BUREAUCRATIC INNOVATION IN URBAN GOVERNMENT: A POLICY MODEL*

† Richard D. Bingham

ABSTRACT

The paper reports the results of a study examining the diffusion of innovations across four different units of local government. Using partial correlation coefficients to test a hypothesized model, the variables were successful in explaining the adoption of process innovations but showed limited success in explaining product adoptions. Socioeconomic variables were not found to be significant direct determinants of innovation. Demands for innovations, organizational characteristics, and the organizational environment were much more important predictors of the use of innovations by local governments.

PREFACE

In the last twenty-five years, a number of scholars have investigated the impact of socioeconomic and political factors upon urban policy outputs. Variables such as population (Wood, 1961; Dye, 1967), class (Dye, 1965), economic resources (Clark, 1968), industrialization (Brazer, 1959), race and ethnicity (Dye, 1967), and religion (Clark, 1968) have been found to be important predictors of city outputs. Similar socioeconomic variables have also been associated with the adoption of innovative policies by municipal governments (Aiken and Alford, 1970). Typically, in these "determinants" studies, the socioeconomic characteristics of the city have shown a strong direct relationship to a variety of urban policies. This paper suggests that socioeconomic variables are not important direct determinants of bureaucratic innovation adoption although they form the base of such adoptions. The findings presented here suggest that political and bureaucratic innovations are closely related but that they differ in important respects.

FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 presents a model of the innovation process. DEMANDS for political innovation or new policy are created by the local COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT. These DEMANDS are then articulated by the public and elected leaders, causing a POLITICAL INNOVATION in the form of new policy. The immediate POLICY IMPACT may then cause a BUREAUCRATIC INNOVATION leading to a change in PUBLIC SERVICE or outputs. BUREAUCRATIC INNOVATION, however, may receive important SUPPORTS AND CONSTRAINTS from factors in the political system (e.g., intergovernmental relations (Campbell and Sacks, 1967, pp. 53-66),

*The research reported here was supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation. The conclusions and recommendations contained in this paper are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Foundation. An earlier version of this paper was presented at "Technology Transfer to Urban Governments: Agenda for Research and Education." The Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, May 6, 1977.

† Dr. Richard D. Bingham is a member of the faculty and Chairman, Department of Urban Affairs, College of Letters and Science, The University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI 53201.
external professional relationships (Lee, 1971) and slack resources provided by both the community and external sources (Roessner, 1974, p. 3) and/or from the characteristics of the organization itself (e.g., size (Mohr, 1969), structure (Lineberry and Fowler, 1967), professionalism (Feller et al., 1974, pp. 210-211), formalization and complexity (Zaltman et al., 1973, pp. 138-143).

Figure 1 -- A Model for the Adoption of Innovation by Local Government

[Diagram of a model showing relationships between various factors such as community environment, political innovation, policy impact, bureaucratic innovation, and public service.]

18