989) associated the exertion of power with the creation of friction between individuals and organisations: *The enactment of power always creates friction - disgruntlement, foot dragging, escapism, sabotage, protest, or outright resistance.*

Power, then, appears to be a critical category in the collation of data and its analysis when developing theory towards an improved extension policy framework. I did not enter this study with a view that all life and meaning centres around a struggle for power. I did enter it with a view that the social action resulting from vigorous discourse must inevitably be influenced by power relationships between the individuals, organisations, and groups involved. If I was to explore the meaning and value of extension policy, I felt that I must seek it in the context of these power relationships.

How then can power be described? The literature and perspectives of power are vast and wide ranging, and I have been selective in this section. In explaining my perspective, I will focus on the categories of power proposed by Wolf (1989).

Wolf described four categories of power. These were:

    (i)   the attribute of the person (capability);

    (ii)   the ability of a person to impose their will on others;

    (iii)   the ability to manipulate within an organisation (use of tactics) or how operating units circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings; and

    (iv)   the ability to organise and orchestrate the settings themselves and so specify the distribution and direction of energy flows.

(i) the attribute of the person (capability)

This first attribute can been questioned. Is it meaningful to ascribe power to an individual in isolation of a context or protagonist?

Long (1989) linked power with knowledge, describing both as...*not simply something that is possessed and accumulated...nor can it be measured precisely in terms of some notion of quantity or quality...it emerges out of processes of social interactions.* Villareal (1994:205) building on Foucoult's (1990) insights, described power as...*not inherent in a position, a space or a person...it is not possessed by any one of the actors, and it is not a zero-sum process whereby its exercise by one of the actors leaves the other lacking.* It is this relationship aspect of power that is a recurring theme amongst sociologists, or as Foucault concluded:

> *Power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a comeless strategical relationship in a particular society.* (Foucault, 1980:3)

If power does not explicitly or implicitly reside in an individual, then where does it reside? The next category deals with the 'relative attributes' of interacting persons in attempt to understand power.

(ii) the ability of a person to impose their will on others

This is where the **relative** personality, riches, and position within an organisation could be expected to play a part in the enactment of power. The Director-General of an organisation, for example, could be expected to be able to impose operational direction on a field staff member - by virtue of invested authority (ability to approve expenditure, issue directives, and hire and fire). Wagemans's (1987) study, however, demonstrated that formal power does not necessarily equate to the ability to impose will. It could limit options (by withholding operating funds, for example) but not force a change in viewpoint or intention.

In looking at agricultural and research policy formulation, Nogueria (1990:78) argued that it is the...*degree of concentration of power that was a major factor which determines how policies are formulated and implemented.* He described a continuum from...*total monopoly* to *equal distribution of power among all participants,* with each situation associated with a specific decision-making process. He disputed the *rational-deductive* model of decision making to explain the process of policy formulation and implementation. This model was described as when...*an explicit set of goals is drawn up, rational calculations are made as to how best to achieve these goals, policies are formulated and the actions required to implement these policies are defined and carried out* (citing Dahl and Lindblom, 1953). He argued that this model demanded total concentration of power at the top, which does not exist in practice because of:

- •   *the multiplicity of participants who attempt to influence government processes and outputs;*
- •   *the discretionary nature of research and extension tasks; and*
- •   *the limited amount of information that can be handled by those at the top of the hierarchy.* (Nogueria, 1990:79)

Nogueria described the range of the many individuals and groups with an interest in influencing this area. He proposed that:

> *These individuals mobilise different types of social and organisational resources to promote their interests and points of view. All government levels become the target of their pressures and they have the capacity, in varying degrees, to block or distort public actions. This threatens the overall coherence of policies which attempt to integrate research and extension through centralised control.* (Nogueria, 1990:79)

Vickers (1970) contended that...*powers of action and powers of decisions* are not, however, just invested in individuals, but also result from 'policies' themselves:

> *As policies, to be adequate, become wider in scope, they involve more agencies in their operation, with different functional responsibilities at different levels of government. The policy maker must rely on more and more executive agencies which he does not directly control. The executive must expect to be involved in the carrying out of many policies which he does not directly make. The difficulties of thus separating policy-making from executive responsibility in government are well known and still unresolved; the need to make action departments responsible to wider policy directives breeds conflict within the regulative machine itself.* (Vickers, 1970:60)

His description of power processes was that of...*the bargaining power and skill of the parties and their willingness to compromise.* (60)   The result of the exercise of power then is a compromise, or social contract, rather than the autocratic imposition by a single agent. Vickers also explored the limits to these social contracts - when they break down, and the option of...'*rebelling', or at least contesting a policy.* As he pointed out...*the limits of consensus will become visible only when they are overstepped*:

> *It is individual men, however closely integrated, who feel, act, suffer, enjoy, aspire; who talk, write, persuade and are persuaded; who coerce, resist and rebel. The personal is the level at which they live. It is no cultural artifact.* (93)

In looking at this emerging aspect of power, Long (1989) described how individuals 'delegated' power to others as a result of iterations:

> *Knowledge encounters involve the struggle between agents whereby certain of them attempt to enrol others in their 'projects', getting them to accept particular frames of meaning, winning them over to their points of view. If they succeed then other parties*

'delegate power to them ..these struggles focus around the 'fixing' of key points that have a controlling influence over the exchanges and attributions of meaning. (Long, 1989)

This leads, then, to the next category which acknowledges this ability to thwart or outmanoeuvre others within determinant settings.

(iii)   the ability to manipulate within an organisation (use of tactics) or how operating units circumscribe the actions of others within determinate settings

The discussion about the second category is indeed relevant to this category. The flaw with looking at relative personal attributes in an interaction for explaining power in human interactions appeared to be this ability of individuals to circumscribe the imposed actions of those who have the formal ability to impose their will.

Villarreal (1994), in looking at the relationships between peasants and officials in the context of a Mexican development project, emphasised this ability of people to manoeuvre within power relationships:

To open the discussion on power, I take as a starting point, not a blatant description of domination or a striking set of statistics to prove its strength, but the trivial everyday manifestation of power, which lives to the degree to which it is exercised upon others and hence to the degree that there are countervailing forces which must be controlled. Otherwise it would be useless to conceive of such a notion. It is impossible to envisage power without an image of this affected by it, without notions of subservience, inferiority, subjugation and control, but also without some kinds of counter forces, of negotiation, resistance, conflict and opposition. (Villarreal, 1994:8)

It is this room to manoeuvre that provides the interest in looking at interaction and power relationships within a bureaucracy - and between the bureaucracy and the community.

One could also consider the case of managers within a government department or agency being given political directives by the government in power, but allowing the directive to get lost in the bureaucracy. The British television series 'Yes Minister' reflected this process as it chronicled the interaction between a government minister and the career public servant who used 'bureaucratic speak' and convoluted processes to appear to be responding to ministerial directive, but in fact maintained the status-quo. As emerging from the Queensland case study, the pre-emptive instigation of an extension review process, provided a mechanism to exert power in the political process.

What happens however, when an individual or individuals manipulate the setting to skew the advantage of discourse in their favour? This leads on to the next category.

(iv)   the ability to organise and orchestrate the settings themselves and so specify the distribution and direction of energy flows

One step beyond manipulating within a determinant setting in a power relationship, is designing a setting that is weighted towards an advantage in an interaction. An example from Wagemans (1990/91) illustrated this.   In relation to keeping control over information, Wagemans argued that:

> *...the main interest of actors in the formal domain is that the plan will be accepted and legalised as soon as possible and with as less energy as possible.   The consequence might be that only information will be given that supports the proposed plan, while information about alternative solutions or disadvantages of the selected is avoided.* (Wagemans, 1990/91:81)

This limits the information that can be used in the *objection* process.   Wagemans concluded:

> 1.   *The dominance of the formal domain leads to a process of monopolisation of meaning attaching processes.*
> 2.   *Communication between the two domains has the character of a manipulation of meaning processes.* (82)

The limiting of information could be in the form of establishing a non-negotiable framework for discourse - for example, inviting discussion or input on a predetermined agenda, or of deliberate silence on an issue. Davies (pers com 1992) explained the power of 'what is not said' in this way: *If we accept that social discourse constructs 'reality', then if we limit social discourse then we hold power in constructing 'reality'.*

In comparing the differences in power between the formal and field domains relevant to town and country planning, Wagemans (1990/91:78) pointed to the dominance of the formal perspective in the communication between the domains. The dominance is evident because *...the planning process tends to take only information into account, as far as this information is meaningful in the formal perspective* and *the formal perspective is not easy for citizens to understand, especially if they are not familiar with it.* On the countervailing side, however, he argued that...*in practice citizens try to protect their interests in a very active way. They make an intensive use of objection procedures...they are by no means powerless and that the outcome of such procedures is certainly not always favourable to the actors in the formal domain.*

From the consideration of these categories of power, an impression is left that there is no neat hierarchal explanation of power to explain human interaction and resulting action. It is for this reason that the power category is critical in viewing such interaction. The evidence points to the enactment of power as being an intrinsic component of interaction and negotiation. When something with the potential impact of a formal extension policy is being formed, it could expected that this power dimension to be much in evidence.

For this reason, I entered into the case study looking for evidence of the exertion of power to explain the context of social action emerging from the discourse around 'extension policy'. A framework to think about and act upon extension policy would appear to need attention to this dimension to be effective. My working definition of power was:

> **Power is enacted when an individual or group of individuals attempt to manipulate a situation to permit his/her/their viewpoint or preference to take precedence over, or be shielded from, the viewpoint or preference of another individual or group.**

Further descriptions or categorisation of power depended on what emerged from the case study through the grounded theory approach.

2.7   THE CASE STUDY

As I enter the case study, then, it is with the proposition that there is no one definition of extension policy held by those involved in the process, and that hence the meaning of extension policy is being constructed though discourse, the interaction of individuals and groups involved, and actions being taken. During this process, learning is taking place. Friction is occurring in key areas. Discontinuities are becoming evident. Steps are being taken to overcome difficulties. New knowledge is contributing to the development of a useful understanding and use of the concept - or being used to skew the development in preferred directions.

It is also proposed that there is a lack of an effective shared framework for thinking about and acting upon this policy element of extension as an instrument of effecting broader agricultural and rural policies. The object of this research was to develop theory to assist the development of an improved framework and so ensure that major policy and operational issues are not ignored in the design of extension policy.

Because of the dynamic and interactive nature of the development of a shared viewpoint of the process, I chose a grounded theory approach. This allowed flexibility in data collection and for theory about a moving target to emerge with the minimum of pre-emotiveness.

I also chose a basic toolbox to allow me that minimum structure on which to base data collection and analysis. This toolbox consisted of the **Hierarchy of Extension Objectives,** an **Agricultural and Knowledge System** perspective, and the dimension of **Power**.

In the next section, the approach used to gather this data is outlined.

2.8   OVERVIEW OF APPROACH

In the introduction, I argued that there were a number of issues that confused the notion of extension policy. My research phases are structured around four of these issues as they relate to a formal extension policy:

- the need;
- the process of developing;
- the content; and
- the implementation.

As discourse and action is analysed around these areas, the remaining issues of extension definition, the role of public sector extension, and the impact of extension policies could be expected to be woven into the discourse.

In developing an improved theoretical framework, I have used techniques to tease out the emerging meaning of extension policy from those individuals and groups involved in the discourse and action. I have argued that it is in understanding the context in which the notion of extension policy was used, and its intended (or disputed) function in that context, that can provide the building blocks for a theoretical framework.

A case study of the development of an extension policy in the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (QDPI), Australia provided the basis of this research. It was undertaken in two phases. The first phase focused on the initiation, process, content, and response to a wide ranging, departmental initiated **Extension Policy Review.** The second phase focused on the development of formal policy (an **Extension Strategy Statement**) resulting from the review, and its early implementation. The overall research approach used in each phase is outlined below.   Details on research and analysis **techniques** used in each phase are contained in Appendix II. Further elaboration of the methodology used is included in the case study chapters.

An important aspect of the research was that I was employed by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries before and during this research. During the period of 1987 to 1994, I moved from being on the periphery of events in the department in relation to policy and the role of extension, to being a central figure in the development of the formal extension strategy. This raises interesting questions about being both a key participant and researcher and will be discussed later in this chapter.

(i)   QDPI Extension Policy Review - initiation, process, content and response.

Why in 1989 did the Queensland Department of Primary Industries have this felt need for a formalised extension policy?   After 100 years of operating without one, why then? Somewhere in the answer to this question could be expected to lie the germ of the notion of **extension policy** from the point of view of individuals within the organisation!

This was my starting point. I had been absent - studying at Wageningen University (1988-90) - during the establishment of this review. Prior to leaving for Wageningen, I worked as

a Poultry Extension Officer and took little interest in any emerging debate surrounding extension. At Wageningen, I studied Agricultural Knowledge Systems where I was exposed to the extension debate, and explored the impact of the introduction of user-pay to the extension service in England and Wales. (Coutts, 1990) I returned from Wageningen with a determination to further explore this phenomenon of public sector extension. This coincided with the QDPI Extension Policy Review nearing completion.

I was therefore able to delve into the initiation, process, and content of the review, from a relatively naive perspective (in terms of understanding what went on in Queensland to bring about the review and affect its content).

My primary interest lay in why **this** review happened – not reviews in general. I wanted to discover the factors that prompted this action. For this purpose I focused my exploration on the individuals at the core of the review – to capture the concentration of discourse that surrounded the initiation and process. I wanted to discover clues based on what **they** put forward as reasons for its initiation, process used, and inclusion of content. Separate interviews were conducted with these key persons so that I could compare, contrast and seek commonalities. I wanted to look beyond the document itself, and the espoused reasons given for the review, and attempt to capture a glimpse of the individual and group needs for wanting/needing the review. This would indicate the purpose an extension policy was intended to achieve!

To provide the broader context beyond the eyes of the Queensland participants, I explored the 'paper' debate that was occurring within Australia (after my analysis of the Queensland situation). The contrast between factors that emerged in this paper debate and the Queensland situation was intended to provide further insights into any peculiarity of Queensland.

Finally, I looked at the responses to the formal policy review document from other individuals and groups – outside of the initiating agency – who felt a need to respond (or saw some value in responding). These provided clues as to how others within the 'Knowledge System' viewed the notion of extension policy, and how they attempted to influence its content to their advantage.

This phase of the research then, permitted me to look at the issue of extension policy through the eyes of others. It provided clues to understand why the need for an extension policy 'irrupted' at that point in history. It provided insights into the meaning that was being constructed around the term **extension policy**!

(ii)   Formalisation of Policy: The Extension Strategy - process, content. early implementation.

It was in this phase that I moved from spectator to key participant. Based on my studies at Wageningen, I found myself in the centre of developing a formal Extension Strategy based on the outcome of the Extension Policy Review! As a researcher, this provided me with both a problem and a unique opportunity. The dilemma related to the issue of causality and

objectivity - being able to affect the direction of discourse, and having a stake in the outcome. This could be argued to impact on 'objectivity' and skew analysis. The advantage of the situation was that I was in a position to **experience** the discourse first hand and test the limits - to see who spoke up, what was spoken about, and what was at stake! The issue of my role as a researcher is taken up in some detail in the next section, and addressed in Appendix II.

The interest in this phase lay in the fact that the stakes were raised. A review had been held and a document produced detailing its findings and recommendations. The vague notion of a review about extension policy was replaced with something of apparent substance. There was now a distinct focus for discourse!

How would individuals and groups perceive the implications of this document? In the move towards the formalisation of a specific extension strategy, where would discourse be focused? What content would be contested, modified, and included prior to formalisation? What would happen when such a formal policy was implemented - where would the discontinuities and lessons for process and content lie? What meaning of **extension policy** would emerge around this process? What framework would therefore assist the process of thinking about and acting on extension policy?

I also continued to follow and explore the wider paper debate that provided the formal discourse on extension policy issues beyond Queensland. This was to look for interaction, similarities, and differences between what was happening in Queensland, and other states and countries.

During my analysis, I looked for more building blocks to develop a theoretical framework which would assist those involved to better think about and act on the policy element of public sector extension.

2.9   ROLE AS A RESEARCHER

In the previous section, I raised the issue of being both an active participant in the process (the development of the Extension Strategy Statement) and a researcher at the same time. I will deal with this issue under the headings of (i) 'objectivity'; and (ii) 'ethics'

(i)   'objectivity'

Berg and Smith (1988:12) contended that research...*like other human undertakings, is embedded in a society, and in the interests of that society.* They listed influences on researchers such as those relating to a funding agency or supporting institution, current professions or discipline, career, class and culture as potentially impacting on the research process.

They also argued that the relationship between the social researcher and researched is central to the nature and quality of social research findings. The relevance of this argument is not

to question the value of social research per se, but to propose that an overt recognition of these personal influences and research relationships strengthens the value of research. They proposed research relationships as important because:

- virtually no information about a person, group, or social system exists without a relationship between that person or social system;
- research relationships are the vehicle through which the researcher comes to understand a social system; and
- a description of the research relationship provides the context necessary for interpreting what has been discovered.

They went on to describe the 'clinical' (or human demands) aspects of social research as having the following characteristics:

(1)   direct involvement with and/or observation of human beings or social systems;
(2)   commitment to a process of self-scrutiny by the researcher as he or she conducts the research;
(3)   willingness to change theory or method in response to the research experience during the research itself;
(4)   description of social systems that is dense or thick and favours depth over breadth in any single undertaking; and
(5)   participation of the social system being studied, under the assumption that much of the information of interest is only accessible to or reportable by its members. (Berg & Smith, 1988)

Smith (1988:141) described the value of 'clinical understanding' in social research as the recognition that each event made into data for theories...*has both context (settings in which it is embedded) and latent texts (scripts), which are the behavioural equivalent to of musical voices.* He went on to describe these as the basis for theory construction: *The richness of the meanings of the data we are working with depends almost entirely on our capacity to see/hear/sense/intuit that which is beyond the manifest and then to make these into frames which will give us multiple descriptions to make into fibre from which the fabric of our theories is constructed.*

Looking to the issue of objectivity then, a critical point is that I was both involved in part of the process, as well as being the **instrument** for analysing the process. To take Berg & Smith's (1988) point, however, this does not disqualify my role as a researcher. Rather it is an issue of making the duality overt and acknowledging the researcher-researched relationship with its implicit impact on data collection and analysis. It also required of me to demonstrate an ability for self scrutiny and willingness to change theories or methods 'in response to the research experience'.

I contend that the analysis that I was able to undertake into this topic was a unique opportunity and provided insights and experience that would not have been possible for an external researcher.

Importantly, I was not testing a hypothesis - and as such had no motive for interpreting data in favour of a particular point of view. Neither was I undertaking an evaluation in terms of the 'correctness' of the process or content of the policy of which I was instrumental in developing. I was exploring the **meaning** of policy, and where the margins were. I was looking for who spoke up, and where the issues of contention were. I was in a position to experience the pressure and angst where and when it occurred. My research ran parallel to my policy planning interests, but in a separate sphere of interest. The two phases of my research allowed me to use the eyes of others in phase 1 as a check to my own analysis in phase 2.

My interest in the research was not in proving myself right or someone else wrong, but in developing a theory to improve the process and practice of extension policy beyond the process in which I was involved.

The techniques described in Appendix II, are designed to assist critical reflection and disciplined analysis. Questioning routes, for example, provided this type of personal discipline and structure. The interaction with a research promoter who was completely outside of the research situation also provided an independent critical input into data collection and interpretation. As the study progressed, I was also able to seek 'validation' of my interpretations by feeding these back to individuals and groups who provided data for the research through formal seminars, papers, and informal discussion.

Having dealt with this issue of objectivity, then, there remains the issue of ethics.

(ii)   'ethics'

The issue of ethics arose chiefly in the second phase of my research. Much discourse occurred, and data was gathered, as part of the process of my formal role within the organisation. I recorded, reflected on, and analysed discussions, meetings, and memoranda that were an integral part of my job within the organisation. I looked for concerns, attempts to influence outcomes, and other evidence of how individuals viewed the process and content of extension policy. Although I was open about my research interest and made no attempt to disguise or deny it, inevitably not all individuals with whom I interected in this phase were aware that I was also undertaking research, or the details of that research.

My research role, however, in the area of extension policy, **was** negotiated and approved by the organisation. It was included overtly in my work duties. No restrictions were imposed or requested on the nature of that research, or the information used. The organisation, in fact, funded study leave to allow this book to be completed. The implicit understanding was that there would be future benefits for the organisation from the outcome of the research.

The onus has been on me to 'ethically' use information that I have gained by virtue of my work position and associated formal and informal interaction with colleagues and others. Details of private conversations must remain private (although they may lead to further research efforts). Information gained through formal organisational processes and interactions has had to be dealt with sensitively. Anonymity has been maintained for

individuals, although scope has been needed to attribute discourse and action to parts of an organisation or broader grouping. Where articles or memoranda were written of a public nature (for example, where it was accessible by all staff and/or people outside the organisation) and quoted, however, due recognition has been given to the author.

Interviews that formed the basis of my research into phase 1, were preceded by a specific clarification of the research objective (see Appendix II.1). Anonymity for the individual was guaranteed, however the relatively small number of persons who carried out the Extension Policy Review has meant that individuals are closely associated with details of the research findings in this phase. This was understood by each interviewee.

2.10   THE WORLD OF APPRECIATED KNOWLEDGE

The stage is now set for an entry into the appreciated world of extension policy!

It can be likened to going on a sea voyage! I have joined the journey after it has begun, and left it as it continues its route towards the ever moving horizon. Along the way, I attempted to discover where the journey had begun, and why it was going in the direction it was. I took in the sights, sounds and smells through my own eyes and those of my fellow travellers, and played my part in setting the sails.

On leaving the journey, I intend to provide something of value to assist my fellow travellers in **their** continuing journey, and others embarking on similar voyages.

In the next chapter, I commence the case study by exploring the reasons for initiating an Extension Policy Review at that time in the history of the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and so enter into the world of appreciated knowledge!

3. THE INITIATION OF THE 1990 QDPI EXTENSION POLICY REVIEW

...if you lead the agenda, you lead the debate.

3.1　Critical points in (QDPI) extension history
3.2　Initiation
3.3　Evolutionary changes in QDPI extension
3.4　Changing world paradigms
3.5　Competition for resources
3.6　Changing political environment
3.7　Summary and analysis
3.8　Queensland in the context of the world-wide debate
3.9　Lessons on the meaning of extension policy from an extension organisation perspective

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It has been said that history is written by the victors. In this case, I have viewed history through the eyes of those who constructed the extension policy context for the Queensland Department of Primary Industries.

It is in the discourse and action surrounding the initiation of the Extension Policy Review that I have looked for the germ of the emerging meaning of **extension policy**. This meaning could be expected to surround the reasons why individuals raised the need for a review, and for an extension policy.

This chapter, then, is based almost exclusively on interviews with those persons who actually carried out the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review or those who were closely associated with it. I did not 'cast a wider net' to explain the initiation, as I wanted to establish the core reasons for **this** review - not a collation of opinions on why reviews happen. It was the history from the perspective of those initiating and carrying out the review that was important - they were the ones that would interpret, and be influenced by, the historical context. Direct quotations from the interviews, when used to illustrate an issue, are in *Italics*. They have not been attributed to particular persons in order to maintain anonymity. The body of the text is an amalgamation of the content from the interview process.

I have not included my own perspectives from a broader historical or philosophical context. I have written this history of the initiation as if one of the players directly telling the story. Where there was divergence or contrary opinions, I have noted them. The headings used are based on my categorisation of the themes emerging from the interviews.

Here, then, may lie the answer to the key question: Why, after almost 100 years without a formal extension policy, did this public sector extension agency initiate a process to develop such a policy?

3.1   CRITICAL POINTS IN (QDPI) EXTENSION HISTORY

As early as the 1950's, the QDPI was questioning its role as...*only providing technical advice to farmers*. As a result, the department started moving in new directions. A senior officer visited the United States returning with the recommendation that QDPI should strengthen its ability to provide farm (business) management. The Economic Services Branch was a result of this change in thinking.

In the early 1960's, some frustration began to emerge concerning a **perceived** lack of progress in the adoption of technology/managerial improvements on farms. One explanation put forward was that extension personnel did not adequately understand the social factors surrounding technology adoption. This influenced QDPI management to encourage extension officers/managers to receive training in this area. A one year post-graduate diploma course at the University of Queensland dealing with the social sciences and farm economics was used to provide training for a number of departmental extension officers. These graduating officers added to the questioning of the then QDPI structure and operation. Perceived deficiencies included:

- *QDPI focus was too narrow;*
- *Branches (for example, Beef Cattle Husbandry) were 'doing their own thing' with little regard or co-operation with other branches;*
- *Unsystematic (concentrating on narrow technical issues in isolation from the total farming system) approaches were being used; and*
- *A lack of forward thinking and little awareness of negative consequences of some technologies was being promoted.*

In an effort to address these issues, moves were made in the late 1960's to set up Regional Extension Groups (to encourage co-ordination of extension activities across industry branches). Such moves were strongly resisted by some branch management. About this time, another senior manager went overseas to explore solutions, and returned convinced that QDPI was out of step with 'modern' extension thinking. A major workshop was held to revamp extension within QDPI (at Redcliffe, Queensland, in 1972), leading to the setting up of mandatory (...*so they would be taken seriously*) District Extension Committees, and the appointment of Regional Extension Leaders. These iniatives were intended to further strengthen the co-ordination of extension within the department.

Following a review in 1978, the District Extension Committees were modified to become formal (agricultural or livestock) industry groups (within QDPI) - a more focused extension co-operation grouping.

The 1980's saw a national focus on extension policy and direction. A 1984 conference in Melbourne concluded that extension was going to change more significantly than research in the next 10 years. State and federal governments began to review their commitment and involvement in agricultural extension. Commonwealth extension support was abolished, and Research and Development (Corporation) legislation was introduced in 1986. Within QDPI, a review was carried out on the functioning of the (agricultural or livestock) industry groups, and overseas consultants were commissioned to look at the

functioning of middle level management. QDPI also co-organised an Australasian Agricultural Extension Conference to look at factors impacting on extension within the region/country - the user-pay debate was a significant agenda item. The 1990 Banyo QDPI Extension Conference (the first significant state-wide internal conference for extension officers and managers within the department) came out of these events.

The 1980's also saw an increase in the number of private sector extension alternatives - consultants and agribusiness (for example, chemical companies). Coupled with this was an increase in the demand for extension/advice from the fast growing number of hobby farmers, home gardeners, and students - particularly in the more urbanised areas of South-East Queensland. Because of the particularly heavy demand for horticultural information, the Horticulture Branch experimented with 'information centres' in an attempt to cope with the pressures.

3.2   INITIATION

The preceding section contained those critical points of history in the development of extension in QDPI, from an inside perspective of those involved in the Extension Policy Review process.

In an early draft of the Extension Policy Review document, it was noted that...*this was the first time that the QDPI had developed an extension policy.* This was disputed by a senior manager who maintained that...*we have always had an extension policy, we just haven't written it down before.*

Why write it down now? The following sections are answers to this specific question, again from the analytical perspectives of those involved in the process.

3.3   EVOLUTIONARY CHANGES IN QDPI EXTENSION

Prior to the review, there was pressure on the existing 'extension model'. This was particularly evident in the Plant Industries Division. Some of the extension officers in this division had undergone some form of post-graduate training in the extension area. Such study had exposed these officers (and subsequent managers) to broader models of extension and rural development.

The Agriculture Branch had already started limiting access of extension officers by use of a roster system, and by having extension officers more involved in 'project work' (pro-active extension programs). This was first made visible at Kingaroy, Southern Queensland - deliberately chosen because that was the main town in the seat of the then Premier (state government leader) whose political party had a strong rural base. It was thought that if...*they could get away with it there, then a strong precedent would have been set. The*

Agriculture Branch Officers were in effect used as guinea pigs, but a lot was taken on board and welcomed by a lot of officers. The branch pursued four key areas:

    (i)   Commercialisation and development of technology;
    (ii)   Utilisation of modern extension concepts;
    (iii)   Changing roles of extension officers from advisory to proactive - particularly working with groups; and
    (iv)   Participative involvement of clients.

This proactive direction was also becoming reinforced by significant changes in the Animal Industries Division. The Sheep and Wool Branch had initiated the 'Wormbuster' project - a collaborative, partly funded, and very directive educational and training exercise in the wool industry. The Beef Cattle Husbandry Branch had started experimenting with 'Producer Demonstration Sites' for new technologies. This was a new direction to the previously perceived 'advisor' role for extension officers.

Senior QDPI management at the time were considered to have a strong research background, and not to understand or appreciate the independent role that extension could play. An interesting trigger to the Extension Policy Review was described as the relationship...*between someone in senior management from a strong research background who wasn't au fait in this area, who picked a partner with a strong extension agenda/commitment.* There was a feeling expressed that...*extension was not properly catered for or recognised, nor was extension as a function properly understood.* This resulted in lobbying to...*clarify the role of extension within the organisation.*

3.4   CHANGING WORLD PARADIGMS

The exploration of extension's role and its potential new horizons and boundaries were also strongly linked to new paradigms for extension being explored in universities in Australia and overseas. Departmental officers had been increasingly choosing to study extension related streams at post-graduate level, and were being exposed to concepts such as 'Soft Systems' from Lancaster University, 'Agricultural Information and Knowledge Systems' from Wageningen, and 'adult education' approaches from The United States of America. These approaches were already being used in the context of some QDPI extension programs: *We (QDPI) saw what was happening in the rest of the world.*

3.5   COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES

There was concern that less public funding would be available to the department in the future. An issue that was being increasingly raised was to...*what extent shall 'we' fund either research or extension if QDPI came under (financial) pressure.* The opinion was held by some managers that...*it would have helped 'shore up' research if the Extension Policy Review came out with a recommendation for extension to be totally self funding*! The newly formed Research and Development Corporations (R&D) were seen as having a strong delivery capacity. Questions, such as whether or not the...*R&D Corporations would pick up Extension as well*, were being asked. If the department lost this function to the Corporations...*careers were at stake*!

Some departmental senior managers were also beginning to feel the pressure from the funding bodies for research to be 'accountable' and hence the need for an effective extension service to make the results of research 'visible' and adopted - Q*DPI was relying on significant funding from sources outside QDPI.*

As well, some pressure was being excerted on the government, and hence QDPI, to take a more active role in environmental and animal welfare issues - to...*change from primarily servicing primary producers to public interests.*

3.6   CHANGING POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Adding to this was political uncertainty. The strong rural base of the government had meant that the QDPI had largely been supported and funded without any real questioning or pressure. However, such questioning was beginning to occur: *Even the previous (country based) government wasn't prepared to continue funding extension as it was, in the same way.* Despite the perception of government financial cutbacks during the 1980s, there was...*actually little change in research and extension personnel numbers during this period.*

A major Extension Conference sponsored by The Australian Standing Committee on Agriculture was held in Brisbane in 1987 (and convened by the soon to be Director-General of QDPI). In the light of the moves in the United Kingdom, Tasmania and New Zealand, the issue of user-pay for government extension was firmly on the agenda, and was the theme of many papers and addresses. *This was the first time user-pay for government extension was floated in this type of forum. Being in Queensland, many senior people in the QDPI attended these sessions and were exposed to this issue - suddenly it was a matter that demanded attention!.*

In responding to the question 'why did we have the review?', a senior manager replied *...to head off user-pay which would have been thrust on us otherwise!* Another senior

manager claimed that...*the extension function was in real danger of being lost to the department!*

There was some concern being expressed that the QDPI was losing its relevance - *farmers were going broke, and research was not centred on relevant issues.* The current extension structure also had difficulty adjusting to new demands in the environmental arena (such as, conservation cropping). As well, larger producers were exerting some pressure on QDPI to...*meet their needs in a better way (for example, providing consultancy services).*

Added to that was the real possibility that a Labour (non-rural based) Government could soon be in power! (The Extension Policy Review was decided on prior to the change of governments, but the change came before the process was completed). Some senior managers were thought to have concerns that politicians would come 'walking in' and issuing directives such as...*you will start charging* (as happened in the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Tasmania), or...*get rid of extension,* without them having the data to counter such directives, or even to provide alternatives. The logic was that if a review was initiated by the department, inappropriate political changes could be countered: *If you lead the agenda, you lead the debate.*

There was a change in the agricultural environment, with...*a general move to deregulation and questioning where government services fit in,* and there was a...*distinct issue with respect to user-pay and accountability of government services.* Prior to initiating the Extension Policy Review, a major review of the Public Sector in Queensland highlighted the need for improved efficiencies in government services. This led to thinking in terms of program management, funding alternatives, and the need for different public sector structures.

The concept of carrying out the review was first raised to staff in May 1989.

3.7   SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Information gained from the interviews was remarkably similar. It could be expected that many of the 'normative' reasons for extension shake-ups and policy developments would come through in the interviews. A critical component of the interview process, however, was my specific reference to 'hidden agendas'. It was in answering this that some of the 'gems' emerged - such as concerns about the Labour Government and 'leading the agenda', and the resource struggle between research and extension. Most of the interviewees knew me, and appeared to genuinely attempt to reflect on this issue of 'agendas' in an effort to help me understand what was going on. **It was as I weighed these against information from each of the interviewees, that I began to piece together what I believed to be the relative importance of the 'triggers' for the review.**

I have therefore tentatively arranged these triggers in order of importance and immediacy.

The **immediate trigger** for the QDPI Extension Policy Review appeared to be the 1987 Extension Conference held in Brisbane. It was an significant because it was:

- convened by a Senior Manager within QDPI;

- attended by extension policy makers, managers, and practitioners from around Australia and beyond. This included New Zealand which had recently commercialised its extension service, and Tasmania which had introduced a user-pay extension service (a large proportion of papers at the conference dealt with the issue of commercialisation and user-pay); and

- attended by a relatively large number of departmental managers - who were hence exposed to the wave (and 'inevitability') of extension privatisation.

Other *triggers* included:

1. The policy directions of the Federal Labour Government challenged traditional approaches to government services in Queensland. These included such concepts as market failure and a reduced focus on providing traditional services to the rural sector. The possibility of a State Labour Government increased the perception that traditional extension services were under threat.

2. There was pressure on resources for government services - between QDPI and other state government departments, and between QDPI functions.

3. There were visible changes in government support, approach, and funding of extension in other states and countries. This resulted in a fear that similar policies (for example, user-pay) would be thrust on the department by default, or that the extension function would be dismantled.

4. There was a perceived need to satisfy the demands of external industry funding bodies. This included being able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the extension arm of QDPI in effectively disseminating the results of externally funded research.

5. Extension staff within QDPI were becoming better educated with respect to alternative extension paradigms. QDPI was employing more graduates, encouraging post-graduate training and exposing these staff to new approaches to extension. This resulted in an extension paradigm struggle within the organisation.

6. There was pressure on QDPI from clients. This included dissatisfaction with services from traditional clients, increased demands from non-traditional clients, and an increase in alternative sources of information for farmer clients.

3.8 QUEENSLAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WORLD-WIDE DEBATE

In Chapter 1, I reviewed some of the issues that muddied the waters when attempting to understand the meaning of extension policy. These issues included institutional attacks on the value of public sector extension, and debates about its future role. How much of these 'paper' (that is, from journals, books, and papers written by 'professional' extension commentators) issues were raised by the interviewees in the Queensland context? Was Queensland affected by this world-wide debate and questioning? Were events occurring in Queensland overlapping those occurring in other places?

Rivera's (1991) 'major developments confronting extension internationally' highlighted the costs and financing of public sector extension in the light of criticism of its... *effectiveness and relevancy* and *clarity of extension's role* in the Agricultural Knowledge System. Feller (1987) made much of the...*declining number of farms* in the United States, and the...*increased scope and capacity for farmers to obtain information from alternative sources* (than the traditional county agent).

Other pressures on the revamping of the US extension service included:

- the pressure of competition between countries re agricultural produce - and hence the need for (a more effective) extension service (Holt, 1987 and Bloome, 1991);

- the need to address (new) national issues including agrochemical reduction and environmental protection (US Farm Bill 1990, Bloome, 1991);

- alternative paradigms of extension - for example, screening of innovations after a technology has been in place; or integrating pieces of technology (Feller, 1987), and being instrumental in the repositioning of agricultural in line with new realities (Bloome, 1991);

- the need for alternative or a broader funding base - including funding support from clients (Feller, 1987); and

- the changing relationships between the political, bureaucratic, and industry groups that impact on the policies and resourcing of extension services. (Bonnen, 1987)

My research into the introduction of user-pay into Agriculture Development Advisory Service (ADAS) in the United Kingdom, indicated that a major reason behind this introduction was as a means of 'painlessly' reducing the size of the extension service - fulfilling the philosophy of privatisation, user-pay, and smaller government. (Coutts, 1990)

The triggers for the Queensland review that emerged out of the interview process overlapped these issues found in the literature. Queensland was **not** an island in the sea of Patton's...*extension in transition.*

Despite the continuation of the country based political party in state government, the increasing demands on treasury funds, and the changing priorities of an increasingly urbanised voting public were being felt. The bureaucracy of the Department of Primary Industries that had flourished under the strong political patronage perceived a future competition for resources within the organisation!

The Queensland Government, regardless of its political persuasion, was not insulated from changing public sector philosophies in the areas of user-pay, smaller government, privatisation, and market failure. The presence of a long term Labour Government in the national arena brought such philosophies to the fore.

Extension, which had for so long been accepted as 'normative' and the right of all Queenslanders to access at will, was also reeling under the tide of hobby farmers and home gardeners. This added to the criticism being levelled at it by 'real' farmers faced with volatile commodity prices and extremes of climate. The explosion of private enterprise advisory options added to the confusion and identity crisis affecting public sector extension in Queensland.

The 1987 Extension Conference in Brisbane emerged from the interviews as the immediate trigger that brought these things home to the organisation, and exposed senior managers to the tide of privatisation sweeping extension services. It appeared to a be a wave that even Queensland could not resist. If extension was at risk, jobs and 'empires' were at risk. External research support was also at risk. The pre-emptive move to lead the debate on the future of extension in the state was that of the organisation commissioning an exhaustive and 'rigorous' review of its own extension service. The answers and preferred options needed to be there when the politicians tapped the organisation on the shoulder and said...*and about your extension service?*

3.9   LESSONS ON THE MEANING OF EXTENSION POLICY FROM AN EXTENSION ORGANISATION PERSPECTIVE

(i)   Power and resource issues

Why such a sudden 'irruption' at this particular point in time? The previous section brought out those temporal factors that appeared to be pressing in on the organisation - its culture, values, structure, power base. They were affecting different people within the organisation in different ways.

On the one hand, for example, individuals saw an opportunity to reinforce the extension direction that they were travelling - against the tide of some clients and reactionaries within the organisation. Others saw it as an opportunity to counter threats to their own funding - for example, the hope expressed that a self-funding extension service would secure the role of research. Others saw an opportunity to safeguard the research function by **not** going user-pay, but by strengthening the organisation's scope for technology

transfer and so secure continued financial support from Research and Development Corporations.

The common factor appeared to be pressure on resources for organisational functions - with a fear of individuals losing the say (or power) to function in a preferred manner (either to maintain or advance a method of operation). An opportunity was developed and supported which gave scope to take the initiative - to focus the discourse and to set the agenda and lead the debate.

There was risk that:

- the result of the review may be adverse to some interests; or

- despite a positive result, it may not be recognised by the 'owner' (and funder) - the Government! - and hence lose its pre-emptive value.

How this risk was minimised is explored in the following section.

Ultimately, it would have required a critical mass of senior managers to agree to the holding of the review, the timing, and resourcing. Because of the high profile nature and possible implications, it also would have needed political sanction (this did not come out explicitly in my research). Because of the internal/organisational nature of the review, however, this political support should have been easier to obtain. After all, the government had the scope to distance itself from the outcome - it was not *their* review.

The relationship between knowledge and power was beginning to emerge. The 1987 Extension Conference was a concentration of information - a forum to demonstrate and build knowledge about the changing environment of extension. It reinforced the 'fact' that extension was in change and at risk. It added to the ammunition of people within QDPI to build the necessary strategic alliances, and gather support to initiate an extension review. It provided a basis to exert power within the organisation. The lever was the common risk of individuals losing 'power' over departmental functions.

This reflected Wolf's (1989) assertion that societal arrangements (the perspectives on the role and operation of public sector extension)...*become most visible when they are challenged by crisis.* If this is true, the process embarked on with the Extension Policy Review should reveal much about the current place, perceptions, and role of public sector extension in Queensland. Evidence should also be found of the exertion of power - at personal and organisational levels - as this is a case where a (potential) major organisational transformation could put...*signification[1] under challenge.*

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[1]   Signification in this context refers to the worth, or significance, that is given to a task or role of an individual within an organisation.

(ii)   Extension paradigms

The predominant extension paradigm evident in the data was that of a technology transfer role.   The evolutionary changes were concerned with moving from reactive to proactive extension, directive to participatory - but designed to improve the uptake of technology and improved management practices.   Issues of reduced funding and user-pay were couched in how they would impact on the capacity of the organisation to provide this function.

(iii)   Knowledge systems

This analysis is not intended to necessarily reflect the interviewees own view of the Knowledge System, but what they recalled as comprising the discourse around the initiation of the review.

The information centred very much on the organisation itself.   Within the organisation, subgroups which emerged were the senior managers (further split up as having a research or extension bias), researchers, extension officers and managers.   External to the organisation, the prime 'client' farmers were the focus.   Hobby and home gardeners were highlighted as a growing part of the system, but as a distraction rather than an integral part.   The innovative 'horticultural information centres' appeared to be designed to minimise this distraction.   The growing private and consultant sector appeared to be perceived as competitors and a threat.   Research and Development Corporations emerged as growing in importance because of their role in (future) funding of research and/or extension.

(iv)   Extension hierarchies

This analysis of the reasons behind the initiation of the Extension Policy Review in Queensland starts to give some clues about the notion of extension policy.   It would appear as if extension policy is about:

1.   maintaining control of organisational functions/directions (in the face of outside/political interference);

2.   strengthening the ability of the organisation to compete for public and private financial resources;

3.   the allocation of resources within the organisation (for example, between research and extension, or paradigms within extension);

4.   rationalising the priorities and client contact of extension staff (for example between 'real' farmers and hobby farmers); and

5. realigning the extension function in the face of criticism by clients and a critical mass of extension managers and officers with conflicting paradigms of extension.

If these are viewed within the levels of concern in the **Hierarchy of Objectives**, we see that these lie firmly in the **conditions for effect!** This level is concerned with...*those conditions that must be satisfied to allow successful (desired) intervention.* This theme will be explored in other phases of the study, both from the QDPI perspective, and from other elements of the knowledge system which impact on, or are affected by, policy.

(v) Extension policy framework issues

This analysis also raised the following framework issues:

1. Reactivity/proactivity/timing of establishing/modifying policy frameworks;

2. Linkages between functions within a government department (for example research and extension) as well as between government departments (as affected by a common government policy);

3. Whose policy - the government's, the organisation's, the community's, or the client's ?;

4. The strong link between a policy framework and power over resource allocation; and

5. The potential downline impact of a policy framework.

The interview process highlighted the fact that the discourse occurring in other states and countries **was** impacting on the perception of individuals in QDPI. In particular, the 1987 Extension Conference held in Queensland appeared to play a significant role in bringing the content of this discourse to the attention of key persons.

For this reason, I turned my attention to this wider discourse, and in particular, the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference. What was being discussed at this 'paper' level in the broader Australian context? The comparison of this paper debate to the information emerging out of the interview process could also assist in checking the Queensland imperatives in developing an extension policy against the normative positions. The academic debate surrounding extension policies was also a forum for negotiating meaning for the term **extension policy**.

4. REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF AUSTRALIAN EXTENSION POLICY ENVIRONMENT LEADING UP TO THE 1990 QDPI EXTENSION POLICY REVIEW

There seems a strong likelihood that there will be no government (extension) services in the future. (Bardsley & Phillips, 1987)

4.1   1980-1987
4.2   1987 Australasian Agricultural Extension Conference
4.3   1987-1989
4.4   Discussion
4.5   Emerging perspectives

The previous chapter provided some evidence that Queensland **was** caught up in the broader national and international debate around the role and funding of international extension. The challenge to public sector extension, and a broader 'meaning' of extension policy was inevitably being constructed though this paper discourse.

This section explores the background discourse, its content, context, and impact on the emerging meaning. It also seeks to contrast the interview data against the written discourse developing during this period of time. In particular, because of the importance of the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference in concentrating this discourse and its evident role in initiating the Queensland review, it is analysed in some depth. Details of the analytical technique used are included in Appendix II.

What was being debated in this public arena? Who was entering the debate - what knowledge system was evident in this participation? What arguments were being used to question or to influence the role and /or future of extension? In what context was Extension Policy being used? At what level of the Hierarchy of Extension Objectives was the debate focused?

A starting point for this chapter is a review of the state of extension within Australia by the then Federal Department of Primary Industry in 1980. In this report, which is targeted towards state departments of agriculture, a number of issues viewed as impinging on the future of extension are placed firmly on the agenda. The report also fed back the stated objectives for extension in Queensland at that time (an informal extension policy?)

4.1   1980-1987

(i)   Federal report on Extension

In this review of Agricultural Extension in Australia in 1980 by the Federal Department of Primary Industry, the relationship between the federal and state governments in the area of extension was described in the following ways:

> *The provision of agricultural extension (or advisory) services for the rural sector is an accepted state responsibility with minor support form the Australian Government.*

> *Commonwealth-state consultation in defined areas of agricultural policy, including extension services, takes place at meetings of the Australian Agricultural Council, comprising ministers responsible for agriculture in all states with the Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industry as Chairman.*

> *Finance for the state's extension and research services is derived mainly from States' consolidated revenue, supplemented by funds from the Commonwealth including the Commonwealth Extension Services Grant (halved in 1979-80 from previous years) and from rural industries.*
> (Department of Primary Industry, 1980)

The report referred to the...*dynamic situation in Australian Agriculture, the economy generally and the political scene* as having an impact on state extension services. In terms of significant impacts, the report highlighted:

> *Significant development in recent years has been the establishment of a Commonwealth[1] Council for Rural Research and Extension. The body was formed to advise the Minister for Primary Industry on rural research and extension activity within Australia including priorities for and on the co-ordination of research;*

and

> *The general trend in a tightening economy is for government services, especially free services, to receive critical examination. Thus it is not surprising that the freely given agricultural extension services in some States of Australia, have been under a degree of scrutiny arising from demands for greater accountability.*
> (Department of Primary Industry, 1980)

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[1]   refers to the Federal level within Australia, not to the 'Commonwealth' of anglphone countries.

The report also referred to:

▶ the decrease in the total number of farming enterprises over a three year period by 4200 to 176 155 (partly due to a change in statistical procedure - excluding farms earning less than $1500) yet with an increase in total area under crops;

▶ the increasing number of hobby farmers and farmers seeking off-farm income;

▶ increased unity within agricultural industries (...*to cope with the increasing effect of union influence on the handling and marketing of farm products*);

▶ increased competition requiring further technological advances for Australian farmers to stay ahead;

▶ unstable market prices and increasing production costs on farms; and

▶ a current boom period assisting the task of extension to increase the rate of adoption of innovative methods.

With respect to Queensland's situation, the report recorded that QDPI had 270 extension staff out of a total staff complement of 2730. It described the 6 divisions based on industries and the regionalisation of the service. With respect to recent changes, the report referred to the pressure for more accountability in the public service departments which had resulted in the request that all departments adopt a Program Management approach to accounting and organising. The trend towards employing graduate staff and the move by some towards post-graduate qualifications was noted. It recorded that the stated objectives of extension in QDPI as related by the Extension Services Board were:

- *to promote and enhance agricultural and rural productivity;*
- *to educate and train farmers to enable them to adjust to changes in technology, economics and the social environment; and*
- *to encourage and assist the implementation of programs considered to be beneficial to the nation, the State, the industry or to the farmer concerned, in accordance with government policy.*
  (Department of Primary Industry, 1980)

(ii)   Changes in the early 1980's

In 1981, the federal government totally withdrew funding support for state government extension services. This assistance had commenced in 1974 with funds provided to the states to **upgrade capital items and supplement operating costs** (Australian Planning and Training Associates, 1989). This left the states with the resposibility of providing the full cost of these services in an environment of contracting budgets.

Although the link between this loss of assistance and the introduction of user-pay in Tasmania is not made in the literature, the timing appears to be more than co-incidental. Thompson, an on-going commentator of the changes in Tasmanian extension, highlighted the implication of the Tasmanian decision for the rest of Australia:

> *Agricultural extension in Australia is once again confronted with change, this time due to policy decisions concerning fees for advisory services.* (Thompson, 1986)

His paper addressed the impact of the Tasmanian Department of Agriculture's introduction of fees for Advisory services some years earlier. Tasmanian farmers were described as becoming...*one of the first groups in the world to have such fees thrust upon them.* The paper, based on the results of interviews with farmers, concluded that farmers were 'generally happy' with Department of Agriculture advisers having a joint role - classical extension and part consultant (for fee).

The island state became a pebble that caused ripples throughout the mainland.

As well, in 1982, a major report on agricultural policy in Australia, the Balderstone Report, identified the key issues for extension in Australia...*given limited resources* as:

- *what resources should be provided;*
- *who should provide them; and*
- *how should they be funded.* (in Fitzpatrick, 1987:18)

The report concluded that there *was* scope for cost recovery within state government services.

Thompson (1987) continued his advocacy of the Tasmanian direction with a paper promoting the value of charging for extension services in tandem with free advice. He concluded that...*acceptance of such a philosophy will ensure that value for the taxation dollar, retention of their advisers within the knowledge pool of the farmers and continued awareness and adoption of research findings.*

1987 saw reports of some significant moves to user-pay in countries 'close' to Australia:

▶ The Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (ADAS) in the United Kingdom introduced a user-pay policy in 1987;

▶ New Zealand's Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries re-organised its advisory services and commercialised in April 1987; and

▶ Bygott (1987:235) reported that...increased direct charging of farmers for advice was evident at a conference of Directors of Agricultural Advisory services, conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in Paris from 21-22 May 1987.

These changes came at a time when rural Australia had moved beyond the boom years of the late 1970's and was undergoing significant environmental challenges. The economic conditions were depressed and the outlook grim:

> *...(Australian Agricultural) Council noted that the financial situation for many rural (agricultural and pastoral) industries was depressed with no prospect of an improvement in many industries...average farm income expected to fall to $6700 in 1985/86. Land values had fallen in some areas, debt levels risen and high real interest rates were causing financial stress...farm costs were expected to rise by 7% ...continued deterioration in world agricultural trade...major implications of the US Farm Bill for Australian Agriculture.*
> (Australian Agricultural Council, February, 1986)

Australian Departments of Agriculture were being challenged about their effectiveness. More ripples in the sea of extension policy were being felt!

> *Extension's world has changed.* (Littmann, 1987:iv)

In Australia, the waves were felt and a major Australasian Extension Conference was held in Queensland, in October 1987, endorsed by the Standing Committee of Agriculture. It was described as a **policy conference**. The aim of the conference was given as providing two outcomes:

• *the first, that its recommendations to the Standing Committee on Agriculture will generate new policies in extension, directed to the better public good;*

• *the second, that the accumulated thinking in these 'proceedings' will provide a source of reference and ideas for students, practitioners, and administrators in the challenging years ahead.* (Littmann, 1987:iv)

Another agenda was suggested by a leader of the National Farmers Federation:

> *I could be cynical enough to say that it was the desire to introduce and progress fees which lead to this conference being held.* (Goucher, 1987:57)

What were the **policy** issues raised in this crisis conference? What edges were touched? On what was the discourse centred?

4.2   1987 AUSTRALASIAN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION CONFERENCE

This conference was conceived and promoted as a policy conference. Submissions were called for from all around Australia, and all papers received were included in the proceedings. As such, the proceedings provided a valuable insight into the policy environment out of which emerged the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review. The forces impacting on change, and the debate undertaken, provided significant insights into the

context of the Policy Review - and reviews in other states since 1987. As pointed out in the study of the initiation of the Queensland review, this conference was held in Queensland, convened by the soon to be Director-General of the QDPI, and attended by a number of senior managers in QDPI.

A detailed analysis of the content of the papers included in the proceedings of this conference is included in Appendix III. In this chapter, a summary of the analysis is provided (the figure in brackets indicates the number of papers in the category).

The major themes running through the conference papers were those of user-pay and the appropriate relationship between public extension and other providers.

(i)   User-pay and relationships between the public and private sector

In keeping with the momentous changes occurring in this area, user-pay and charges was a significant and recurring theme, touched on by most sectors involved in the conference.

Those involved in recent introductions of a user-pay policy advocated its necessity, inevitability, and advantages. Those facing the 'threat' of user-pay argued for maintaining the public role of extension services.

Departments having introduced user-pay (10)

Hercus (1987), from the New Zealand Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, provided a glowing description of the changes in extension in New Zealand. This involved restructuring into *business units*, with revenue targets based on seeking commercial opportunities. He concluded that despite the unknowns and uncertainty of change:

> ....*at this moment we are heading forth confidently, proudly, and in the knowledge we are playing a leading part in determining our own future, as well as earning our keep.* (Hercus, 1987:31)

Thomson (1987:211) provided insights and posed questions based on Tasmania's experience with user-pay: *The question of government extension services imposing fees is a very complex one. The outcome is very dependant upon whether its tackled form a social or business view.* He highlighted issues such as:

- the reliability of information suffering because of reduced access to knowledge and information;
- the distinction between charging for information and charging for facilitation and/or interpretation of information;
- the question of what was 'fair' competition with private consultants;
- the matter of legal liability of (paid for) information/advice given; and
- the need to include a lead time and full and frank communication of intention to both extension staff and clients.

United States (2)

Advocates from public sector organisations who were struggling against this tide of user-pay entered the debate. Bloome (1987) from the University of Illinois, USA, argued that the debate of commercialisation or user-pay was an indication of administrators losing the plot about the role of 'public' extension institutions - that is, being about the *public business*. He quoted a colleague as responding:

> *"No federal agency is helping the gas stations owners or electrical contractors of America make profits, and I'm afraid that if any agency demonstrates that it has no higher purpose that helping farmers and foresters make money, it will not last long. "* (Sampson, 1987 in Bloome, 1987:15)

> Bloome added...*at least...it will not last as a publicly-funded agency.* (15)

Bloome, then, used the forces towards user-pay as a lever to argue for a renegotiating of the role of extension in its public role: *Extension's job is education, not service.* (16) He further argued that fee for service activities by extension were in conflict with developing consulting services by the private sector.

Bloome's perspective was given a measure of support by Plunkett (1987), from the (Federal) Industries Assistance Commission. He argued that retaining a publicly funded extension service was based only on a strong *public good* basis. He concluded that:

> *...services with a large public good component are likely to be under-supplied if all extension services are to be charged for at the full cost of their provision and that the opportunities for funding services of a high public good component by cross subsidies from revenue raised by services with a high private good component are likely to be limited.* (Plunkett, 1987:95)

State Departments not having yet introduced user-pay (42)

An extension leader from the QDPI, entered the user-pay debate by arguing that extension activities can be viewed within a matrix based on two marketing characteristics: 'exclusion' (feasible/infeasible) and 'consumption' (individual/joint). (Van Beek,1987) He labelled the extremes of the consequent matrix as:

- Private goods (individual consumption - feasible exclusion);
- Toll Goods (joint consumption - feasible exclusion)
- Common pool goods (individual consumption - infeasible exclusion);
- Collective goods (joint consumption - infeasible exclusion).

He argued that...*publicly funded extension would remain in the areas of "Common Pool Goods and Collective Goods" and not in "Private or Toll Goods".* As stated, the nature of

the "goods" change, but the principle remains the same as it has been for 100 years, namely looking after the public's interests in primary production. (Van Beek, 1987:253)

This distinction between public and private goods was a theme that emerged in many papers from departments of agriculture. Fisher (1987:261), Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Victoria, developed tables and distinctions alongside Van Beek. He concluded that an...*emphasis has been placed on the need to establish whether there are public and/or private benefits from specific services before considering funding arrangements as this determines whether government involvement is necessary. Unless this is done, there is a risk that "a more commercial" approach will lead to low priority being given to services with public benefits, or where externalities are involved. Such an approach would reduce the contribution of agriculture in society.*

Consultants (5)

Private farm consultants were strongly represented at the conference. They used the opportunity to argue for a greater recognition of their role in extension. Consultants Finlayson, Gerrish & Naunton (1987), for example, attempted to set guidelines for a complementary relationship between the sectors: They proposed that:

- the public service extension activities should continue to be essentially broad-based to farmers in general as well as to farmer groups;
- contact with individuals should be confined to technical matters either by request from the farmer or referral by consultants;
- departments of agriculture should exclude multi-enterprise planning and financial management; and
- developing software was valid, but engaging in bureau services was the province of private consultants.

Farmer Organisations (3)

Farmer organisations were also well represented at the Conference. Recognition was given to the 'positives' of user-pay. For example Goucher (1987:54) from the National Farmers Federation declared that user-pay resulted in a...*greater responsiveness to farmer demand, greater efficiency, and balancing budgets.* However, he maintained that the introduction of fees, without commensurate reduction of other taxes, would be a tax increase to farmers. He called on governments to take the broader view of the benefits of extension and questioned whether the beneficiaries - that is the wider public - are the more appropriate sources of funds.

Allwright (1987:70) also from the National Farmers Federation and from Tasmania, praised the benefits of user-pay...*in spite of initial strong farmers opposition, it* (user-pay) *is now readily accepted. This practice has also provided a discipline to those providing this extension; it won't be utilised if it isn't worth the money.*

Universities (15)

The university sector also touched on the user-pay debate - at a distance and without the heat. Hawkins (1987:62) referred to charging for various extension services as...*now an established fact.* The implications from his perspective was the change in training needs: *No doubt we will have to develop a higher level of entrepreneurial skills in our graduates.* Lees (1987) highlighted the need for any charges or changes to be made with due cognisance of the impact in other sectors:

> *The overlap, and therefore the potential for conflict between government sponsored extension services and private consultancies functioning in the farm sector, has long been a matter for concern for policy-makers and should be addressed. It would be unfortunate if changes in present policy on the role, function, and funding of government sponsored extension services occurred without appropriate consultation between users, providers, administrators and policy makers.*
> (Lees, 1987:167)

Tafte (1987:230) raised implications of user-pay as including an inevitable change in mission of the extension organisation. He stresses that...*under user-pay principals, the goal needs to reflect the individual's advantage, not the nations.* Tafte also raised the ethical considerations of the information gained by the advisers and used elsewhere. As well, he argued that user-pay would increase the gap between the well-off and those who are financially disadvantaged.

On the other hand, Roberts (1987:392) contended that one of the benefits of user-pay for commercial production issues, would be to free up resources for government extension for conservation issues: *Landholders (should) be required to pay for advisory services aimed primarily at problem solving in the sphere of commercial production, so making government resources more available for land capability and farm planning within which commercial production is planned.*

Politicians (2)

The Queensland Minister for Primary Industries referred to the fact that...*some governments are turning to a user-pay system to help fund the provision of extension services.* (Harper, 1987:4) He went on to note that...*the cost of these services of course is significant,* and welcomed the increasing role of the private sector.

Although the Federal Minister made little direct reference to user-pay, his departmental representative, Fitzpatrick (1987:18) noted that the Australian federal system precluded...*a national policy or approach* (to extension) *and unlike New Zealand there cannot be a specific policy towards issues such as charging for Government services.* He highlighted budget constraints as a critical issue for government extension services, and noted that...*a trend is observable in all states towards charging for those government supplied services that lend themselves to pricing...It is not the information itself that is being priced but the*

cost of its delivery to individual beneficiaries. The paper also forecast a greater role for consultants in the delivery of extension services, arguing for a clearer delineation as to the services provided by the government and those by private providers. He called for the government to withdraw from...*on farm delivery of 'one on one' extension services charged for or otherwise to leave a vacuum for consultants to move in.* (26)

(ii)   Other 'policy' issues

I have dealt in detail with the issue of user-pay, and the associated relationships between the public and private sector. My study of the causal factors for the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review showed that the treatment of these topics at this conference was a significant trigger to the review. The debate about user-pay for public sector extension **was** a significant and over-riding theme of the conference. However, other role and policy issues were raised in the context of Australia's specific circumstances at the time, and advances in thinking about extension world-wide.

In this section, other issues that were raised by the different sectors present at the conference are dealt with. They also had the potential to impact on the **policy** component of public sector agricultural extension. These issues are taken and collated from the analysis as recorded in Appendix III. As such, individual papers are not noted by name.

Concerns were raised in the context of the need to change the way extension operated because of changing circumstances in the political or agricultural environment and/or changing philosophies on how to enhance the extension process. The viewpoints very much reflected the needs and perspectives of the interest groups that provided the paper.

As discussed earlier, most groups entered the user-pay and public/private debate. This was the issue of the moment! Beyond this, the analysis brought out the following major concerns:

▶   Politicians focused on the need to promote economic competitiveness, while the federal bureaucratic counterparts reflected this concern while emphasising the tighter government budgets.

▶   There was strong input from staff of state departments of agriculture. Those without user-pay promoted the increased complexity of 'sustainable' farming and the need for new and multi-disciplinary approaches and specialised extension skills. They evidenced concern about reduced public funding and the growing competition with the private sector. Land conservation branches echoed this need for new approaches to address the sustainability issue, particularly focusing on participatory models.

▶   Conservation groups argued for a long term focus, integration of production with conservation issues and the need to consider wider community goals rather than just farmers.

▶ Tasmania and New Zealand emphasised the personalised business and specialist technical needs of farmers, and the professionalism needed in extension. Tasmania also raised the issues of equity and farmer co-operation that were lacking with a user-pay approach.

▶ Input from the United States and Netherlands speakers highlighted the need to take a wider view of extension rather than a narrow technological focus, and to focus on both the wider community and the range of service providers. Both warned of the conflict between a policy and service delivery role.

▶ The universities focused on the decline in training for extension workers, and the need for new extension skills to cope with updated technology and participatory approaches.

▶ The CSIRO (a strong federal research organisation) paper called for improved ways to transfer research results to farmers.

▶ Consultants emphasised the increased capacity of the private sector and its ability to provide the high quality information servicing needs of an increasing sophisticated and competitive rural sector. They voiced concern about the unfair competitiveness of free government services which limited their contribution.

▶ Banks were concerned about the impact of rural debt and the need for better business management skills of farmers.

▶ Farmer organisations were interested in effective dissemination and adoption of technology, and wanted extension to be broadened to include marketing issues.

(iii) Recommendations arising from the conference

A working group prepared a list of recommendations emerging from the conference. Key policy areas that were identified as requiring attention (by way of exploration, discussion, and position papers) by the Standing Committee on Agriculture (and hence state departments of agriculture) were:

- (defining) cost recovery options for public extension and information services;
- (establishing) new equilibrium between public and private sector advisory services;
- (improving) integration of roles of research and extension;
- (enabling) reconciliation of conservation and long term sustainability of production with farm survival and community objectives;
- (ensuring) co-ordination of national extension programs (a current example would be pesticide residues);
- (providing) training opportunities in extension - post graduate, post diplomate and joint in-service training with agribusiness;

- (facilitating) a co-ordinated approach to establishing criteria for prioritising and funding research, extension, and education of extension officers in farm management; and
- (exploring) means of encouraging extension research. (Littman (ed), 1987)

4.3   1987-1989

The issues raised and highlighted at the 1987 conference continued to be addressed through other forums. The relatively new Research and Development Corporations attempted to come to grips with the changing extension scene as it impacted on their industries. Two reports in particular - one commissioned by the then Australian Wool Corporation, and the other by the then Meat and Livestock Council - focused on the extension environment.

(i)   Wool Commission review

In October 1989, the Australian Wool Corporation commissioned a review of extension. The changes occurring in state extension services were given as a reason for the review:

> *The dissemination of technical knowledge through public sector extension organisations has long been recognised as an important contribution to the process of technology transfer. However, the nature and mission of some extension organisations is rapidly changing. It is important for a funding body such as the Wool Research and Development Council (WRDC) and its associated research advisory committees to understand the effect of those changes and the implications for future funding allocation.* (Gooch, in Russell et al, 1989)

The review criticised the reliance of public sector extension on the 'transfer of technology' model. The authors argued that it was too simplistic and proven to be of little use, and pointed towards the emerging models of farmers and researchers as joint managers of research projects. It further described free individual consultations on farming practice as the exception rather than the rule, with government departments as *...ambiguous and indecisive in their attitude towards charging a fee for their services.* The rise of independent consultants was seen as a major contributor towards this trend, and advances in computer technology as enhancing the capacity for better decision making in farm management.

The advent of broad community based support for regional resource management projects, and...*nationwide concern for land degradation* were described as significantly changing...*the direction of government spending on what would have previously been 'extension' issues.*

(ii) Australian Meat and Livestock report

The Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation echoed the concern and confusion about extension by commissioning a report on *technology transfer*. As was concluded in the report for the Wool Commission, the authors of this report also highlighted the perceived failure of the traditional 'transfer system':

> *The Corporation has been made aware that some producers believe that much valuable technical information is not being transferred to them.*
> (Australian Planning and Training Associates, 1989:2)

The report quoted a joint statement by the then Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy and the Minister for Resources as saying:

> *The changing environment for technology transfer - including innovations in communications, the reduction in extension capacity of State Departments of Agriculture, and the increasing role of agribusiness in rural advisory services - necessitates an urgent review of technology transfer in the rural sector.* (5)

The matching increase of registered consultants to the decrease of government extension officers was highlighted by the authors. A concern about the lack of motivation of government advisory officers was expressed. Low morale was linked to issues of status and salaries as well as the...*lack of opportunity to progress professionally through undertaking post-graduate extension training.* (10)

The report drew on the contents of the Australasian Agricultural Extension Conference as well as from other forums (for example, the International Symposium of the Royal Agricultural Society of England on Communication in Agriculture in 1987 and The International Conference on Communication in Agriculture held at Armidale in 1989) to highlight the change in thinking as to appropriate extension approaches:

> *The human factor - deciding to adopt, adapt, or discard new technology - has been highlighted as being at least as important as the act of innovation itself.* (14)

In looking at the barriers to effective information flow, the report concluded that ...*consideration has to be given to matching information supply and demand.* (14)

(iii) QDPI Centenary Extension Symposium

A significant symposium was held within QDPI to mark the centenary of the organisation. It focused on the extension function within the organisation.

A key note address at the symposium was given by a then field extension officer, who was later to play a key role in the 1990 Extension Policy Review. The address was entitled 'Where Extension Might go in the Future'. Woods (1987) described extension as

...influencing (including initiating and/or promoting) the process of change in agriculture to improve the welfare of agricultural communities (individually and in groups) and society as a whole.

Woods emphasised the distinguishing feature of public sector agencies in producing benefits for the wider community. She described the changes facing agriculture - and hence the issues with which extension must grapple. These were:

- worsening terms of trade;
- reduced direct assistance form government to agriculture;
- continuing technical developments leading to increased efficiency of production;
- continued efforts to improve farm management;
- increased involvement in post-farm gate aspects of their products - quality control and value adding;
- the changing image of agriculture and the need to attract resources to develop opportunities rather than handouts; and
- decreased importance of agriculture as measured by % of GDP (10% in 1967 down to 4% in 1986) and % of export earnings (70% in 1967 down to 37% in 1986) and numbers of people involved in agriculture.

Her formula for improving the responsiveness of extension included the following elements:

1. Maintain a level of advisory and information gathering roles as a basis for preparing regional situation statements for action;
2. Increase farmer involvement in extension activities: *This may sound ridiculous, but we continue to direct extension programs at farmers rather than working with them;*
3. Address priorities - rather than a *"no-one can feel neglected now"* approach; and
4. Involve farmers in planning extension programs and in determining priorities - to convince them of the value of addressing priorities rather than being always available for one-to-one advisory.

She saw operational changes for QDPI extension as moving towards increased project based extension, stronger regional management, a reduction of 'ad hoc' advisory work, as well as the streamlining of all routine activities.

Woods also highlighted the emerging role of agribusiness and consultants, and the conflict between the advantage of sharing the information delivery load and the use by consultants to profit on information gained freely from government. Extension's role in the wider community was seen to potentially encompass safety issues, land use changes, conservation issues, 'agricultural' pollution, and general regional development.

Input at the Symposium was also provided from an international perspective. Röling and Jiggins (1987) had been invited to undertake a review of middle level management within

the QDPI. In their key note address at the symposium entitled 'Developments in European Agricultural Extension Practices and the Implications for Australia - Present and Future', they challenged the strongly held view within the department, of technology lead development. They highlighted the 'unintended' consequences of technology propelled development - with the inevitable loss of farmers without the resources or opportunity to be first in taking up the proffered technology. They offered the Agricultural Knowledge System perspective as a tool to broaden the thinking of QDPI and the synergy with other players in the Queensland agricultural sector. They also:

- contrasted innovation technology with human resource development;
- advocated the need to recognise the role of women in agriculture;
- distinguished the difference between extension and advisory functions;
- pointed to the emergence of information technology; and
- highlighted the implications of commercialisation and privatisation.

As with the Australasian Extension Conference, many senior managers and 'extension influentials' were at the Symposium. The challenge to the traditional public sector extension role was again brought firmly onto the organisational agenda!

4.4   DISCUSSION

(i)   Arguments for change

There appears little doubt that prior to the 1990 Extension Policy Review, the extension community in Australia was in turmoil! Agricultural extension in Queensland had been an accepted government institutionalised service for close on a hundred years. It now shared in the challenge and pressure for change. Maintaining the 'status quo' was not an option in this verbal and written debate. Rather, the options appeared to be those of change or disappearance. Table 4.1 draws from **this** discourse to list those arguments pushing for the disappearance of public sector extension, and those pushing for a change in the operation of public sector extension.

The forces driving change appeared on paper to be irresistible! Despite those arguments that seemed to herald the inevitable disappearance of public sector extension, there were stronger voices demanding continuation of public extension - albeit in a radically different form from the traditional free technical advisory service.

In this paper debate, it was those with points to make (agendas) who did so. Academic, political, strategic, reactionary driven papers were written by those who were trying to influence others - the movers and shakers within the organisations they represented. Extension officers fully immersed in their advisory function and clients making most use of this service did not participate in this level of debate - it was not their forum. None the less, it is the discourse at this level that will - and did - inevitably impact on this interface.

Table 4.1   Arguments for change in public sector extension emerging out of the paper debate in Australia in the 1980s

Change in operation	Disappearance
- increasing demand from hobby farmers - increasing international competition - increasing farm costs - unstable market prices - increased complexity of farming - farm restructuring - counselling needed - new skills needed by farmers - farmer demand for specialist advice - implementation of new rural policies - New Zealand, Tasmania, UK introduction of user-pay - pressure on government budgets - increased government accountability - business approaches needed - program planning imperatives - wider public-private benefit and user-pay debate - new extension paradigms - including participative approaches - employment of graduates and impact of post-graduate studies - advances in information technology - emphasis on sustainability - concerns about environmental pollution from agriculture - increase in philosophy of client participation in planning and priority setting - new content of extension training - R&D Corporations requiring results of research to be disseminated.	- decreasing number of farmers - decreasing importance of farming in the national economy - increasing industry unity - emergence of R&D Corporations - extension seen as one-to-one private benefit - increased government accountability - pressure on government budgets - emergence of a strong private sector - competition from other sectors

This plethora of pressures challenging extension demanded a response. The question is - why a formal government **policy** response? - why not the evolution of operational change as suggested by Woods (1987)?

(ii)   Contrasts with interview data on the initiation of the Queensland review

My research into the triggers for the Extension Policy Review through the eyes of those close to the review, highlighted many of issues that emerged through this wider paper debate. These included: the evolutionary changes occurring within extension; exposure to alternative development/extension paradigms; increasing pressures on farmers; stricter accountability requirements; and the increasing community concerns about the environment and sustainability.

What **was** different was the over-riding emphasis in the interview data in relation to the triggers for the Queensland review with respect to:

▶ the changing political environment - broader government policies (outside of agriculture) - a federal Labour Government and the possibility of a Queensland Labour Government;

▶ increased budgetary pressure on state government departments;

▶ competition for resources between government departments and within QDPI (for example, between the functions of extension and research - and between industry extension and resource management); and

▶ the fear of 'falling dominos' (user-pay becoming the norm for extension and hence the inevitable 'loss' of the technology transfer function).

These were concerned with physical constraints on **resources** for extension, and political decisions which could dramatically change the ability of extension to function in a preferred operational manner (for example, user-pay imperatives limiting the transfer of technology function).

Within the organisation, there had also been a struggle between paradigms, and between maintaining the status quo and implementing operational changes (for example, the desire to maintain independence of field extension and one-to-one advisory roles). Such operational changes could have been made by senior managers within the organisation (as demonstrated by the experiment at Kingaroy - to limit extension staff's availability to clients), however, differences of opinions between senior managers, the resistance of some extension staff, and the political nature of apparent withdrawal of services to clients made rapid 'evolutionary' change extremely difficult. More powerful tools would appear to have been needed to bring about such desired change!

The contrast between the paper debate and the triggers for the actual QDPI Extension Policy Review then reinforces the theory in the previous chapter as to **the role of formal policy in the capturing of essential resources for extension to function, and shoring up political support and hence power to enforce preferred operation of the extension function.**

(iii)   The wider Knowledge System

The 1987 Australasian Extension Conference provided an opportunity for elements of the Knowledge System concerned with issue of extension policy to self-select.   The proceedings only captured those who had strongly held views and the desire and ability to argue them in a public forum.   None the less, it provided a starting point in which to begin to understand the elements of this wider Knowledge System.   It was a record of those who spoke up, and, provided clues into their motives for speaking up.

A move was made away from the limited departmental-farmer centred view that emerged from the interviews about the initiation of the Extension Policy Review.   The Knowledge System now included universities, banks, consultants, overseas experts, environmental groups, Federal and State Ministers of Agriculture and non-agricultural government departments.   All appeared to have a stake in the area of extension policy, and were prepared to argue their case.   All participated in constructing a meaning around the theme of the conference - extension policy.

(iv)   Extension paradigms

The issue of resources and funding was interwoven with the view of role and outcome of extension.   As Bloome (1987:15) quoted...*if any agency demonstrates that it has no higher purpose than helping farmers and foresters make money, it will not last long.*   The delineation between the public benefit of extension and its role in market failure situations were attempts to demonstrate this higher purpose.

Much of the discourse, however, centred around this issue of extension as helping farmers in the first instance.   Those departments that introduced user-pay focused on the benefits (and concerns) to the client.   Farming organisations also viewed the issue of user-pay in this light.   The discourse from the private sector was concerned with this competition in the provision of services to farmer clients.   Politicians and federal departments appeared concerned with macro-economic management and international competitiveness.   State government departments that had not yet introduced user-pay, stressed issues such as the increased complexity of farming, and the need for better extension processes - including participatory processes, use of information technology, a focus on business management, and the long term sustainability issues.   Research and Development Corporations were concerned with an apparent move away from the traditional technology transfer approach within state departments towards the direction of environmental issues, and looked to the consultant sector to provide more of this role.

Non-agricultural departments and conservation groups were concerned with the issues of land conservation and the integration with production orientated extension.   Banks were raised rural adjustment issues and extension's role in helping farmers with high debts.   The federal research organisation (CSIRO) urged for improvement in the transfer of research results to farmers.

Calls for alternative views of the role of public sector extension came chiefly from the input from the United States and the Netherlands.   They questioned the role of public sector extension in this role of technology push and assistance to farmers, suggesting

alternative roles such as a focus on sustainability, development of other extension providers, and considering the wider community as the primary client of extension.

(v)   Extension hierarchies

Two of the major issues addressed in this **policy** debate were user-pay and the related issue of the relationship between the public and private sector. Where do these fit into the hierarchy objectives?

The issue of user-pay appeared to fit into the category of **conditions for effect** based on the following arguments:

▶   Money is needed to allow the extension function to operate and hence the spin-off for wider public good or to fund specific 'public good' extension;

▶   If an **intervention objective** is to assist innovative, resource efficient producers to continue to make rapid advances, user-pay advisory services may be essential to justify, fund, and give credibility to specialist 'consultant' staff in the government department;

▶   To permit a strong private sector to develop, government extension services need to operate on a user-pay basis to develop the service and information market to support an effective private sector; and

▶   If it is a government imperative that some or all extension services operate under a user-pay scheme, then a user-pay policy is essential to be able to politically permit the continuation of the extension function.

Alternatively, user-pay could be considered a constraint - a pre-condition limiting effectiveness!

▶   If extension was only able to continue under a user-pay policy, and a free extension was no longer acceptable to politicians or the wider community, then user-pay may be a pre-condition for public sector extension.

▶   If extension was intended to achieve technology transfer, sustainability, or human development agendas, agents and agencies would need to work around this constraint of user-pay, or somehow use it to advantage in achieving its underlying agenda.

User-pay would however be an **intervention objective** if the primary aim of its use was to bring in money for the organisation/government. This did not emerge as a reason for user-pay in this analysis.

The relationship with the private sector could fall into either of two categories:

Intervention Objective: In order to achieve the wider societal goals (**ultimate objective**), a strong, skilled, and co-ordinated private sector extension capacity may be deemed to be necessary and an achievable **intervention objective**.

Condition for Effect: In order for the extension function to be able to achieve the defined **intervention objectives**, assistance from the complementary private sector may be essential.

The other issues that were raised in the paper debate can be included under the following categories:

Ultimate Objectives: The rationale for maintaining a public sector extension capacity was chiefly grounded in issues such as the need for efficient production of food and fibre, international competitiveness, and to some extent in the need for sustainability. It was extension's persuasive capacity that appeared to be the basis for arguing for its need and role in achieving these societal outcomes. There were fewer calls for alternative outcomes such as improved human welfare and better recreation facilities.

Intervention Objectives: In the context of the above **ultimate objectives** as the justification for extension services, extension was argued to be capable of, and needing to be directed towards improving farm efficiency and farm business management through technology transfer. In this context, as well as the broader view of community and human welfare, extension was seen as being able to assist farmers to be more skilled in finding their own solutions to problems, and to educate the private sector in better carrying out a consultancy role.

Conditions for Effect: The perceived objectives of extension had largely not radically changed in this discourse from previous decades (except perhaps in production efficiency rather than volume). Much of the argument appeared to centre around the changing skills and relationships needed to achieve these objectives, in the context of increased complexity of farming and markets, environmental concerns, budgetary pressures, and a stronger consultancy sector. These **conditions of effect** included increased skills for extension officers (consulting, farm management and/or facilitation, participation skills for example), increased use of information technology, increased co-ordination between programs and agencies, increased participation by farmers in extension planning, and improved flexibility and responsiveness.

Activities:	Only limited attention was given to actual activities, methods, or techniques which could be used by extension officers. Some reference was made to specifics of information technology options, the use of groups in allowing participation and learning, adult educational approaches, and the need for personalised high-level services in the case of user pay imperatives.
Means:	This level of detail with regards to cars, budgets, staff, and equipment was not part of this level of paper debate.

The **ultimate objectives** were used in the context of the **total** institution - the Departments of Agriculture with their many instruments and functions. Extension was viewed as an important means of achieving these objectives. The **activities** area was only lightly touched on and then only in general terms. The **means** were not addressed. It was the **intervention objectives** and **conditions for effect** that featured most in the paper debate.

(vi) Discourse and power

The act of convening a conference not only gathered existing 'discourse', but also created discourse. Presenters drew on other papers, presentations, or reports and concentrated on the issues relating to extension. Conference papers often provided room for opinions to be expressed in the absence of hard supporting data. The act of presenting ideas and trends in this way provided an impetus for the discourse to take on a reality and life of its own.

Subsequent papers, reports or meetings drew on this previous discourse to perpetuate and develop the themes that were emerging. Statements such as...*there seems a strong likelihood that there will be no government services in the future* (Bardsley & Philips, 1987:152) became rallying points and the focus for future action. Such forums became opportunities for consultants to argue for a better slice of the client cake, for educational institutions to promote the courses they were running, and for government departments to reinforce the direction they were travelling.

Why then was an Australasian Extension Conference held? The stated aim was to ...*generate new policies in extension, directed to the better public good.* (Littmann, 1987:iv) Rather than based on a...*desire to introduce and progress fees* (Goucher, 1987:57) as suggested by the farmer organisation representative, or to fulfil the prophecy of...*no future government services*, it would seem as though it was a move to capture the agenda and reinforce the need for a vital public sector extension service.

Individuals within QDPI, who convened the conference, were aware by this stage of the threats to extension. They were also aware of emerging new paradigms and the arguments about the need for public sector extension. Speakers, such as Bloome and Röling, had powerful overseas experience and perspectives to draw on in the debate in which the user-pay and commercialisation tide appeared to be winning - as evidenced by *actual* changes occurring in other states/countries. Technology transfer, and the need to have research adopted, had a high priority and would have appeared at risk had all states followed Tasmania's example.

Paper discourse then, would seem to be a powerful tool, open to manipulation and to the exertion of power. It created a world removed from the day-to-day experience of the extension officer. To illustrate this, I draw from a recent training course (1994) for field extension officers in which I was involved. I made the point that the 'Transfer of Technology' model of extension was under question. The blank faces of more than one extension officer accompanied the question: *What does transfer of technology mean?*

Meanwhile, the paper debate with the potential to impinge on their way of working continued.

4.5   EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

Having entered into this appreciated world of extension policy by exploring the initiation of the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review and the surrounding paper debate, what perspectives are emerging?

Firstly, the debate surrounding extension policy appeared to be centred around the resources for extension rather than about outcomes or paradigms. New perspectives were being introduced concerning human development and sustainability, as well as questioning technology development, but the **heat** in the debate centred around the threat to, or competition for, resources for extension - hence the ability for extension to 'achieve' desired outcomes. Tied in strongly with this issue was that of who the beneficiaries of extension were. This issue affected the resourcing of extension. For extension to continue to capture a share of public funding, important **public** benefits had to be demonstrated - or at least argued.

Secondly, the provision of a public forum - an extension conference - provided an opportunity for a broad range of interests to provide input into extension operation and 'policy'. Representatives of many different groupings 'spoke-up', attempting to influence others in favour of their perspectives, needs or wants. The point was that it was not just the public sector agency that had a felt stake in policy affecting their operation. Other individuals and groups wanted to be involved in the negotiation. This type of formalised discourse, however, worked against the input of the extension officers and their immediate clients. Armchair critics and supporters of their mode of interaction carried the debate!

Such a forum also provided an opportunity to develop a body of discourse to favour a certain direction - for example, a continuing role for public extension beyond the user-pay tide. Discourse could be managed to some extent!

In the next chapter, the process of carrying out the QDPI Extension Policy Review is explored. What process was used? What fresh perspectives about extension policy emerged?

5. THE PROCESS OF THE 1990 QDPI EXTENSION POLICY REVIEW

...there was no likelihood of more money being available for extension - and there would probably be less. (guideline given to the Extension Policy Review Working Party)

5.1   Review team make-up
5.2   Process
5.3   Inputs
5.4   Audit
5.5   Summary
5.6   Discussion
5.7   Emerging perspectives

The need to act in the area of extension policy had been felt within the organisation. The first formal steps were those of actually carrying out the Extension Policy Review. There were few precedents and so the process had to be developed and modified as it progressed. What process was used? How was it modified? How was power exerted during that process? What can be learnt about an appropriate extension policy framework from this experience?

As with the initiation, I sought to view and record this process through the eyes of those who actually designed and carried it out - or who were close to it (see Appendix II). I also sought insights through available documentation in terms of memoranda or press releases related to the process.

This section describes the process used to carry out the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review. It could well be argued that the outcome of a review must be seen in the context of the process used to arrive at that outcome.

5.1   REVIEW TEAM MAKE-UP

Initially, the review was intended to consist of two full-time and two external part-time reviewers, including a primary producer. *Practical difficulties* resulted in the modification of the team to two internal and one external full-time reviewer.

An external reviewer was called for *competitively*. The external reviewer chosen was an ex-public servant, and was working in the private sector (consultancy) at the time of the review. A suggested advantage of this person was in having past experience on the staff of the Federal Labour Party. As there was the possibility of a Labour Government taking power in Queensland this reviewer would be...*sensitive to Labour party thinking*. Another suggested advantage was in never having been in the Queensland (QDPI) system and so had no 'axe to grind'. Having at least one 'outsider' on the team appeared to be important for reasons of *impartiality and accountability*.

In October 1989, expressions of interest were called for from within the department, to carry out the roles of reviewers. Interviews were held in December, and successful staff advised in January 1990. Some initial effort went into ensuring the working compatibility of the Working Party.

One of the successful internal reviewers had post-graduate qualifications in extension, and the other had recognised management expertise. Both had been practising extension officers.

5.2   PROCESS

The original intention was for the review to take three months (6 weeks for consultations, 2 weeks for draft writing, 2 weeks for audits, and 2 weeks for 'tidying up'), with the next phase - the development of a conceptual strategy - following straight on and also taking three months. The review proceeded in February 1990.

An interesting aspect was the inclusion, by senior management, of a staff member from New Zealand's recently commercialised agriculture department, in initial discussions with the Working Party. I was unable to ascertain the reason for this. Perhaps the rationale was to steer the Working Party in the direction that New Zealand had taken, or alternatively, to ensure a different outcome? One view expressed was that the only purpose was to ...*acknowledge that reviews should not be done in isolation of what was happening elsewhere.*

The Terms of Reference were determined by the Working Party after initial guidance and were than ratified by senior management. They were to:

- document existing policies, practices and resources relevant to extension activities;

- identify relevant, current and likely changes in strategic factors influencing the effectiveness and efficiency of extension activities;

- identify relevant existing and potentially desirable linkages between the department and other public and private sector agencies involved, either directly or indirectly, in enhancing the sustained economic growth of the primary industries;

- identify client groups, including but not restricted to primary producers, and survey their needs and aspirations; and

- produce a policy framework that would enable development of differing strategic designs that cater for the challenges which must be addressed.

Apart from the link with New Zealand at the start of the review, and feedback from senior managers on the proposed Terms of Reference, the only guidelines given to the Working Party included:

- to explore the educational model as per the United States Co-operative Extension Service with its emphasis on adult education and strong link with the Universities;

- not to get caught up in the *nuts and bolts* and operational mechanisms, and to focus on what *should be* - not *what is* or *has been* - a 5 year time frame;

- to refrain from suggesting changes in the structure of the department (for example, an Extension Branch); and

- to understand that...*there was no likelihood of more money being available for extension - and there would probably be less*!

The structure of the document to be produced was proposed by the Working Party, and approved in principle by senior management. The Working Party was specifically excluded from direct liaison with the Minister (of Primary Industries) or the political/policy area.

Advertisements were placed in various media outlets (*far and wide*) calling for submissions from interested parties into the review process, and a data base for clients was set up. Approximately 70 submissions were received, read, and the main points extracted and summarised. The public advertisements inviting submissions read as follows:

The QDPI has a key role in development of technology and knowledge transfer to primary industries in Queensland and overseas. Changes in communications technology, farm management, agribusiness services, client spectrum and demand and government policy require the department to examine the relevance and effectiveness and strategy of its extension service.

The department has established an Extension Review Committee and invites industry organisations and individuals to make written submissions to the committee on matters relevant to the development of an appropriate extension policy framework industry (including) but not restricted to:

- *changes in strategic factors influencing the effectiveness and efficiency of extension activities;*
- *existing policies, practices and resources relevant to extension activities;*
- *linkages between the department and other public and private sector agencies involved, either directly or indirectly, in enhancing the sustained growth of primary industries; and*
- *the needs and aspirations of target groups, including but not restricted to primary producers.*

As well, letters were sent directly to 'key' organisations/persons to prompt input. These carried the same basic text as the media advertisements.

5.3   INPUTS

The Working Party specifically commissioned:

(i)   A Culture/Value Survey of extension staff

This survey used a mail-out questionnaire to extension staff and was analysed using the Hall-Tonna Inventory of Values and the Organisational Inventory of Human Synergistics Incorporated. (McKeown, 1990) The analysis showed extension staff as having a values focus on **actualisation** - or a 'search for meaning and values' - indicating that QDPI extension was in a state of transition. The predominant organisational culture emerged as **avoidance** and **opposition**. The organisational structure was seen as reinforcing this culture.

(ii)   An Employment Survey of extension staff

This survey used staff records (restricted to the Agricultural Program Area), and compared characteristics of extension staff with those of research staff. The analysis showed that compared to research staff, extension staff: were less likely to have been promoted; more likely to have been transferred; more likely to have resigned; and had less formal qualifications.

These two surveys were considered by some as one...*of the best things to come out of the process*, because they provided...*evidence on which to argue positions*.

An analysis of the New Zealand experience with commercialisation was also commissioned. This was considered to have glossed over the inadequacies and problems of the New Zealand policy. If anything, this appeared to 'harden' the Working Party against the direction adopted by New Zealand.

A market survey on the current extension service was suggested but there were insufficient resources to carry it out, so the survey was abandoned.

When the initial list of 'who to talk with' was drawn up, it was seen as too extensive to manage in the time available. Consequently, some culling was necessary. Major client groups identified and contacted included:

- ► Consultants;
- ► Producers (selected across industries);
- ► Media (rural press club, rural radio, rural newspapers);
- ► Finance (banking, accountants);
- ► Business (agrochemical, millers, seed and grain merchants, butchers, meatworks, sugar mills);
- ► Rural politicians (Mayors, Members of Parliament);
- ► Stock and station agents;
- ► Education (TAFE, Rural Colleges, Universities, Post harvest);
- ► Agricultural and Pastoral industry groups (horticulture, beef, sheep/wool/lambs, pigs, chicken meat, fish, eggs, field crops, ornamentals);
- ► Co-operatives;
- ► Farmer groups (organic farmers)
- ► Water Resources Commission and the Queensland Forestry Service;
- ► Landcare;
- ► Conservation groups (Rainforest Preservation Society);
- ► CSIRO; and
- ► QDPI management, extension, and general staff.

Public meetings were also held in some towns. However...*the people who attended these were part of the (above) groups - in a large interview session.*

Nine major geographical centres across the state were identified. All of the Working Party travelled to most areas, but then individually held discussions with representatives from the major groups. The time constraint, and reliance on administration staff (rather than extension staff) to organise meetings meant that the consultations were sometimes ...*hit and miss.* Although some environmental groups were included in the process...*the emphasis was on canvassing traditional clients in the agricultural (and pastoral) industries.*

Within QDPI, Divisions were asked to nominate their contact for the review process. These contacts ranged from senior managers who covered a wide group to more direct individual branch directors. An explanatory letter was sent to staff from the Director-General. Senior managers (Branch Directors and higher) were offered an opportunity to make a written submission or to be interviewed. Most opted for an interview.

Workshops with staff were held at chosen centres and followed a predetermined format based around nine questions/issues: These questions were:

1. What do you think is the purpose of extension?
2. Who should be responsible for extension policy ? (Not who does extension or who pays for it ?) Why?
3. What are the key factors influencing extension policy for the 1990's?
4. What needs should be catered for? (Not restricted to QDPI delivery)
5. What should be the role of QDPI, other government agencies and the private sector?
6. Is a public sector role in extension justified?
7. How should extension adjust to meet modern needs?
8. How do we improve effectiveness and efficiency?

9.   What are the most important things we need to do to make sure that the review leads to some improvement in QDPI work?

All staff were invited, and sometimes a facilitator was used. A general introduction was followed by an open discussion, with staff invited to raise the main issues as they saw them. Sometimes an effort was made to rank them, but...*the same issues came up at most meetings.   These were generally related to Human Resource Management issues, in particular:*

  •   *reward opportunities and pay levels;*
  •   *career opportunities for diplomates (three year diploma) versus graduates; and*
  •   *fear about the introduction of user-pay.*

Finally, the nine questions were posed, with participants breaking up into groups to discuss the issues of their choice. Groups reported back summarising their responses to the posed issues. There was some surprise expressed at how...*(constructively) critical the staff were prepared to be of the organisation during the process - and the freedom the QDPI allowed in this regard.*

In the Toowoomba workshop (8/6/90) for example, the concept of market failure was raised early to staff.   The concepts of...*equitable provision of services* and fee for service versus cost recovery were also introduced. The point was made that...*it was hard to stop 'push' from Treasury for fee-for-service once it starts.* The issue of career structure for extension officers was also raised by the Working Party, as was the need for extension staff to have more skills (for example...*people skills* and *putting advice in an economic perspective*).

The Working Party kept their own notes on these (and other) meetings, passing on copies to the other members. There was no formal collation of the results and outcomes of such meetings.

5.4   AUDIT

The draft report was 'audited' by three groups prior to final completion. These consisted of:

  (i)   Outsiders - industry people, other non-QDPI personnel;
  (ii)   Insiders - departmental people with a high profile in the extension area; and
  (iii)   Senior departmental managers.

Most disagreements within the Working Party over aspects of the report were...*sorted out at the audit stage.*   The positive response from the audit teams (to the

outcome/recommendations of the draft report) - particularly from the 'outsiders' made an impact on senior management: *It looks as though we will have to take the recommendations seriously.*

During the process of drafting the final copy of the report, a degree of editing of the content by senior management occurred. This therefore had an influence on the content of the report. For example, the references to a Human Development Model/function[1] of extension were culled.

The view was expressed that, in an attempt to ensure ownership within the client (and staff) community, the review team was weighed down with *excessive consultation*, with only marginal gain. Subsequently, this impacted on the time and resources available to analyse and edit the final document. The value of the ownership was recognised, but it was contended that the 'delayed birth' of the review and recommendations dissipated the value, and the 'false expectations' resulted in a negative rather than a positive ownership effect.

The Working Party had intended to follow up the review by returning to the major groups who gave input into the process, with explanations of the outcomes and recommendations. Copies of the review were sent to such groups for comment (although the implication to staff was that they were not to respond at that point), and a report was given to some extension staff at a major internal Extension Conference. The wider reporting, however, was not supported by senior management and hence did not occur.

5.5   SUMMARY

The review was initiated by the organisation. To maintain the perceived integrity of the review, and to provide a broader perspective, outside participation was included.

Initial broad guidance was given to the team, including:

- ▶ the issue of future resourcing for extension;
- ▶ the direction to explore the USA education model;
- ▶ the avoidance of structural issues;
- ▶ a future perspective;
- ▶ not to have direct liaison with the 'government'; and
- ▶ exposure to the New Zealand model.

The Terms of Reference were developed by the Working Party and approved by senior management. They focused on...*developing a policy framework (not restricted to primary producers) that would enable the development of differing strategic designs that cater for*

---

[1]   The Human Development Model in this context refers to the notion of directing extension efforts towards building leadership and self-learning skills in people. Individuals and communities then develop the capacity to draw down and use resources and drive their own development.

the challenges which must be addressed. They included the call to identify necessary linkages, and the *needs and aspirations* of client groups.

Consultation was sought on a number of fronts:

1. advertisements were placed for interested parties to 'self-select';
2. specific persons or groups were directly invited to make submissions;
3. a comprehensive list of important groups and organisations was drawn up from internal mailing lists and data bases, and an intensive series of meetings were organised across the state to canvass their views; and
4. special effort was made to consult with all sections of the organisation itself.

Members of the Working Party took their own notes, circulated these to the other members, and made conclusions based on consensus between them.

Testing of the conclusions were incorporated by holding audit workshops with different client and organisational representatives.

Some negotiation occurred with senior management prior to the final version being published.

The completed review was circulated to those groups who had provided input and reaction was sought (except specifically from staff).

The intended direct follow-up with client groups did not occur.

5.6   DISCUSSION

(i)   Process and influence

Based on my tentative conclusions from the initiation phase, a major reason for the initiation was a reaction to a perceived threat to the resourcing of the organisation.

The process of developing policy as proposed by Birgegård (1991) highlighted the issue of...*influence of external bodies* (donors) and...*the resultant lack of commitment of those left to carry out resultant changes in policy.*

In the case of this review, the Queensland Government could be viewed as the 'donor'. It was, however, the organisation rather than the 'donor' who commissioned the policy review. The senior management then, had the challenge to obtain commitment to the result both within the wider organisation, as well as the donor - the government.

The process used in the QDPI Extension Policy Review can be tested against the four basic characteristics of Birgegård's (1991) approach. This comparison is detailed below:

> *(1)*   *Active participation and leadership role to local staff;*
>
> > The organisation's positions on the review team were advertised and experienced extension staff/middle managers were selected. Participation outside of this Working Party, however, was limited to: giving submissions; participating in one-off workshops; and the participation of representatives in the final audit.
>
> *(2)*   *A wide participation in the analysis;*
>
> > Although there was wide participation in the data input stage, there was limited participation in the analysis. The final audits were intended to provide a measure of input at this level.
>
> *(3)*   *External input primarily in a facilitating role;*
>
> > The Working Party provided the facilitating and analytical input. The fact that two of the team were organisational staff meant that the team could be considered 'internal'. The inclusion of an external consultant provided an opportunity to ensure a perpsective beyond QDPI's experience and interests.
>
> *(4)*   *De-linking the analytical role from the money.*
>
> > The review was linked to money in that the team was made aware that funds were shrinking for extension. However, it was the organisation that commissioned the review, with the brief of...*not worrying about the nuts and bolts*, but to come up with a strategic framework to get the job done. As already pointed out, however, there was no commitment from either the senior management or the government ('donor') to abide by the recommendations of the review. For this reason, also, there appeared to be pressure on the team to...*get it right!*

The Terms of Reference had a strong direction on the process. The emphasis was to... *document, identify,* and *produce* (rather than, for example...*facilitate the clients desired outcome for extension policy*). They focused on strategic considerations and a changing environment, with client needs and aspirations being *surveyed* rather than met. Whose policy? - clearly the organisation's. The analysis itself was firmly in the hands of the chosen Working Party.

In Chapter 3, I referred to the risks involved in instigating a review of extension from the organisational perspective. These risks were that the result of the review may be adverse to some interests within the organisaiton, or, despite a positive result, it may not be recognised by the 'owner' (and doner) - the government - and hence lose its pre-emptive value.

This study of the process used to set-up and carry out the review suggests that this risk was minimised by:

- the organisation itself commissioning the review and having the scope to set the direction and Terms of Reference (or at least approve them);

- having two known departmental personnel (with background and 'empathy' with extension and with a management perspective, as well) on the review team. The advantage of including an external consultant was that impartiality could be demonstrated (should the organisation wish to use the outcome of the review!) Would the outcome have been different if the original plan to include a producer had gone ahead? ;

- including someone on the review team sensitive to Labour Party policies (to ensure that the outcome was consistent with political direction?);

- having control over the final document. Senior management could have intervened by excluding or modifying certain sections/components prior to publishing. The organisation was under no obligation to accept the recommendations arising from the review; and

- having the ability to halt the process - for example, preventing planned follow-up meetings to client groups to explain the recommendations.

The senior management of the organisation firmly held ownership over the review. The inclusion of the audit, with its positive support, however, threatened this control. The wide consultation with the associated publicity also built up expectations in client groups that changes would occur.

The process highlights the issues of:

- to what extent should such reviews be totally independent, or permit involvement of organisational staff to include their perspective and ownership;

- the ownership of reviews - who holds control over the initiation, process, and implementation of outcomes; and how is the distinction made between 'our review' and 'their review of us'?;

- unrestricted scope in a review versus imposed restrictions - how up-front are possible limitations (philosophical or practical/resource limitations) during the consultation and review process;

- who does the analysis? - the Working Party itself, or a wider reference group facilitated by the Working Party. Should those who 'own the review' negotiate the final 'public' outcome?; and

- whose policy - the organisation, farmers, wider community, or treasury?

(ii)   Knowledge System

The Knowledge System constructed by the Working Party had gone far beyond those who spoke up at the conference. Groups such as the media, rural politicians, rural educational institutions, organic farmers were now overtly included (see section 5.3). Input from these groups were directly sought through both written submissions and group interviews.

Public advertisements for submissions, and public meetings in smaller towns also provided opportunity for other individuals and groups who felt they had a stake in the outcome, to come forward. The advertisement indicated an interest in the extension service broadening its client base. It explained that the focus was...*the needs and aspirations of target groups including, but not restricted to, primary producers.*

(iii)   Objective hierarchies

The Terms of Reference identified the **ultimate objective** of...*enhancing the sustained economic growth of the primary industries* - as the societal aim to which extension was about. The remainder of the Terms of Reference related to the **intervention objective** and **conditions for effect**. The paradigm of extension being primarily an instrument of technology transfer was explicit in the call for submissions:

> *The QDPI has a key role in development of technology and knowledge transfer to primary industries in Queensland and overseas. Changes in communications technology, farm management, agribusiness services, client spectrum and demand and government policy require the department to examine the relevance and effectiveness and strategy of its extension service.*

The call appeared to be about improving the **conditions for effect** to improve extension's capacity to achieve better technology transfer - directed primarily towards primary producers, although open to other target groups to come forward.

The intent to stay at the 'higher objectives' was reinforced with the direction not to be concerned about the 'nuts and bolts' or organisational structure.

(iv)   Power and the control of discourse

The act of providing the Terms of Reference as the basis for input provided the initiating body with a significant power advantage. The debate became focused and limited as a result of this given framework. How might the outcome have differed had the government set the Terms of Reference (and to a totally external review team) - with say a focus on user-pay? How might the outcome have differed if conservative producer groups could have set the Terms of Reference with a focus on servicing client's day-to-day needs - or a service station proprietor who sees no reason for special services to primary producers?

In calling for public submissions, the **fact** of the importance and function of QDPI's extension role pre-empts and precludes alternative views:

> *The QDPI has a key role in development of technology and knowledge transfer to primary industries in Queensland and overseas.*

The sheer volume of the consultation process with the wide range of client groups and interests (for example...*agribusiness and the consultants agreed with the philosophy of market failure*, others did not), also kept power in the hands of the review team (and hence in the initiating organisation). Outcomes of specific group consultations were not required to be...*written up or available for public viewing*. The analysis was **not** dependant on the weight of opinion - or a majority view of those consulted. It depended on the professional analysis of the Working Party to sift out the strategic considerations from the organisation's perspective and interest.

The Working Party's inclusion of an audit by staff and representatives limited its own power in defining the content, but also that of senior management. Others had seen the draft report. They had a say in final modification, and radical changes were limited!

5.7   EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

The process was an acknowledgment that there were many stakeholders in determining appropriate policies for the public sector extension agency. Opportunities for input were provided through the call for public submissions, the wide ranging interview process, and by selected representatives though the final audit. The volume and range of views in such a consultative process at a point in time in a dynamic period of discourse appears to be a significant limitation to providing for ownership by interests of those outside (and inside!) the organisation. It also did not permit a process of negotiation and experimentation to develop over time. One-off reviews, no matter how wide ranging, have severe limitations in negotiating (extension) policy!

There would appear to be certain organisational or political imperatives or 'realities', for example 'less money for extension', which both contributed to the need for change, and impacted on the shape of that change. These could have been considered 'constraining conditions'.

What impact did this review have on the content then? In the next chapter, I look in detail at the content of the Extension Policy Review, and attempt to uncover the actual source and reasons for inclusion of the key elements!

6. THE OUTCOME OF THE 1990 QDPI EXTENSION POLICY REVIEW

...there was a real sense that extension might disappear off the face of the earth.
(member of Extension Policy Review Working Party)

6.1   Key content statements and their triggers
6.2   Summary and analysis
6.3   Hierarchy of Objectives
6.4   Power implications
6.5   Emerging perspectives

An Extension Policy Review had been initiated. The Terms of Reference had been set. A comprehensive consultative process had been undertaken. What would comprise the **content** of the written document? What sense would be made out of this requirement for a policy review document? What were the triggers for the inclusion of the different elements? What role did the consultative process play? What role did broader trends and political imperatives play?

To seek an answer to these questions, I examined the document and selected the 'key content statements' contained within it. I interviewed those that were responsible for the actual writing of the report - or who were closely associated with it. Each interview began with the following clarification of my intentions (see Appendix II.I)

> **Please note that I am studying why certain recommendations, concepts, and statements are included in the document. I am <u>not</u> studying why you think these recommendations, concepts, and statements should be included nor am I asking you to defend their inclusion. I am studying what specific directives, situations, events, or submissions were actually responsible for their inclusion.**
> (after Wissemann, 1991)

As for the initiation of the Extension Policy Review (Chapter 3), explanations of the **content** of the Review document have been developed directly, and exclusively, from the interview data. As previously, *italics* are used where direct quotes illustrate an issue. Where there were discrepancies or individual viewpoints, I have noted them. My derived conclusions are included in brackets '[....]'.

The Extension Policy Review document could be expected to provide a concrete focus for the continuing discourse surrounding extension policy in Queensland!

6.1 KEY CONTENT STATEMENTS AND THEIR TRIGGERS

I have based this section around those statements and recommendations which I selected as significant in capturing the policy content of the 1990 Extension Policy Review. They had provided the structure for the interview process. I have called them **Key Content Statements (KCS)**, and collated them under the following headings.

(i)	Purpose of extension:	These included statements describing the extension paradigm contained in the review, and the ultimate and intervention objectives to which extension was seen to be contributing.
(ii)	Structure:	This related to statements about the organisational structure needed to allow extension to work in this paradigm and achieve the identified objectives.
(iii)	Extension support:	Statements describing specific steps needed to allow extension staff themselves to work within the proposed structure and paradigm were included under this heading.
(iv)	Relationships:	These were statements relating to the relationship issues with other agencies, organisations, groups or individuals, needed to achieve the objectives of the extension organisation.
(v)	Funding:	This heading included any statements relating to resourcing or funding.

(i) PURPOSE OF EXTENSION

KCS.1 Extension is defined as the use of communication processes to identify and assist change in primary industries.

This was a very difficult choice because of the wide range of definitions and models of extension at that time - ranging from coercive to 'laissez faire', 'top down' to 'bottom up'. The definition chosen was based on that of Röling (1988)...*we wanted the shortest possible definition which conveyed a wider rather than narrow perspective, with an authoritative person to hang it on.* Röling had a high standing in the department following a comprehensive consultancy to improve middle-level management: *People might not like it but they could not disagree with it!*

There were debates about the meaning of communication - with an agreement that it had to be...*pro-active, non-linear, facilitative, participative and having an 'HRM'(Human Resource Development) component.* The aspects of...*identifying and assisting change* were considered essential components, and were intended to include...*adult education, leadership, etc, as well as technology transfer.* The review process reinforced rather than shaped these views. As a result, some arguments...*never took place* - for example, the recommendation that extension should be...*directed at strategic issues rather than reactive one-to-one.* An effort to include 'supporting and empowering' clients failed because of the trouble capturing the meaning and lack of support (from senior management). [The perception of extension as public sector, pro-active, and not one-to-one advisory appeared to be held by all Working Party members and those close to its commissioning and organisation, prior to the review].

KCS.2   The purpose of extension is to enhance the sustained contribution of primary industries to the nation's economy.

This statement was not debated, rather it was taken directly from the already compiled Corporate Plan...*and had long been implied in the department.* The term agriculture was changed to Primary Industries as a result of the audit process, as was Queensland to national...*because of the perceived restrictiveness of state boundaries in the context of the purpose.* [This was considered by the Working Party, to be the 'only arguable position' for a government extension service.]

This statement was also considered to be...*central to the review recommendations*: it answered the question...*what the hell is the Department about?* It...*had to be an economic rationale* [to make any sense]...*with riders in areas of sustainability etc.* Once this matter was settled, it impacted on the 'right' of access to service (for example, a producer with 2000 head of cattle would have precedence over a hobby farmer with only five cows), and the need and rationale for targeting resources. Choices of whether it was departmental business could then clearly be made on the basis of whether it gave a significant economic return to the public. Segmenting (for example, commercial, non-commercial) and targeting could then follow.

KCS.3   Extension should be directed at strategic issues rather than be controlled by reactive one-to-one extension.

[As pointed out previously, this concept was not debated, as it seemed to be a preconception of the key people involved in the process, and was only reinforced during the process.] It also flowed on from the definition and was...*meant to convey a pro-active stance - stand outside of immediate industry interests in terms of long term profitability and sustainability - so that extension was not a band-aid therapy nor maintaining the status quo.*

One opinion on the reason for this recommendation was as a 'shock treatment' - a clear signal that extension was about to change.

KCS.4   Extension should be outcome driven not input or process driven.

[Again this did not seem to have been debated, and also flowed on from the agreed definition]. New Zealand, for example, was perceived as being...*process driven: it existed to be user-pay!*. The primary audience was perceived by the Working Party to be *treasury-type* people. There was a perception that if they did not agree with the outcome ...*all was lost. There was a real sense that extension might disappear off the face of the earth!*

KCS.5   Extension should focus on those opportunities with the greatest potential for sustained profitability.

In an early draft of the review, emphasis was placed on concentrating on the...*bigger, more influential producers*, but this received considerable opposition (at the audit) and was revised. This direction had also been seen as a way of...*getting around the hobby farmers.* The word...*sustained, always had to be in.*

It also was about the allocation of resources...*for example - the banana industry had 2 people allocated to it compared to wheat with 60 people - there was a need for flexibility.*

KCS.6   QDPI should complement private sector extension, not compete. QDPI should deal in areas of market failure for the public good.

The market failure concept was aired early in the process. It appeared to derive from a logical view of not duplicating. It also appeared to follow from an approach to...*manage the high level of demand perceived to be on extension officers' time.* 'Busyness' did not mean effectiveness - market failure was seen as a way of reducing the low productive aspects of the demands on extension officer's time. Private consultants also put the view firmly across - do not compete!

This issue of market failure also revolved around the question of...*who are the clients of QDPI - The Minister or producers. In essence, market failure resolved the dilemma of where the minister, community, and producer fits in and where public sector extension had a role.*

The Federal Government at the time of the review was hotly debating the issue of private benefit versus public benefit. This distinction was...*one of the key issues for public sector intervention in the market place.* [Experience with this debate had a strong influence on market failure being considered as a basis for Government agricultural advisory services in the Extension Policy Review. Individuals involved in the process had also experienced

frustration with the way Federal Government and semi-government agricultural organisations were operating].

Few of the submissions included reference to the market failure, public benefit versus private benefit debate...*chiefly because most people in Queensland were not even aware of the currency of this debate.* The issues were, however, raised in subsequent consultation with staff and clients but again there was minimal debate. There appeared to be a lack of appreciation of the relevance and implications of this issue. *When extension officers were asked why farmers should get a free advisory service as opposed to cafe owners, only spurious reasons were given to justify the difference.*

In one view, the key trigger for market failure inclusion was the...*threat of Labour Government reduction of resources* (to QDPI extension): *There was a definable role of public sector extension in areas of public good where there was no prospect of others carrying it out (in short or long term) - with assisting the private sector to take over these roles as being a prime goal: a facilitating and enabling government rather than a constraining one.*

KCS.7   QDPI should be more active in disseminating factual information to the general public about primary industries.

This recommendation primarily emerged from direct consultation with producers. It was...*a product of the time: there was a new government, and producers were terrified that the QDPI would cease and statutory boards demolished, hence a need for public advocacy for rural communities to urban communities.*

(ii)   STRUCTURE

KCS.8   Extension roles should be differentiated to enable concentration of effort towards the extension objective.

Extension roles were targeted to help the reward system, and as a means of improving the performance of extension officers. Because of the general, and individualistic nature of the extension officer's job, there was a perceived lack of positive signals coming from the departmental hierarchy reinforcing the worth of the extension officers' contribution. It was for this reason the Culture/Value Survey was commissioned by the Working Party. The result gave the impression that extension officers were overwhelmed and felt they had no recognition. The Working Party also felt that extension officers **were** in a generalist mode and needed assistance to...*work at a higher level.*

The terminology 'specialist' was of key significance. It gave a signal about change and worth: *Extension is not just about some blokes wandering about giving advice - it has specialist areas and people.*

The **Extension Specialist** role was to plan and execute extension activities to increase sustainable development and undertake necessary liaison to achieve program goals. They were to be seen as doing the bulk of proactive extension aimed at the issues of productivity and sustainability.

The **Information Specialist** role was proposed to manage and operate QDPI's information systems from strategic regional sites, and to develop strategies to effectively and efficiently handle inquiries. This concept was developed as a result of endeavouring to find a way to reduce the load on extension officers for 'ad-hoc' informational requests, and was therefore primarily directed to assist self-help capacity for all clients.

The **Technical Specialist** role was intended to provide an opportunity for active involvement with progressive farmers in developing new technologies and relevant production skills.

All of these roles emerged in response to perceived and raised deficiencies in QDPI's technical abilities. During the review process, some groups of producers criticised the QDPI as being irrelevant as far as technology was concerned. Technical expertise of extension officers was apparently not...*as good as the department thought it was.*

KCS.9   **QDPI should decentralise responsibility and accountability for extension programs and activities within a regional structure.**

Debates on decentralisation versus regionalisation were ongoing during the review process. Regional managers supported a greater devolution of authority for extension. [There was strong awareness of moves within other states towards a more regionalised delivery of services. This influenced this positive attitude to regional responsibility]. There had recently been a move within the department in Queensland to strengthen regionalisation by appointing Regional Executive Officers (REOs). This trend contributed to this recommendation.

KCS.10   **Multi-disciplinary teams should be formed to address specific problems or opportunities.**

Producers put forward the view that they were perplexed by the fragmentation of QDPI services. For example, they had to deal with officers from many different branches and disciplines within their single farming situation. A...*program structure appeared to be common sense and was not debated.*

KCS.11   **There should be better integration of extension activities at delivery point.**

The perspective that QDPI was not central in industry, but rather had a role in co-ordination and management [the emerging 'knowledge system' literature was referred to as a strong influence], resulted in this recommendation.

Producers also referred to the problem of contradictory advice from advisers, particularly between departments (for example, the QDPI and other State Government departments).

KCS.12   **Effective inter-corporate interfaces should be developed between both public and private extension agencies.**

At the time of the review, there was a...*private extension agency explosion.*   The recommendation was aimed at the issue of complementarity rather than competition. This inclusion was described as...*more of a hope and a wish than a fact.*

(iii)   EXTENSION SUPPORT

KCS.13   **There is a need to improve the professional status and rewards of extension officers and develop the skills base of extension staff. Performance reviews need to be implemented, and provision should be made for study and travel incentives.**

The question of the role and status of extension officers had been an issue for many years. There was a perception that extension was the 'poor sister' of research, and ill-treated by the department. The Culture Value Survey commissioned by the review and supported by discussions with extension officers reinforced the self-esteem problems facing extension officers within the organisation. The emphasis on the above recommendation was on the word **professional**, seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The need to provide contingent rewards was also seen as essential to change the culture of extension officers - to an outcome orientation.

KCS.14   **Focal groups should be established for specialist support and development of human resources for public and private sector extension. These should be multi-institutional. A focal group for extension was specifically recommended.**

The concept of focal groups were current at the time (for example, Agricultural Chemicals focal group and Landcare focal group): *In fact, there were 18 different groups based on high priority issues requiring multidisciplinary input - some had short lives, others became subprograms.*

This concept of an extension focal group 'floated around' in discussion among members of the Working Party, and the recommendation became finalised as a result of a positive audit. The concept had been contained in some submissions from departmental staff, and was also supported at a departmental extension conference/workshop. The Queensland University included a submission to create a joint extension centre[1]. One opinion on the reason for this specialist support for extension was that...*the 'bush' was saying we are different - we need something special.* There was some difficulty with choosing a name for such a focal group.

The concept of multi-institutional focal groups was also supported at the time by federal Research & Development Corporations. The need to link the public sector with the growing private sector had been raised by these corporations.

(iv)   RELATIONSHIPS

KCS.15   Extension activities resulting in private benefits should be carried out by the private sector, without public subsidisation.

This recommendation was influenced by the perception of an...*explosion of private extension, and a lack of support for traditional extension services expected from a labour government ('for people who don't even vote for them') and the scope to develop 'bona fida' public sector extension jobs for the next 5 to 10 years.* It also followed on from the market failure concept.

KCS.16   Target groups of extension should be better identified.

There was an expectation that the resources available for extension would shrink and hence a recognition that resources would need to be reallocated [this was made clear to the Working Party at the start of the review]. It was also a consequence of the need to segregate **commercial farms** from **hobby farms**, and ensure resources were put into activities and target groups that would yield the most gain.

KCS.17   A more effective interface with target groups should be established.

This inclusion of a 'participative management model' was aimed at achieving client ownership of extension. The general philosophy emerging (around Australia) about client involvement in priority setting and planning of government services provided impetus for this recommendation.

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[1]   This submission was jointly written by QDPI staff and Queensland University staff. It recommended a joint centre to develop a critical mass of extension expertise for training and extension research purposes.

KCS.18   Input from other stakeholders into the strategic decision making process should occur at state and regional levels.

As indicated earlier, the view of client involvement appeared to be a feature of the perspectives involved in driving the review process. It was noted, however, that...*field staff had a different view. To field staff, 'policy' was something that **they** determined - independent and according to their specific situation.* Agricultural and pastoral industries did not appear overly enthusiastic about an increased level of involvement but indicated a desire to be part of the full spectrum of the process. The main issue was 'how' to achieve an effective input.

It was also a recognition of the 'global' conceptual move towards participative development. Consultative mechanisms were already in place at some levels of the department.

The recommendation was also meant to imply involvement from a wider base than 'just' producers - to include consumers, local authorities, educational institutions etc.

KCS.19   Linkages needed to be strengthened or created with educational institutions.

This was also seen as a way of managing the heavy demand on extension officers, as well as resulting from a collective view included in submissions from educational institutions. The Working Party had also held this view.

KCS.20   QDPI should actively contribute to maintaining the technical expertise of workers in the commercial sector.

The concept of market failure and the emphasis on 'complementarity' with the private sector was behind this recommendation: *Someone put the view from the private sector that we had common clients and if we wanted correct information to get to them, we needed to give it to the private sector.*

KCS.21   QDPI should facilitate the provision of services by other agencies.

Again, the issue of 'complementarity' was at issue. An example which came out of consultative process concerned a certain agri-business company which had an agronomic advisory service. They felt that if QDPI developed a decision support system, for example, it should train the consultant sector in its use and hence introduce it to the farming sector thorough consultants.

KCS.22   Non-target groups should be actively redirected to agencies providing complementary services.

This recommendation tied in with the general concept of managing demand and complementarity. It related directly to the demand of hobby farmers and home gardeners, who had a *...growing band of private support* (for example, nurseryman association, consultants etc).

(v)   FUNDING

KCS.23   Charges should be made for specific products produced from public benefit activity, and on equity grounds when, for overall effectiveness, QDPI extension is involved in activities that lead principally to private gain.

Here, one of the major issues was tackled. There was no pre-emptive, unified view on this aspect - either within the Working Party itself or from outside of it. However, there were groups...*pushing various formulas*. For some, the review was seen as a means of introducing a user-pay extension service, but for others, it was a way of maintaining the 'status quo'. There was pressure on the Working Party to 'read it right'. The recommendation made was...*a natural consequence of market failure*. The issue became crystallised during the external policy audit, and was reinforced at the State Extension Conference. The difficulty lay in setting specific boundaries to paying for private benefit.

Another view was that the charge for private benefit was in response to a view by some large producers in intensive industries. They expressed the view that QDPI was not up to the leading edge of technology. This level was something that they could only achieve by working with large producers in a 'commercial consultancy type' approach - as the producers would be reluctant to share commercial advantages otherwise. An example was given by a large commercial producer during the review process. He was reluctant to have QDPI officers visit his farm because of the risk that other farmers would learn of his techniques, so losing him commercial advantage. If QDPI officers provided an effective commercial consulting service, he would be happy to use them. For this reason, QDPI should develop a consultancy capacity: *We would not do it for the money, rather for the strategic value, but, because we are doing it, private benefits should be paid for.*

KCS.24   The public should provide the majority of resources.

As the process continued, this guideline was reinforced. It seemed to be generally recognised that in most situations in agriculture, market failure would occur by way of inappropriate investment in agriculture. It was felt that this would work against the adoption of technology needed to maintain international competitiveness in Queensland's primary industries. This argument also followed on from the belief that the principal beneficiaries from QDPI extension were the people of Queensland - hence it was a matter of the true beneficiaries paying!

Concern was held that there was a real problem with information overload during this process. The wide canvassing...*increased expectations and led to disappointments. Stage 2 should have immediately followed stage 1, but the new government was moving carefully.*

6.2   SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Of specific interest in this analysis was the role that the actual review **process** played in arriving at the **content.**   The examination of the discourse in the broader Australian context (Chapter 4) demonstrated that many different groups and individuals were entering the debate about extension policy, promoting their interests and viewpoints. The issue was not whether public sector extension had to change, but rather in what direction that change would be. Extension policy appeared to be viewed as the means of achieving this change!

At the commencement of the Extension Policy Review, then, significant debate had already occurred about the content of extension policy. This had occurred at a level beyond that of extension officers and their immediate clients. Managers in government departments, policy advisers, rural leaders, and academics in universities provided the bulk of the input into the debate. Some common understandings were already emerging, such as the 'need' to change the operation of public sector extension. Another point of convergence in the paper debate appeared to be the need for public sector extension agents to stop providing free technical advice to farmers - with the alternatives being to charge for that advice or withdraw and allow private consultants to provide it.

What content, then, was derived from this 'higher level' debate and shared understanding, and what actually was derived from the interview process? Where was there room to manoeuvre?

The interviews focused on the 'actual' reasons which prompted the inclusion of the Key Content Statements.   I have attempted to discover the sources and motives for their inclusion. Three levels of influence were evident:

> (i)   overriding global trends;

> (ii)   impact of the guidelines driving the review and/or views held by the persons carrying out the review; and

> (iii)   direct and unique impact of the review - inputs/consultation - process.

(i)   Overriding global trends

There were trends that were occurring in the broader policy and extension environment prior to the holding of the QDPI Extension Policy Review. These were evident in the paper debate, and had been influential in the initiation of the review. During the interview

process, it became evident that regardless of the input into the review, these Key Content Statements would have been included.

It would be unthinkable to have an agricultural policy that did not promote **sustainability**, for example, as a central issue. As one of the informants put it : *It had to be an economic rationale with riders in areas of sustainability.*

Client participation in decision making and programs was a key feature of the discussion of more appropriate extension approaches. It was also a trend that was evident in broader society, beyond agriculture. The informants pointed out that, not only were stakeholders looking for more effective input, it was a recognition of the global conceptual move towards participative development.

Regionalisation/decentralisation of decision making and extension planning was also a trend occurring elsewhere in Australia. This trend influenced the inclusion of this recommendation.

Market failure was certainly an emerging philosophy occurring in Australia - strongly related to the new era of the Federal Labour Government. It was the subject of debate, and impacted on federal government policies. It was not, however, introduced as a result of consultation...*chiefly because most people in Queensland were not even aware of the currency of this debate.*

(ii) Impact of the guidelines driving the review and/or views held by the persons carrying out the review

Enhancing the sustained contribution of primary industries to the nation's economy was taken straight from the Corporate Plan of the organisation and was not debated. It was also an imperative held by persons involved in the process - *it had to be an economic rationale*. The issue of being outcome driven also related to this economic rationale. The primary audience was considered to be the (government) treasury. There had been a perception that if they did not agree with the outcome, 'all was lost'.

Use of communication processes to identify and assist change in primary industry (including implicit concepts of...*adult education, leadership as well as technology transfer*) came from definitions and concepts emerging in the extension literature at the time, particularly in The Netherlands and the United States. It was a global trend rather than the trend. The choice of this definition was dependant on other choices. It was consistent with the concept of market failure, public funding, and enhancing sustainability and the economy. The definition came from the Working Party, with the review...*reinforcing rather than shaping these views.*

Strategic rather that one-to-one extension was not debated. It related both to the guideline given that resources would not increase for extension and would probably be less, and a preconception held by all involved in leading the review process. As shown

later in this study, this was a key issue with extension staff and farmer clients - and one that threatened to subvert the implementation process.

Market failure, as well as being an emerging philosophy under a Federal Labour Government, was brought into the process by the Working Party rather than from the consultation process. The concept was considered to have been reinforced by the process.

Target groups and **complementarity with the private sector** was also strongly related to this process.

Strengthened linkages with educational institutions was in line with the direction to examine the USA model, the concept of market failure, and with the views brought in by the Working Party.

At the commencement of the review process, the issue of **funding for extension** was said to be open. However, the decision to recommend **mainly public funding**, was a result of the choice of the market failure concept that was 'reinforced' rather than resulting from the consultative process - *the issue became crystallised during the external policy audit*. The actual consultative process did not appear to resolve the issue of funding - except perhaps for a strong reaction against individual user-pay.

(iii)   Direct and unique impact of the review process

The **focus on those opportunities with the greatest potential for sustained profitability** was primarily a result of the emphasis on economic impact and market failure. The review process, however, modified the recommendation away from a narrow focus on larger, more influential producers.

The call for extension to be **active in disseminating factual information to the public** - emerged directly from producers - a sop to a concerned sector?

Differentiated extension roles and **improved status and rewards for extension officers** were derived from the consultative process, primarily as a way of dealing with the low morale and high work load felt by extension officers. It was also a way of dealing with industry criticisms of the lack of technical relevance. Another rationale was the need to shift extension officers towards the 'predetermined' needs of better focus, outcome orientation, and economic impact. Focal groups were the subject of submissions, and were consistent with the support and development for extension.

Multi-disciplinary approaches and integration of resources were recommendations resulting from observations and comments in the review process. They also were a natural consequence from the outcome orientation.

6.3   HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVES

What was the content focus in terms of the hierarchy levels of extension within the public sector organisation? Where did the review itself impact on these?

The ultimate objective of enhancing the sustained contribution of primary industries to the nation's economy, came directly from the organisation's Corporate Plan!   It was brought in through the inherent guidelines for the review, not through the consultative process.   The significance of this was that the outcome to which the extension function within the organisation was expected to contribute was determined by the purpose of the total organisation. It was not viewed as an independent entity.

> **Extension, then, was seen as a tool to achieve the aims of the organisation. Extension 'policy', then would only make sense as a subset of organisational policy.**

Intervention objectives included such recommendations as the use of communication processes to identify and assist change (including adult education etc), and   focused where there was the potential for the greatest economic return.   These objectives derived both from the ultimate objective, and were brought into the process chiefly through the initial guidelines or by those who carried it out.

> **Intervention objectives for extension can be seen to be determined by the scope, and most effective use, of the tool of extension in relation to the purpose of the organisation.**

The issue of funding could fit in to this level - *if* it was determined that the object of the organisation was to contribute towards government income. This did not appear to be the case.

Conditions for effect included such elements as continued government funding, client participation in strategic decision making, complementarity with private extension, greater linkages with educational institutions, extension support and structure, and intra-organisational relationships (multi-disciplinary etc).   These were influenced strongly by the consultative process.

> **The consultative component of the review process would seem to be largely concerned with providing the optimum conditions for effect to achieve the purpose of the organisation and the predetermined intervention (including over-riding broader policy constraints - for example, user-pay) of the extension function.**

Activities were touched on in relation to the specialist extension roles - which emerged during the consultative phase, but these roles were not prescriptive.

The issue of the withdrawal from one-to-one extension that was contained in the outcome, however, directly impinged on the activity level. This recommendation was derived from the issues of public versus private good, market failure, and strategic focus - all of which were carried into the review process. Private consultants particularly endorsed this recommendation during the consultative phase.

Means were left untouched - consistent with the directions given to the Working Party - except in the broader area of funding.

6.4   POWER IMPLICATIONS

(i)   Shift in direction

When we look at the shift in the multi-facets of extension, we see it is a shift to the 'strategic' - extension more as a policy instrument with a focus on visible, arguable outcomes.

What comes hand-in-glove with this is a loss of *individual* control - or power. This is embodied in aspects such as: less personalised service; less reactive one-to-one; less managerial control; less scope to compete with services; a need to link and co-operate with other organisations; a need for extension officers to 'fit in' with more focused extension roles ('specialist' rather than 'generalist' with the inherent freedom of movement); and the wider community interests impinging on producer interests.

Client participation in strategic decisions took power away from managers, individual extension officers, and individual producers. The increase in the 'control'/participation of clients in the broad sense still implied a loss in ability to draw personalised resources to the individual producer. The freedom that existed for individual extension officers, and individual producers who wanted to use or co-operate with extension was put under challenge. Alternatively, it increased the 'bargaining capacity', and hence the power of agricultural and pastoral industry and funding bodies.

The recommendation against one-to-one extension also directly impinged on this freedom. It questioned the traditional and current mode of most extension operations. ' 'Signification' was put under challenge. The reaction to this is explored in subsequent sections.

(ii)   The role of information

The review process was awash with information - guidelines, submissions, consultations, commissioned inputs and literature reviews. Information covered both the 'political' and economic environment, as well as perceived views, needs, and current and desired processes held by the many elements of the Knowledge System.

Knowledge, or meaning, was developed by the Working Party as they interacted with this information and with each other. Their shared knowledge had to involve a common understanding of the information, as well as the choices resulting from it. There was a felt pressure to...*get it right.*

Policy recommendations directed at any level of the Hierarchy of Objectives had consequences for other levels in 'both directions'.

(iii) Control of discourse

It was the Working Party who had control over the data and information during the consultative process. They had the power to use, respond, reject submissions/opinions - within the Terms of Reference and guidelines given. The sheer volume of information, inevitably conflicting, permitted them to be selective.

The power over the information, however, was not complete. As pointed out, control over the final output was relinquished to some degree by the audit process. The outcome also had to pass some senior managerial hurdles prior to publication. An outcome inconsistent with social, political, and economic realities surrounding the review - would also have been futile, after all...*treasury was the primary target of the report.*

The state government treasurer at the time had made a public statement prior to the review being completed:

> *Treasurer Keith De Lacey singled out...(Primary Industries)...as likely main target areas for implementation of the new user-pay plans.*
> (Queensland Country Life, 5/7/90)

The report, to have power, would have to either be consistent with these views, or provide alternative, well argued recommendations!

Other elements of the Knowledge System had limited power in the input and consultative process. They could, and did, contribute - but had little power over what was done with the information. They also had access to the media, and in the face of suggestions of a user-pay outcome, some producer groups looked for power in emotive statements:

> *Primary producers are facing an increasingly bleak economic outlook with increasing farm costs and rapidly diminishing returns....The State Government should look carefully at the longer term impact of its push for cost recovery, before blindly pursuing options that are simply not feasible.*
> (The Chronicle, 13/7/90)

If the review recommendations so outraged staff and clients beyond the will of the government to 'tough it out', it would also have lacked the power of implementation!

The review team had the power to select and recommend - however, they needed to walk a fine line!

The completed written discourse - the Extension Policy Review - moved the debate from 'what-if's' and 'I think' to a response around the issues and recommendations contained in the review. The debate was now focused. Discourse was limited!

By now, the extent of the proposed shifts was exposed. The issue of 'signification' would evoke response - and bring out the exercise of power. It should also further enrich our notion of the meaning of **extension policy.**

6.5   EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

Although the content of the Extension Policy Review document included statements about the objectives of the extension service, they were largely independent of the review process. The strong emphasis on contributing to the state and national economies reflected both the total organisation's stated objective, as well as a political imperative. It was a critical aspect of ensuring that public funding for extension continued.

A key meaning behind formal policy would appear to be that of capturing resources for the function to operate.

The broader debate and changes in extension and government policy had a major impact on the content of the document. The review process stimulated interest in the issue of public extension amongst stakeholders in Queensland, but the short time frame and consultative overload restricted both discussion and learning through the process - either by the Working Party or those being consulted.

Formal extension policy, then, would appear to have the potential to introduce new developments from other places and stimulate and focus debate about extension amongst its stakeholders. However, it would appear to capture a perspective at a particular point in time, but debate and developments continue on.

The consultative process provided for much information to come from many different groups and interests. Such a process was unable to arrive at a 'consensus', nor a negotiated outcome. The range of views permitted the reviewers to be selective in those issues that they accepted. The opportunity was there to introduce views that do not come through this consultative process.

The content arising from the wider world trends and organisational imperatives could have been considered as 'constraining conditions'. These aspects were demanded by the surrounding organisational, societal, or political environment. Examples of these were the withdrawal from one-to-one extension, participative decision making, and regionalisation.

The content of the Extension Policy Review arising from the consultative process itself, focused on the **conditions for effect** to allow extension to best work within these 'preconditions'.

Discussion about extension was initiated by QDPI with its stakeholders. A limited opportunity was provided to permit input into changes in extension operation. Just as interest and debate had commenced, a formal policy document was produced - for all intents and purposes the final word on the shape of extension. There was now something concrete, however, on which to focus the on-going debate. Part of this continued discourse was captured by the formal responses to the policy document. The following chapter explores these responses and their lessons for a policy framework.

7.   RESPONSE TO THE 1990 QDPI EXTENSION POLICY REVIEW

...can you effectively erect fences around primary industries?
(challenge from United States respondent)

7.1   **Producer organisations**
7.2   **Other government agricultural departments**
7.3   **Non-agricultural government departments**
7.4   **Educational institutions**
7.5   **Private consultants**
7.6   **Professional organisations**
7.7   **Extension staff**
7.8   **Other responses**
7.9   **Discussion**
7.10   **Emerging perspectives**

An extension policy document had been produced and circulated to those who had participated in the review process. An opportunity was provided to respond to the content. This time it was **not** an open call for input, nor an opportunity to push particular perspectives.

The focus was on the content of a 'formal' document with specific conclusions and recommendations. It was now evident as to whether input that had been given influenced the outcome, and if the content lived up to expectations - or fears!

A number of individuals - many representing interest groups or organisations - formally responded to the Extension Policy Review document. Why did they respond? What did their response indicate about their view of the purpose and content of extension policy? Were there attempts to change the content even at this stage, and if so how?

It was by glimpsing the reaction from these other organisations and groups to the content and recommendations contained in the Extension Policy Review, that a better understanding of the meaning and implications of public sector extension policy could be gained.

This section focuses on these responses. For the purpose of the analysis, I have combined the responses (26 formal responses) into the following groupings:

    (1)   Producer organisations
    (2)   Other government agricultural departments
    (3)   Non-agricultural government departments
    (4)   Educational institutions
    (5)   Private consultants
    (6)   Professional organisations
    (7)   Extension staff

The lack of response from the other individuals and groups that received the Extension Policy Review may have also been significant. Some groups may have been precluded from responding in some way (for example, extension staff were not encouraged to respond), or they may have agreed with the outcome and so did not feel any need to respond. Alternatively, these groups may have been angered or upset by the outcome and had 'washed their hands' of the outcome, or they may have just ignored it as irrelevant.

The formal responses could also have been expected to result from mixed reactions and from differing motives. The value in studying them lay in looking beyond the words themselves and so capturing their reactions and motives.

In order to achieve this, the responses were analysed using the following questioning route (see Appendix II.2):

- What view of the "purpose of policy" was expressed?
- Which objective hierarchies were addressed?
- What evidence was there of the exertion of power?
- Was there any reference to linkage relationships between institutions and groups?
- Were there any other interesting aspects included in the response?
- On reflection, what was the main issue to emerge from the text - essentially why was this formal response written?

Here was the opportunity to try and understand the meaning and purpose of extension policy through the eyes of those individuals outside of the initiating circle and organisation. It was at this point of focused discourse, when direct implications of a formal policy were evident, that the 'arrangements of society' as affected by public sector extension should become visible!

7.1   PRODUCER ORGANISATIONS

(i)   Main purpose for response

Producer organisations were chiefly concerned with ensuring the continuing servicing of farmers by QDPI extension in some form. There was some confusion expressed by them about the implications of the review recommendations. Some saw it as signalling the introduction of user-pay and therefore, were concerned that it would be introduced to the farmers' detriment: *Let it be known that we don't agree with paying for QDPI services beyond what we are already paying in tax.* The more intensive horticultural respondents were disappointed that the department did **not** go commercial, as their members were looking for an effective consultancy service. The common thread was to ensure further input into negotiating how services to their particular agricultural or pastoral industries would evolve under the recommendations.

(ii)   View of purpose of policy

Producer organisations appeared to view extension policy as defining the services that would be provided to farmers, and clarifying who would pay.

(iii)   Main objective hierarchy addressed

The responses from producer organisations were wide ranging and addressed most of the extension hierarchies.   Although arguments for continued services centred around the **ultimate objective** of economic returns from the farming sector, references were also made to extension's role in land conservation, and the need to have equity of access to government services.

Intervention objectives were firmly in the area of technology transfer to the commercial farming sector, whether by user-pay or 'free' extension.   The issue of sustainable practices was highlighted, but alongside that of production needs.

The need to improve consultation with farmer organisations was a key **condition for effect** raised, if the recommendations were to be successfully implemented.   Increased participation by farmers in developing programs and objectives was considered essential, as was more effective co-operation between government services and consultants.   There was general agreement that individual user-pay would be counter-productive and work against effective extension programs, although funding support for negotiated projects was generally supported.

Activities in the areas of greater use of information technologies and information centres were noted, however, some responses indicated confusion as to 'what was on offer'. There was no mention of **means.**

(iv)   Power aspects

The need for QDPI to take heed of the concerns raised in the responses, was reinforced by a number of references to the 'spin off' benefits to the public in having an economically efficient farming sector.   Points were made about the size of the agricultural, pastoral, or support industries such as...*our industry is second largest purchaser of grain, seed, and produce.*   Other references were made to the threats on the livelihood of farmers if extension support was reduced.

(v)   Linkages

The responses included strong calls for increased co-operation and liaison between QDPI extension, consultants, private commodity extension services, and educational institutions. There was also a call to ensure continued interaction between extension officers and commercial farmers to maintain relevance.

(vi)   Other

A number of submissions claimed that the contents of the Extension Policy Review document were confusing, general, and repetitive: *If you can't convince them, confuse them! The contents are very difficult to understand.*

There was also some concern relating to the lack of independence of the review process.

7.2   OTHER GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENTS

(i)   Main purpose for response

The response from other government agricultural departments depended on how the Extension Policy Review recommendations either agreed or differed with their own direction. The main purpose of their response appeared to be in pointing this out. A user-pay extension service, for example, chided the Working Party for not choosing to follow their policy of commercialisation, which they described as output oriented and 'good'. At the other end of the spectrum, another government department, which itself was attempting to avoid introducing user-pay, praised the review team for the excellent job they did in identifying the issues because...*you came to the same conclusions as us.*

(ii)   View of purpose of policy

The view of policy in this group appeared to be that of defining the role of a government extension service in the rural community, and of settling the issue of user-pay for that service.

(iii)   Main objective hierarchy addressed

These departmental responses paid no attention to the **ultimate objective** of extension, and little to the **intervention objectives.** They were mainly concerned with the **conditions for effect** such as linking government policy with client demands, a focus on outcomes, and the need to have performance indicators for 'image and accountability' reasons. The issue of user-pay and its impact on achieving required outcomes was also a major issue.

A response from the United States Co-operative Extension Service challenged the focus on economic output and on farmers. It argued that an alternative objective was to achieve a better educated community (more than just the farming community), and that public funding was hence essential.

(iv)   Power aspects

Apart from indicating support or disdain for the choice of direction, there was little attempt to influence changes in content. An exception to this was the USA response that challenged the primary industries centred policy by attempting to sow doubt about the

underlying premise of the recommendations: *Can you effectively erect fences around primary industries? We are unable to do so. The Working Party will find it difficult to defend its recommendations!*

(v)   Linkages

There was particular interest in supporting linkages between public extension and other service providers.

(vi)   Other

In general, these responses were very supportive of the clarity and style of the document and recommendations, with phrases used such as...*well prepared, researched, and presented report,* and...*well balanced and provided sound guidelines.*

7.3   NON-AGRICULTURAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

(i)   Main purpose for response

Other government departments were concerned with boundary issues, co-operation, or apparent inconsistencies with policy choices that they had made. On one hand, there was a call to...*focus on balance of payment issues to determine clients,* and on another, there was a call to move out of free extension because it was a subsidy which should be avoided! As well, charges for environmental advice was argued as being inappropriate

(ii)   View of purpose of policy

Policy, with this group, appeared to be firmly about defining departmental boundaries, including the clarification of target groups.

(iii) Main objective hierarchy addressed

Although some acknowledgment was made of **ultimate objectives** of improved balance of payments or environmental issues, the **conditions for effect** was the main hierarchy objective addressed.   These conditions related to delineation of inter-departmental boundaries and co-operation, effective use of government funding towards societal benefits, and the use of industry levies.

(iv)   Power aspects

There was no evidence of overt attempts to specifically influence or modify the outcome of the review.

(v) Linkages

More co-operation between government departments was a major interest with these respondents. Some reference was also made to the advantages of links with educational institutions and other extension providers.

(vi) Other

These government departments expressed regard for the clarity of the document and quality of discussion. Phrases such as...*a good report...comprehensive and professional*...and...*impressed with the presentation* highlighted this response.

7.4 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

(i) Main purpose for response

Educational institutions were quick to respond. They pointed to what their institutions had to offer the department, in support of the new directions contained in the policy document. Their interest lay in providing staff training, as well as improved co-operation and joint initiatives.

(ii) View of purpose of policy

The view of policy from these responses appeared to be in defining the government's task in relation to other institutions, and hence the clarification of training needs.

(iii) Main objective hierarchy addressed

The need to balance economic development with ecological concerns was an **ultimate objective** that concerned this group. Extension was viewed as having an **intervention objective** of managing change within social systems that extended beyond primary industries and technology transfer.

The emphasis, however, was in the area of achieving the **conditions for effect** for extension officers to work under the new direction described in the Extension Policy Review. The need for staff training and post-graduate study particularly in the areas of sociology, behavioural studies, adult education, and business management were raised. The possibility of a joint QDPI-university extension training and development centre was raised as a way of providing the support required in this area.

There was some reference to **activities,** in terms of technologies or techniques in which the various institutions had expertise. Satellite television, distance education, and information technologies were highlighted, as well as participative approaches to extension.

(iv)   Power aspects

Although there was no overt attempts to enact power through the submissions, concern was expressed about possible political influence on the values and culture of the extension service. More involvement of the educational sector was seen as a way of keeping the extension service 'honest'.

(v)   Linkages

There was strong agreement with the recommendation for better linkages between the government extension service and the full range of educational institutions - both at the head office and field level.

(vi)   Other

These responses from educational institutions were full of praise for the content and direction of the Extension Policy Review: *The Department is to be congratulated on the comprehensive nature of the review process...*and it...*contains a series of very welcome recommendations based on a generally well balanced analysis of particular shortcomings and strength.*

7.5   PRIVATE CONSULTANTS

(i)   Main purpose for response

This single reply was a call for QDPI to rethink its relationship with private consultants. The implication was that the review did not recognise the important role of consultants in the farming sector.

(ii)   View of purpose of policy

A key purpose for developing an extension policy was seen as the defining of this relationship between the role of private consultants and government extension officers.

(iii)   Main objective hierarchy addressed

The **intervention objective** of assisting farmers to improve business and entrepreneurial skills was explicit.   The **condition for effect** of the provision of adequate training for consultants or government extension officers to meet this objective was considered outdated and impractical.

Emphasis was placed on such **activities** as focal groups, farmer training, and the provision of regionally relevant information to assist farmers.

(iv) Power aspects

An attempt to influence or modify the outcome of the report was accompanied by the claim that this view was representative of many others: *This view is not solely mine, but is shared by other consultants who have viewed the report.*

(v) Linkages

There was support for the recommendation to strengthen the relationship between public extension and private consultants.

(vi) Other

The consultant complained of the lack of clarity of the report. He maintained that it was...*difficult to interpret and understand what changes were envisaged for extension.*

7.6 PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS

These organisations provide professional and scientific support for their members by way of newsletters, the holding of conferences, seminars, and workshops.

(i) Main purpose for response

Professional organisations supported the general direction of the report in terms of market failure with the focus on public and private benefits. The point was made that this was consistent with the direction for public sector extension that had emerged in a recent conference on extension.

(ii) View of purpose of policy

The purpose of policy was viewed as a means of providing a philosophical basis for extension.

(iii) Main objective hierarchy addressed

The response focused on those **conditions for effect** needed to ensure that extension developed and acted on a nationally recognised philosophy. A national consensus on key policy goals for extension was called for, as well as a recognition of extension as an integral part of the research and development process. The need for a definition of market failure as it impacted on extension was also considered critical. Other conditions included better consultation with agricultural and pastoral industries, and an avoidance of user-pay.

(iv)   Power aspects

There were no overt attempts to modify the outcome of the review.

(v)   Linkages

Beyond a call for opportunities to develop policies at a national level, little reference was made to linkages.

(vi)   Other

No comment was made on the quality of the report or any other surrounding issues.

7.7   EXTENSION STAFF

A small informal group of QDPI extension officers and managers, most of whom had undergone post-graduate training in extension, responded to the review.   Following a workshop to discuss the contents of the Extension Policy Review, they provided a formal response.

(i)   Main purpose for response

The response was primarily aimed to support the general direction of the Extension Policy Review recommendations, and to signal that an informal group existed and were prepared to assist in the implementation.

(ii)   View of purpose of policy

The need to challenge staff, and to have them think about their tasks in extension, appeared as their view on the purpose of policy.

(iii)   Main objective hierarchy addressed

The strong economic focus related to the **ultimate objective** of extension was questioned, and a greater emphasis on human resource and rural community development was promoted.   The **conditions for effect** to assist extension officers in thinking about their tasks were seen as the implementation of program management, and the adoption of the specialist extension roles recommended in the report.

(iv)   Power aspects

The experience and training in extension of this group was highlighted as a reason for their comments to be acted on, and for their suggestions to be included in the implementation process.

(v)   Linkages

No reference was made to linkages.

(vi)   Other

The response called for rapid formal approval of the Extension Policy Review recommendations, and for the implementation process to be clarified.

7.8   OTHER RESPONSES

The submissions detailed above were the documented formal responses to the Extension Policy Review.   As pointed out earlier, staff were not encouraged to submit formal responses.   Prior to publishing the review outcome, the essence of the content and recommendations emerging from the Extension Policy Review was given at an internal Extension Conference (Banyo, Brisbane, 1990).   An opportunity was given to provide direct feedback at this venue.

The published Extension Policy Review document was also circulated within the organisation.   However, a planned tour of the regions to explain the findings and recommendations of the review to staff did not go ahead.

I was working as an extension officer at the time, and recall a large number of comments by other extension staff relating to the difficulty in understanding the document. As well, confusion as to what the implications were for staff was apparent: *They call it an extension policy - but you can't understand it - some extension!*

The recommendations of the Extension Policy Review were not formally adopted by the department or the government.   The perception was that it was...*'left on the shelf'*.   It appeared that there was no commitment by the organisation to the document. In drawing from interview data and informal staff commemts, an interpretation for this varied from a newly elected government *'finding its feet'* to the ambivalence in senior management as to the appropriateness of the recommendations.   It appeared as if senior management within the department **were** unsure about the appropriateness of the recommendations and the implications of the report. The prevention of the Working Party in the planned follow up to explain the outcome to staff and clients, and the slowness in initiating the next phase were actions that indicated this.

7.9   DISCUSSION

(i)   Response and non-response

The formal responses to the Extension Policy Review were extremely significant texts! The trigger for the irruption was given - the publishing and circulation of the Extension Policy Review. For all intents and purposes, this was the blueprint for future operation of extension within the Queensland Department of Primary Industries.

Up until this point, there was speculation as to the outcome of the review, but there had also been opportunity to input into the process. This opportunity now seemed to be past. Speculation was replaced with a written 'official' text! Now the potential impact on other groups was exposed.

Which elements would feel threatened enough - or see enough potential benefit - to formally respond to the review? Would the formal responses be irrelevant normative texts, or would they expose the framework of this concept called **extension policy**? What roles or relationships were threatened.

The responses were significant because:

1.   They were <u>made</u> - not all groups and organisations responded! Why did **these** groups respond? This analysis was not based on me making a decision as to who I would survey on their thoughts of the outcome. I did not rigorously study a cross section of the elements I thought relevant. This was a 'real life' response - self selection on the basis of self interest and relevance. As such, the value of the text rose significantly!

2.   The response, in most cases, would be on record within the organisation that they represented - they needed to express the view with which members of that group/organisation would concur. The writers were largely people with a good overview of the needs and perceptions of the elements they represented. As such, each formal response represented a large population.

3.   It would be expected that the responses would focus on those parts of the policy that had greatest impact or meaning to the group or organisation - enriching the notion of extension.

The lack of response was also significant. There was no response from field extension officers (apart from the Extension Development Group), other departmental staff and management, farmers themselves (as opposed to formal producer organisations), and many groups that had been included in the wider 'Knowledge System' evident in the review process.

Extension officers were not encouraged to formally respond. Most field extension staff would have been aware of the review and may even have participated in the consultative

process. However, they were then confronted with an Extension Policy Review document, without the benefit of the planned follow-up workshops. The document was not accompanied with an explanation and was written in terms that were unfamiliar with many officers.

Farmers outside of the politics of farmer organisations lacked copies of the review, explanations, and had little opportunity to provide individual input.

Those organisations and groups outside of the traditional relationships with extension (for example, the banks, environmental organisations, rural politicians, and business), also failed to respond. Reasons became speculation. Did the appropriate people receive copies? Was it that they did not see the need to respond - that they had felt that they had done their part by providing input into the consultative process? Did they fail to understand the content - or see its relevance?

It would appear that the responses received, or not received, were also related to the way the process was undertaken. The planned follow-up and media campaigns, for example, could have alerted the broader community to the recommendations and implications of the review. Another version of the document could have targeted farmers, extension officers, environmental groups etc, to assist in their understanding of the implications. These steps were not taken. The organisation kept the document and its outcome 'close to its chest'!

(ii)   Comparison of responses

Producer organisation responses were the most numerous, expansive, coercive, and demanding. They approached the issue at all levels of the Objective Hierarchies - this was their area, their 'bread and butter'. They used current terminology, such as sustainability, equity of services and state economy on which to ground their case. This appeared to be an effort to maintain services to their member base. Maintaining the focus on primary producers as the clients was a key issue. Was the policy implying a broadening of this traditional base? High on the agenda was the issue of user-pay - either rejection of the perceived introduction or the considered support within certain boundaries. They used **seduction** ('there are significant benefits to you if you back us'), **intimidation** ('we are large important organisations'), and played on **compassion** ('if you don't look after us, we will be in trouble') to add force to their arguments. They complained of confusion about the content of the document - what did it really mean for them and their members, in terms of continued services and extra costs?

The private consultant purported to represent the views of many others, and attempted to carve out a stronger niche for the private consultant role (than was considered obvious in the document).

Producers, organisations and the private consultant complained of the confusing text. It did not tell them what they specifically wanted to know - how did this, in practice, affect their livelihood? What changes would occur? What would they have to pay for - or what opportunities could be grasped? To make this point, strong comments were made:

...difficulty with content - generalised and repetitive...If you can't convince them, confuse them...difficult to interpret and understand changes envisaged for extension.

Extension staff within the organisation, seemed to emerge in two distinct streams. The 'progressive' (represented by the informal Extension Development Group) agreed with the direction, and had expressed little problem with the written document. They also used the formal written response to support the direction and to 'offer' assistance in its implementation. Other staff, however, were neither given, nor took, the opportunity to formally respond. Instead, there was a lot of discussion around the 'coffee table' about the confusing nature of the document. The expression often repeated was *...they call it an extension policy - but you can't even understand it - some extension!*

Other government agricultural departments reacted to the differences or similarities to their own policies and directions. Their approval or otherwise depended on this similarity. They were chiefly concerned with the **intervention objectives** and **conditions for effect** - after all, they were in the same game and were aware of the **ultimate objectives**. Interest in the issue of user-pay was central. If such a publicised policy review supported the policy direction elsewhere, it would strengthen their position. If it proposed an alternative, then it would publicly and directly challenge them. This was reinforced to me, when a senior manager in QDPI supported the holding of an international extension conference in Queensland by saying...*although Queensland is supposed to be independent in the areas of extension policy, including user-pay within the Australia, if the large southern states go a different way (for example, introduce user-pay), we won't be able to hold out!*

Non-agricultural departments were concerned with boundaries. They did not want the 'agricultural' department encroaching on their domains or acting at cross purposes with them.

Educational institutions saw opportunities and sought to exploit them. The policy review implied changes. Changes in staff roles required new skills, and hence educational and training support. Educational institutions were looking for such opportunities to increase their own funding base.

It appeared significant that these 'institutional' responses were impressed with the clarity of the text. It was described as:

> *...well prepared, researched and presented...well balanced and provided sound guideline...comprehensive and professional review...impressed with presentation ...the department is to be congratulated.*

Why such a striking difference between the view of the clarity of the document of these institutions to those of producer organisations, consultants, and field extension officers?

I have already suggested that the document was written with bureaucrats (treasury) as the prime target, and that much of the terminology would have been foreign to many field extension officers. The producer organisations, however, should have been 'au-fait' with this type of document. Was the claim of confusion then a matter of the difference in what

they were looking for in a policy document - was their notion of extension policy different - or was the apparent confusion a smokescreen for rejection of the basic perceived content of the review? The responses from these groups were aimed at securing services for their members. A claim of confusion perhaps provided both an opportunity to delay the implementation of a recommendations deemed detrimental to the members, or could ensure their inclusion in further negotiation to 'clarify' this confusion.

Perhaps, the resourcing and philosophical orientation, which was more consistent with the way other organisations strove for their place within the public funding structure, was too much at odds with the reassurances and clarity of day-to-day implications required by direct clients of the service. The needs and wants that the clients contributed in the consultative process appeared to be lost. The philosophical inputs from the other sources were catered for - or at least addressed.

Linkages were of interest to all groups - particularly the strengthening of the link between the group itself and the extension service. The institutions promoted the wider concept of linkages from a philosophical viewpoint. The producer organisations were more concerned with linkages that they could see may have a direct effect on their service.

(iii)   Knowledge and power

Now the discourse had been narrowed! The discussion and formal reaction now firmly centred on the agenda and text contained in the policy review. The nature of the document, and the limited circulation, explanation and media coverage, also played a significant part in limiting further discourse.

The philosophical nature of the recommendations - and lack of specifics - left the debate 'up in the air' for those groups and staff concerned with the practical implications for their day-to-day needs. They almost seemed to be at a loss as to how to 'argue' - or what to argue about! The 'power' of arguing over specifics had been lost. Real power in influencing the outcome appeared to have passed - the review had been completed and published in a very official format. None-the-less, formal responses were made. Attempts to influence the direction of policy were made! These responses, however, became swallowed up in the organisation, with no clear way of having an impact! Written arguments were submitted, but the attempt to exert power appeared to lie in the claim of confusion about the implications.

The organisation also appeared to be at a loss. The conflicting interests in holding and supporting a review of extension remained. The strategic alliances within the organisation that permitted a major review, no longer had a reason to hold together. The pre-emptive news releases by treasury staff about the inevitability of user-pay (see Chapter 6) was at odds with the outcome. The document stood as a 'dijk' against the rising tide of user-pay/commercialisation! An argued position to maintain a publicly funded extension service confronted senior mangers, researchers, treasury and cabinet!

Two things occurred. Firstly, the department failed to endorse the policy recommendations - it became a 'report of the Working Party' rather than the result of a 'departmental review'. Secondly, follow-up to the review was prevented (beyond the release of the document and its circulation to groups who contributed in the consultative process). Planned meetings to explain the recommendations to clients and staff were prevented from going ahead, and the second phase - that of endorsement and implementation did not immediately proceed. This gave the organisation both breathing space to see what they would make of it, as well as inhibiting either a ground-swell of endorsement or rejection. The organisation controlled the text, and controlled the process of dealing with the text.

7.10   EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

A significant discontinuity appeared to have occurred. In the consultative process, considerable effort was made to stimulate public discussion about extensions's role and seek input from a wide spectrum of interests. The process had been successful in achieving both of these objectives. However, when there was something concrete to debate about, discussion and debate were inhibited. The review was at best a snapshot in time. Much of the content of the review was a result of wider policies and national and international debates which were not understood by many who participated in the consultations. The opportunity to meaningfully feed back the context and rationale for the content of the Extension Policy Review and its recommendations was largely lost. This reinforced the significant limitation of such a consultative process - whether it follows 'good process' (for example, Birgegård's blueprint, 1991) or not. Add to this the difficulty of obtaining ownership and endorsement of the result of a process awash with information and diverse self-interest. Furthermore, regardless of the comprehensiveness of the process used, and the positive or negative reaction, organisational management, or political dogma or agendas could fail to accept recommendations - or policy - emerging from the process.

The responses also reinforced the notion that the debate was centred firmly around the **conditions for effect** to allow the extension service to operate. This may have been because most of the respondents shared the economic - with sustainable rider - objective contained in the policy review. There were signals, however, that this **ultimate objective** would not be without challenge. The USA response and that from the 'progressive' extension officers, for example, directly challenged the narrow focus on farmers and economic output. Direct **intervention objectives** appeared to be largely ignored. The implication appeared to be that if the **conditions for effect** could be put into place, then the extension service would be able to contribute towards this **ultimate objective**.

It is at this interesting stage of policy development, that I crossed the boundary from being an interested bystander and historian, to being a participant. I must point out that many of my perspectives gained from studying the data in this first phase have developed over time as I analysed the interview data, documents, and 'paper discourse'. As such, I entered the next phase as a participant **without** the advantage of having developed and reflected on these perspectives. Had I done so, I would hope that I would have contributed differently.

8. THE DEVELOPMENT OF A QDPI EXTENSION STRATEGY STATEMENT - MAY 1991 TO NOVEMBER 1993

...its a resource shift issue!
(view of senior manager within QDPI)

8.1 Process
8.2 Outcome
8.3 Format
8.4 Discussion
8.5 Emerging perspectives

The completed Extension Policy Review was a 'watershed' in the development of a QDPI extension policy. It marked the end of the open, wide ranging review and consultative process, and the beginning of the organisational struggle about what to actually include in the content of a formalised 'policy'. In this case, the policy took the form of an **Extension Strategy Statement**.

I moved from viewing the world of extension policy largely through the eyes and words of others, to becoming part of that world. It was, in part, my own struggles, within the context of this phase of policy development, that provided the substance for this chapter. I have dealt with the issues of 'objectivity' and 'ethics' in some detail in Chapter 2.9 and Appendix II.

The interest in this phase lay in the transisiton from a comprehensive Extension Policy Review document compiled by a Working Party, to a brief Extension Strategy Statement for which government endorsement was sought.

It was in this process of negotiation of an endorsed policy that I sought to discover more of the meaning and implications of a formal extension policy. The organisation itself initiated the review, and it is what it did with the results that had the potential to expose its value to the organisation!

8.1 PROCESS

(i) Commencement

As I noted in the previous chapter, the planned immediate follow-up to the Extension Policy Review did not occur. The intention had been to hold a series of meetings to explain the outcome of the review to staff and client groups who had participated. My reasoning as to why this did not occur, was that the organisation was not totally at ease with the outcome (for example, the government had been pre-empting the outcome with

references to user-pay).   As a result, senior management had distanced itself from the
outcome.   An example of this was continual reference to the results of the review as
'recommendations of the Working Party' rather than 'the outcome of a departmental
review'.

The review was completed and published in November 1990, and copies circulated to staff
and clients who had participated in the process.   An analysis of the responses to the
Extension Policy Review was dealt with in Chapter 7.   I also described the completion of
the Extension Policy Review as a discontinuity in the interactive process between the
department and interest groups.   Phase two was an opportunity to redress this.

In May 1991, I was appointed to take the review into the second phase.   Producer groups
had been asking what was happening - or rather, why nothing was happening.   Many key
players were involved in the review process, including the audit, and were looking for
something concrete to emerge.   In particular, they were looking for clarification on issues
such as user-pay, one-to-one servicing, and other issues which were considered confusing
in the Extension Policy Review.   Senior management within QDPI had also had time to
consider the content, and although they had distanced themselves to some extent from the
outcome of the Extension Policy Review, they felt that they could move with the general
direction contained within it.   Having held such a significant public review, with the
outcome made public, its recommendations could not be ignored.   There was some
confidence that the new Labour Government would also accept the broad direction.

Although the intention had originally been to use one of the Working Party to progress the
review to the second phase, this did not occur.   A short list of possible candidates with an
extension background was compiled.   I was selected.   The reasons given to me for my
selection, and subsequent approval, included my recent post-graduate studies in the area of
Knowledge Systems (this included research on the implications of user-pay for extension
in the United Kingdom), and my extension background which would provide credibility
with both extension officers and clients.   It was also suggested that I was a relatively
junior officer, who could be expected to follow directions.   This was reinforced to me
when a senior manager stated that....*this is what I would like to be doing, but am unable to
put the time into it - you will be my hands.*

A memorandum from the then Director-General was circulated advising managers that the
next phase of the...*strategic redesign of QDPI's agricultural extension services* was to go
ahead, and that full co-operation was requested.   This phase was described as developing
strategies to implement the recommendations of the Extension Policy Review. (Circular
Memorandum, June 1991)

(ii)   The process

The development of these strategies was intended to take place primarily at managerial
level within QDPI.

I was directed to work with middle and upper management within the organisation to develop an Extension Strategy Statement. The rationale given was that...*there is no intention to re-invent the wheel - the Extension Policy Review covered the extensive consultative part of the process.* In the early part of the process, a memorandum was drafted to be circulated to extension staff advising them of the process, and urging them to make submissions to me. However, circulation was prevented as it was considered inappropriate and in the category of...*reinventing the wheel.* The informal 'Extension Development Group' provided some scope for interaction with extension staff, albiet the progressive element.

Most of the process involved circulating discussion papers, collating of responses, and recirculating them. Progressive drafts of the Extension Strategy Statement were also circulated for further comment. Individual discussions occurred with key individuals when requested.

The need was to arrive at a document which was acceptable to senior management across the organisation (including sections without the traditional agricultural extension function). Only then could the organisation seek formal endorsement from the government.

(iii) The task

The Terms of Reference were also arrived at through a similar interactive process. The final agreed task was defined as:

> (i)   *defining extension roles and positions within the context of sub-programs and projects, and within the broader context of community education and information requirements;*

> (ii)   *clarifying client groups of extension, the appropriate means of providing extension input to these groups, and mechanisms to involve them in the design and implementation of such input;*

> (iii) *clarifying funding policies for extension, and strategies to implement these where appropriate;*

> (iv)   *highlighting the needs for personal and professional support for the maintenance of professional excellence, with particular reference to clarifying an appropriate relationship between sub-program and skills divisions in this role; and*

> (v)   *proposing criteria for the geographical location of extension positions.*
>   (Internal paper, July, 1991)

The stated intention was that the Extension Strategy Statement would...*be developed through an educative and consultative process involving QDPI staff, clients, and*

information providers outside of the QDPI. In practice, the process limited such wide spread educative and consultative process!

(v) The base

To initiate the process, I drafted a paper entitled 'Key Issues for a QDPI Extension Strategy Statement Arising From The 1990 Extension Policy Review'. This paper was circulated to managers in the organisation. The results were collated and analysed.

The issues/recommendations that were highlighted as significant from the Extension Policy Review were that:

► the definition of extension included assisting people to identify and solve problems through education and training;

► extension effort should be selective, directed to areas with the greatest economic benefit;

► this effort should also be based on 'market failure', complementing other extension providers;

► primary producers should not have an 'exclusive and unchallengeable' right of access to QDPI services - nor should they expect that these services will be immediately available, free of charge, and provided on a one-to-one basis;

► target groups, and types of services provided to them, should overtly be linked to QDPI priorities;

► extension should be based around specialist roles of information, extension (process), and technical expertise;

► one-to-one extension should only be used in a pro-active context (that is, as a deliberate strategy within an extension project), not as a reactive, problem-solving service;

► clients should participate in decision making about extension services and objectives;

► funding should be a secondary concern rather than driving the process away from *...activities aimed a producing public benefits through overcoming market failures* - Public funding should continue to provide the bulk of extension resources. Cost-recovery should be sought from information packages, and although QDPI should be involved in consultancies, they should be incidental to programmed extension activities;

► career and training support should be provided for extension staff;

► a discipline base for extension should be established;

▸   management of extension should be decentralised; and

▸   the geographical location of extension officers should be based on the balance between market failure (that is, lack of alternative services) and 'greatest economic benefit'.

In some cases, managers forwarded copies to other staff members (including extension staff) for input. The responses came by way of formal memoranda or comments jotted in the margins of the Key Issues paper. These responses were collated, and the content analysed (see Appendix II.4 for the technique used, and Appendix III.2 for a complete listing and the weighting that comments received).

The feedback provided an opportunity to quickly establish where the primary interests and concerns lay within the wider organisation - at least, at managerial level. What issues would have to be resolved prior to achieving sufficient organisational support? What changes would need to be negotiated?

The controversial issues that became evident through the responses are dealt with below.

General

A fear was expressed that the formalisation of a specific extension policy would isolate extension from the other functions of the department, as well as, from other extension providers within the rural sector. It was also pointed out that effort would need to be put into changing extension staff attitudes if the recommendations were going to be implemented. Coupled with this was a call for participative development of the Extension Strategy Statement.

Definition

The broader definition of extension appeared to be largely accepted, with one call to expand the facilitation and leadership development aspects. One reply also took issue with the term 'adult education' - a term used in the Extension Policy Review - as being incompatible with extension.

Market failure

There was disagreement about the definition and use of the term market failure (from economists within QDPI), however, the general concept appeared to be largely accepted. Only one response questioned the appropriateness of not competing with private consultants.

Decentralisation

Some concern was voiced by senior managers that decentralisation might compromise long term and overall state perspectives on extension needs and programs.

Roles and specification

Most of the 'heat' centred around the recommendation for specific specialist roles for extension officers. It was forcefully argued from many sources that such roles would reduce needed flexibility in extension, did not capture the full range of extension skills needed in QDPI, and that there was a great deal of essential overlap within roles.

One-to-One

This issue generated almost as much angst and opposition as that of extension roles. The recommendation to withdraw from reactive on-to-one was seen as that which most threatened the capacity of extension officers to carry out their job. The oft used argument was that one-to-one was essential for organisational feedback from clients, training of new extension officers, and in obtaining the credibility extension officers needed to be accepted by the farming community. It was also pointed out that if QDPI expected more funding from farmer sources, the continuation of one-to-one would be an accompanying demand.

Broader community focus

The little response received concerning this issue related to the need to separate this function from 'normal' extension work by the appointment of special officers for the task, or the development of special, separate projects.

Client groups

The issue of client participation in extension planning and programs caused some concern. This mainly related to concern about what 'real' client participation was, the desire to maintain flexibility (without 'clients' setting the agenda), and the concern that many producer groups lacked skills in this area. General support for the concept of being selective in the choice of 'clients' was evident.

Information centres

A question was raised about the cost and maintenance problems with the proposed information centres.

Funding

Strong support was shown for a continued reliance on the use of mainly public funds for extension, but with charges on information packages produced by the department. There appeared to be some confusion about the charging for 'private good' and the perceived difficulties with making the distinction in practice. Increased industry funding of QDPI

extension was seen by some as a way to increase joint commitment for extension projects. As well, some support for charging for consultancy-type services was indicated.

The different viewpoints expressed about funding showed that there remained confusion about the Extension Policy Review's recommendations on this issue. A divergence of opinion on the issue of charging within QDPI remained.

Professional support

The concept of establishing a discipline support base for extension officers was well received. Not surprisingly, there was also backing for increased recognition and rewards for extension officers.

Geographical location

Little attention was given to this issue, and it was argued that it should not fall under the province of an extension strategy. There was a call to recognise the need to retain a 'critical mass' of extension resources together, rather than spreading officers too thinly.

(vi) The development

The process following this response was one of constructing draft Extension Strategy Statements and circulating them within the organisation. Modifications were also made after discussions with key persons and groups within the organisation, informal discussion with some industry groups, and weighing the contents against wider developments in (Queensland) government policy - for example in user-pay.

Ultimately, it was a matter of arriving at a document that would be supported by senior managers within QDPI, and endorsed by the Queensland Government.

8.2   OUTCOME

It was in this internal process of developing the final shape of the strategy that insights into the perceived role, scope, and limitations of formal extension policy emerged.

I attempted to capture these insights by following the threads of the struggle to change or modify the major recommendation domains that emerged from the Extension Policy Review (refer Appendix II.6 for details of techniques). From this, the structure of the Extension Strategy Statement (Appendix I) was formed. These recommendation domains were:

(i)   Extension definition, purpose, and output;
(ii)   Extension Funding;
(iii)   Extension roles and mode of operation;
(iv)   Extension support, rewards, and training;

(v)   Client groups;
(vi)   Relationships; and
(vii) Geographical location.

(i)   Extension definition, purpose, and output

The Extension Policy Review had proposed an extension definition as...*the use of communication processes to identify and assist change in primary industries,* with the emphasis being on market failure, yet with strategic application to...*enhance the sustained contribution of primary industries to the nation's economy.*

Initial challenge to this definition came from two directions. The 'non-agricultural' groups within the Department of Primary Industries (Water Resources, Forestry, Land Use and Fisheries) called for a wider recognition of advisory/consultancy activities in the area of water management, forestry and land conservation issues, and argued that the emphasis on economics and agricultural industries was far too limiting.

On the other end of the spectrum, 'progressive' extension officers wanted recognition of the...*facilitation role of extension - bringing groups together and empowering people to help themselves - and the role of extension in determining research priorities.*

The definition of extension, however, quickly focused on that of **adult education.**

The strong emphasis on adult education, however, resulted **not** from debate, but rather from the insistence of key senior management. It was contended that this was the **only basis from which continued public funding support for extension could, or would, be argued.** The argument was that, on equity grounds, everyone had a right to continuing education. Many landholders were unable to continue their education because of distance considerations, and a public extension service was one way of addressing this inequity. This was also a rationale for strengthening ties between QDPI extension, the university, and the skills-oriented Technical and Further Education (TAFE) System. It was believed that **commitment for continued public funding would not be achieved should the focus of QDPI extension appear to be only on technology transfer!** It was also argued that the **only** alternative to an adult education basis was to...*move extension into the commercial arena as was occurring elsewhere,* but it was contended that...*if we go this way, we will destroy extension as we see it - those forces are there!*

Even though I was reluctant to equate adult education to extension (rather than as a significant component of extension), I conceded to the change in emphasis with a rider of including the word 'communication'. The Extension Strategy Statement hence described extension in the following way:

> *QDPI extension is about using communication and adult education to help agricultural industries and others to identify where changes need to be made and to help them make those changes.* (QDPI, 1992:1)

One producer group received from disgruntled field extension staff, a copy of a late draft of the Extension Strategy Statement in which the definintion (of adult education) was proposed. The emphasis on such a definintion resulted in a public attack on the department. In a newspaper article entitled...*QDPI to Axe On-farm Extension - Drawn up by theorists* the Warwick graziers president was quoted as saying...*Farming is not a classroom, it is a school of life, and one farmer learns from what another does.* (Bush Telegraph, Warwick, March 1992) In the leader article, the correspondent proclaimed:

> *One-to-one farm visits will be a thing of the past, and farmers will go back to school at TAFE and other learning institutions to find out how QDPI wants them to farm.*

A senior departmental staff member also echoed this concern in a memorandum to the management. It agreed that...*the adult education concept will be attractive for continuing Government support for extension,* but warned that...*from the perspective of the rural sector the word "education" is likely to be misunderstood, and QDPI could be seen as patronising.* (Internal Memorandum, March 1992)

At a meeting of senior managers to discuss the draft strategy (April 1992), concern was expressed that the term 'adult' education may be seen as excluding programs targeting school children.

These adverse reactions resulted in a definition of adult education to be also included in the final document:

> *Adult education activities are those which assist people to learn for themselves and which help people to increase their practical skills and knowledge, so they can more effectively manage their enterprises and community functions in increasingly difficult circumstances.* (QDPI, 1992:3)

One of the authors of the Extension Policy Review remarked that there had been a fundamental shift in the policy...*from one based on market failure to one based on adult education.*

(ii)   Extension funding

If you start to charge for QDPI extension services, I tell you that we farmers will no longer use you - so said a senior executive of a conservative farmer organisation after I introduced myself as being involved in the follow-up process to the Extension Policy Review. This interpretation of the Extension Policy Review's direction as equating to user-pay was common in those organisations that I contacted. Also, many extension officers had a similar understanding and expressed concern.

Sections within QDPI continued to object to the way market failure was defined and used in the Extension Policy Review. A paper was written and circulated to senior managers and others involved in this second phase, to correct this misuse of the term: *The Extension*

Policy Review was deficient in its treatment of economic concepts, notably in the authors' treatment and understanding of the terms "market failure" and "public goods". These concepts have the potential to be very useful when the issue of "user pays" is addressed. (Internal Memorandum, October 1991) The paper went on to clarify a viewpoint on market failure, public and private benefit, and charging, which to me, supported the essential arguments of the Extension Policy Review! Because of the disputes over definitions of the term market failure, it was not used as such in the Extension Strategy Statement. Rather the concept of...*complementing and encouraging those in the private sector who provide personalised services* was used.

Meanwhile, on the broader government front, the Under Treasurer of the Queensland Government, in a public address entitled 'Setting a New Direction in Government Entities - Business Units' stated:

> *Governments will continue to face unparalleled demands to be more accountable in the use of public resources, by using those resources more efficiently and effectively. Commercialisation is and will continue to be, a key part of the Government's overall strategy to be more accountable*; and

> *I understand that the Commonwealth undertakes primary industry research on the basis of 50/50 public and industry funding with industry contributions being made through compulsory production levies. I am certain that there is considerable scope for the government to consider similar arrangements in Queensland.*
> (Smerdon, 1991)

These types of signals resulted in QDPI re-examining the implications of user-pay in a broader context than extension. There was a concern in some quarters that this might undermine the strong recommendations against (individual) user-pay extension contained in the Extension Policy Review. A memorandum written to maintain the momentum of the Extension Policy Review direction, argued that any move by QDPI into greater industry funding or user-pay should:

- . *not discourage clients the department wishes to relate to and influence;*
- . *support departmental moves in strategic direction and changes;*
- . *support appropriate departmental decisions on resource allocation;*
- . *be based on a knowledge of the full cost of the good or service;*
- . *be equitable in its application; and*
- . *not interfere with implementation of government and department policy.*
  (Internal Memorandum, 3 October 1991)

The theme of increased industry co-funding gained in support. It was proposed that it was a way of demonstrating a move towards user-pay, while still permitting QDPI to retain flexibility in its extension function. It was a view I was urged to adopt by senior management, for inclusion in the Extension Strategy Statement:

*...(the co-funding argument)..should not derive from the separation of public-private
benefit but argue inseparability and therefore the appropriateness of proportionate
industry-public funding on the multiplier effects*; and

*The notion of industry funding must be sold by emphasising the opening up of
industry participation in the strategic management and operational review of jointly
orchestrated services. Do not at this time say there is "no intention to impose any
new levies etc." - they may be necessary. Say instead that fund raising mechanisms
will have to be examined in concert with industry bodies.*
(Internal Memorandum, 7 October 1991)

On the issue of industry co-funding, a then senior manager, at a meeting with the
Extension Development Group, replied to the question of...*where will the money come
from,* with the response of...*its up to industry. We didn't tell them how to set up levies for
research. If they want extension services to continue, its really up to them.*

It was the broader governmental signals about the need to seek user-pay, and a desire to
avoid the imposition of individual user-pay in extension, that lead to the stronger emphasis
on industry co-funding in the Extension Strategy Statement:

*Where extension activities have direct benefits for individual industries and other
clients, some level of co-funding by Government and Industry has always existed.
Negotiated co-funding arrangements should occur where specific client groups stand
to gain significant group commercial advantages from agreed extension projects.*
(QDPI, 1992:6)

(iii)   Extension roles and mode of operation

The issue of clearly defined extension roles continued to dominate the debate in moving
from the Extension Policy Review to the Extension Strategy Statement.

Following receipt of an early draft of the Extension Strategy Statement, a group of
extension officers reacted by sending a formal response.   The attached note declared:
*Please find enclosed a discussion paper on the role of an extension officer as seen by
extension officers.* The front page of the submission further stated that...*contributions have
been made by district agricultural extension officers from all regions of the state.* (Internal
Memorandum, 1991)   It described the role of all extension officers as including
components of information provision, education, facilitation, research, development,
arbitration, and extension management. It concluded that:

*Unless the role of an extension officer is understood and clearly documented, an
effective and fair evaluation system cannot be implemented. Individual officers work,
to a varying degree, in all of the roles specified. District/client needs and individual
officers preference have in the past, dictated the time allocated to each of these roles.
The dilemma faced by all extension officers is that the importance places on these*

different roles by our clients appear to be in conflict with that determined by QDPI management. (Internal Memorandum, 1991)

This concern about forcing extension officers into what were perceived to be narrow and inflexible roles, paralleled that of the perceived withdrawal of one-to-one extension.

However, from a senior management point of view, the defined roles and mode of operation of extension officers were past the negotiable stage. In an early draft, reference had been made to a compromise of the...*availability of rostered extension officers to deal with 'ad-hoc' inquiries.* The senior management response was that...*the notion...is inconsistent with the proposed withdrawal from one-to-one.* (Internal Memorandum, October 1991)

Managers involved in a newly negotiated extension contract arrangement with the dairy industry voiced...*concern about the movement away from individualised services. Does this mean there is to be no more one-to-one? This must be clarified for future (Dairy contract) arrangements.* Similarly, a regional manager, while agreeing with the spirit of the strategy, also warned that...*employment of staff who have a commercial consultants role should not be dismissed.*

At senior management level, concern was expressed from the non-agricultual business groups (that is, Forestry, Water Resources, Agribusiness) that many of their key advisory functions were either not covered by the strategy, or were at odds with the strategy. For this reason, to obtain endorsement, it was necessary to recognise this by inserting the clause:

> *Outside of the extension function, QDPI will continue to provide personalised services in certain regulatory, plant and animal health, specific property planning, social justice (for example, financial counsellors) and other appropriate areas, with associated charges where applicable in line with Government policy.*
> (QDPI, 1992:2)

A significant distinction had been forced between the extension and advisory functions of field workers!

When a later draft was discussed in a forum with managers from the traditional agricultural business group within QDPI (February 1992), the apparent loss of one-to-one emerged as a major issue. There was general concern about the loss in flexibility, and there was also difficulty with...*how this approach maintains client contact?.* A common problem raised was that of how new officers were to gain the experience they needed in practical farm operations and problems. To clarify that 'pro-active' one-to-one extension was a valid extension approach (as opposed to a one-to-one advisory role), a clause was included in the strategy (and highlighted) which stated that:

> *QDPI extension will work individually with producers and others, but only where that work provides a wider benefit for the industry or the community as a whole.* (QDPI, 1992:2)

(iv)   Extension support, rewards, and training

As a result of the Extension Policy Review, and pre-empting the Extension Strategy Statement, the intention to establish of a **Rural Extension Centre** within the Agricultural Production Group of QDPI was announced. The centre was described as having the role of linking the business group with...*other organisations and institutions such as CSIRO, other state departments, the University of Queensland...(and other universities)...and the Department of Education and Technical and Further Education.* (Internal Memorandum, 1991) It was also to provide...*a real focus to develop extension and the social sciences, roles, responsibilities, relationships and to ensure extension is practical and relevant.* Another role was to...*foster, comment on and provide expert review on project involving extension and extension research.* The justification was given as the need to provide suitable disciplinary support. Its role was described as needing to be defined in the context of the Extension Policy Review and Extension Strategy Statement.

The intention to seek establishment of this centre within the University of Queensland (UQ) was argued as giving...*us (QDPI) more depth; them (UQ staff) better orientation; and creating a durable post graduate extension school for our training and perhaps the nation's.* The centre was also seen by senior managers as a way of bringing about the change in culture needed to implement the strategy. There was strong interest in the concept for a centre from the University of Queensland who had contributed a submission on a joint centre to the Extension Policy Review.

These moves resulted in the specific inclusion for a Rural Extension Centre in the Extension Strategy Statement, stating that it...*will be established in association with a University, be located in a rural setting...and ideally be physically associated with delivery of a regional extension service.* (QDPI, 1992:5)

(v)   Client groups

The issue of client involvement in extension management was a difficult area. There was no disagreement with the concept of greater involvement, but a model which was applicable across all regions and all client groups was a significant difficulty.

There was already a number of producer/QDPI consultative mechanisms emerging, as well as formalised landholder group structures such as Landcare. The confusion was captured by a memorandum from a senior officer who asked: *Are they (local client groups) extension versions of Research Station Committees or are they closer to industry action groups or to community participative groups like Landcare groups? Are they advisers, clients, overseers or partners?* (Internal Memorandum, 1992)

A key senior manager strongly favoured the establishment of formal boards comprising of representatives from client groups to manage extension in a service district. It was maintained that this concept should be included in the Extension Strategy Statement. This was based in part on the United States Co-operative Extension Model. **A major reason given for this viewpoint was that it would assist the argument and opportunity for industry co-funding of extension.**

This contrasted with the views expressed by a number of extension staff who saw client consultation as less directive, more informal, and related to specific projects that were undertaken. One extension officer responded after the term 'oversee' was used in an early draft by pointing out that...*oversee reads as if the group will be dictating to extension - change the word to participative / consultative / develop with!*

My own view had been influenced by the difficulties I had working with agri-politicians while working as an extension officer, as well as by the philosophies expressed by Bloome (1991) who argued for the need for public sector extension to work towards wider public interests rather than being captured by industry interests. As well, I did not see Australia as having the structure within the rural sector to permit this kind of formalised board being established and working.

The impasse was resolved by a generalised reference only to client groups, which paved the way for more formalised client involvement without providing a blueprint:

> *The geographical area appropriate to a local client group, and how the group is constituted and operates will be negotiated between the Department and its extension staff and industries and client communities.* (QDPI, 1992:3)

An attempt was made to broaden the framework for participation beyond that of traditional producers or producer groups:

> *Participants would have an active interest and involvement in industry and/or community issues. The broader the representation of participants, the more likely it will be that effective extension activities will be negotiated.* (3)

(vi)   Relationships

A later draft was criticised by a key senior manager who had a strong research background. He perceived it as having...*no treatment of the research/extension interface.* He stated that it **had** to be included as...*we need to describe a system which is going to take ideas and adapt them...the technical specialist end. Unless we do that, we'll have problems!*

Concern about the lack of sufficient reference to the research/extension interface in the draft was expressed by the then manager of a QDPI research institute: *The importance of extending research does not come through as a high priority in your discussion draft.* He

recommended that it...*would be valuable if your review discussed a few issues relevant to research and extension in detail, such as the interaction between research and extension, and the role of extension officers in research groups and institutes.*(Internal Memorandum, 12 November 1991) He submitted a paper...*based on views expressed by research staff over a period of time.* The paper stated that there was a need to ensure that QDPI strategically and systematically extended research results, and the need for extension officers to be involved in research projects prior to their completion. A key conclusion was the need for specialist extension staff to integrate the information being produced from research establishments.

An attempt to detail this relationship resulted in argument over the role of extension related to research. The disagreement centred around a description of extension's role in facilitating interaction between researchers and producers to jointly set research priorities. This concept of extension conflicted with views of senior managers with a research background. In the final document, the research/extension interface was not developed in detail. The role description of a **Development Extension Officer**, however, was accepted as moving in some way towards meeting this need.

(vii)   Geographical location

Very early on in the development of the Extension Strategy Statement, there was general agreement that the strategy should not deal with the specifics of geographical location of officers.   An early draft dealt with this issue by describing a process of determining location of officers...*in line with QDPI priorities, purpose, and available resources.*

In the final document, specific reference to geographical location of officers was dropped.

8.3   FORMAT

As the draft document developed to include the many comments, perspectives, concerns, and clarifications required by people, a thirty-five page Statement resulted. It dealt in-depth with a range of issues, including extension's relationship with research and educational institutions, the need for regular reviews of extension, and geographical location issues.   This draft was professionally edited in preparation for an envisaged circulation to extension staff and clients.

Some senior managers, however, voiced concern that the document had drifted too far from the original Extension Policy Review. The document was said to be introverted (...*look how wonderful we are*), too repetitive, too difficult to understand, and that it was ...*almost exclusively written from a technical perspective.*   Another comment was that it pandered to rural clients rather than focusing on public needs. It was recommended that it needed to better...*target the Minister, industry (leaders of producer organsiations), and the senior management within the organisation*!

At this stage, the draft was rejected by key senior managers! I was instructed to replace this document with...*a four page policy statement!* The argument put forward was that...*its a strategy, so we're not talking about (the detail relating to) implementation. Its a resource shift issue!* The content was considered to be too prescriptive, with too many details open to challenge.

This view was reinforced when a senior manager met with the Extension Development Group to discuss the implications of the Extension Strategy Statement. He stated that ...*the aim is not to be too concrete before industry negotiation. It needs to be logistically feasible and negotiable within political construct.* (Meeting, March 1992) He also asserted that a result of the strategy would be...*a higher percentage of resources going into extension.*

The concise version of the Extension Strategy Statement was arrived at and was supported by key senior managers. A copy was forwarded to the Director-General for consideration, and also to the Minister of Primary Industries. This was not a formal submission of the statement, but an opportunity to obtain early reaction from the Minister - and hence government of the day - to the direction of the Extension Strategy Statement. In particular, it sought reaction to...*the implicit withdrawal of QDPI from personalised advisory services to primary producers, the pursuit of cost-sharing arrangements with client groups for a community based adult education service, and on the linkages with educational institutions proposed including that of the Rural Extension Centre.* The statement was forwarded on the basis of having broad departmental acceptance.

The process was then close to the envisaged formal policy. There was now, little room to make significant further changes.

There was further negotiation, however, to ensure that the Extension Strategy Statement would be seen to relate to the entire department, not just the Agricultural Production Group. This required rewording to overtly go beyond the traditional agricultural industries. As a result, the final document read:

> *The primary purpose of QDPI is to meet this need for targeted information in the rural and fishing/aquaculture sectors;* and

> *The focus of QDPI extension will be on industries (industry bodies, producer groups, producers, and associated input and output industries) and geographically defined communities as the clients.* (QDPI, 1992:2)

A series of workshops were held with senior managers or their representatives who would be expected to negotiate directly with peak industry/community bodies about the nature and implementation of the strategy (assuming government endorsement). The first involved a pre-workshop exercise requiring participants to...*consider the future structure, resourcing, and operation of extension within sub-programs using the concepts proposed in the Extension Strategy Statement both based on current staffing and resources, and what you consider to be an optimum situation.* At this initial workshop, the then Deputy-

Director addressed the participants, supporting the direction of the Extension Strategy Statement and emphasising that...*as you begin consultation with clients about appropriate Departmental services, it is important that you have a firm basis from which to negotiate extension services which provide consistency across all business groups within the Department, and allow Departmental Programs to achieve Corporate Objectives.* (Fenwick, July 1992)

The second workshop focused on developing operational plans as a basis for **communicating** the implications of the proposed strategy with extension staff, and **negotiating** details with client groups.

In July 1992, the major producer groups were advised of the progress of the strategy, and the intention to negotiate specific details on a case-by-case basis.

Concurrently, however, there was concern that issues relating to the proposed Extension Strategy Statement would 'blow up' prior to the election. Excerpts from an early draft **had** appeared in the newspaper (without QDPI or government sanction), and as well as this, public comment, individual letters of concern by primary producers had been received by the Minister. Also, other public budgetary and structural concerns were occurring within QDPI at this time. For example, a newspaper article appeared with the caption 'QDPI's Brain Drain - Top executives leave in droves'. The article claimed that...*the redundancies and accompanying restructure followed Public Sector Management Commissioning investigation of QDPI, and they leave the department totally demoralised.* The editorial of the paper declared:

> *When you link this careless shedding of so many top executives with the unannounced but steadily advancing move to reshape QDPI's front-line, the extension service, you could be excused for thinking all is not for the best.*
> (Country Living Magazine, June 1992)

As a result, the government looked for reassurance from QDPI that it could ...*administratively handle and contain the issue* (of the planned changes to extension contained in the Extension Strategy Statement). A departmental response to the government outlined a plan for release of the strategy. It reiterated the background (including the needs for increased levels of skills and knowledge by primary producers), described the key features in terms of benefits for producers and the department, made the link with current government policy (equity, increased educational opportunities for rural people, and public sector role), and grounded the arguments in the relationship of the new direction with...*current successful extension activities.* The acknowledged difficult issues highlighted were user-pay, co-funding, contacts between extension officers and farmers, and the transition to private sector services. (Internal Office Memorandum, July 1992)

Informal discussions were also held with leaders of producer organisations to ascertain any fundamental concerns about the statement's proposals, prior to consideration of the statement by Cabinet (the decision-making body within the Queensland government).

A paper entitled 'The Extension Strategy Statement - Implementation and Operation' (Leslie, 1992) was prepared for this informal meeting. It argued the correctness of the changes based on the failure of the current extension system to provide adequate and systematic learning opportunities to the 'geographically dispersed' primary producers, and the need for equity of services. It also asserted that the current extension service was *...too narrowly focused on providing personalised advice on particular technical topics* with the consequences being that QDPI extension was...*not an ineffective extension service but a disappointingly inefficient one compared with what it could be.* Leslie further stated that QDPI believed that...*industry deserves much better and should not fight to maintain the status quo.* A strong point was made on the issue of user-pay: *We are not pursuing more extreme courses such as full cost fee-for-service or short term technology transfer models...We believe they are inappropriate for Queensland and Australia.* The paper then went on to outline the features of the Extension Strategy Statement in terms of its impact on industry. It specifically addressed the more 'contentious' issues in an attempt to clarify the impact of the strategy. Some personalised services were promised to continue. Farmer contact and on-farm time was described as not being reduced, but rather changed. It was admitted that funding was 'on the agenda', but that it was not predetermined. The paper also addressed the issue of negative attitudes that were appearing both within QDPI and amongst some producers about the changes signalled for QDPI extension. Leslie cautioned that...*we have to be very careful to interpret negativism correctly. Mostly it is fear, ignorance or capriciousness. Where it is valid we must and will do something about it.* (Leslie, 1992)

Feedback from this meeting indicated that the producer leaders who attended (some key industries were not represented) endorsed the general direction of the Extension Strategy Statement.

Because of the calling of an early state election in late 1992, Cabinet did not immediately consider the Extension Strategy Statement for immediate endorsement. However, based on the generally positive response from producer leaders, the key elements of the strategy were included in the Labour Party's Rural Policy platform as a lead-up to the election. A press release described these elements:

> *Premier Mr Wayne Goss said in Toowoomba yesterday his Government would set up regional and district information centres and a rural extension centre at the University of Queensland, Gatton College.*

> *Mr Goss said his government would improve extension services to make sure they delivered more relevant information and that there would be closer integration between DPI extension services, universities, rural training colleges and TAFE.*

> *When questioned on whether proposed improvements meant more field officers on the farm, Mr Casey said proposals being put to industry leaders would mean a different delivery of extension work.*

> *Mr Casey said the Government had met industry leaders taking proposals back to their state council level. He said in their first month back in office, the Government would work out a strategy and plan with rural leaders.*
> (The Chronicle, 12 September 1992)

Already public promises had been made about the implementation of some of the content of the Extension Strategy Statement!

Following the successful return of the Labour Government, Cabinet quickly considered, endorsed , and...*supported the thrust of*...the Extension Strategy Statement as submitted to them for...*public negotiation of implementation arrangements and provision of specific extension services.* There were two riders - one requiring feedback on the cost/benefits of the implications of this direction for a continuing (largely) publicly funded extension service, and the other directing consultation with education institutions.

The press statement announcing the new strategy proclaimed that:

> *It would give farmers, agribusiness and rural communities help they need to boost farm income and productivity...It will become one of the best information and extension services available to rural industry anywhere in the world and will improve our ability to compete.....The details will be worked out in consultation with agricultural industries, producer groups and other prospective clients, using the strategy agreed on today, as a framework for discussion.* (Casey, 1992)

Reference was also included as to a high level of involvement of producer groups, overcoming the 'cumbersome and haphazard' nature of traditional one-to-one extension, and that...*overall producer contact is expected to increase.* The press release also foreshadowed a $3 million injection above current commitments (noting that the government currently spent approximately $20 million per year on extension).

8.4   DISCUSSION

(i)   Extension definitions and paradigms

Conflicting definitions of extension did emerge during this process.

Firstly, there was a strong promotion of the technology transfer role of extension from researchers and from senior managers with research backgrounds. It appeared that the maintenance of this function was a primary motive for ensuring that user-pay and commercialisation were not thrust upon the extension function of the department. It was also a significant reason for **leaders** of producer organisations to support on-going QDPI extension.

A difficulty was in the government perception that a free extension service was, in effect, a publicly funded personal technical advisory service to already privileged farmers. For the capacity for technology transfer to be maintained, QDPI had to distance itself from that image and claim. This required overtly declaring that QDPI extension was no longer about one-to-one servicing! It was this personalised servicing that formed the basis of the argument for the introduction of user-pay.

Secondly, the purely commercial nature of the transactions had to be refuted. If extension was solely about improving the efficiency of the farming community, then the argument for commercialisation of the service could also predominate. For this reason, the emphasis was overtly moved to one of adult education. The argument encompassed an equity and human development aspect that did not have the same scope to be commercialised!

Extension organised around programmed 'educative' activities also provided more scope to ensure that extension was actually carrying out this technology transfer function - rather than getting caught up in the day-to-day servicing demands of individual clients.

It was the concern about losing this servicing function, however, that upset many field extension staff, and their immediate clients. The pre-emptive newspaper coverage of the draft Extension Strategy Statement was a result of these fears, and an attempt to maintain the servicing paradigm.

The use of the definition of adult education, however, did much to satisfy the 'progressive' extension officers. They saw in that definition the scope to pursue the emerging participative, and 'action learning' approaches to extension without being tied to demands of 'ad-hoc' inquiries.

There was provision for preferred paradigms to be pursued through the specialist roles described for extension. The **Program Extension** role provided scope for both straight information transfer activities, as well as those embracing participation and adult learning. The **Development Extension** role permitted those with a participatory approach to technology development (that is, learning from, and involving farmers in the development of appropriate technologies) to operate in this mode, as well for research scientists to envisage a stronger involvement of extension in promoting the results of specific research. The **Information Extension** role permitted a degree of continuation of the reactive servicing role of extension, and in providing information to the wider community.

The conflict between the view of extension as an advisory/consultancy role and these other roles was not resolved. Rather, on-going involvement of departmental field staff in such roles (for example, in financial counselling and water management) were overtly distanced from the extension function of the department.

Therefore, the prime definition of extension used to ground the case for retaining an on-going public sector extension function, was based on a political imperative rather than a philosophical negotiation. There was sufficient scope within this definition and components to enable general support from competing perspectives. Those extension

officers and their immediate clients who desired to maintain the 'status quo' had little opportunity to formally contest the change within the organisational process.

(ii)   Objective hierarchies

The **ultimate objective** contained in the Extension Policy Review was largely unchallenged and was reflected in the Extension Strategy Statement. Extension remained linked primarily to its ability to contribute to the prosperity of Queensland which was described as being...*tied to the international competitiveness of its agricultural and fishing industries* with riders on...*environmentally sound resource management.* There was little dispute over this within QDPI, the leaders of producer organisations, and the government.

The **intervention objective** of extension was to provide...*targeted information and knowledge in the rural and fishing/aquaculture sectors* to enable changes to be made, that would result in greater competitiveness and better environmental practices. The generalised nature of this intervention objective is striking. The Extension Strategy Statement did little to contribute to the clarification of specific intervention objectives of extension!

The issue of definitions and paradigms addressed the issue of how this generalised intervention objective could be achieved, or the **conditions for effect**. Adult education, communication, an emphasis on developing skills and knowledge, the specialist extension roles, and complementing private sector services were all placed in the context of achieving this intervention objective.

However, the key **condition for effect** was that of a commitment of public funds to allow the extension function to continue without the 'inappropriate' constraints of user-pay and commercialisation! An adult education focus, then, was both a way of achieving 'increased skills and knowledge' in people, and of ensuring continued public sector support. Overtly withdrawing from one-to-one extension was also both an argued way of being more targeted and effective in achieving the stated **intervention objective**, as well as being essential to rebutting the chief argument for the imposition of user-pay. The emphasis on co-funding of extension was one way of gaining resources and client commitment to extension programs, but it also demonstrated an essential move in the treasury emphasis on user-pay, without QDPI losing control of the function of extension.

Another **condition for effect** included the establishment of regional information centres. This not only provided scope for QDPI to upgrade its information delivery quality and capacity, it provided a political alternative to the loss of a one-to-one government service. The Rural Extension Centre was considered essential in assisting staff to move towards the direction contained in the Extension Strategy Statement (that is, away from one-to-one servicing of clients). It also, however, provided a visible symbol that QDPI and the government were increasing resources to extension, rather than withdrawing services.

In describing the extension roles, examples were given of **activities** appropriate to these roles. The danger was that these examples would become the blueprint. These were incidental to the overall content of the document.

(iii) Discourse and power

The catchcry of...*not wanting to re-invent the wheel*, permitted this next step to be taken without significant consultation outside of the managerial level within QDPI. The Extension Policy Review had provided the comprehensive consultative part of the process. The last chapter was concluded by highlighting that a significant discontinuity had occurred. The interest and debate that had commenced during the process of the Extension Policy Review was stifled, and was 'left hanging'. My scope for addressing this discontinuity during this subsequent phase was severely limited.

This limiting of discourse during the development of an Extension Strategy Statement permitted strong control over the ultimate content of the strategy by senior management within the organisation.

The control, however, was limited by the imperative to have support across the breadth of QDPI (or at least at senior management level), and to convince politicians that the Extension Strategy Statement both met their broader policy agendas and was marketable within the rural community. It was this latter requirement, that re-invested some of the power back into the hands of producers and producer organisations. The critical newspaper article, pre-empting the content of the Extension Strategy Statement and quoting leading farmers as critical of the adult education approach, as well as the individual letters to the Minister, provided a basis for electoral concern. The initiative was, in part, taken away from QDPI.

Meetings with the leaders of the producer organisations were an attempt to regain this advantage. The paper that accompanied these meetings firmly focused the discussion. It argued that the changes were not about the reduction of services, but about ensuring an improved service. Importantly, it focused on the central issue that concerned these groups - user-pay! The paper pointed to the fact that QDPI was **not**...*pursuing more extreme courses such as full cost fee-for-service or short term technical transfer models.* The implication was that the rejection of the proposed strategic direction for QDPI extension could see the imposition of such models! Continuation of a 'free' extension service within QDPI was implicitly linked to the acceptance of the Extension Strategy Statement by these leaders.

The issue at the core then, revolved around the continuation and resourcing of a public sector extension service. Arguments about extension models, one-to-one servicing, and specific intervention objectives were ultimately secondary to this issue, and room for negotiation about these details with specific producer groups remained. If this central issue was 'lost', the scope to argue and negotiate about the secondary issues became largely irrelevant.

The impact of the content of the Extension Strategy Statement was already evident prior to its official endorsement. It influenced the rural platform on which the government went into the state election. Public promises were made about establishing structures such as the Rural Extension Centre, and information centres. A figure of $3 million had also been quoted as being injected into extension. The impact of the Extension Strategy Statement in capturing resources was already evident!

(iv) The meaning of extension policy

Why was it necessary to go to this degree of effort to obtain support for a brief statement on extension, which included an endorsement by Cabinet? If it were just a matter of changing the approach to extension, why not make decisions within the scope and framework of the organisation and implement these?

The fundamental reasons appeared to be that:

(i)   It was a major resource maintenance/shift issue and hence demanded overt political support/sanction.

Pressure on public funds meant that continuation of the QDPI extension function was at risk. This was a concern to both researchers and producer organisations, as well as to extension staff themselves. Government endorsement of the public sector extension role, with an explicit commitment to continued funding, was essential if extension was to maintain its share of public resources.

Changes to its operation were required to permit extension to demonstrate a 'public' role - that is, beyond that of providing one-to-one advice to individuals. Re-training of extension officers, the appointment of new support staff, and the provision of 'ad-hoc' information through information centres were considered essential to permit this operational shift. To obtain this **extra** funding support at time of severe pressure on public funds, overt political and managerial support was also essential!

(ii)   Support was required across a large and diverse organisation to maintain an extension function.

The prevailing political climate favoured a shift towards commercialisation/user-pay for government services, including traditional agricultural services. The recent amalgamation of Water Resources and Forestry (with their accompanying focus on client advisory services) with the previously farmer-oriented Department of Primary Industries added to the weight and perception that extension was a matter of servicing individual client needs. If the organisation did not recognise and endorse an extension role that went beyond one-to-one advice, individual user-pay to field services across the department was more likely to be introduced. A cross-departmental commitment to an alternative definition of extension was essential to prevent this tide.

(iii) Public sector extension was in the public and political domain. Significant changes affecting the interface had electoral repercussions. 'Up-front' political support was essential to protect senior managers within the department against client/public backlash.

The key interface implications that were tested against broader government policy and commitment were...*the implicit withdrawal of QDPI personalised advisory services to primary producers, the pursuit of cost-sharing arrangements with client groups...a community based adult education service, and on the linkages with educational institutions including that of the Rural Extension Centre.* The test had a dual nature. It provided feedback both on whether these components were sufficient for continued support for extension, **and** whether the government was prepared to publicly back this change in client relationships. Only through endorsement of a public formal policy could this stance be tested and assured.

8.5 EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

This analysis has reinforced the theory emerging through this study, that formal extension policy is related to defining and establishing the **conditions for effect** to permit extension to operate.

These **conditions for effect,** however, are closely intertwined with two spheres of interest that are themselves closely linked. One sphere relates to the **reason for maintaining an extension capacity.** The other sphere is that of the **constraining conditions,** or political and resource imperatives within which public sector extension must work.

The **reason for maintaining an extension function,** in effect, combines the **ultimate objectives** and **intervention objectives** of the Hierarchy of Extension Objectives which I have been using for data collection. In order to even think about the **conditions for effect** required for extension, some mutual understanding is required as to the reason for extension's existence! Issues of extension paradigms, specific intervention objectives, and appropriate extension activities can be negotiated within this mutual understanding of the reason for maintaining an extension capacity. These issues become secondary, and are by their nature dynamic - they cannot be frozen at a particular point in time. Certain **conditions for effect,** however, must be in place to permit extension the capacity to fulfil its reason for existence!

Continued funding commitment to an extension service necessitates the government also concurring with this reason for maintaining an extension capacity. Government support, however, also places **constraining conditions** on extension - in terms of public funding limits, as well as the need to demonstrate such things as the principle of user-pay, client participation, regionalisation, and other societal changes within public services.

This can be illustrated by using the Extension Strategy Statement. The **ultimate objectives** of international competitiveness, food quality, and sustainability, and the

intervention objectives of providing...*targeted information and knowledge to assist people to better manage the states's agricultural and natural resources* may have been shared. They did not, however, provide a reason to maintain a 'public extension capacity'. Other mechanisms, for example, private or commercialised extension services, an expanded formal education system, or legislation and regulation, may have been sufficient to achieve the required **intervention objective.**

The argued reason for maintaining a public extension service was that...*many primary producers have only limited access to such targeted information.* It was argued, in effect, that extension had the capacity to overcome this limited access, and that the private and educational sectors needed to be complemented - that they were not sufficient in themselves to do the task. This was the argued - and accepted - reason for maintaining an extension capacity.

If the emphasis, then, is directed towards the 'reason for maintaining an extension capacity', rather than achieving specific outcome objectives, it becomes possible to think beyond the "if x then y" criteria. For example, extension could then be claimed to be an essential mechanism to facilitate rural community development, even when there was no prescriptive 'end-point' or economic imperative for the development. The rural community itself could provide its own evaluation. The government, the extension managers, extension officers, and the public need only agree that a reason for maintaining an extension capacity is to 'facilitate rural communities to develop'!

The Extension Strategy Statement had been completed and endorsed. QDPI now had, for the first time, an overt formal extension policy. The introductory chapter, however, pointed out that policies are only pieces of paper, and the road to implementation is not an easy one. The following chapter travels down this road and explores this link between a formal extension policy and actual changes in extension operation.

9. EARLY IMPLEMENTATION OF THE QDPI EXTENSION STRATEGY STATEMENT - NOVEMBER 1992 TO 1994

Any change must be carried out with consideration for the individuals involved. It must be done sensitively, openly and must engender debate about its need, nature, adoption, and evaluation. If this is not done, then any attempt to implement change will not be effective or even implemented. (Cullen, 1987)

A formal Extension Strategy Statement had been produced and endorsed by the department and government. Elements of it had also featured in election promises made to the rural sector. Two years on from the comprehensive Extension Policy Review, there was both sanction for action, and an imperative to act!

Difficulties with implementation was an issue raised in the introduction of this book. Wagemans' (1987) study of the problems with operationalising policy changes in the then Netherlands extension service gave no cause for optimism for an easy transition. What can an examination of the early days of implementation of the Extension Strategy add to the understanding of extension policy and its role in bringing about change?

The object of this case study was described as developing a theoretical framework for...*thinking about and acting on the policy element of public sector extension.* This phase should provide insights into this link between a formal 'paper' policy, and its impact on the actual resourcing and operation of extension. Did the formal policy make a difference in practice? Were there any significant discontinuities between the intention of the policy and the implementation of the policy? What lessons can be learnt about the link between the process and content of extension policy, and its implementation? What can be learnt about the potential impact?

This chapter only takes a 'snap-shot'. It considers implementation issues between November 1992 and mid-1994. This is a relatively short time frame and does not account for changing approaches, strategies, and events resulting from lessons learnt during this

early implementation period. There is no intention to 'judge' the appropriateness of implementation processes. The intention is only to see what can be learnt from this early implementation period as it relates to the meaning and framing of extension policy.

The chapter will be structured around the implementation process from a number of different perspectives. These are listed below:

- Implementation timetable
- Funding the changes
- The role of managers
- Establishing specialist staff
- Establishing information centres
- The role of the Rural Extension Centre
- Impact on extension staff
- Impact on clients

9.1   IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

Following the public announcement of the adoption of the Extension Strategy Statement by the State Government, there was an expectation (by government) that implementation would follow quickly.

In an explanation of the Extension Strategy Statement to leaders of producer groups, however, a long implementation period had been foreshadowed: *With special funding, we think we can do this (provide all staff with the training and skills needed to implement the strategy) in five years. Without such funding, it will take longer - 8 to 10 years.* (Leslie, 1992) In the same paper, it was suggested that...*industry contributions might start in Year 3 of implementation and if they reached $3 million from all sources by year 5 we could have the 'ideal' profile in place by 1998.*

An implementation timetable was drawn up and circulated. This defined milestones for client and staff consultations, and the establishment of specialist staff positions, the commencement of training from the Rural Extension Centre, and staff taking up the new extension roles described in the Extension Strategy Statement.

The implementation of the Extension Strategy required funds. These were needed for the creation of specialist staff positions, the establishment of the Rural Extension Centre and its training program, and the development of information centres. These elements requiring significant new funds were submitted to senior management as a 'new initiative project' to ensure its inclusion in the departmental budget process. The recent Cabinet endorsement, and the related electoral promises, assured funding against competing projects.

The government's interest in the progress of the implementation was demonstrated by on-going requests for details. In particular the cost-benefit analysis of the new strategy, which was a requirement of endorsement, was sought. There was also much interest in the evidence of progress, with information centres and the Rural Extension Centre as public evidence that implementation of the Extension Strategy was proceeding.

The rocky road of implementation is captured in the following sections!

9.2 FUNDING THE CHANGES

Leslie (1992) considered $8 million (over 4 years) to be the ideal amount of 'special revenue fund' to be injected into the implementation process to...*permit the change, including retraining, without any reduction in front-line services.* However, he feared that this amount was unlikely to be made available, and hence acknowledged a longer transition period.

In a media interview early in 1993, it was announced that there would be...*an injection of $3 million over the next three to four years in addition to the almost $20 million currently budgeted for agricultural extension.* (Qld Country Life, 4 February 1993)

In essence, however, the funding had to be found within the total existing budget of the department! This forced changes in priorities and for resources to move from 'low priority' areas of activity, to the financing of this 'new initiative'.

On the client funding of extension, Leslie (1992) had hoped for new funding (over time) to cover 20 - 25% of the costs - in the order of $3 million. In view of the depressed state of rural industries (severe drought and low commodity prices), there was reluctance to push this issue. Although the issue remained on the agenda, it was a low priority for implementation in the early stages.

Funding remained an issue throughout the early implementation. New positions and structures required significant resources in a department already stretched to the limit with a reducing budget.

9.3 ROLE OF MANAGERS

Immediately after Cabinet endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement, senior managers across the department were officially advised by memoranda of its endorsement by Cabinet. Managers were reminded of their responsibilities for staff and/or client consultation/negotiation, and advised of the requirement to report back to Cabinet. The memorandum concluded with the statement that...*these negotiations and the implementation of the strategy are an important policy initiative of the department and should be given due priority.* (Miller, 1992)

Managers, with state responsibilities, were charged with negotiating specific extension services with the producer organisations representing the various agricultural or pastoral industries, or resource management issues. Regional managers were charged to communicate the content and its implications to staff, and to facilitate the transition from the current generalised extension roles to those contained in the Extension Strategy Statement.

Despite memoranda about the relevance of the Extension Strategy and its implementation to all Business Groups, there remained a strong perception that the non-agricultural groups in the department initially had little identification with the strategy and sought to distance themselves from it. This difficulty with identifying with the Extension Strategy was demonstrated in a memorandum from a senior regional manager, just prior to Cabinet's endorsement:

> *I would suggest many of the groups/individuals listed in the notes as non-Agricultural Production Group operate such that, if we tried to open up the current draft strategy to include them, the trust and direction sought by the Government from the new extension strategy in the Rural Policy for their second term would be lost.* (Internal Memorandum, 26 November 1992)

The difficulties of co-ordination across reluctant Business Groups was accentuated by the fact that co-ordinators were part of the Agricultural Production Group. This provided little authority to enforce changes in other Business Groups.

This difficulty was met with the appointment of a senior state co-ordinator to facilitate the implementation of the Extension Strategy - the Director of Extension and Research. The appointee was a Regional Director, and relatively new to the department. As such, he had no apparent alignment to any particular group, and was senior enough to be able to make 'demands' relating to the implementation process. He was also given control over the money re-allocated to implement the Extension Strategy. An internal memorandum to senior managers described his 'Terms of Reference' as including:

> *...developing an agreed timetable for department-wide implementation including necessary transitionary arrangements, timing of staff appointments and budget direction;* and

> *...taking necessary steps to ensure that Managers in all Groups comprehend the Strategy and are initiating appropriate actions to implement it.*
> (Miller, 1993)

The memorandum also stated that...*the budget allocation of $1 million for the 1993/94 financial year cannot be committed to any expenditure item without specific approval...of* the Director - Extension and Research.

A key means employed to assist implementation was the establishment of two major committees. The first one was a 'State Steering Committee' for the establishment of information centres, and the other an 'Extension Strategy Communication Group'. These had cross-departmental and regional representation and were designed to speed up implementation of the Extension Strategy with cross-departmental consistency and support. In the first meeting of the Extension Strategy Communication Group, the purpose for the group was described as being formed to...*assist communication between the different groups in the department involved with implementation of the Extension Strategy. Members of the group are expected to report on activities within their Business Group, to raise matters their Business Group want clarified, and to report back to Business Group Directorates on matters discussed at the meeting.* (Coffey, July 1993)

This meeting highlighted the specific targets that needed to be achieved, with support from the group as:

- completion of role identification within each sub-program;
- completion of role negotiations;
- projectisation targets;
- co-funding targets;
- establishment of a central information coordination/management systems;
- establishment of information centres; and
- commencement of training activities.

The second meeting (August 1993) focused on the need for a 'checklist' to ensure/assist ...*compliance of extension projects with the Extension Strategy Statement.* The outcome intended was that...*by June 1995 all projects will be (if not totally in line with the strategy) well on the way to compliance with the strategy.* (Minutes, Extension Strategy Communication Group Meeting 2, 31 August 1993) A related issue was defined as clarifying the scope and definition of extension activities, that is to enunciate...*the differences between publicity campaigns, extension, advice, dissemination of technology and information and education.*

The link had to be made between these paper guidelines and extension activities in the regions. When asked why the implementation of the strategy was lagging, one senior manager suggested that it was because the departmental management structure had changed from central to regional control. As a result...*it has only progressed where regional management has understood it and believed in it.* A related conclusion made at a workshop to progress implementation, was that the management culture in some sections of QDPI was...*at odds with the empowerment of teams,* a central plank in the Extension Strategy. (Workshop, April 1994)

In an effort to put pressure on regional management to take steps to progress the implementation, a memorandum was circulated to Regional Directors (16 February 1994 - one year after endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement). This provided implementation deadlines, in terms of aligning extension projects and activities with the

intent of the Extension Strategy, in role negotiations and in providing extension staff profiles for the region.

To guide this compliance, two aids were given. Firstly, a planning guide for new extension projects was circulated, in which criteria to match new projects with that of the Extension Strategy was described. Secondly, a checklist for comparing new and current extension activities against the Extension Strategy was provided, with opportunity to suggest steps to bring them closer in line.

Frustration at the lack of progress in implementation was evident in a memorandum...*which pointed out that...several attempts have been made to collate data on the number and role of extension staff in each region. To date the quality of data has been variable (where it has been returned).* In an effort to make progress in this area, staff profiles for the different extension roles included in the strategy were circulated, as was a draft regional staff profile developed by one of the regions which was actively attempting implementation:

> *The extension strategy has been adopted as QDPI policy and regionally we have accepted the responsibility to implement the strategy. To date, we have ensured that all new extension position descriptions have been designed in a way consistent with the strategy. All staff have been informed of the strategy and training programs that area planned at the UQ Gatton Centre (REC). In the Performance Planning and Review process, extension staff have contracted to implement parts of the strategy. We have established a regional information service in the south region and recently, the regional extension specialist has been appointed.*
> (Hamilton, D., 1993)

In one regional situation, it was reported with some concern that the Regional Manager of a non-agricultural business group was failing to correctly interpret and implement the strategy. In discussion, the manager pointed out that...*he felt that the Extension Strategy was thrust on them without adequate input and consultation.*

An update of the progress of implementation tabled at the Extension Strategy Communication Group meeting stated that...*all extension staff were to have roles negotiated under the ESS by June 1995. Target is 80% by June 1994.* (Internal Memorandum, August 1993)

In an effort to assist compliance with the roles described in the Extension Strategy Statement, some managers had developed 'Position Descriptions' to mirror and expand on the roles as described in the Extension Strategy. These were used in the initial Performance Planning and Review discussions with some staff. A special meeting was called across Business Groups to bring together these sample roles, and develop a consistent 'generic Position Description' for the extension roles.

During the Performance Planning and Review process, there were many disagreements about the difference between 'Program' and 'Development' extension roles. (Hamilton, A., pers comm 1993) Was the position a 'Development' or 'Program' role? Was it possible to be 80% 'Development' and 20% 'Program'? Where was the cut-off? What would happen if there were too many people labelled as 'Development'? Would some end up being 'axed'?. What to me, and others involved in the development of the Extension Strategy Statement, seemed to be a clear cut difference, caused a lot of confusion, concern, and angst in the field.

The process, however, did provide a focus for discussion between managers and staff about the transitions to these roles. One manager involved in a number of Performance Planning and Review discussions with extension staff, for example, concluded that...*I was initially sceptical about the role definitions in relation to extension staff. However, I found them extremely valuable in negotiating work expectations (PP&R) with extension staff.*

A memorandum advising regional managers of deadlines for implementing the Extension Strategy, described role negotiations as having commenced, but requiring better co-ordination. The reason for the slowness in finalising these negotiations was suggested as resulting from managers...*still having difficulty with descriptions of these activities.* Examples of expanded descriptions of the roles were therefore circulated.

The Extension Strategy Statement had been endorsed at a time of significant structural change in QDPI. The amalgamation of three previously separate government departments had occurred. There had been a shift to program management from the previously discipline-based Branches, and new regional management structures were being established and modified.

Many managers then, lacked the background to understand the implications of the Extension Strategy, lacked commitment to implement it amongst their staff, or were too pre-occupied with other matters to give the implementation the time and energy required. For this reason, a lot of expectations rested with the specialist supporting positions included in the Extension Strategy Statement.

9.4   ESTABLISHING SPECIALIST STAFF

The appointment of specialist staff were seen as essential to overcome the managerial inertia and inability in taking the necessary steps to implement the Extension Strategy.

In an update of the implementation of the Extension Strategy, for example, Regional Extension Specialists (RES's) were described as having...*the task of ensuring that 50% of specific extension projects will fall within the Strategy guidelines by June 1994, and achieving full implementation by June 1995. They will be key personnel in regional and district negotiations with client groups, and in coordinating activities with other Departments.* (Coffey, 1993) The pivotal role of these specialist staff was recognised (or

hoped for!) early in the implementation, and achieving changes 'on the ground' was put into the too hard basket until these positions were filled.

In September 1993, a workshop involving the newly appointed Regional Extension Specialists was held to define their role in the implementation process. Although most had only very recently taken up their positions, they were already feeling the pressure of diverse expectations and conflicting demands from extension officers and managers. There were also struggles concerning the payment of salary and operating costs with the new positions - the 'extra' $1 million per year did not cover all of the extra expenses incurred when implementing the Extension Strategy.

The Regional Extension Specialists were keen to define their role, obtain support for their view from senior managers, and provide a basis for boundaries. Their tentative description of their role is outlined below:

> **Professional development of extension officers** - that is, to maximise beneficial use of the Performance Planning and Review process in supporting the transition of extension officers in taking up the roles contained in the Extension Strategy Statement, providing training in new skills required to take up those roles, and career development. They also saw a role in facilitating networking between extension officers to provide the peer support seen as necessary to enable such a transition to take place.

> **Developing excellence in extension projects** - that is, developing skills in project design that met the principles of the Extension Strategy Statement, in accessing resources needed to carry out such projects, and in their monitoring and evaluation.

> **Providing a linking and integrating role across projects and business groups** - that is, facilitating strategic direction in extension projects across Business Groups in a region, and providing a link to mutual resources.

The advantage of having specialist staff, however, carried with it the disadvantage that some managers appeared to attempt to shift the responsibility for implementing the Extension Strategy from themselves to the specialist staff. Claims that...*nothing seemed to be happening any differently* in extension, were in some cases, diverted to Regional Extension Specialists rather than to the managers responsible for the staff.

Deadlines for extension projects meeting the criteria laid down by Regional Extension Specialists as in line with the Extension Strategy, and of extension staff being officially aligned to the new roles were also considered the responsibility of Regional Extension Specialists - by managers in some regions. The frustration of meeting such requirements were not so much in meeting the 'paper deadlines', but the realisation that showing compliance on paper was 'irrelevant': *The problem is deeper, its about individual renegotiating of roles with extension officers through the Performance Planning and Review process...the check list (for extension projects) is also a paper exercise* (Regional Extension Specialist, 1994)

There was also some frustration expressed that despite this key role being played by Regional Extension Specialists, they lacked representation in state managerial committees related to the implementation of the Extension Strategy, and as a result, there was a lack of co-ordination and understanding for the needs and progress of that implementation. As a result it was considered that...*the implementation process of the Extension Strategy is often inconsistent with the principles of that strategy.* (Workshop, August 1994)

The other specialist support position for the implementation of the Extension Strategy was that of a Regional Information Specialist. This position was not highlighted in the Extension Strategy Statement, but was referred to under the section on information centres. In the struggle for resources to establish the structure to support implementation, this position was questioned and was the subject of some debate. After all, it was only a minor reference, and positions were difficult to establish. However, **the fact that it *was* contained in the endorsed Extension Strategy Statement, ensured its place.** The struggle continued, however, in the process of defining the position description, and hence the salary/resource level. A position description written in a similar responsibility vein to the Regional Extension Specialist, drew this response from a senior manager:

> *This has got to be overdone. With the exaggerated responsibility description and reporting relationships...the Information Specialist needs to be a worker for the Regional Management Team...We don't want a new specialist "bureau" across the state.*

Ultimately, when the position was approved, it was at a lower level than the Regional Extension Specialists. Funding for salaries, operating, and associated costs were also a difficulty and required negotiation and re-allocation within regional budgets.

Just as progress with extension roles and projects was limited prior to the appointment of Regional Extension Specialists, the development of the information centre concept and structures stalled until Information Specialists were appointed.

This position was linked specifically with the establishment of information centres.

9.5   INFORMATION CENTRES

Information centres were a major visible component of the Extension Strategy and were highlighted both in the government's rural election platform, and in the news release accompanying the introduction of the Extension Strategy Statement. It was this visibility that helped sell it to the government, providing an alternative to meeting farmer and community 'ad-hoc' information needs with the withdrawal of extension staff from this 'personalised service'.

Leslie (1992) had estimated that the...*capital costs of Information Centres and their stocks of publications, software, videos and electronics* was in the order of $2 million dollars. This excluded the specialist and support staff required to operate the centres. The $3 million dollars allocated for the total initiative had to go a long way!

There was some concern expressed by both extension staff and community groups that information centres would replace the human component of extension. This angst resulted in some extension staff initially demonstrating reluctance to co-operate in planning regional centres. A concern was expressed by a special Women's Policy Unit established by the state government, that...*Information Centres will be the only service delivery mechanism for the Department*...and was answered with the assurance that....*this couldn't be further from the truth.* (Internal Memorandum, May 1993)

Co-ordination was levelled at both a regional level (regional information committees) and at the state level (State Information Steering Committee), with both levels consisting of representatives from each Business Group. Regional Information Specialists provided the focus and energy at a regional level. The intention was for these specialists to provide the co-ordination and to set up the operating systems, while extension officers in the **Information Extension** role facilitated the development of targeted information for particular agricultural and pastoral industries, resource management issues, or communities.

A major issue was in the struggle between the visible information component, and the process of developing an information **system** that was targeted, pro-active, and participative. This concern was captured by a Regional Extension Specialist who noted that ...*money is being spent which is output oriented and not process oriented ... it seems a rush to get information on shelves...not on understanding what the client needs or wants. This is in conflict with the Extension Strategy.* (Workshop, August 1994) It was the organisational imperative for money to be spent within certain periods, and a political imperative to demonstrate visible implementation of the Extension Strategy that were seen as the reasons for this skewed emphasis.

A lot of pressure was exerted by politicians and from within the organisation with regard to the opening schedules for information centres. However, the breakdown of the previous discipline structures which had the responsibility to produce 'farm-notes' and other publications (with the support of specialist editors), had left a large gap in both preparation of material/information packages, and in the coordination of information in the department. As a result, despite the efforts of the state and regional committees to develop information systems, a major block in establishing regional information centres was the lack of information products, staff time, and resources to develop these.

Information centres, then, provided a focus for charting the implementation of the Extension Strategy. Their development provided both a visible evidence of progress, but were also seen as required before extension staff could, in practice, move out of providing 'ad-hoc' information advice and into the roles prescribed in the Extension Strategy Statement.

9.6   RURAL EXTENSION CENTRE

The Rural Extension Centre was a distinctly *new* initiative and had a profile and 'life' outside of the department, and hence had the potential for strong and positive publicity for the government's support for rural industry. It was an obvious counter to the concern that QDPI was withdrawing from the extension function. In the lead up to the election, the Rural Extension Centre featured as key component of the government's rural policy.

The establishment of the Rural Extension Centre was described by a cabinet official as a *...meter for how the implementation of the Extension Strategy was progressing.* It was argued that the establishment of the centre was relatively easy compared to the broader structural changes, and...*if the QDPI couldn't deliver its establishment on time, there was little hope for the rest.*

An establishment committee was set up comprising of staff from QDPI, and the two university campus' (St Lucia, Brisbane and Gatton). They answered to a steering committee comprising of senior management from the two organisations.

To seek active client participation (and 'ownership') of the Rural Extension Centre, a focus group workshop was organised with representatives from industry and community interest groups. In response to the question, 'what might be the purpose of the Rural Extension Centre', the groups came up with the following recommendations:

- to address the issues of social change facing rural communities;
- to provide a focus and linkages for extension;
- to provide services to rural community;
- to raise the performance and status of extension;
- to create new ways to involve clients in extension;
- to improve the management of extension;
- to contribute to extension policy;
- to develop new models for linkage between producers, researchers and extension; and
- to link 'doing and teaching' extension. (Woods, 1992)

The basis for organisational support for the Rural Extension Centre and a significant proportion of the '$1 million per year', however, lay in its role in the retraining of extension staff. It had been argued that for extension staff to move out of a technical servicing role, and into the more educative and facilitative roles contained in the Extension Strategy Statement, significant retraining was required.

Pressure, then, was placed on establishing courses, and demonstrating that this retraining was taking place.

The link with the Queensland University both enabled, and demanded, that courses were developed that fulfilled criteria for formal accreditation. In the first instance, this was in the form of a 'certificate', but moves were taken to achieve post-graduate status. Although many staff were interested in achieving 'paper' qualifications and saw it as a means of career development, others had difficulty with the academic demands this placed on them. The special funding provided for training permitted most staff to attend courses without relying on their own project, or regional budgets.

Initial training modules (modules equated to subjects, with a number of modules requiring completion for a certificate to be awarded) were based on a market survey of perceived needs of extension staff, and an analysis of skill needs for the positions described in the Extension Strategy Statement. These initial modules covered areas such as adult learning, facilitation, group dynamics, project management, information management, and evaluation. They were run by QDPI staff based at the Rural Extension Centre, associated University staff, Regional Extension Specialists, and other appropriate personnel.

Training started through the Rural Extension Centre in February 1994, some 12 months after the endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement. The complexity of establishing a joint-institutional centre, negotiating facilities, locating staff, and developing training material was time consuming. In the first six months of operation, approximately one hundred staff (out of a pool of approximately 450 full or part-time extension staff) had completed **one** (five were required for a certificate) of the training modules. The initial 'students' were also largely self-selected and particularly represented those most comfortable with the directions of the Extension Strategy, and with accreditation requirements. The time required for each module (one week residential, an on-the-job project for three months, and a two day follow-up session) also meant that there was a practical limit to the number of different modules that individual officers could complete in a year. Feedback from staff attending the courses has been very positive.

Regardless of any long-term impact of the training on extension staff's commitment to the direction of the Extension Strategy Statement and/or skills to move into new roles, the time-lines and the other limitations outlined above, precluded such training support as providing a 'quick-fix' solution to implementing the strategy.

9.7   IMPACT ON EXTENSION STAFF

Extension staff were not directly advised by central memorandum of the adoption of the new Extension Strategy. Instead, it was the responsibility of management in the different regions to communicate with staff and advise them of the content and implications of the strategy. Guidelines provided for these discussions were:

   (i)   an initial explanation and exploration of the implications of the Extension Strategy Statement framework as it may affect staff in the region (noting particularly the transition period, training intentions, time frame, and specific sub-program and client situations);

(ii)   an agreed process for continuing communication and negotiation to determine the details of specific staff roles, and to permit implementation over time; and

(iii)   the determination of issues that require clarification and resolution with regional staff. (Coutts, 1993)

In practice, these discussions were rather sporadic - a combination between staff meetings/seminars/workshops and the Performance Planning and Review process. The latter was incidental to the implementation of the Extension Strategy (being implemented as a general 'Human Resource Management' tool), but was seen as a mechanism for staff negotiations, aligning staff to the roles as described in the Extension Strategy Statement, and changing the way they operated. The Performance Planning and Review process was intended to negotiate and assess work activities by the staff member, as well as to identify training requirements.

A number of meetings that were held with extension and regional office staff to explain and discuss the implications of the Extension Strategy, followed a set format:

(i)   a brief explanation of the background to the strategy, and its key features were outlined to staff;
(ii)   participants broke up into groups to determine <u>both</u> opportunities and problems they saw with these key features; and
(iii)   the difficulties were discussed as a group to identify where clarification/modification might be needed.

The key concerns that arose from these meetings...*including quotes from staff which captured wide spread sentiment*, are listed below:

•   Roles were seen as too limiting, too inflexible, and with too much specialisation: *Our jobs demand elements of each role.*

•   The Program Extension Officer role was seen as too generalist, and too removed from technology/problem solving: *It will be seen to lose relevance and therefore to lose access to innovative producers.*

•   Development Extension Officers were seen as threatening the hands-on role of the remaining extension officers: *Care!...Development Officers may move to being researchers in extension clothing!*

•   It was feared that the Rural Extension Centre would become too academic and remote from the field extension officer or...*an academic self-congratulatory group.*

- Concern was expressed that user-pay was going to be introduced, resulting in...*difficulty of defining private/public benefit - don't hang this responsibility on extension officers.*

- An adult education emphasis was considered to be paternalistic and too limiting a description for extension: *If adult education is a primary role of extension - why don't we all go and work for TAFE? Where are the lines to be drawn?*

- There was resentment that the Extension Strategy Statement was developed without adequate consultation with extension staff: *Change doesn't occur in a vacuum, but apparently the compilation of extension strategies do!*

- Local Client Groups were seen as potentially too parochial, with too short a term perspective, and that...*problems would result with local industry groups managing extension.*

- There was strong disagreement with one-to-one approaches being 'totally' replaced by group extension: *Individual contact with producers is essential for all extension staff - none of which make the grower the sole beneficiary. How would new officers gain experience if they weren't involved in on-farm problem solving?*

- Insufficient attention was considered to have been given to other support services such as clerical, administration, and corporate services which must react similarly to any change in extension focus/organisation: *We're (Corporate services/administrative staff) the ones who have to face an irate public when extension officers will no longer talk with them!*

On the positive side - and because the process demanded recognition of opportunities - there was acknowledgment of the extra recognition, training, and support for extension and extension officers that was perceived to be contained in the Extension Strategy Statement.

The issue of roles was an on-going problem with staff. As described in section 9.3, the negotiation between extension managers and staff on roles proved to be a significant difficulty. The problem lay in the issue of overlap: *Can I be 25% Program Extension Officer and 75% Development Extension Officer?*, and the implications for day-to-day activities for officers in the role. Description of these roles in the Extension Strategy Statement had been very brief, and despite attempts to expand them into larger Position Descriptions, extension staff and managers had difficulty in visualising each role. An example of this difficulty was demonstrated at a recent (June 1994) Rural Extension Centre training module which I was directing on Information Management. It was attended by a number of extension officers who had recently been nominated as Information Extension Officers. After a week of challenge and exposure to the environment and opportunities developing in information systems (in the broadest sense), there was a call to...*define the day-to-day activities of an Information Extension Officer!*

As the implementation progressed, an increased resistance was perceived to be building up among extension staff concerning the strategy. There was concern in management that the implementation would...*founder on a small number of perceptions/misconceptions which many extension staff linked with the Strategy and found unpalatable.*

These concerns were fuelled by reports in the media concerning the implications of the Extension Strategy. The Minister for Primary Industries, for example, was quoted as saying that...*producers seeking one-to-one contact with Department of Primary Industries extension officers, under the redesigned DPI extension strategy, "had better look to the yellow pages".* (Queensland Country Life, 4 February 1993) This quote was faxed around regional offices between staff, and between clients and staff and added to the building angst.

In an effort to tackle this problem of staff resistance, and in the face of the difficulty in getting a consistent message through the multiple management, regional, group, and industry layers within the department, a memorandum was sent to all extension staff, tackling the key stumbling blocks 'head on'. The memorandum read in part:

> *Since assuming responsibility for implementation of the extension strategy about four weeks ago, I have become conscious of the feeling of many extension staff that they were not being kept informed.* (Coffey, June 1993)

The memo dealt with three issues: concern that extension officers were expected to work 'only' with groups; the perceived loss of capacity to handle 'ad-hoc' inquires; and statements that QDPI would no longer handle disease investigations.

The first issue of 'group versus individual' was addressed by explaining the difference between 'working with groups' and in projects of 'group' significance. The memorandum went on to say that...*increasingly extension staff are using group extension methods to enhance their effectiveness...however, extension staff will continue to work individually with producers and other clients to achieve these (negotiated group significant) targets.*

The second issue of 'ad-hoc' advisory was tackled by appealing to 'common sense': *This is again a misleading simplification.* Coffey argued that rather than forbidding staff to deal with 'ad-hoc' inquires, QDPI needed to...*manage this inquiry more effectively.* He signalled a transition period of 4 to 5 years to assist alternative providers, and improve QDPI information centres and described the move as necessary to foster self-reliance and...*free staff from dealing with repetitive time consuming inquires.*

The memorandum referred directly to the Extension Strategy Statement to reassure staff that it did not preclude continued disease investigations. It pointed out that such activities were 'not extension', and hence is outside of the charter of the strategy.

As well, the memorandum also dealt with information centres, the Rural Extension Centre and the training opportunities it would provide for staff, as well as the Performance Planning and Review process and the opportunity it provided for extension staff. The

memorandum finished with the assurance that...*I have little doubt that the extension strategy will result in better recognition for extension staff, improved career paths, and considerable opportunity to be creative and innovative.*

Despite such reassurance, workshops, and organisational demands, there was still a perception that there was no real change occurring 'in the bush'. One explanation for this was that...*the pressures from hobby farmers, home gardeners, or small farms were not putting the same pressure on extension officers working in truly rural areas. The main advantage for extension officers in the strategy is in giving them the right to say no to the increasing demands from this sector. Extension Officers in the 'bush' have fewer clients to deal with, know these clients personally, and are left more to their own devices.*

In a major external evaluation of the 'Sustainable Beef Production Systems' project in December 1993 - one year after the endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement - the evaluator reported that...*an issue which stood out from the interviews with Project team members...was the lack of commitment to adult learning models or participatory research by QDPI officers.* (Ison & Humphreys, 1993:45)

The evaluators concluded that there was a discrepancy between the regional and operational levels and management with regard to committment to...*increased participation by all parties...increased ownership, and the power that relates to that and a higher level of involvement of extension people in group related, action learning, adult education activities.* (54) While management had expressed these ideals as being consistent with the Extension Strategy, the evaluators suggested that these were not well appreciated by extension staff (with the exception of the project co-ordinator and one or two other regional staff).

Such project co-ordinators and other 'progressive' extension staff (for example, the Extension Development Group described in previous chapters) attempted to redress this 'ownership' and commitment to the principles of the Extension Strategy Statement, by initiating two conferences. The first was an internal conference aimed at extension staff and based around the skill areas described in the Extension Strategy Statement. Unfortunately, the conference was held immediately after the endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement by Cabinet (a 'fait accompli'). This highlighted the lack of input that extension staff had in the final shape of the formal policy, and made it appear as if the conference was designed to impose a direction rather than facilitate shared knowledge and assisted learning. The media comments about the demise of one-to-one services (with regards to producers seeking that service by...*looking to the yellow pages*) also co-incided with the conference. This added angst rather than learning.

The second event was an international Extension Conference (The Australia-Pacific Extension Conference, October 1993), that was designed to allow extension staff to understand the broader developments occurring outside of Queensland. Approximately 100 QDPI staff attended this conference. A workshop immediately following the conference sought to ascertain and consolidate any learning gained from participation. Significant issues raised by staff as emerging from the conference included: the need to be

forward looking; the need for more effective evaluation of extension; the interdependence of extension with other disciplines and organisations; and an appreciation of the policy context. A number of extension officers were reported to have made comments during the process which indicated that now they...*understood why the Extension Strategy Statement was written the way it was.* (Woods, pers comm. 1993)

A survey was carried out of extension staff in 1994 to explore changes in the way they were working, as well as changes in perceived needs and attitudes. This paralleled a similar survey carried out in 1987. Analysis of survey results demonstrated that the extension staff were spending significantly less time on 'ad-hoc' advisory work (24.9% in 1994 compared to 38.6% in 1987), and significantly more time on 'planned extension work' (33.8% compared to 24.3%). The time period over which these comparisons occurred do not provide the answer as to whether the formal policy facilitated the move, or whether it gave recognition to the move! One could also question whether extension staff provided answers that they knew would take pressure off them.

The survey also measured confidence that staff felt in the skills associated with the Extension Strategy. It was concluded that...*specialised training received during post (graduate) diploma or masters studies (in extension) has made the holders of these qualifications more confident in applying adult education principles, and therefore more confident of achieving the objectives set out in the strategy.* (Mills & Coutts, 1994:61)

An analysis was also carried out on the comments made by extension staff in the survey, framed around an 'organisational change model'. (This model is based on six stages of organisational change - initial shock, retreating, reacting, passive acceptance, exploration, and challenge). The analysis found survey respondents to be at various stages of this process. It was concluded that...*the role change for extension officers has challenged their values, their identity, and their sense of security. In their previous role, extension officers had a very clear customer, they were using their strong technical expertise and the results of their day's work were tangible.* (Cowan, in Mills & Coutts, 1994:75)

The impact on staff, therefore, was mixed. Those staff who were sympathetic with the adult learning and participative approaches embodied in the Extension Strategy, found increased opportunity for training and support to work in this way. Other staff, although required to have a 'new extension role' on paper to satisfy a demanding administration, appeared largely unaffected by the implementation process in these early stages.

9.8   IMPACT ON CLIENTS

In planning a media campaign to explain the implications of the Extension Strategy to clients, a senior officer wrote:

> *Industry groups and producers don't give a damn about the philosophy of the department's new extension strategy - its just another policy document...The only thing they care about is how it will directly impact on them as producers.*
> (Internal Memorandum, June 1993)

A press release announcing the new Extension Strategy Statement promised that...*the details will be worked out in consultation with agricultural industries, producer groups and other   prospective clients.*(QDPI News Release, 30 November 1992)   A list of departmental client groups was drawn up, together with the relevant managers, or their representatives, who were responsible for carrying out the negotiations about the Extension Strategy. Details of these negotiations were required to be reported back to Cabinet.

In practice, these early discussions were sporadic, and lacked substance. Collated feedback for this report to Cabinet, was as follows:

- *Local producer and client groups wished to be involved in decisions concerning detail of provision of local services, for example, the location of information centres. New consultative arrangements in major industries, such as the regional Beef Committees and the Regional Advisory Committees of the grains industry, will be used for this purpose;*

- *Producer groups demanded that consultation must involve genuine participation and decision-making;*

- *It was considered essential that personal contact between producers and extension officers be maintained. This is an essential component of the Strategy. The Strategy will provide more equity of access;*

- *There is a concern about the desire and capacity of the private sector to provide the services needed and at an affordable cost; and*

- *It was argued that a balance needs to be maintained in servicing production and natural resource management issues.* (Internal report, 1993)

The lack of progress in negotiating specific arrangements for different agricultural and pastoral industries and community groups, was considered to be a major impediment to implementing the Extension Strategy, resulting in confusion amongst producers.

It was concluded that implementation progress was suffering largely because the Extension Strategy was poorly comprehended: *There are still a large number of extension officers and their clients who are believing in the face value of the extension strategy or rumours.* (Hamilton A., 1994) One of the consequences of this was that...*staff confusion (at all*

levels) is compounding concerns in (producer) and community groups. (Internal Memorandum, June 1993) To use an example of the type of incidents that were causing organisational concern, it was reported that when an extension officer was asked by a producer to make a farm visit, he/she replied that...*under the extension strategy, I am no longer allowed to do so!*

As well as the lack of understanding of clients, it was also considered that there was a need to...*ensure current support is not eroded by informing industry (producer groups) of progress and progressing as soon as possible to specific project negotiation with local groups.* (Internal Memorandum, June 1993) Steps proposed to overcome this included identifying key players in QDPI who could help communicate with producer groups, and concentrating media efforts to educate industry about the need for the Extension Strategy.

There was also a view being expressed that endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement required that government policy objectives took precedence in negotiations with producer groups and other clients: *Their (that is, producer groups/rural communities) needs and wants are of concern to the QDPI but when they are divergent from Government policy, the QDPI must implement policy - the community and industry can bring pressure to bear on government to change policy but must be deterred from bringing pressure to bear on the QDPI staff to work against policy...Expanding the number of client categories means that some clients will perceive that they are suffering a reduction in services compared to the past, whilst others will perceive that they are suffering a reduction in services compared to the past.* (Internal Paper, 1993)

One response to such signals, for example, was a move by the grain industry to explore the opportunity to take over the Research, Development and Extension (RD&E) function within the industry. In a paper arguing for this direction, it was stated that...*there will be a continuing shift in emphasis by QDPI away from focused grains RD&E to community issues, and there will be continuing uncertainty about structures, levels of activity, and overall planning.* The paper went on to urge the grain industry to...*assume commercial, 'real' responsibility for the grains specific RD&E activities of the State Government, the QDPI.* (Johnson, 1993)

It is important to note that there was a significant difference between 'producer groups' with whom many of the negotiations were occurring, and producers themselves. Firstly, not all producers belonged to such groups and as such were not involved in any communication processes within these groups. Secondly, there was a difference in the perspectives of the leaders of these groups and their members. In an informal meeting with producers comprising a 'research and extension advisory committee' within a producer group, I was informed that...*although we on the committee agree with the direction of the Extension Strategy, most of our members would not.*

The impact on traditional direct clients of extension could be expected to mirror the impact on extension staff themselves. If the situation was that...*there was little change in the bush* (in the way extension officers were operating), then it could be expected that

there would be little impact on the clients of these extension officers - at <u>this</u> stage of implementation.

9.9   CONCURRENT EVENTS

During this period, the wider discourse continued.

Reviews of the extension function were also held in other states.   Concern had been expressed that Queensland could not hold out against user-pay if the other states made this choice.   As it turned out, the precedence in Queensland appeared to influence choices made elsewhere. A review of the New South Wales Department of Agriculture concluded government intervention would also be based on market failure, albeit, a 'more selective role'.   It was recommended that...*intervention should be limited to areas where market failure leads to a significant social and economic costs, and where the gains to the community exceed the cost of government intervention.* (Briggs, 1991:2) User-pay was not recommended because of the perceived...*potential conflict with public sector objectives.* The extension function was described as...*a combination of technology transfer, marketing, and adult education, to create the intellectual and social climate necessary to solve problems.*

A review of the Victorian Department of Food and Agriculture likewise recommended that the department should concentrate on...*field services that government needs to provide 'in the public good' versus those areas where industry should self regulate or where the forces of supply and demand should be left to operate freely in the private sector to match demand with costs of delivery.* (Watson et al, 1992:5)   Market failure was defined as...*when the private sector will not provide adequate services.*

Other conferences and workshops were also held at a national level to debate the best course for extension in the changing environment.   An 'Improved Extension Methods' workshop was initiated by the then National Soil Conservation Program based on the concern that...*despite the innovations which are taking place, there is still a concern that many landholders are not receiving the type of extension service that will enable them to adopt a sustainable land management approach.* (DPIE, 1992)   On this issue of sustainability, a comprehensive review of a movement known as 'Landcare[1]' in Australia, claimed that, despite some encouraging signs...*examples of significant institutional change embedding sustainable use and management of land as a fundamental underlying principle is as rare as small marsupials species in the arid zone.* (Campbell, 1992)

National organisations also attempted to influence the development of policies affecting extension.   The National Farmers Federation declared that...*currently, the transmission of*

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[1] Landcare has been described as...*local voluntary groups of people, mainly comprising of land users in rural areas, whose primary aims are to tackle land degradation and develop more sustainable land management practices.*

research results to farmers was inconsistent and often recognised by farmers, as well as parts of the scientific community, as inadequate. (National Farmers Federation, 1993) They called for government to maintain an extension capacity alongside the growing private sector. The Australian Institute of Agricultural Science also initiated a national conference, and used it as a springboard to develop national policy for agricultural extension. Such a policy was seen as necessary to remove the limitations of...*understanding, attitudes, institutional inertia and communications.* Likewise, the Research and Development Corporations took the initiative in commissioning national studies on the role of the private sector in extension, information delivery mechanisms, and the demand and supply of facilitation training. Part of the rational for commissioning these reports was that of identifying...*the effective investment options in technology transfer adoption in the future, and consider opportunities for enhanced collaboration between corporations.* (Inter-Corporation Working Group, 1993)

The 1993 Australian Pacific Extension Conference, held in Queensland, provided an opportunity to bring some of these developments together. The conference (as described in section 9.7) was initiated by the Extension Development Group in QDPI with a desire to expose QDPI extension staff to these wider developments. As the convenor of the conference, I was responsible for negotiating the necessary resources from QDPI to stage the conference. I found significant support within QDPI senior management to holding the conference, primarily as it was an opportunity for Queensland to promote the policy direction it had taken.

A significant number of papers at the conference focused on policy issues. User-pay remained on the agenda. Bennet (1993) from the United States argued for continuing public funding based on the significant public benefits and market failure (or limitation) issues. Other US speakers, Penrose and Rohrer (1993:100) faced with trialing user-pay argued that...*charging user-fees had its place.* New Zealand speakers provided lessons from their experience from commercialisation. Walker (1993:126) described the emergence of four distinct, though interrelated, practices. These were facilitation (identification and promotion of opportunities), extension (assisted learning), technology transfer (communicating new practices to farmers), and consultancy (contract advice to fee-paying clients). He described the commercial move as having resulted in...*less interaction between organisations, reduced feedback from farmers to science providers, and more limited information distribution - particularly to less well off and poorer performing farmers - and a loss of extension experience in New Zealand.* Walker,F. (1993:116) from Tasmania also highlighted that they made a strong distinction between the extension function (an education process) and an advisory function (consulting to interpret information).

This distinction between extension and advisory made at the conference inspired an attempt to make the same distinction in Queensland as a way of solving some of the conflict and confusion within the department. However, this was seen as attempting to change the endorsed policy (the Extension Strategy Statement), and the move was defeated (at least at that time).

One result of the conference was the establishment of a formal extension network - the Australia Pacific Extension Network. As well as having the purpose in assisting practitioners to share their knowledge and improve the practice and methodology of extension, a further outcome of the network was described as raising...*the understanding of key policy makers about the process and profession of extension and its importance to them.* (Makin, 1993)

9.10 SUMMARY

The endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement by Cabinet enabled, and demanded, the overt process of implementation to proceed. This was in the face of continued opposition within the organisation, and vocal concern by some producers and producer groups. It also ensured a degree of special funding to be provided out of an already stretched organisational budget.

The implementation occurred at a time of significant structural change within the organisation. Smaller discipline-based Branches were being relaced by larger 'program' management approaches, three previously separate state departments with their unique cultures and client orientation were being merged, and a regionalised service delivery structure was being put in place. These factors resulted in difficulties with communication within the department, with mutual understanding of implementation requirements, and with commitment to changes. There was also severe pressure on funds needed to establish staff positions and new structures.

In an attempt to develop this organisational consistency and commitment, a senior manager was appointed to co-ordinate implementation across Business Groups and regional boundaries. State level committees were also set up in an attempt to provide this cross-interaction required.

Much emphasis was placed on the role of specialist staff in providing the energy and leadership in progressing changes in staff roles and types of projects, and in the development of the network of regional information centres. The concern was expressed, however, that when these staff were in place, some managers were abdicating their role in facilitating implementation, leaving it up to the specialists. Specialists saw their role more in supporting the changes, rather than driving them.

The training offered through the Rural Extension Centre was initially based on self-selection, and the interest and ability of staff to cope with demands of university accreditation. The time frame to permit most staff to receive a breadth of training was such that it would not provide the basis for a rapid cultural change.

Extension staff responded to the demands of implementation of the strategy in mixed ways. Much appeared to depend on their location, and the level of their (extension) qualifications. There was a particular difficulty with relating to the roles contained in the Extension Strategy Statement.

Leaders of producer groups generally supported the direction of the strategy, but there was some exploration of alternative ways of continuing the technical support to their members. There was a gap between the views of leaders of these producer groups and the direct clients of extension officers. The impact on clients in rural areas appeared to be minimal at this early stage of implementation.

Developments in extension continued, as did forums for discussing policy and practice. The QDPI direction appeared to influence choices made elsewhere. However, the recent formalisation of policy in QDPI limited the impact of this further discourse on decision makers in QDPI.

9.11 DISCUSSION

The implementation of the Extension Strategy needed to occur on two levels. The first could be described as the 'visible' level. This level comprised of structures including the establishment of the Rural Extension Centre and information centres, processes such as training activities and the Performance Planning and Review process, new specialist staff positions, and on-paper compliance with such things as the allocation of new extension roles, and the compliance of extension projects with check-lists. The second level could be described as the 'invisible' level. This is the level at which there is a substantive change in attitudes, skills, activities, and relationships between extension officers and their 'clients'. It also encompasses the 'outcome' of these changes - do producers and community members in fact have more skills and knowledge as a result of these new approaches to extension?

The impact of the Extension Strategy Statement on this implementation process at these different levels is discussed below.

(i) The visible level

A policy decision had been made! Not only did change have to take place - it had to be **seen** to be taking place. Promises had been made in an election platform, in the media, and at other public venues. There were words about change - positive change - involving information centres that were going to 'mushroom' around the state, a Rural Extension Centre that was going to pull together resources from the University and QDPI and make an impact in providing skills to the rural sector, as well as the appointment of new specialist extension staff.

Money had been publicly promised to ensure the changes. There was political and organisational credibility and accountability at stake. The Extension Policy Review was first mooted in 1989. Expectations for re-organisation and change had been 'bubbling' since that time, and now that a policy had been publicly endorsed by Cabinet, changes had to be seen.

One difficulty was that the organisation was going through considerable other structural change and demands on its resources. The implementation of the Extension Strategy was demanding funds to establish, stock, and support a network of costly information centres, and a new Rural Extension Centre with the associated costly mass training of staff. It also called for new staff positions. The reality of re-allocating the promised funds from 'low-priority areas' meant hard decisions had to be made. For every 'new' position, another redundancy from elsewhere in the organisation was inevitable. As well, there were a number of managers who did not relate to the strategy and consequently did not fully support its introduction.

It was only the political imperative to implement these changes that permitted the implementation to proceed.

Because of the political and public nature of the Extension Strategy, and the demands put on senior management of the organisation, the resource and structural changes needed to implement the strategy were made a resource priority and funding was allocated.

Milestones were based around these visible components. These included such things as the holding of negotiations with client groups, the opening of regional information centres, the allocation of new extension roles to staff, and the compliance of extension projects (on paper) with the 'principles' of the Extension Strategy Statement. They also included the opening of the Rural Extension Centre, and the holding of training courses.

Despite the argument that even with full resourcing and training, a three to five year transition signalled by Leslie (1992) for extension staff to move into the new roles, political realities demanded that a much quicker transition at least 'appeared' to be taking place. The intention to have 80% of extension consigned to roles under the Extension Strategy Statement by June 1994, and for all projects to be well on the way to compliance with the strategy by June 1995, meant that skills (and attitudes?) would significantly lag behind apparent (on-paper) compliance with the political imperatives.

In this early period of implementation some significant progress was made towards meeting these visible milestones. In particular, the Rural Extension Centre was established, and courses commenced (twelve months after the endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement). Extension roles were placed against most names of extension officers, and some progress was made towards aligning planned extension projects with criteria reflecting the Extension Strategy. A notable exception was progress in the area of information centres. The high cost of establishing and staffing, the difficulty staff and management had with the concept, the slowness in appointing Regional Information Specialists, and the lack of suitable materials and information systems resulted in significant lead time needed to permit development. A political imperative could not overcome these difficulties with the stroke of a pen!

The shift away from 'ad-hoc' servicing of clients, in part, relied on the development of the information centre concept. As well, an extended and comprehensive training program was considered essential to provide staff with the skills and motivation to take on the pro-active and adult education oriented extension envisaged in the Extension Strategy

Statement. Effort on the paper conformity of extension staff positions and activities prior to inroads made into these **conditions for effect** would seem to be questionable.

This leads into the impact of the Extension Strategy at the 'invisible level' of implementation.

(ii)   The invisible level

It is the 'invisible' level where change had to occur to impact on the organisation/client interface.

Based on his research of changes in the Dutch extension service, Wagemans (1987:105) asserted that it is the extension officers who have the true decision-making power when it comes to the actual execution of extension activities. He suggested that...*for actors in the field domain, the plan (policy) only has meaning as far as it forbids some activities or the execution of individual plans.* The insistence on alignment with new roles, and for extension projects to demonstrate compliance with the Extension Strategy, and the use of the Performance Planning and Review process would appear to be means by which the organisations attempted to 'forbid some actions'. Despite this, a perception had remained that...*nothing had changed in the bush.*

Although extension staff and their immediate clients had some scope to input into the policy development process during the Extension Policy Review, that input was minimal, and the impact not evident to them. Throughout the on-going process, many field extension staff argued against two of the central planks of the policy - the withdrawal of one-to-one (reactive) extension, and the new defined roles of Information Extension Officer, Program Extension Officer, and Development Extension Officer. There was little scope, however, to influence the outcome in this regard. These two elements were then captured in formal policy with an organisational imperative to demonstrate their implementation at the organisational-client interface. The reluctance of many extension staff to actively co-operate was not surprising! The lack of understanding, or acceptance, of the new directions by immediate producer clients, and hence their continued 'traditional' demands on extension officers also worked against change.

The longer term strategy was one of providing training for extension staff, and structural systems such as information centres to provide alternatives for clients seeking information, and allow staff extra latitude to vary their work patterns. It had also been hoped that over time, staff would see advantages and gain new measures of work satisfaction. New staff would also be employed under the criteria of the new extension directions, allowing a further shift over time. Overt political and organisational sanction was also intended to permit extension staff to be able to say 'no' and prioritise their time.

There was a major discontinuity, then, between the implementation on paper, and that occurring at much of the extension officer-client interface.

(iii)   The notion of extension policy

There was a strong, direct link between the written and endorsed policy and subsequent resource allocation and action.   In a period of resource restrictions, new staff positions were created and filled.   In a period of restructuring and multiple committees, new cross-departmental committees at head office and regional levels were established in an attempt to achieve concrete implementation imperatives.   The public and political nature of the new policy ensured action and resources from the organisation.   The enactment of a formal policy did result in Colebatch's (1993:37)...*policy as the structuring of commitment.*

Such written policy, however, had significant limitations beyond the visible components. It may have ensured resourcing to establish information centres but could not ensure their value, use, or "success".   It may have established a Rural Extension Centre to provide training support for staff, but could not guarantee that staff would seek training or use the training provided in the way intended.   It may have established better structures for client participation but could not ensure more effective participation or outcomes.

In this instance, a successful implementation demanded co-operation between the Business Groups within the department, from extension officers and clients, with the private sector, and with extension organisations.

The value of the policy development process was that it brought people together.   The very fact of holding a review highlighted the 'fact' of a changing operating environment for extension.   It caused groups to overtly look at their relationship with QDPI and enter into discourse with them.   In this way, it served as what Colebatch (1993:39) called...*policy as the interpretation of action.*

The limitation of the process was that the discourse was very much one-way, and inadequately linked with the outcome.   Groups and individuals had their say into an apparently open review, but the next they knew was that a formal Extension Policy Review document was published in which their contribution was unclear.   Despite the limited formal responses to the 1990 Extension Policy Review, the next stage of policy development - the Extension Strategy Statement - occurred very much in relative isolation from either staff or clients.   The endorsed strategy by Cabinet prior to wide discussion and negotiation ensured that the link with the consultative process was lost.   It now became a 'top down' transfer of technology type exercise to change attitudes, skills, and operations in many extension staff and their immediate clients!

The actual policy document *was* a powerful way to achieve a shift in resources, and provide endorsement for those persons/groups who wished to go in the endorsed direction. However, on its own it was extremely limited in changing the culture or actual operation of extension at the client interface.

The power of policy, however, in changing attitudes, organisational culture, and actual extension operation would appear to lie more in the *process* of developing the policy. This is when people are focusing on change issues - when discourse is occurring at a level which impacts on world views.   Unlike the presentation of a 'fait-accompli' policy

document which can be rejected as inappropriate or inadequate, the consultative and negotiating environment provides room for acknowledging that change is required.

It is in this stage that 'reviewers' need to be clear about what is **not** negotiable within the context of extension policy. It is the education process of the factors underlying the need for review which has the potential to add value to the discourse, and prevent alienation and disenchantment at the conclusion of the process. A process is needed which ensures that feedback is provided to those who have given initial input, with reasons why a certain policy is developing out of the process, and provide them with further opportunity for input prior to the 'final product'.

It is on this issue of a 'final product' that the issue of content becomes critical. The time frame involved in the process of developing and implementing this extension policy was significant. The Extension Policy Review was first mooted in 1989. The Extension Strategy Statement was endorsed in 1992. Almost two years into the implementation process, only marginal inroads have been made.

The Extension Policy Review took only a snapshot view of the needs and developing debate surrounding extension and extension policy. The debate was only just developing momentum. Emergent meaning was in a state of violent flux. Discourse was deliberately limited after this snapshot was developed. Four years on, there remained political and organisational imperatives to implement an extension 'design' that could well lag behind in the debate. The insistence on earlier developed roles and projects to meet certain criteria limited emergent strategies, or the chance to capture new thinking and developments from the wider extension world.

The longer term structural features of the Extension Strategy Statement, however, such as the establishment of the Rural Extension Centre, and network of information centres hold the inherent capacity for capturing emergent strategies and directions. Although initial training courses are based around the skill areas deemed to be needed to allow staff to take up the roles in the Extension Strategy, the very emphasis on personal development, questioning, and action learning works against extension staff slotting into prescriptive roles and extension approaches. The participative and 'action learning' nature of developing a new concept of information centres also inevitably leaves them open to new developments and emergent strategies.

9.12   EMERGING PERSPECTIVES

The content of formal policy, then, becomes an important issue. It revolves around the issue raised by Mintzberg (1994:387) concerning 'formalisation' in a strategic planning context. As I pointed out in the introduction of this book, Mintzberg had warned that although formalisation...*may be necessary to strengthen some loose edges, ...it has its own delicate edge beyond which planners should not go. Formalisation is a double edged sword, easily reaching the point where help becomes a hindrance.* The chief value in a formal extension policy would appear to lie in its capture of government/societal

commitment to an extension function, and the commitment of resources to develop and support that function.

It would appear that the **content** of a formal extension policy should be limited to that of defining the **reason for maintaining an extension function** - if one is deemed to exist - and the supporting structures required to permit extension to build and develop its capacity over time to fulfil this reason!

It would also appear that a distinction needs to be made between a process to develop policy to clarify the reason for an extension function and the **conditions for effect** required to allow an appropriate extension capacity to develop over time, and an on-going process to permit modifications, and optimal use of the extension function. This optimal use will vary over time, as conditions (environmental, market, society) change, and new knowledge about extension process is developed.

10.   TOWARDS AN EXTENSION POLICY FRAMEWORK

10.1   Extension policy content
10.2   Extension policy process
10.3   Extension policy framework
10.4   Concluding remarks

The incursion into Queensland provided an opportunity to explore the emerging meaning of **extension policy** in a specific historical context. It has provided insights into why *...extension policy was spoken about, who did the speaking, and how extension policy was put into discourse!* (after Foucault, 1976) It has therefore provided insights into the concept of extension policy, which could have relevance for other places and other times.

Extension policy was described earlier in this book, as **attempts by organisations and governments to impinge on the operation of extension**. It was argued, however, that extension policy was being developed without an adequate framework for thinking about and acting upon it. For this reason, it was feared that there was a risk that some major policy issues would be neglected because there was no adequate framework for discussing them.

A number of issues surrounding the notion of extension policy were highlighted as confusing the development of such a framework. These issues included definitions of extension and policy, the legitimate role of public sector extension, and the process, content, implementation and impact of extension policy.

It was this use of a confusing concept - extension policy - in practice, that provided both the interest in developing an improved theoretical framework, and the research environment in which to explore it. I proposed that the questions surrounding the meaning and use of extension policy could only be addressed by studying an actual situation where it was being developed, designed, and implemented.

The developments around extension policy in Queensland provided an opportunity to enter into this world of 'appreciated knowledge' and explore the meaning being constructed around the term **extension policy**. A grounded theory approach provided a means of gathering and analysing data in a complex 'messy' world of 'appreciated knowledge'.

I entered the research with a number of tools, or categories, to provide a basis for data collation and analysis. The **Hierarchy of Extension Objectives** provided me with a structure to examine the content around which the notion of extension policy was developing. **Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems** provided a means of seeking out those individuals and groups caught up in the process in which extension policy was being debated and formalised, as well as their interaction. The concept of **power** provided a basis for exploring the interaction, and the relationship between the process of developing policy and the formal policy document.

In this concluding chapter, this interaction between the emergent meaning of extension policy, those involved in the process of change, and the role and content of formal policy are brought together. The chapter is structured as follows:

1.	Extension policy content	the substance of the debate and developments in extension policy; the content of formal policy;
2.	Extension policy process	the steps in policy development; the individuals and groups; discontinuities; role of a formal policy; and
3.	Extension policy framework	a theoretical framework for thinking about and acting on the policy element of extension.

10.1   EXTENSION POLICY CONTENT

(i)   Content issues emerging during the initiation and development phase

It was in the exploration of the reason behind the initiation of the Extension Policy Review in Queensland, that the link between the concept of a formal extension policy and resources was first made.

The analysis of the initiation of the 1990 Extension Policy Review, suggested that individuals within the organisation anticipated decreased resourcing of the extension function. The move towards user-pay in other states and countries, new developments in extension approaches, and the associated questioning of the traditional extension paradigms of QDPI extension, were brought home in such forums as the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference.

The 1987 conference provided an opportunity to promote various perspectives on funding, extension approaches, and the role of the public sector. It demonstrated that perspectives were changing, and that a wide range of interest groups held a stake in the shape of public extension policy.   Importantly, it appeared as if the conference was designed around developing a rationale - or reason - to maintain a public sector extension function amidst the turmoil and debates on paradigms and relationships.   This reason was essential if public sector extension was to be retained - and resourced.

As well as the issue of funding, much of the debate focused around new skills and relationships required for extension officers to cope with an increasingly complex farming and rural sector.

The 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review appeared to be a means of pre-empting expected changes imposed by broader government political philosophies and reduced resources for the

extension function. It appeared to be designed to provide a basis for arguing the continued existence of the extension function based on the power of a wide ranging review. It could be said that the initiation was a way of providing a new **reason** to maintain - and resource - an extension service in the face of heavy competing demands. The previous 'reason' of food production needs and providing one-to-one technical advice to a dwindling and increasingly sophisticated farming sector was fading fast! Consequently, the reason for the continuation of public sector extension had to centre around public benefits, not private.

The process of the 1990 Extension Policy Review was designed to provide maximum input over a relatively short time period. It was a recognition that many individuals and groups had an interest and potential stake in a public extension function, and that a continuation of that function would demand some support from these stakeholders. The process however, as well as being a 'snap-shot' in time, was tightly managed. The Terms of Reference, the internal nature of the review, and the opportunity to be selective within a massive amount of information, limited the scope for broader debate and negotiation. Discourse was limited. It was also evident that the wider debate and developments in extension, the changing expectations of society and economic/political perspectives had significant impact on the outcome of the review. These were essential elements in the argument for maintaining the continued extension function, but were largely out of the experience of many of the Queensland stakeholders. The opportunity was not provided to feedback these factors to those who participated for further discussion/negotiation. This was despite the controversy and interest raised by the review, and the extremely dynamic nature of the broader debate surrounding extension and extension policy. This discontinuity in process is discussed later in the chapter.

This 'snap-shot' in time was a significant feature of the review. The degree to which it would provide a hindrance would depend on the nature of the content and impact of the resulting policy.

(ii) Content of formal policy and its impact during implementation

The act of formalising an extension policy demonstrated a commitment from the government to maintaining the extension function. The use of extension was now a policy, not an anachronistic instrument of policy which could be used or discarded as resources diminished. It provided that basis for a continuing share of public funds against other government structures and policy demands. There was a new agreed 'reason to maintain an extension function!'

It also provided resources for the structures and training deemed as necessary for developing that extension function. The establishment of a Rural Extension Centre and the associated training of extension staff, the network of information centres considered necessary to provide alternatives to 'ad-hoc' advisory roles, and the establishment of specialist support staff were only made possible by their inclusion in the content of the formal Extension Strategy Statement.

The public endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement also provided the conditions to allow extensions staff to move into new directions which would have otherwise been electorally difficult without such endorsement. It also permitted the use of the Performance Planning and Review process to overtly shift staff towards activities and training consistent with a particular extension orientation, and the related development of Position Descriptions for new staff. This would have been difficult within the organisation without such formalised support and imperatives. It was in the provision of such resources and structures that the formal extension policy proved to have a powerful role.

The formal policy was severely limited, however, in bringing about short-term changes both in the day-to-day extension officer-client interface, and in the development and shaping of structures such as the information centres. The buildings and basic material that the formal policy could resource were only bricks and mortar without the necessary, and emergent, conceptual development.

Likewise, the Rural Extension Centre could be established, and training programs instituted, but extension officers could not be forced - or their situation may not allow them - to attend or act on any learning. The focus on self-learning also could not guarantee that staff would be steered in the direction outlined in a policy.

The emphasis on meeting paper criteria in the form of opening dates for conceptually under-developed information centres, and roles and checklists for extension staff who have not made the cultural shift had the potential to divert energy and attention away from effecting 'real' change, and to undermine developing the potential of the policy direction.

The perceived rigidity of roles and extension approaches also had the potential to prevent the emergence of perhaps more appropriate roles over time. Prescriptiveness based on a review at a particular point in time, and at a time of upheaval and dynamic development, appeared counter-productive and a severe restraint.

It was in the defining of a 'reason' for a maintaining and resourcing a continuing public sector capacity, then, that formal extension policy played an important role. The provision of structures and processes along which to develop the capacity to fulfil this reason was also made possible through this formal policy. Prescriptiveness, or pre-empting the appropriate development of that capacity, was the 'down-side' of the policy content.

The process initiated to determine the content of extension policy, limited input by stakeholders into the formulation of that content, ownership through the emergence of a shared meaning, and the opportunity for improvements to be made as the discourse and experience progressed.

Although the implementation process had not progressed far enough to seek data on the impact of the policy, the scope to monitor and adjust extension operation based on its perceived impact or outcomes would also be affected by prescriptiveness and flexibility within formal policy. The greater the prescriptiveness in the objectives or process of extension, the greater the danger of unintended consequences resulting from extension.

(iii)   Role and limitations of formal policy

Firstly, establishment of a formal, government endorsed extension policy provided a public commitment to an extension function. Secondly, it enunciated a community reason for maintaining this function, and the accompanying societal trends impacting on extension policy. Thirdly, it ensured continued resources and specific funding to permit structures and processes to be put into place to permit extension to fulfil the reason for its support.

The time-frame required to establish and modify the formal policy limited its role in defining specifics of what extension should be doing, or how it should be doing it. Economic, societal, and environmental contexts change. Within the community, there is extreme variation in make-up and needs. The roles of other agencies, including the private sector, change over time and from place to place. Developments in extension processes and paradigms progress, and debates about extension continue to have impact. Content that is prescriptive in areas subject to change, on-going negotiation, and new developments then, would appear to be best avoided in formal policy.

The defined extension roles contained in the Extension Strategy Statement appeared to go beyond the needs of a formal policy. Their apparent prescriptiveness limited organisational flexibility and scope to develop alternative capacity to meet these functions. The organisation and extension officers were locked into a struggle to meet the policy requirement for roles that appeared appropriate by some key individuals at a particular point in time. Much energy was directed into compliance with these roles rather than developing extension capacity within these areas.

If, for example, the reason for maintaining the extension function was deemed to include facilitating information access and flow in the rural sector, then a statement about this focus would be appropriate in formal policy. The commitment to provide resources to develop appropriate structures and systems would also be appropriate. Specialist support positions may also need to be included in formal policy - if limited resources meant that new positions were difficult to establish. Beyond that, prescriptiveness proved a limitation and liability. Scope had to remain to negotiate and develop this capacity within the organisation, with extension staff, and with other stakeholders in a learning process. The task must take precedence over prescriptive paper requirements.

The difficulties associated with attempting to include a prescriptive 'Local Client Group' model, demonstrated the limitations of formal policy. In this case, the difficulty in achieving prior agreement on a prescriptive formulae, resulted in the inclusion of the intent, rather than that of details. A problem could be expected to result if an inappropriate prescriptive clause is included in a policy where the room to manoeuvre, negotiate, and develop a key aspect becomes secondary to the need to comply with the content of the document.

This argument to limit prescriptiveness does not imply a 'blank' cheque approach to resourcing extension. It is in the area of **constraining conditions** that **processes** can be included in formal policy to provide accountability of that function, and on-going stakeholder input into the extension function, and processes to ensure/monitor its relevance to society.

(iv)   The Hierarchy of Extension Objectives revisited

I entered into this study using the framework of the Hierarchy of Extension Objectives after Röling (1988). It provided an extremely useful structure for collating data and to understand the levels at issue in discourse.

It was through using this hierarchy that it became obvious that debate was focused on the **conditions for effect** rather than on other levels of the hierarchy. The **ultimate objectives** for extension appeared to be inherent, or very generalised, and specific **intervention objectives** inappropriate to debate in the context of policy. Although **activities** were raised, it was not in an extension policy context. **Means** were left untouched.

This framework, however, was limited in addressing the notion of extension policy for two reasons. Firstly, it ignores the **constraining conditions** which had a significant impact on the operation of extension, and secondly, the emphasis on objectives ignores the central question of the **reason** for maintaining a **public sector** extension rather than relying on other instruments or agencies to meet these objectives. By inference, this emphasis on objectives, means that the extension function tends to be judged on predetermined physical outcomes such as 'the rate of adoption', and 'contribution to the economy', or even 'improved sustainability'. The array of inconclusive 'cost-benefit' studies litter these attempts to evaluate, or justify, the extension function.

To overcome these difficulties, and in response to the theory emerging through this case study, I propose that a framework for thinking about and acting on the policy element of public sector extension, can be based around three elements. These are the:

Reason for extension   -   the societal reason for maintaining a public extension
                                         function;

Enabling conditions   -   those structural, resource, and process conditions
                                         needed to permit extension to develop the capacity, and
                                         to adapt, to fulfil this societal reason; and

Constraining conditions   -   those conditions imposed by limitations to resources,
                                         political or societal imperatives, and on-going
                                         accountability and monitoring requirements.

These elements are developed below.

Reason for extension

Although it is inevitable that this **reason** will be framed within a generalised societal goal, it is in the distinction between 'reason' and 'objective' that is critical.

For example, neither an agreed societal objective of improved 'sustainable' economic development nor an intervention objective of technology transfer is sufficient in itself as an

argument for maintaining a public sector extension function. There are alternative agencies and instruments to attempt to achieve these objectives. The difficulty in 'proving' the impact of extension in terms of its success in transferring technology, or in its subsequent impact on the economy or the environment, in the context of other agencies, instruments, and markets, has also been well documented. The use of more participative approaches, human development models, and the recognition of complementarity with other agencies are those which make these types of objective criteria even less relevant.

Whereas an **objective** implies a predetermined, physically measurable outcome, a **reason** implies a function or a process. In the Extension Policy Review for example, the reason to maintain an extension function was based around the use of market failure. Public sector extension was deemed essential to ensure that certain processes and functions were carried out because otherwise they would not get done. In the Extension Strategy Statement, the implicit reason to maintain an extension service was to provide a process whereby primary producers, who had only limited access to targeted knowledge, could be provided with such access.

Reasons, then, relate to needed societal functions, rather that defined outputs. Public sector extension must be viewed as essential to permit such a function to take place. The following examples illustrate the difference between objectives and reasons:

Objective	Reason
Increase the rate of adoption of new technology	For appropriate new technologies to be developed, adopted and used, producers need information and decision-making skills, and interaction between stakeholders is essential.
Improve the level of environmental management	Because of the complexity of environmental issues, interest groups, scientists, and the community need to be brought together to work through alternative strategies.

Monitoring and accountability, then, are based on alternative premises. They are focused on process rather than a predetermined 'physical' objective. They also provide an alternative basis for thinking about the **enabling conditions** to allow extension to fulfil this reason (or reasons) for maintaining it.

The essential question is 'what is the societal reason (if one exists) for maintaining a public sector extension service?'

Enabling conditions

These conditions equate closely with the **conditions for effect** in the Hierarchy of Objectives. The skill will lie in preventing **enabling conditions** from crossing the 'delicate edge' and becoming a hindrance in extension developing its capacity to fulfil its function.

The examples from the Extension Strategy Statement used earlier in this chapter provided some insights into this 'delicate edge'. Prescriptive extension roles were contrasted to a defined focus on developing an information, adult education, and development function. The former was limiting and based on a snapshot in time, and the latter would have provided greater scope to develop the capacity in these functions in concert with staff, stakeholders, and advances in these areas. The 'Local Client Group' concept for example, while not satisfying individuals' desires for specifics, provided a focus for developing the capacity for greater 'client' participation.

Enabling conditions, then, are those which provide the resources, structures, and processes to permit extension to develop its capacity over time, with regard to a changing environment, and through interaction with its stakeholders.

Constraining conditions

Constraining conditions are those that impact on the extension function or its ability to develop its capacity. They may include political or societal imperatives that must be adhered to for the public sector extension function to receive support.

For example, decentralisation of government functions, and input by the community into government decision-making processes could be considered as 'constraints'. If user-pay is a political or philosophical imperative, then its inclusion as a rider to some or all of the extension function must be explicit. The need to decrease staff numbers in government departments may also become a **constraining condition** for the extension function.

Other constraining conditions may rest in the need for accountability processes, and the scope for monitoring and modifying the enabling conditions over time.

I propose, therefore, that these three components form an **extension policy triangle**, depicted in Figure 10.1. The content of extension policy lies in the interaction, and relationship between these three elements. The process of developing policy must then permit discourse within and between these elements, with mutual understanding allowed to emerge, and with scope to act. Discontinuity between a formal policy and the process of developing and implementing policy would appear to be damaging in the context of the total process of change.

THE EXTENSION POLICY TRIANGLE

The policy element of extension is bound up in these three spheres. Unless each is acknowledged and catered for, the extension function will lack capacity and direction.

ENABLING
CONDITIONS

REASON
FOR
MAINTAINING
EXTENSION
FUNCTION

CONSTRAINING

CONDITIONS
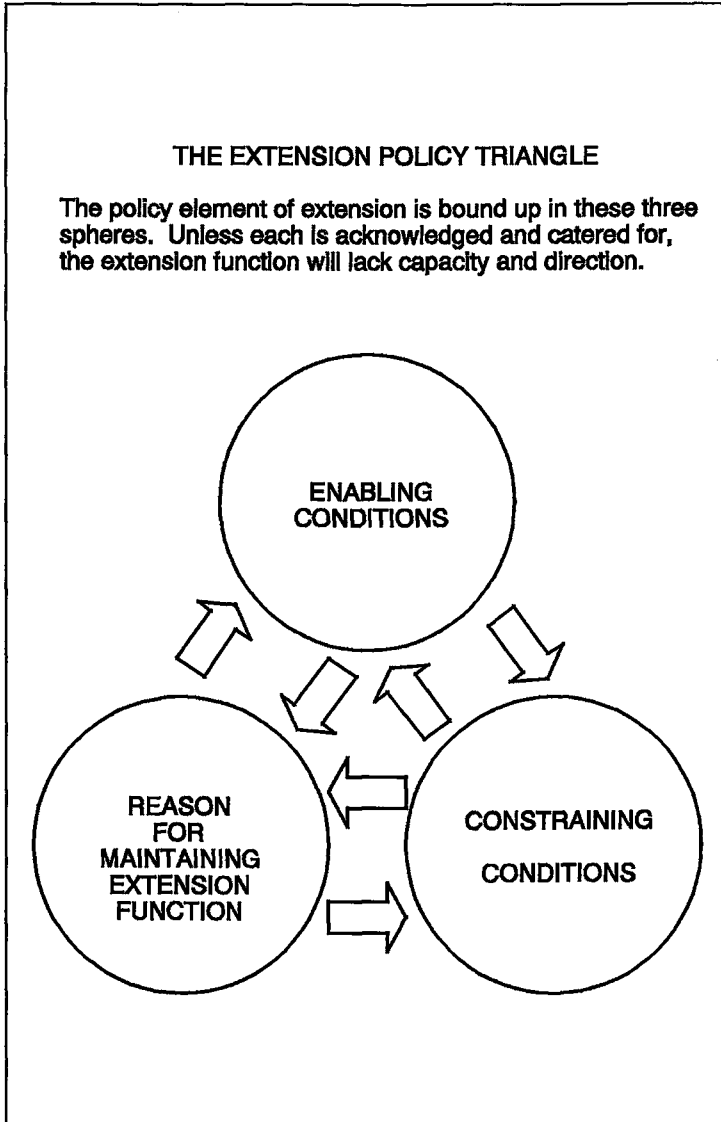
Figure 10.1   The Extension Policy Triangle

10.2   THE EXTENSION POLICY PROCESS

Knowledge Systems thinking provided a structure in which to consider the many individuals and groups involved in the discourse about extension policy and their interaction. For research purposes, the 'arbitrary boundaries' were defined by those brought into the process of discourse, and those who took the opportunity to become involved. It was in the process of interaction between these different groups and individuals that meaning emerged around the notion of extension policy, and steps were taken in response to the emergent meaning.

In this case study, there appeared to have been two levels at which extension policy was being negotiated. At one level, key senior managers within QDPI were concerned with the continuation of the extension function within the organisational and political context. This could be considered the **strategic level**. On the other level, QDPI managers and staff, their clients, and other stakeholders in the arena of public sector extension were caught up in the debate and process of extension policy development. This could be called the **collective level**. These reflect Colebatch's (1993:41) dimensions of policy as 'decision making by those in authority', and policy as the 'interpretation of action' - or the...*management of interpretations of social life*. Colebatch recognised the importance of the decision-making process, and the role of organisational dynamics in the eventual implementation of developed policies.

Colebatch's dimension of 'policy as commitment' appears to bridge the gap between these two levels. At the **strategic level**, the organisation was building an external commitment for public sector extension to have a role in a changing society. This commitment demanded negotiation and recognition across organisational boundaries, and between competing and complementary functions of government. The community, and hence the government, needed to be convinced of the need for, and the function of, public sector extension. Without that commitment, the organisation would have lost its legitimacy and hence support and resources.

At the **collective level**, however, commitment to change is equally essential. It is ultimately the interface between the public sector organisation and the wider community that will determine the level and nature of the commitment at the strategic level. Public sector extension is a function with an outward focus, and as such, the commitment - or lack of commitment - to its societal role negotiated at a strategic level will be evident. Strategically negotiated policy, divorced from a commitment at a collective level, would appear to run the risk of eventually alienating the external commitment built through negotiation. Likewise, collective commitment which is developed in the absence of the societal, political, and resource context, runs the risk of building an internal commitment at odds with the external environment.

The discussion in the introduction to this book on the implementation of extension policy (Chapter 1.7) highlighted the issue of the gaps that can develop between 'paper policy' and practice. Wagemans' (1987) study of the response by extension officers to new extension policy in the Netherlands, for example, demonstrated this gap. This case study of QDPI has demonstrated the impact that the process of extension policy development can have on the internal commitment to that policy.

The importance of communication processes and organisational dynamics have been well documented in the commercial arena. Perspectives on communication within organisations have been described as ranging from 'mechanistic', 'psychological', 'interpretative-symbolic', and 'systems-interaction'. (Krone et al, 1987) These reflect the view of communication ranging from a means of conveying authoritative decisions, to that of communication as an interactive process involving mutual learning. Krone et al (1987:38) argued that no one perspective is right or wrong, but rather that the four perspectives yield different insights about communication and that...*in effect, communication encompasses all of the four variables.*

The context of the link between the external and internal communication environment is also one that is occupying researchers and writers. Euske and Roberts (1987), for example, contended that organisations could not be studied outside of the context of the environment in which it operated. Strauss and Corbin (1990:173) also emphasised this link when describing the relevance to different levels of the matrix in understanding decision-making within an organisation. They described organisational phenomenon as...*being located in the middle of the matrix, with conditions seen as bearing on it from above and below...even when studying such abstract ideas as information flow or decision-making, one would want to locate them in action/interaction.* Van Woerkum (1994) broadened the concept of the external and internal communication processes beyond organisational interfaces to that of the interface between government policy makers and the community. He argued that, for a government to be truly reflective and responsive, communication must be developed in three directions: external-internal (bringing people in); internal (how to adapt the content of policy to different interests and rationalities); and internal-external (how to inform people of existing ideas).

This role of communication processes in building a common understanding and commitment to change, through linking what I have called the strategic and collective levels, is also documented in the organisational management literature. In describing the need for a new treatise on 'managing organisational change', McLennan (1989:xiii) proposed that...*given the stupendous variety of changes affecting large and small enterprises all around the globe, and the sheer pace of change, managing organisational change is surely the very essence of what is to be a manager in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.* The book concluded with a call for open-endedness in the change process. The reluctance of managers to go beyond limited participation in a decision making process was considered to reside in the threat to the 'authority' of management, as well as a 'fear of scrutiny'. (Miller, 1989)
Van Eijnatten (1993) concurred with the need for a more 'democratic' organisational paradigm, and described a 'Socio-Technical Systems Design' as a mechanism for making this shift. He described it as an 'holistic' approach which attempted to combine the interest of both management and the 'workers'. It could be said that this mechanism was one way of trying to link the **strategic level** with the **collective level**.

It was the observed discontinuity between the strategic and the collective level within QDPI during the development of a formal extension policy that appeared to result in difficulties with implementation of that policy. This discontinuity impacted on the 'orderly' process of change. Power issues arose when the strategic process took precedence over the collective process. Control over the process, and hence discourse, limited the ability of certain

individuals and groups to develop the shared understanding and commitment to steps in the change process.

The process of developing extension policy, like other organisational change, could be considered to involve the stages of a community problem solving cycle (Woods et al, 1993) which includes problem awareness and definition, negotiation of the direction of required change, and the taking of steps in that direction (or implementation of change). While recognising that this problem solving is iterative, the phases around the introduction of a formal extension policy in Queensland provided a structure around which to explore these stages.

(i)   Problem awareness and definition

In examining the background to the initiation of the 1990 Extension Policy Review through the eyes of those involved in carrying out the review, it was obvious that there was an on-going process of change within the organisation.

Specific critical points were identified where steps had been taken within the organisation in recognition of changing needs. The establishment of an 'Economic Services' Branch, Regional Extension Groups, District Extension Leaders, and Regional Extension Leaders were attempts to adapt over time to these changes. In the establishment of these structures, however, there was some evidence of changes being imposed on reluctant managers and staff.

In an effort to invoke change in staff attitudes and skills, some staff were encouraged to pursue studies in sociology, and undertake post-graduate extension training. There were also workshops for managers and the initiation of an extension conference for staff. Moves had also been made in some situations to restrict one-to-one extension activities, and for extension staff to seek external funds for specific projects.

Change was occurring, then, over time. It did appear to be sporadic - varying according to location and discipline. It was also a mixture between organisationally imposed structures, incentives, and opportunity, and adaptation by extension officers and managers themselves to changing circumstances.

The change, however, did not appear to be occurring fast enough within the broader political imperatives. Senior managers within the organisation were closer to this political domain, and were acutely aware of the questioning of the extension function within agricultural departments. There were broader societal moves in the direction of user-pay and commercialisation, as well as pressure on departmental budgets. Research and Development Corporations were taking an increasingly important role in agricultural policy and were impacting on services. Criticism from some sectors of the farming community was being heard by government. The 1987 Australasian Extension Conference, held in Brisbane, appeared to play a key role in highlighting the urgency for change to senior management within QDPI. It was perceived that a change, such as user-pay, could be imposed on the extension function of the department, with senior managers having little opportunity to

influence the decision. A strategic response was required. A process was instigated for the *...strategic redesign of QDPI's agricultural extension services.*

Public discourse, then, such as the Extension Conference, played an important part in the process of problem awareness and was a 'non-directive' trigger for change - although individuals did use such forums to attempt to influence the direction of discourse. However, events occurring at the political and national conference level involved few extension officers, their direct clients, researchers, or other stakeholders in rural areas of Queensland. It was not until the planned 1990 Extension Policy Review was publicised, that many of this group were confronted with this 'problem situation'.

The wide ranging review process with its call for submissions, workshops for extension staff, and interviews with clients and other stakeholders, provided both an opportunity for raising the issues that prompted the review, as well as for the Working Party to learn of the needs and perceptions of those contacted. Discussion was stimulated, debate commenced. New terms such as market failure were introduced into the vocabulary of extension staff and clients. User-pay was painted as a formidable wave on the horizon.

The consultative process of the 1990 Extension Policy Review demonstrated that there was value in focusing discussion, and raising debate about the appropriate use of extension among its many stakeholders. There was value in bringing knowledge about new approaches and developments in extension from other places to the attention of local stakeholders. It provided a basis for horizons to be broadened on all fronts, and for local specificities to temper 'mega-trends'. The process added to the refinement of structures and support to permit extension to function in a specific context. The tight rein on the process, however, allowed filtering to occur - for example, the dropping of references to the Human Development Model of extension. The inclusion of other stakeholders in an audit of the outcome, however, provided some limitations to significant changes being made by the organisation to the outcome of the review process.

To limit control from the strategic area, such a process would need to be iterative, out of the direct control of the department or agency having the extension function, and have an opportunity to directly impact on the modification of the policy element of extension!

(ii)   Negotiation of the direction of change

The 1987 Australasian Extension Conference reflected the discourse involved in negotiation of extension policy at a strategic level. Claims and counter-claims were made about appropriate directions for extension, its funding, and its relationship with the private sector. Further strategic debate drew from such discourse to further influence decisions being made. The holding of the conference itself appeared to be part of the strategic process to renegotiate the role of public sector extension in the changing social and agricultural environment.

The one-off workshops for extension staff, and interviews with clients, culminated in a formal document entitled the '1990 Extension Policy Review'. It contained many 'official' recommendations. Some extension staff were exposed to the draft with an explanation and opportunity for input in a Brisbane based conference for QDPI extension staff, but the

planned state-wide follow-up workshops were not held. The document was circulated, but response from staff at that time was not encouraged. A significant discontinuity occurred in the discourse!

The Extension Policy Review document was circulated to other stakeholders who also contributed submissions. A number of replies were received. Government departments, universities, and 'progressive' extension staff largely praised the outcome. Producer groups, consultants, and field extension staff (informally) demonstrated their difficulty with the outcome by claiming it was confusing. The responses appeared to have little impact on further process. A 'brick wall' appeared to prevent further negotiation and discussion between this response to change at the strategic level, and the collective level - a further discontinuity!

Awareness had been raised, and some shared notion of the problem had begun. Opportunity had also been given to provide input into solutions. The lack of direct feedback or encouragement to respond to the outcome of the review, and apparent failure to recognise their input in the outcome resulted in frustration among many extension staff and their clients.

The second phase of the 'strategic redesign' - that of developing the Extension Strategy Statement - was tightly managed within the organisation. At this level, the 1990 Extension Policy Review had provided the consultative base in which it could build both content and legitimacy in the formal redesign process. The urgency of the situation, and the view that it was now a matter of upper managerial expertise to propose the final shape of formal policy, resulted in other parties being largely precluded from further input into developing steps to address the 'problem situation'.

In an attempt to continue the 'educative process' of change, the 'progressive' extension officers (Extension Development Group) organised a second state-wide extension conference for extension officers. The conference was based around the changing extension directions emerging in the formal policy. The Extension Strategy Statement, however, was endorsed by Cabinet just prior to the conference, and statements such as...*producers seeking one-to-one-contact .... had better look to the yellow pages,* co-incided with the event. Although reinforcing the 'fact' of significant change facing extension, the events accentuated the lack of opportunity to contribute to the direction of policy. One extension officer had expressed it by observing that...*change doesn't occur in a vacuum, but apparently the compilation of extension strategies do!*

The Australia Pacific Extension Conference held in Queensland in 1993, was another major forum for discourse on extension policy, paralleling the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference. Its timing after the endorsement of QDPI's Extension Strategy Statement, meant that it was seen by some as a forum for consolidating QDPI's direction, rather than a forum for shared discourse in an on-going process of the development of such policy.

The imperative for a review from a strategic viewpoint appeared to lie in establishing a **reason** for the government - and community - to maintain an extension function **and** associated resourcing. The short, intense review, with its use of many elements from the

wider debate and developments, appeared to fulfil this function. A longer, or alternative process, appeared not to be required or desired at this strategic level. The scope for other parties to significantly impinge on the operation of extension appeared to be deliberately limited.

The significance of this discontinuity between the formal, or strategic level, and the staff and stakeholder, or collective level, however, was demonstrated in the difficulty and gaps encountered during the early implementation phase.

(iii)   Implementation of change

The discussion on the content of policy in Section 10.1 (ii), highlighted the limitations of prescriptive policy in the face of lack of ownership, and the lack of opportunity to continue the negotiation and development process.

Strategic issues appeared to demand a formal policy. The formal policy appeared successful in fulfilling this strategic objective. Public sector extension was legitimised, resources were secured to maintain and put new structures, processes, and positions in place, and political support was given for a change in extension officer relationships. The gap between this formal policy, however, and those on whom it was to impact, disrupted the implementation process. It also disrupted the development of shared understanding, commitment to change, and an iterative process of negotiation and trial.

Deadlines, guidelines, and milestones tied to the formal policy became the drivers of change, rather than education, negotiation, and mutual encouragement - **constraining conditions** rather than **enabling conditions**. The **reason** for the maintenance and direction of the function held by many staff and clients, was still out of balance with the reason imposed in the strategic formal policy.

Key elements of the formal policy were at odds with the perspectives of many staff – for example, specifically defined extension roles, reduced one-to-one extension, and the adult education emphasis. Defined roles, for example, designed at a formal level - at a point in time - and overtly rejected by many extension staff became a formal imperative rather than a shared understanding of appropriate steps. The negotiation or development of alternative, or modified roles, were severely limited and hampered by their inclusion in the formal policy.

The commitment to significant staff training, increasing client involvement in the decision - making process, and providing resources to develop the information capacity, however, had potential to involve staff and stakeholders in the continued learning and development process. These elements of the formal policy provided some opportunity for progress to be made on a 'shared view' of the **reason for maintaining the extension function**!

The role of formal policy, then, would appear to be in securing enabling resources and assisting the development of shared meaning and commitment to change by the total staff and stakeholder community - not in inhibiting it, or pre-empting the substance of that

commitment. The strategic need for formality and securing political and organisational commitment to maintaining the function - and to **hasten** change - requires a 'delicate balance' with the need for collective development.

10.3   EXTENSION POLICY FRAMEWORK

I entered this study with the view of extension policy as...*attempts by organisations or governments to impinge on the operation of extension*. I described the output as...*a framework for thinking about and acting on the policy element of public sector extension*. My focus, therefore was firmly on the substance of **formal** policy. The exploration of the initiating and developing of such a formal policy was viewed as a means of obtaining an understanding of the role, and hence what would best comprise the content of that formal policy.

In the course of analysis, however, I have found it difficult to divorce the process of policy development from the content - or the collective understanding of policy changes and the strategic. The view of the senior echelons of an organisation, or experts, developing extension policy in relative isolation from the collective level, no longer appears valid. It is not that the strategic level can be ignored, nor that a formal policy may not be required, but that the link between the two levels must be maintained. Discontinuity must be avoided.

To return to the **extension policy triangle** of section 10.1, I propose that there is a need to work between the elements of **reason** for maintaining public sector extension, **enabling conditions**, and **constraining conditions** both at the collective and strategic level. The strategic need for enacting or modifying formal extension policy, may have a role in triggering this collective process, and in providing opportunities for focused discourse to facilitate shared problem definition and appropriate steps towards change. Strategic 'realities' need to be brought into the collective process as part of the learning process. The process, however, should be one that limits the power of the organisation to control discourse or emerging content. Sufficient time and opportunity must be provided to permit an iterative process between those parties who have a felt interest in the outcome. **Public sector** extension is a function which demands both community input and commitment.

The content of formal extension policy would then be a reflection of this iterative collective process, rather than a selective result of a consultative process. The content of formal policy, should therefore be both a stimulus for further discourse, and provide a basis for collective understanding to develop and for actions to be taken. Formal extension policy should not freeze discourse and development at any particular point in time.

Formal policy would appear to have a role in interpreting developments in extension direction, and feeding it back to the collective level as stimulus for further development (as Giddens, 1989, describes the re-entry of 'knowledge' into human society as being interpreted and affecting human action).

This relationship between formal extension policy, and extension policy at the collective level, is depicted in **Figure 10.2**. In this figure, the 'strategic' process is shown as smaller 'triangle' to highlight its role as an integral step in the total extension policy process, rather that the dominating or end result of a policy development process.

The process described in this case study, from the initiation of the 1990 Extension Policy Review to the endorsement of the Extension Strategy Statement in 1992 and its early implementation, had the potential to more closely reflect this model. The key to shifting it from a process dominated by the strategic level, closer to a balance between the strategic and collective level, would have been the removal of the identified discontinuities. Some ways in which this could have been done were by:

(i) holding extension (and other stakeholder) conference/workshops prior to the announcing of a formal review (rather than towards the end of the 1990 Extension Policy Review process), and seeking input into the Terms of Reference for developing formal policy;

(ii) taking a longer period for the consultative/negotiative process; specifically including non-traditional clients in the discourse; collating and feeding back information exchanged in the process to those involved; bringing representatives from regions to workshop directly with senior managers (and politicians);

(iii) feeding back a draft report to those involved in the process (rather than a completed report in a glossy cover); having media coverage of the results and rationale; holding strategic workshops in regions to discuss;

(iv) collating feedback and overtly modifying the report, with a rationale also from a strategic perspective; proposing a format for the formal component of extension policy;

(v) seeking input/providing feedback into the format and content of formal policy;

(vi) framing policy which reflected the understanding that emerged for the reason for public sector extension, the enabling conditions, and the constraining conditions; the emphasis being on resourcing and focusing efforts to move extension in a direction to better fulfil the emerging reason;

(vii) considering implementation as a process to develop these directions at the collective level rather than enforcing prescriptive demands; and

(viii) incorporating a commitment to review the formal policy component at regular intervals (for example 3 to 5 years).
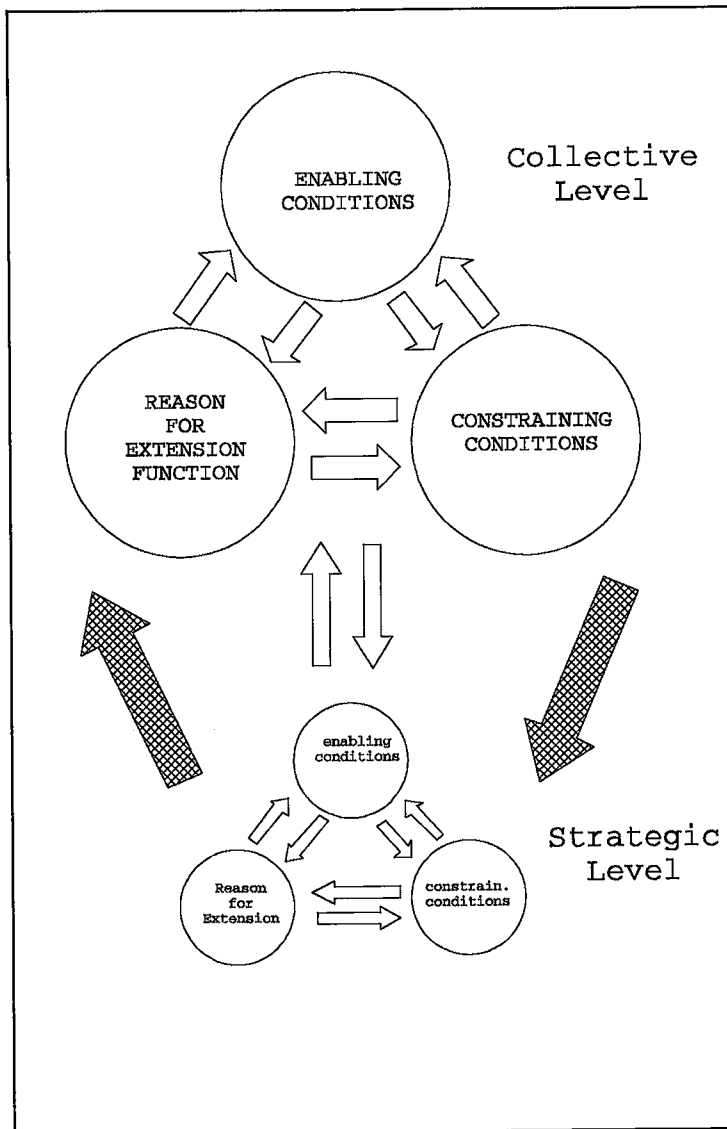
**Figure 10.2   The relationship between the strategic and collective levels
in the development of extension policy**

These steps are not intended to provide a model process of developing policy in every situation. They are provided to demonstrate that relatively minor changes to a process have the potential to make a significant impact on bringing the **strategic level** in balance with the **collective level** without jeopardising the continuity of the extension function.

Much research is needed on this process aspect of extension policy development, and the development of mechanisms to improve discourse between competing interests, and the interaction between the strategic and collective level. Departments and agencies developing extension policies have also much to learn from the experience of other agencies and research into organisational change and alternative decision-making paradigms.

10.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Public sector extension is increasingly being asked to become involved in complex community issues. This is the case whether the focus is on production systems dependant on fragile markets, on rural development in an increasingly urban society, or on the complexities of ecological sustainability. What is becoming apparent is that there is a lack of tailor-made solutions from experts - or rather that such tailor-made solutions are found wanting! It is in the collective knowledge, interaction, and actions of the many parties concerned that learning is taking place, and solutions are being sought.

The notion and role of extension policy is equally complex. It is incongruent that, in the formulation of extension policy and practice, experts should provide prescriptive solutions. If extension is to take a lead in the complex issues facing society, it must first demonstrate that its own guiding policy is grounded in a collective process.

210

APPENDICIES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

SUMMARY/SAMENVATTING

CURRICULUM VITAE

APPENDIX I: QDPI EXTENSION STRATEGY STATEMENT 1992

This is the text of the QDPI Extension Strategy Statement as it was published and distributed to staff and clients, in November 1992.

FOREWORD

This Extension Strategy Statement has been developed in response to concerns that the Department's extension service could be more effective in meeting the needs of rural industries and communities.

An Extension Policy Review conducted in 1990 found that the existing service was not fully effective in achieving technology transfer, helping farmers acquire new skills and knowledge and in equitably delivering services to farmers and rural communities. This was because extension roles and methods were too narrowly focused on providing personalised advice on particular technical topics.

A study of extension services in Europe, Tasmania, and New Zealand revealed that charging a 'fee for service' did not correct the deficiencies in technology transfer, equity of service use and skill and knowledge education.

The Extension Strategy Statement is the approach considered most appropriate to meet Queensland rural producer and community needs.

The direction of the Strategy was outlined by Government in September in its policy document 'Building Rural Queensland' and has since been endorsed by Cabinet.

The Strategy is aimed at achieving a more effective service for rural industry and communities within existing public resources.

While the Strategy has been the subject of extensive discussion with rural organisations, a further process of discussion with rural industry and communities and with DPI extension staff on implementation arrangements and provision of specific services will be undertaken prior to final consideration by Cabinet.

I. EXTENSION DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

The prosperity of Queensland is strongly tied to the international competitiveness of its agricultural and fishing industries, the quality and safety of agricultural produce on the domestic market, and on having environmentally sound resource management. Advances in these areas demand a strong flow of targeted information designed to build up knowledge within people and to increase their capacity to better manage and use the state's

agricultural and natural resources. However, many primary producers have only limited access to such targeted information.

The primary **purpose** of QDPI extension is to meet this need for targeted information and knowledge in the rural and fishing/aquaculture sectors. QDPI extension is about using communication and adult education to help agricultural industries and others to identify where changes need to be made and to help them make those changes. Its emphasis is on developing skills and knowledge in people.

This is best achieved by complementing and encouraging those in the private sector who provide personalised services to the rural sector rather than competing with them. This purpose will also be most effectively met by working closely with educational institutions.

The **focus** of QDPI extension will be on industries (producers, producer groups and associated input industries) and targeted communities as the clients. It will not be about providing publicly subsidised services to individuals where they receive exclusive commercial benefit. QDPI extension services may sometimes work individually with producers and others, but only where that work provides a wider benefit for the industry or the community as a whole. Conversely, where a particular producer benefits solely from a service, that service is more appropriately supplied by a consultant from the private sector and will not normally be carried out by QDPI extension.

Outside of the extension function, QDPI will continue to provide personalised services in the regulatory, property planning, social justice (for example financial counsellors) and other appropriate areas, with associated charges where applicable in line with Government policy.

II. EXTENSION WITHIN WITH THE QDPI CORPORATE PLAN

The QDPI 1992-96 Corporate plan states that some of the key issues for QDPI are to:

*   Develop extension services that are more strategically directed;
*   Have community involvement in setting the priority of services;
*   Focus on the longer term needs of the community; and
*   Provide the basic tools to help producers make self-management decisions and to have greater long-term self-reliance.

    It goes on to say that some of the ways to achieve this are to:

*   Develop systems that provide proficient and effective information and education to industry and rural communities;
*   Achieve increased levels of funding by clients; and
*   Target action through collaboration with industry, funding bodies and others.

In accordance with these goals, an extension strategy is proposed which:

♦   Significantly increases effective industry and community participation in extension activities at a local level;

♦   Allows extension officers to apply themselves to specific extension roles, and provides them with specialist support;

♦   Provides effective self-help information facilities and improves the management of information to make it more available to clients; and

♦   Seeks communal co-funding arrangements for targeted extension programs.

This strategy will be achieved by putting in place the following components:

III. STRATEGIC COMPONENTS

1.   Regional Programs/Projectisation

The QDPI has already moved towards a regional focus for its activities.   It is also adopting a program management structure to more effectively assist rural industries and address resource management issues.

Regional extension activities will occur within industry or issue sub-programs, and will be based on projects.   This will assist extension officers and managers to focus on issues, priorities, and outcomes.   It will also be more clear to producers and the community what extension services they are receiving.

2.   Local Client Groups:

Extension should be decentralised and sensitive to local needs and opportunities within the context of broader issues.   The 'local client groups' will provide a local forum for extension officers to negotiate and evaluate their extension activities.

The geographical area appropriate to a 'local client group', and how the group is constituted and operates will be negotiated between extension staff and their industries or client communities. Participants would have an active interest and involvement in industry and/or community issues. The broader the representation of participants, the more likely it will be that effective extension activities will be negotiated.

Local client groups would also have an important role in feeding back research and extension needs to QDPI Industry Programs, producer bodies, and R&D funding bodies.

3. Program Extension Officer (eg Beef Industry Officer; Land Care Officer)

Most extension officers will be Program Extension Officers assigned to specific localities within regions. They will have a broad knowledge of the technologies of the industries or issues they serve and be trained in extension with an emphasis on adult education. Their charter will be to increase information sharing within their designated industries or communities, and to use targeted adult education activities to address issues. Adult education activities are those which assist people to learn for themselves and which help people to increase their practical skills and knowledge so they can more effectively manage their enterprises and community functions in increasingly difficult circumstances.

Program Extension Officers will assist the client community to identify needs and opportunities of group significance, to develop skills to meet them and to engage in problem-solving and innovative activities. Local group activities, on-farm/on-site demonstrations, field days, farm walks, seminars and workshops will be important methods used by Program Extension Officers. They will not be providing personalised services to an individual client where those clients receive significant exclusive commercial benefit.

Program Extension Officers will interact strongly with their 'local client group(s)' to negotiate local extension priorities within the context of wider industry issues. They will largely work within these negotiated projects using activities and methods best suited to addressing project goals.

4. Development Extension Officer

Development Officers will be appointed as required to specifically develop commercially relevant technologies within practical farming systems or resource management situations. They will use results deriving from public research, information generated through extension projects, and client knowledge as a basis for carrying out negotiated development projects.

Development officers will work on-farms or other appropriate sites, facilitate and co-ordinate client run development trials, and/or work with computer modelling techniques. They will work on projects linked to specific industries or issues. Development officers will provide a source of technical expertise to support Program Extension Officers and, with researchers, will generate information materials such as booklets, videos, and farm-notes for use in extension projects and self-help information centres.

Development projects differ from research-station based projects in that they would integrate information derived from a number of sources and work with clients to practically and commercially incorporate new technology into local farming, grazing, or fishing systems.

Researchers will also have responsibility for carrying their research findings through a practical developmental phase, where the technologies are not complex.

5.   Regional Information Centres

Regional Information Centres will be established in a number of towns within a region. They will provide a unified 'shop front' where clients can obtain information from all sections of QDPI, previously only available through direct contact with one or more officers.

These centres will serve a dual function. Firstly, they will provide self-help information facilities for clients.   Secondly, they will provide a base for Information Extension Officers to integrate and disseminate information to target groups.

The size and format of a Centre, and the type of information held will depend on the needs of the area it serves.   Level 1 Information Centres will be established at major locations, with lower level (2 or 3) centres at smaller locations.   Major centres within a region will be managed by a Regional Information Specialist.   All centres will have support staff appropriate to the size of their business.

6.   Information Extension Officers

These officers will be closely linked to the Regional Information Centres, and will improve the collation, integration, and presentation of information on specific industries or issues.   They will provide expert assistance in the packaging of information for self-help applications or as part of targeted extension projects carried out by program extension officers.   They will also liaise, and work closely with, QDPI library services, educational institutions, industries, client communities, and other external providers.

An Information Extension Officer may be appointed for each major industry within a region depending on local needs.

7.   Rural Extension Centre

A Rural Extension Centre will provide a focus for the development of extension and the social sciences pertinent to the needs of rural communities.   This will be established in association with a University, be located in a rural setting, and have a national (and international) focus.   The centre would link with other institutions and organisations with an interest in rural extension.

The Rural Extension Centre would provide in-service training in extension methodologies and the social sciences, post graduate extension training, and facilitate research in support of rural extension.

The Centre would be staffed by several QDPI extension specialists working with staff from the tertiary institution, and ideally be physically associated with delivery of a regional extension service.   The centre would also provide a discipline focus for the Regional Extension Specialists.

8. Regional Extension Specialists

Regional Extension Specialists would be strongly linked to the Rural Extension Centre. Traditionally, extension has emphasised technical skills. A move towards a stronger adult educational emphasis will demand increased strength in the social sciences to ensure a consistent high standard of delivery.

Regional Extension Specialists will be appointed to assist extension officers within a region. They will have specialist knowledge and experience in the social sciences and extension processes. They will provide advice on targeted extension projects, and be involved in developing and evaluating methodologies to enhance extension activities in the region. They will also assist in the training of extension officers. Regional Extension Specialists will be attached to Regional Directors and provide extension support across all Departmental activities. There will be one or more Regional Extension Specialists in each region.

IV. FUNDING

QDPI extension aims to provide benefits to industries or community groups as a whole by enhancing the free flow of information between people and by building skills and knowledge. As extension officers will largely work with individuals within the context of negotiated projects **'where that work provides a wider benefit for the industry or community as a whole'** it is inappropriate to directly charge individuals for this type of interaction with extension officers.

Most funding will continue to come through government to ensure that the wider community interests and concerns are treated in a balanced way, that long-term issues can be addressed with continuity, and that QDPI extension maintains a strong technical and resource base. It is also an acknowledgment of the necessity of these activities for the economic and social wellbeing of the State and that they would not be adequately funded by non-Government sources.

Where extension activities have direct benefits for individual industries and other clients, some level of co-funding by Government and Industry has always existed. Negotiated co-funding arrangements should occur where specific client groups stand to gain significant group commercial advantages form agreed extension projects. Funding from R&D Corporations is presently a source of co-funding and will continue to be important, but other sources should also be explored. Appropriate mechanisms for developing other co-funding will need to be negotiated individually with clients. Funding to enable extension activities to be directed at local needs and opportunities as distinct from wider industry and resource management issues will need to be considered.

Charges for specific products that arise out of extension programs may be made. These include items such as booklets and information kits, and events such as seminars or workshops.

V. MAKING THE TRANSITION

These changes will take time, and will need industry support and participation to be successful. Accordingly, time will be spent negotiating the changes with different agricultural and fishing industries and other stakeholders.

It will be important to identify specific industry needs for personalised services to individual clients, and to link those needs with commercial or producer organisations that do or could provide the service. Training and access to information may be provided to help private advisers to meet these needs. The instances where QDPI needs to provide personalised services on either an on-going or transitional basis, must also be determined.

The increased co-funding of extension will evolve over time and will be sensitive to current economic stringencies. Current support will not be dismantled in advance of putting new arrangements in place. Co-funding arrangements will depend on the circumstances of individual industries and communities.

Discussions with producer organisations and the Queensland Farmers Federation have considered concerns in implementing the new strategy. They support the Extension Strategy Statement and are prepared to discuss further how it can be implemented. They acknowledge that a small proportion of producers will lose personalised services, but acknowledge the benefits possible for the new extension roles and Information Centres.

Those producers currently involved in community-oriented extension projects are strong supporters of the new strategy. These examples will be important in the further adoption of this new approach to extension.

APPENDIX II.   METHODS AND TECHNIQUES USED IN DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

II.1 Interviews: selection of informants and interview process - Extension Policy Review (Chapters 3,5,&6)

II.2 Textual analysis: Written responses to the Extension Policy Review (Chapters 7)

II.3 Textual analysis: 1987 Australasian Extension Conference (Chapter 4)

II.4 Textual analysis: Responses to key issues from Extension Policy Review within QDPI (Chapter 8)

II.5 Textual analysis: Responses from Extension Staff to the draft Extension Strategy (Chapter 9)

II.6 Participant observation: The development and implementation of the Extension Strategy Statement (Chapters 8 & 9)

II.7 Institutional history: Use of internal memoranda in documenting the implementation process of the Extension Strategy Statement.

II.1 Interviews: selection of informants and interview process - Extension Policy Review (Chapters 3,5,&6)

The key technique for obtaining information on the initiation, process, and outcome of the Extension Policy Review was that of in-depth interviews with those persons directly associated with the review process.

I sought information which specifically related to this review - not general opinions on why reviews happened. Opening the information gathering process too wide would dilute the specificity of the data. Checks on the integrity of the data were maintained in the following ways:

> (i)   Separate in-depth interviews were carried out (and hence contrast and comparisons) with those persons who actually conducted the 1990 Extension Policy Review and wrote the review document.

> (ii)   Interviews covering the same ground were held with two persons close to the review process.

> (iii)   Records of the interviews were checked by informants for accuracy and clarity.

> (iv)   Specific questions were put to other persons identified by the informants in order to gain more details/confirmation about aspects of the review.

> (v)   Papers/presentations from this information were written and delivered to managers (including senior managers) and staff to ensure that my account was...*comprehensive and made sense both to the persons who were studied and to those practising in the area..* (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

An in-depth, structured interview with open ended questions (taking from 2 to 4 hours) was used. The format was based on that used by Wissemann (1991) who researched the *processes used by selected Illinois Extension Agents (advisers) to produce high quality programs.* His key research tool was that of interviewing extension agents who were recognised for their successful programs. When interviewing them, in an effort to understand why they were successful, he began his interviews with the statement:

> *I am studying how advisers plan programs. I am not studying how advisers think they should plan, or how text books say programs should be planned. I am studying how advisers actually do plan.*

In my case, I included a similar statement at the beginning of my interview:

> *Would you please tell me, in your own words, why you think the Extension Policy Review was commissioned by the Department - in terms of triggering events, stated agendas, and possible 'hidden agendas'?*

> *Would you please briefly describe the process of carrying out the review?*

> *I would now like to deal with some of the specifics contained in the document to understand why this outcome was achieved.*

> **Please note that I am studying why certain recommendations, concepts, and statements are included in the documents. I am not studying why you think these recommendations, concepts, and statements, should be included nor am I asking you to defend their inclusion. I am studying what specific directives, situations, events, or submissions were actually responsible for their inclusion.**

> *A number of key issues are highlighted in the attached summary of the Extension Policy Review. May I go through these one by one with you, and could you please describe the specific triggers for their inclusion as recommendations in the Review, from your perspective?*

> *Are there any other comments or observations on any other aspect of the process or outcome of the EPR?*

The key issues highlighted were taken directly from the Extension Policy Review. None of the informants disagreed with my selection of the key issues, nor did they add or dispute any of them.

Internal Memoranda which related to the process and outcome of the review were used to enrich, and compare with, the information gained through the interview process.

I was overseas at the time of the initiation and early process of the 1990 Extension Policy Review, and as such had little knowledge or opinion on the details that I researched. I did participate in a workshop for extension staff in Toowoomba, which was a part of the review

process, and was also included in one of the audits of the draft Extension Policy Review prior to final changes and publication.

II.2   Textual Analysis: Written Responses to the Extension Policy Review (Chapter 7)

All formal responses to the 1990 Extension Policy Review Document were analysed. These consisted of 26 written responses.

I developed a textual interrogation route in which to answer the research questions. This consisted of the following questions:

(1)   What was the view of the "purpose of policy" expressed?

(2)   What were the objective hierarchies addressed?

(3)   What evidence was there of attempting to exert power?

(4)   What references were made to linkage relationships.

(5)   Are any other key aspects evident?

(6)   What was the main issue to emerge from the text - essentially, why was this formal response written?

This questioning route was used to systematically analyse each response. Questions (3) and (6) required some degree of reflection to derive an answer.

There were few formal responses from extension staff, primarily because staff were not encouraged to respond at that time (personal experience / observation). Recollections and assessment of informal responses from staff contributed also to the data.

Responses were also categorised into the elements of the Knowledge System that became evident during the description of the review process, and the analysis of the texts were grouped under these headings. The consistency in the responses within these categories both reinforced the usefulness of these groupings for analytical purposes, and provided checks on the outcome of the textual analysis.

II.3   Textual Analysis: 1987 Australasian Extension Conference (Chapter 4)

This conference was selected for in-depth textual analysis because of its overt extension policy focus and because it was highlighted in the interview process as a significant trigger for the Extension Policy Review. All 98 papers were analysed by:

(1)   grouping papers into emerging categories;

(2)   reading through each paper and noting each issue that was raised in the context of extension issues and policy;

(3)   noting the frequency and, by reflection on the context of the issues raised, the relative concern expressed about the issue (for example, whether it was stated merely as one of many points or was surrounded by an impassioned argument);

(4)   rating the issues to ascertain the intensity surrounding the issue - a combination of the number of times it was raised by each paper within each category and the concern expressed about the issue. Some categories had only one or two submitted papers, others had up to 42. Frequency, then, was related to the number of papers, rather then number of mentions per se;

Intensity was rated on a scale of * to *****, where * was a passing mention and ***** was a high frequency with high concern.

II.4   Textual Analysis: Responses to Key Issues from the 1990 Extension Policy Review within QDPI (Chapter 8)

These responses were by way of memoranda, or notations made on returned copies of papers circulated within QDPI. The direct circulation list consisted of senior managers - mainly within the Agricultural Production Group - with a self-selection of managers from other groups (Agribusiness, Land Use and Fisheries, Water Resources, and Forestry) based on their perceived relevance of extension. Regional Directors were also included. An informal Extension Development Group made up of senior extension officers, most of whom had undertaken some post-graduate study of extension were also included. These papers were copied and sent by recipients to others for comment, as well.

To analyse these responses, a similar technique was used as that for the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference papers (II.3). In this case, headings used, were derived from the key issues circulated, and responses to those key issues collated and rated in terms of frequency and concern. The rating system from * to ***** was also used.

II.5   Textual Analysis: Responses from Extension Staff to the Extension Strategy (Chapter 9).

I was involved in a series of meetings to inform staff about the content of the draft strategy prior to government endorsement. The responses analysed resulted from 7 meetings held in three regions, involving in excess of 150 extension staff. The general format for these meetings was:

(i)   a brief explanation of the background to the Extension Strategy Statement and its key features;

(ii)   small groups discussions to evaluated both opportunities and problems seen in these key features; and

(iii)   whole group interaction to identify where clarification was needed.

Because these discussions were directed in terms of dealing with each item, and in looking at opportunities as well as problems, it was difficult to analyse the written reports on the basis of frequency and concern. Instead, the key concerns expressed by extension staff under the given key features were captured (by collation, reflecting, and condensing) and described by way of statement and *quote* - both of which best reflected the consensus of the extension officers involved.

II.6   Participant Observation: The development and implementation of the Extension Strategy Statement (Chapters 8 & 9)

From a research point of view, I was put into a unique position. I was given the task of developing Stage 2 of the development process - that of developing the Extension Strategy Statement to implement the findings of the 1990 Extension Policy Review. My role as a researcher who played a central role in the policy development process is discussed in Chapter 2 - Exploratory Perspectives and Tools.

There was a significant degree of overlap with my objective as a researcher and as developer of the Extension Strategy Statement. In the latter case, I needed to arrive at an Extension Strategy Statement:

- derived from, and consistent with, the Extension Policy Review;
- supported throughout the Department (Management level) and by major client groups; and
- endorsed by the government of the day.

From a research point of view, I wanted to use a process which:

- explored the margins of the policy element of extension;
- discovered issues that needed resolution as part of determining extension policy;
- exposed power relationships and other factors which had significant influence on the development of extension policies; and
- focused on the link between espoused policies and field realities.

The process and techniques I used were consistent with both objectives. These involved:

(i)   drawing out the key issues from the extension policy through analysis of the review document; attending meetings in which these issues were raised, and informal discussion;

(ii)   circulating these issues for comment as widely as permitted (chiefly within the management level of QDPI);

(iii)   collating responses and re-circulating these for comment;

(iv)   holding discussions with key managers and some extension staff;

(v)   developing draft strategies, and then circulating, or presenting them to different staff groups, for reaction; and

(vi)   negotiating with senior management as to the final content and shape of the strategy.

For research purposes, copies and notes on all discussions, meetings, documents, and memorandum associated with the process were kept. I specifically recorded those events, situations, and directives which forced changes between the 1990 Extension Policy Review recommendations and the final shape of the Extension Strategy Statement.

Other relevant memoranda and media reports were also analysed to provide data.

Another aspect was that I was privy to knowledge that 'external' researchers would not have had access to. I also received confidential opinions and facts that were given in the context of developing the Extension Strategy Statement rather than that of carrying out (public) research. As such, care and discernment in the way such information has been used has been paramount.

The rigour in this phase was provided by the checks and balances in the process:

(i)   the outcome of the review had to pass the rigorous gauntlet of QDPI management, and government (and influential producer organisations?) - if I unduly influenced the outcome, out of keeping with the major forces shaping policy, the policy would not have been adopted;

(ii)   the statement had to be based on the pre-defined Extension Policy Review.

II.7   Institutional history: use of internal memorandum in documenting the implementation process of the Extension Strategy Statement (Chapter 9)

Office, or internal memoranda, provided key data for researching the process of implementation.

It provided the threads weaving and documenting the implementation of the Extension Strategy.   In an organisation as diverse (in terms of functions, business groups, and geographical diversity), such memoranda were the only means of creating the discourse essential for change. Being 'internal' memorandum, they did not have to have political - nor complete organisational - sanction. As a result, they closely reflected conversations that were made over phones, in informal meetings, and on a one-to one basis. This allowed me to use the more public memoranda with confidence rather than referring to the content of the

informal contact and perhaps breaking confidences relating to my 'insider' role in the implementation process.

I have not used letters or memoranda that I considered to be of a confidential nature or whose use may damage the organisation. However, I believe that the data that I have referred to provided critical insights into understanding the events and issues relating to the implementation of the Extension Strategy.

III.1   **Analysis of content of the papers included in the proceedings of the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference**

III.2   **Data and analysis of QDPI responses to 'Key Issues' paper following Extension Policy Review**

III.1   **Analysis of content of the papers included in the proceedings of the 1987 australasian extension conference**

The analysis grouped the 87 papers contained in the Proceedings of the 1987 Australasian Extension Conference. Groupings were based on my assessment of commonalities relating the views on public sector extension, or their 'stake' in extension (for example, consultants having a livelihood stake).

The technique for analysing these papers is included in Appendix II.3.   The major conclusions of this analysis are included in the discussion in Chapter 4.2.

This section lists the groupings I made, and the major points of concern raised by these groups in relation to public sector extension, or the issues that could impact on the operation/future of extension.

The number of asterisks indicate the level of intensity of these issues - frequency and evident concern - within the confines of the varying number of representative papers from the different groupings. One asterisk (*) was a passing mention, and five asterisks (*****) was a high frequency with high concern. The number in brackets is the number of papers submitted in this grouping.

(a)   **Politicians (2)**

.   competition in distorted market place - competitiveness needed***
.   farm adjustment needed***
.   macro-economic reform occurring - emphasis needed on marketing and post farm-gate issues***
.   cost of public sector extension**
.   trends in user-pay for extension**
.   impact of pesticide residues on market*
.   production of food and fibre*
.   farmers need to be educated about basic policy instruments for their industry*

(b)   Federal Departments (2)

.   reducing budgets***
.   trends in user-pay for extension**
.   public good emphasis**
.   competition in distorted market place - extension as a necessary subsidy**
.   extension as information packaging**
.   increasing information technology**
.   growing private consulting sector - conflict of public competing**
.   national macro-economic management*
.   trend for regionalisation*
.   food and fibre surpluses*

(b)   State Department of Agriculture Staff (non user-pay) (42)

.   public role for extension - public benefit*****
.   increased complexity of farming, marketing skills needed, and information overload*****
.   need for integrated multi-disciplinary and whole farm approaches, and to go beyond the technical and look at economic and social needs*****
.   extension officer support and training needed with rewards linked to clear functions and roles*****
.   short term expediencies versus long term sustainability****
.   new extension models and skills needed (computers, interpersonal, group facilitation, adult education, participation, counselling, information management)****
.   more client involvement in priority setting needed and client-centred models emerging - farmers have knowledge ***
.   rural crisis/adjustment needing (community) counselling services and emphasis on business management***
.   reduced public funds and competition from other agencies - need to clarify role of government extension and increase accountability.
.   wider community needs and societal demands such as human and animal welfare, conservation, recreation**

(c)   Other State Departments (for example, Land Conservation) (11)

.   conservation priority****
.   new skills needed for new approaches (leadership, interpersonal)***
.   learning processes - client involvement***
.   integration of production and sustainability**
.   participatory approaches**
.   Landcare impact*
.   community expectations, as well as individual farmer*
.   long term emphasis*

.   better tools available*
.   fewer staff*
.   farmers prepared to take fewer risks*
.   need for multi-disciplinary*
.   co-ordination between programs*

(d)   Tasmanian Department (3)

.   need for personalised high level service**
.   distinction between advisory and facilitation function**
.   evaluation of extension staff*
.   issue of equity - limitations of public funding of one-on-one*
.   good communication needed about changes - staff and clients*
.   whole farm emphasis*
.   difficulty with co-operation if charge*

(e)   New Zealand (7)

.   professionalism in user-pay services*****
.   reduced government funding***
.   business approach***
.   Technical expertise vital***
.   market orientation**
.   new goals and missions needed**
.   post farm gate equal important**
.   need for shared planning*
.   reduced government intervention*
.   farm debt reconstruction*
.   restructuring*
.   farm specialisation*
.   shift from adult education to consulting*
.   new extension skills needed (consulting)*

(f)   United States (2)

.   public role for extension - public benefits***
.   Extension Models - Human Development/adult education focus***
.   adult education, self motivated farmers*

.   flexibility needed*
.   develop private agencies as a goal*
.   public extension to serve wider community not select group of farmers*
.   public versus private goods*

(g) Netherlands (1)

- extension activity as part of a total Agricultural Knowledge system***
- competition in international market place**
- undesirable consequences of technology propelled development
- world glut**
- conflict between policy role and service role**
- need for long term sustainability*
- extension as one of synergistic policy arms*
- importance of information management integration*

(h) Universities (15)

- major decline in extension training since withdrawal of federal assistance*****
- extension officers personal development and need new skills (new models, new technologies, computers, attitudes, ethics, interpersonal)*****
- unfavourable trading conditions and farm adjustment will require increased counsellor service and training, business management skills, and a focus on reducing costs****
- long term environmental and wider community issues a challenge for extension***
- integration of conservation with economic and production issues***
- user-pay now a fact**
- need for farmer rather than institutional orientation - participative approaches, and understanding of social, economic, and cultural factors***
- research into extension processes needed**
- increasing complexity and socio-political changes, require a whole farm approach*
- inequalities and imbalance between extension and research*
- rising cost of providing one-to-one extension*
- Government structural changes likely to conflict with extension officer's perception of role*
- need for better educated agribusiness sector*
- increased education options and processes in community*
- need for better problem definition*
- need more integration of technology*
- specialist roles needed (problem definition, adaptive research, integrating information)*
- more integration needed of institutions*
- ecological and ethics responsibility*
- knowledge system emphasis*
- human development models*
- separation of education and policy roles of extension needed*

(i)   Farmer Organisations (3)

.   Innovators demanding specialised services***
.   User-pay will demand value for money***
.   production efficiency a result of effective dissemination***
.   marketing skills and added value essential***
.   extension as education**
.   need for broader focus - beyond farm gate**
.   capacity for responsiveness needed**
.   information technologies have potential**
.   need for rural counselling in difficult times**
.   replacement of state extension services with federal umbrella similar to industry R&D Corporations*
.   world population growth will demand increased production*
.   high technology research being carried out will require extension**
.   development of niche markets*
.   farmer education levels rising*
.   extension needed in finance and marketing*

(j)   Consultants (5)

.   increased capacity in consultant and agribusiness sector to provide extension*****
.   clear distinction between consultants and public sector extension****
.   farmer demand for specialised advice***
.   high demand for financial advice and management***
.   competition with public sector hindering development of private - need to delineate boundaries***
.   increasing competitive environment for farmers**
.   need for marketing skills for farms*
.   need to harness farmer knowledge*
.   advisory demands limit planned extension*
.   consultant servicing of groups*

(k)   Banks (2)

.   high debt levels on farms demand change in extension processes**
.   rural adjustment needs counselling**
.   need to address education/qualifications of agribusiness and Rural Service Institutions**
.   need to use modern technology*
.   improve communication between extension and farmers to upgrade farm management*
.   need for long term perspective for rural adjustment*
.   extension should educate service sector*
.   need for co-ordinated programs*

(l)   Conservation groups (1)

.   need long term sustainability focus****
.   land conservation***
.   integration of production and conservation extension*
.   community goals as well as individual farmer*

(m)   CSIRO (1)

.   marketing philosophy needed for transfer of research information***
.   better use needed of results of public research***

III.2   Data and analysis of QDPI responses to 'key issues' paper following Extension Policy Review

I wrote a 'Key Issues' paper outlining what I believed to be the significant recommendations and issues for QDPI coming out of the 1990 Extension Policy Review. This was circulated to senior and middle managers within the organisation for comment. These responses came by way of formal memoranda or comments jotted in the margins of the key issues paper.

I collated all responses, and analysed the content (refer Appendix II.4). The number of asterisks indicate the relative frequency and intensity of the issue raised (1 asterisk indicates comment from only one source and not highlighted within this response, and 5 asterisks indicates that the comment was contained in many responses and were highlighted as a major issue by some).

General:

.   Extension being isolated from the rest of the department - particularly from research *
.   DPI extension has to fit with other information providers*
.   Need wider client focus (not just agricultural industries)*
.   Shouldn't focus on short term outcomes*
.   Need examples to illustrate policy changes*
.   Need for participative development of strategy*
.   Some extension staff will require attitude changes*

Definition:

.   Facilitation and developing leadership key components*
.   Argument over 'adult education'*

Market Failure:

.   Argument over definition*
.   Appropriateness of not competing*

Decentralisation:

.   Long term view needed (need to keep skills)*
.   State overview important*

Roles and Specification:

.   Need for flexibility - not rigid roles*****
.   Roles overlap***
.   Other roles (computer specialists, strategic architects etc)*
.   Danger of developing elite clients of specialists (dependency aspect)*

One-to-One:

.   Need one-to-one for feedback, training, and credibility*****
.   Proactive one-to-one needed for some issues (eg land management practices)**
.   Farmers would demand one-to-one if funding extension*

Community:

.   Special projects needed*
.   Community action groups with special officers*

Client Groups:

.   Definition of 'real' client participation****
.   Lack of ability of client organisations to adequately plan***
.   Agree with no automatic right of access**
.   Type of industry/issue will affect appropriate participation**
.   Work with client groups who have strategic directions*
.   Danger of identifying and working only with 'innovators'*
.   Other information providers also clients*
.   Need to feedback results of extension to clients*

Types of extension input:

.   Whole systems approach needed*
.   Information Centres costly and difficult to maintain*

Funding:

.   Support for mainly government funding****
.   Concern about methods to charge where private good***
.   Charges for information packages etc valid***
.   Division over this issue***
.   Short term industry funding can limit long term needs**
.   Different abilities and attitudes of client groups to funding**
.   Public good emphasis makes user pay difficult**
.   Should maintain reactive service with partial industry funding**
.   Public getting used to paying - so charge*
.   User pay as a measure of worth versus strategic management*
.   Difficulty with commercial input*
.   Examples of partial funding enhancing participation and client orientation*

Professional Support:

.   Need for reward and recognition****
.   Need for discipline base***
.   Need for better training**
.   Careers versus short term projects*

Geographical Location:

.   This should not fall under the province of an Extension Strategy Statement**
.   Could use as a reward to industries who are strategic*
.   A question of context (property sizes, distance etc)*
.   Need for critical mass of project teams rather than thinly spread*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADAS	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service (England and Wales)
AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Information System
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (Australia)
DFA	Department of Food and Agriculture (Victoria)
DPIE	Department of Primary Industry and Energy
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
KCS	Key Content Statement
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (New Zealand)
PP&R	Performance, Planning and Review (process)
QDPI	Queensland Department of Primary Industries
R&D	Research and Development Corporations
REC	Rural Extension Centre
REO	Regional Extension Officer
RES	Regional Extension Specialist
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UQ	University of Queensland
USFDA	United States Federal Department of Agriculture
WRDC	Wool Research and Development Council

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SUMMARY

This study explores the policy element of public sector agricultural extension. It was contended that this policy element lacked an adequate framework. Without such a framework, there was a risk that major policy - or operational - issues would be neglected in policy formulation. The study was designed to propose an improved framework for thinking about, and acting upon, the policy element of agricultural extension.

The notion of extension policy was presented as lacking clarity due to a number of surrounding issues. Differences in definitions of extension were considered to be a major cause of the confusion about extension policy. These definitions or paradigms ranged from a persuasive, technology transfer focus, to a facilitative, human development model. If individuals viewed extension from such different perspectives, then, meaningful discourse about extension policy would be extremely difficult to achieve. Other issues presented as confusing the notion of extension policy included the on-going debate about the legitimate role of **public sector** extension, the meaning of **formal policy** itself, and the disagreement about what should comprise the content of such formal policy. Finally, the **process** of developing a formal extension policy, its implementation, and its impact, was also considered to add confusion to the development of an extension policy framework.

Despite this confusion, however, the term **extension policy** was being used in practice, and extension policy was being developed. It was in this social construction of the meaning of extension policy that the development of an improved theoretical framework was sought.

It was contended that an understanding of the meaning and role of formal policy could best be explored by looking at a situation where such policy was in the process of being developed, formulated, and implemented. For this reason, the development of a formal extension policy in Queensland, Australia, provided a very useful case-study. For the first time in its 100 year history, the Queensland Department of Primary Industries had initiated a comprehensive **Extension Policy Review**. As a result of this review, a formal **Extension Strategy Statement** was written, endorsed by government, and is currently being implemented. It was the discourse and action surrounding this process that provided the research environment.

A grounded theory approach was used to enter this 'messy' world of appreciated knowledge. Pre-determined categories which provided an initial basis for collating and analysing the data were the **Hierarchy of Extension Objectives**, an **Agricultural Knowledge and Information System** perspective, and the dimension of **Power**.

The initial phase of the study focused on the 1990 QDPI Extension Policy Review. Research centred around the triggers for such a review, its process, content, and the reaction to its outcome. Because of the link between the events in Queensland and what was happening in other states and countries in the area of extension policy, the surrounding 'paper' debate was also examined. Interviews and textual analysis provided the basis of data collection during this phase.

The second phase explored the development, and early implementation, of the Extension Strategy Statement. In this phase, data was collected through participant observation, as well as through the record of institutional history found in office or internal memoranda.

The analysis suggested that the initiation of a formal extension policy in Queensland was primarily a means of pre-empting an anticipated imposition of 'inappropriate' changes to the extension function, which included an expected reduction in public resources for extension. The discourse surrounding extension policy firmly centred on this issue of resources, and also on other conditions required for extension to fulfil an overt public function. It was the strategic renegotiation of this public function that underpinned the claim on these resources. A formal policy appeared to provide the sought after public sector commitment to the extension function, and hence the provision of resources to permit extension to operate and develop. It also provided a mechanism to realign extension with changing societal trends and expectations. The formal policy, however, was found wanting in achieving commitment and substantive change at the interface between extension officers and their clients. Prescriptive elements of policy, in particular, were suggested as being inappropriate at this formal level.

An **extension policy triangle** was therefore proposed as a framework for thinking about the **content** of extension policy. This triangle comprised the elements of the **reason for extension**, the **enabling conditions**, and the **constraining conditions**. The societal reason for maintaining a public extension function was contrasted with the alternative, flawed rationale for extension in achieving predetermined, physically measurable objectives. Enabling conditions were described as providing the resources, structures, and processes to permit extension to develop and fulfil its negotiated reason. Constraining conditions were those that provided limitations on the extension function. These included resourcing issues as well as political and societal imperatives.

The study concluded, however, that the content and implementation of extension policy could not be divorced from the **process** of policy development. It appeared that extension policy was being negotiated at two levels - the **strategic** and the **collective.** At the strategic level, senior managers were manoeuvring to ensure the continued legitimacy of the public sector extension function and hence ensure its continued role, support and resources. At the collective level, however, extension officers, their managers, and stakeholders were attempting to work through the problem situation that they were confronted with - the challenge to their traditional relationships. Commitment to a direction or change at this level was considered to be essential if a strategic change was to be enacted. It was in the **discontinuities** evident between the strategic and collective levels where problems with content and its implementation appeared to result. These discontinuities centred around the lack of continuing and effective feedback loops between the two levels.

It was therefore proposed that formal extension policy should be viewed within the context of the negotiation of change at the collective level. Formal policy could provide an impetus and focus for that change, and introduce strategic issues into the collective discourse. It could also capture resources to enable new steps to be taken. However, formal policy should be seen as an integral step in the total extension policy process rather than the dominating component, or end result, of an extension policy development process.

Extension is being increasingly asked to become involved in complex community issues that demand collective action. It was argued that if extension is to have the capacity to impact in these areas, it must first demonstrate that its own guiding policy is grounded in a collective process.

SAMENVATTING

Dit onderzoek betreft het landbouwvoorlichtingsbeleid van de overheid. Het stelt vast dat hiervoor nog geen adequaat begrippen kader bestaat. Zonder een dergelijk kader ontstaat het gevaar dat belangrijke beleids - of operationele kwesties over het hoofd worden gezien in het beleidsvormingsproces. Dit onderzoek is opgezet om een beter raamwerk te ontwikkelen voor het denken over, en uitvoeren van, landbouwvoorlichtingsbeleid.

Het begrip voorlichtingsbeleid wordt beschouwd als een onduidelijk concept om een aantal redenen. Doordat voorlichting op verschillende manieren wordt gedefinieerd, ontstaat verwarring. Deze definities variëren van een nadruk op persuasieve technologie-overdracht tot een nadruk op het faciliteren van leerprocessen. Als mensen voorlichting vanuit zulke verschillende perspectieven bekijken, wordt het moeilijk zinvol over voorlichtingsbeleid te praten. Andere kwesties die voor verwarring rondom het begrip voorlichtingsbeleid zorgen zijn de doorlopende discussie over de legitimiteit van overheidsvoorlichting, de betekenis van formeel beleid, en de onenigheid over hoe zo'n formeel beleid inhoudelijk gestalte zou moeten krijgen. Tenslotte dragen het proces van de onwikkeling van een formeel voorlichtingsbeleid, de wijze waarop het geïmplementeerd wordt en de uitwerking daarvan ook nog bij aan verwarring rond de de ontwikkeling van een kader voor voorlichtingsbeleid.

Ondanks al deze onduidelijkheden wordt de term voorlichtingsbeleid in de praktijk gebruikt, en wordt voorlichtingsbeleid de-facto ontwikkeld. Dat was een belangrijk reden om te proberen een beter theoretisch kader te ontwikkelen.

De studie gaat er vanuit dat de betekenis en de rol van formeel beleid het beste kan worden begrepen door een praktijksituatie te onderzoeken, waarin zo'n beleid ontwikkeld, geformuleerd en geïmplementeerd werd. Daarom vormde de ontwikkeling van een formeel voorlichtingsbeleid in Queensland, Australië, een bruikbare case-study. Voor het eerst in zijn honderd-jarig bestaan begon het Ministerie van de Primaire Industrie van Queensland (QDPI) met een omvangrijke beschouwing van haar voorlichtingsbeleid. Dit resulteerde in de formulering van een formeel, door de regering onderschreven, beleidsplan, dat momenteel geïmplementeerd wordt. De gesprekken en activiteiten rondom dit proces waren het onderwerp van het onderzoek.

Een gefundeerde theoretische benadering is gebruikt om deze chaotische/wanordelijke wereld te betreden. Vooraf vastgestelde perspectieven die de eerste basis vormden voor het verzamelen en analyseren van de data waren de hiërarchie van voorlichtingsdoelen, het kennissysteem perspectief en de machtsdimensie.

De eerste fase van het onderzoek was gericht op de herziening van het QDPI-voorlichtingsbeleid, waarbij de actoren, het proces, de inhoud en de reactie op het resultaat werden bestudeerd. Vanwege het verband tussen de gebeurtenissen in Queensland en hetgeen plaatsvond in andere staten en landen met betrekking tot voorlichtingsbeleid, werd het "papieren" debat eromheen ook onderzocht. Gedurende deze fase vormden interviews en tekstuele analyses de basis voor de dataverzameling.

In de tweede fase werden de ontwikkeling en de eerste aanzetten tot implementatie, van de voorlichtingsbeleidsstrategie onderzocht. In deze fase werden data verzameld door middel van observatie van participanten en door de bestudering van de verslaglegging van de institutionele geschiedenis in bedrijfs - of interne notities.

De analyse suggereert dat de initiatie van een officieel voorlichtingsbeleid in Queensland met name een middel is geweest om vooruit te lopen op ongewenste veranderingen in de rol van voorlichting, waaronder een verwachte daling van de publieke middelen voor voorlichting. De dialoog rondom voorlichtingsbeleid richtte zich dan ook sterk op de beschikbaarheid van middelen en andere voorwaarden om voorlichting een publieke functie te laten vervullen. De hernieuwde strategische onderhandelingen over deze publieke functie ondersteunden de claim die werd gelegd op deze middelen. Het betstaan van een officieel beleid lijkt de acceptatie van de rol van voorlichting door de publieke sector te bepalen en zodoende de voorlichting van de middelen te voorzien die het in staat stelt te functioneren en zich te ontwikkelen. De beleidsontwikkeling zorgde ook voor een mechanisme waardoor voorlichting zich kon aanpassen aan veranderingen in de samenleving en de aan haar gestelde verwachtingen. Het officieel beleid wenste echter ook acceptatie en aanzienlijke veranderingen te bewerkstelligen op het raakvlak tussen voorlichters en hun cliënten.

Voor het denken over de inhoud van voorlichtingsbeleid werd daarom een raamwerk voorgesteld dat uit drie elementen bestond, namelijk argumenten voor het gebruik van voorlichting, voorwaardenscheppende factoren en noodzakelijke voorwaarden. In tegenstelling tot het wankele argument, dat door middel van voorlichting vooraf bepaalde meetbare doelen bereikt kunnen worden, werd meer nadruk gelegd op de maatschappelijke rol van voorlichting. Voorwaardenscheppend waren voorziening van middelen en structuren en processen die de ontwikkeling van voorlichting mogelijk maken, en de onderhandelingsfunctie kunnen waarmaken. Noodzakelijke voorwaarden werden geschapen door politiek, en door maatschappelijke en financiële kaders.

In de studie wordt geconcludeerd dat inhoud en implementatie van voorlichtingsbeleid niet los kan worden gezien van het proces van beleidsontwikkeling. Het blijkt dat voorlichtingsbeleid tot stand komt op twee niveaus: een strategisch en collectief niveau. Op het strategisch niveau waren de managers steeds bezig voorlichting te rechtvaardigen en daarmee een continue rol, steun en middelen voor voorlichting te verzekeren. Op het collectieve niveau werd door voorlichters, hun managers, en clienten getracht om met de bestaande probleemsituatie om te gaan - een uitdaging voor hun traditionele betrekkingen. Als een strategische verandering was vastgesteld, werd de acceptatie van de richting of verandering op dit niveau als essentieel gezien. Problemen met inhoud en implementatie kwamen duidelijk naar voren in de discontinuïteiten tussen het strategische en collectieve niveau. Deze discontinuïteiten werden voornamelijk veroorzaakt door het gebrek aan regelmatige en effectieve terugkoppeling tussen de twee niveaus.

Voor verandering op het collectieve niveau wordt daarom voorgesteld het formeel voorlichtingsbeleid te beschouwen binnen de context van onderhandeling. Formeel beleid zou een aanzet en verduidelijking kunnen leveren voor die verandering en nieuwe strategische beslissingen in de collectieve discours kunnen introduceren. Het zou ook de

beschikbaarheid van middelen om deze stappen te kunnen realiseren inhouden. Formeel beleid moet echter wel gezien worden als een integrale stap in het totale voorlichtingsbeleidsproces, in plaats van als een dominerende component, of als eindresultaat van een ontwikkelingsproces van voorlichtingsbeleid.

Voorlichting wordt meer en meer ingezet bij complexe maatschappelijke kwesties die collectieve actie vereisen. Als voorlichting het vermogen heeft om invloed op deze kwesties uit te oefenen, moet het eerst duidelijk zijn dat het beleid dat die voorlichting aanstuurt gebaseerd is op een collectief besluitvormingsproces proces, waardoor een draagvlak voor het beleid ontstaat.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Jeff Coutts was born in Ayr, North Queensland, Australia in 1954. He and his wife Robyn have three children, Amy, Jocelyn, and Ben. Jeff completed his primary degree of a Bachelor of Applied Science (Rural Technology) at the then Queensland Agricultural College, Lawes in 1975, and obtained an M.Sc in the Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems (with distinction) at the Wageningen Agricultural University in the Netherlands, in 1990.

His professional career has provided experience in both developed and developing countries, and in the private as well as the public sector. He and Robyn worked in Papua New Guinea as part of the Australian Volunteers Abroad program, teaching and managing a cattle and copra plantation near Alotau, Milne Bay Province. Later they returned to Papua New Guinea to manage an integrated poultry enterprise for Christian Leaders Training College, near Mt Hagen, Western Highlands Province. In between these visits, he was employed by a large poultry company in Australia, Inghams Enterprises, firstly working with contract meat chicken producers, and then as manager of a breeding farm complex.

Jeff commenced work with the Queensland Department of Primary industries (QDPI) in 1984 as an extension officer to poultry producers in the Darling Downs region of Queensland. He was co-author of the 'Egg Quality Handbook'. It was during this period that he undertook his post graduate studies at Wageningen. Shortly after being appointed as Manager for Poultry Field Services, he was seconded to the task of developing an Extension Strategy Statement for QDPI. He is now based at the Rural Extension Centre, at the University of Queensland, Gatton College, Lawes as Principal Extension Officer (extension development). The Rural Extension Centre is a joint QDPI-Queensland University initiative to provide a focus for extension research and training.

In 1993, he was convenor of the international Australia Pacific Extension Conference, held at Surfers Paradise in Queensland. In the same year, he also convened a state extension conference in Rockhampton, for practicing extension officers. Other recent activities have included co-authorship of a report for the Rural Research and Development Corporations in Australia, entitled 'Information Exchange', as well as overseeing a cost-effectiveness study of extension in QDPI, and leading training modules through the Rural Extension Centre.