

tools of the trade

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PLANNING—matching program priorities with clientele needs, translating financial resources into human purposes, the process of defining desired relationships between an organization and its environment, *inventing the future . . . or . . . simply a time-consuming, paperwork exercise that's at best useless in the face of environmental uncertainties and external political decision making . . . and at worst obscuring the real issues by simply legitimizing traditional operational patterns and decisions that have already been made*

Whichever way you lean in your philosophical orientation to PLANNING, the following paperbacks shed new light on the strengths and limitations of various planning approaches.

Bureaucracy *Bureaucracy. Guy Benveniste. San Francisco: Boyd & Fraser Publishing Company, 1977. 247 pages. \$6.95.*

The author assumes that there's a universal culture of organizations that transcends political or economic ideologies and that controls rewards, punishment, careers, promotions, corruption, errors, and fear that exist anywhere modern bureaucratic structures are established. He also assumes that this universal culture of organizations stresses task orientation and goal attainment; espouses efficiency, coordination, and rationality of decisions; rejects what's spontaneous, disorderly, or accidental; emphasizes what's systematic, thorough, and painstaking; endorses verification, control, and formalization; rejects amusement, pleasure, and delight for their own sake; applauds risk-taking, but rarely encourages it; rejects hedonism in the organization as sheer fantasy; and assumes that organizational survival is the only relevant goal to be pursued.

Within these assumptions, Benveniste explores three somewhat opposing views of the primacy of goals (evolved through planning) as organizational determinants:

1. Planning is so dominated by politics that it's useless.
2. Planning contributes to the rationality of political decisions.
3. Planning reduces uncertainty by helping us establish a consensus.

The author also provides a useful discussion of accountability, evaluation, and reducing the consequences of errors.

Benveniste synthesizes and summarizes these various orientations towards goals and goal-setting by saying:

. . . rationalization exercises (conscious attempts to use rational, logical thinking to deal with problems of organizational articulation—both internal and external) are valuable:

- when goals—or objectives—can be easily specified;
- when there is knowledge, i.e., a theory of the relations between what is done and what happens;
- when we can measure important components of the inputs, process, and output variables;
- when there exists a consensus about goals, process, input, and output variables within the relevant community.

. . . if we can agree about the future, we can make it less uncertain.