The basic and foremost effort of an Action research of this type is to gain acceptance of such an organisation as that of the role played by the researcher as a desirable means of intervention. The relationship between those who hope to intervene and those organisations that are identified to be changed is often influenced by the images they form of each other. Even the assumption that change is desirable may not be equally acceptable to the interventionist and the intervened. Many a district official, for example, while accepting the need for change, thought it was needed more at state and central level than at the district level. Institutionalisation of a researcher's role in the form of an organisation or department could be accomplished through various factors, such as the relative academic advantages of the researcher, their capacity to stimulate activity change, or mutual appreciation by the interventionist and the intervened of the need for change. The capacity to activate change, using and inculcating the adoption of academic research results, solutions derived with the help of the techniques available will be determined more by the individual commitment of the personnel involved and by the direct intervention of the Coordinator (the organisation involved) than by any innate value of the management techniques, skills used or the body of knowledge available.

The image reciprocity is a vital element of institutionalisation. However the value of usage of management techniques through counterpart approach and a continuous dialogue about the data based analysis of the problems identified by the interventionist could inculcate an understanding of district environment
to the interventionist and the means of solving the problems to the intervened which is an indication of acceptance for change because of easiness and the reduction of difficulties in executing the projects. Apart from the factors mentioned above to the receptivity for change, the factors like the strength of District Development Agency (DPAP or DRDA) the bureaucratic culture of the professional strength of the researcher itself are the most important factors which influenced receptivity, the authority from which the strength of designing and experimenting intervention was derived. It was due to the stress of the mandate from the State Government used to impress upon district officials, that the role of the interventionist and the skill of the professionals from the link institution were accorded a greater institutionalisation by the officials in effecting the need for change.

7.2 CONSTRAINTS OF ACTION RESEARCH:

The idea of action research for improving planning, implementation and management of projects at the local or district level was based on the intervention of professional researcher which ultimately aimed at an organisational structure in a district system. It was hoped that such an intervention would develop individual capabilities among the district level officials which in turn would lead to a systematic change. The main aim of the interventionist working in collaboration with the DPAP or DRDA was to conceive a method of internalizing the role of the interventionist. The researcher will have to play a role of consultant as a researcher as well as administrator suiting the needs of various other roles of the district administration but not as a planning and management agent alone.

The district administration and development departments looked upon the interventionist as a ready resource for its intermittent ‘fire fighting’ activities
such as preparation of annual plan, discussing its feasibility, demonstrating the process of collection of data etc. was acceptable to the district administration because of its own urgency while the researcher set them sights on a longer perspective. Some conflicts did arise because of these differing perceptions, but it became quite clear that the district administration or development departments (Minor Irrigation Department) needed such a professional who while maintaining his authority and linkage with modern method of planning and management techniques was also able to support district planning and management activities. However, it was difficult to establish the extent and content of autonomy.

While adopting the clientale approach the interventionist did not get a clear indication of whether suggestions for changing the planning, implementation, monitoring and management process have been accepted. Though the district officials continued to talk of the need for transforming financial procedures, inter-organisational relationships, departmental hierarchical systems, the relationship of the technical (Minor irrigation engineering) department with the district administration etc. inhibited change unless directed from the state level. However, there seemed to be a general consensus on the desirability and efficacy of intervention at the district or local level. But the types of organisation on hierarchies and departmental loyalties that prevail and the extent of decentralisation that exists indicate that their responsibility in terms of effective performance in planning and management of R.D. projects should also be shared by the upper echelons of administration too without whose concomitant support emanating from higher levels (state level) the changes at local or district level cannot be institutionalised.
The people for whom the effort at improvement was designed did not get explicitly involved in the action research process although some conceptional headway was made in this regard. The people's cooperation and involvement was much exploited at the time of problem identification (diagnostic exercise), assessing the need for training for the implementing agencies and in assuring the methods of management and maintenance system of minor irrigation project. The people or target groups were not much involved in the decision making process, i.e., while deciding about the benefits to be accrued. The intervention strategy did not involve the local political leadership directly in the action research process which may not be so helpful to the district without whose help the project planning, implementation, monitoring, management and maintenance may not be effective.

Role of link institutions:

The identification of the link institution was based on the professional skill in guiding the researcher for an action-research process in planning and management of rural development projects and nearness of the institution in order to achieve the local environment. Also action research perspective demanded that it should not merely be interested in producing academic reports but committed to bring about changes in a system which was at times both rigid and inhospitable. As per the role of link organisation, it had helped the researcher in guiding the action research process at the district level for which the institution itself/competent in the areas of action research studies undertaken in terms of problem identification, problem solving, adoption of the results feedback mechanism and replication of the process duly modifying the systems with the experiences gained.

Also the institution has guided the researcher as well as the district administration with the new achieved research results and the management techniques
Cooperation through which the project planning, execution, monitoring, management and maintenance could be made easy at the local or district level. The concept of 'lab to land' was to be achieved with the help of such an organisation when the whole action research process was replicated by legitimising and institutionalising the role of researcher in the form augmented organisation in the district in order to achieve an effective planning and management system through an action research process.

Coordination among District Administration and Sectoral Departments:
The existing organisation structure at the district level indicates that the district administration being the overall incharge of the district development and other activities, the sectoral departments (technical) such as Minor Irrigation, Agriculture etc., were the executing departments at the district level within the overall framework of the district administration linked directly to the concerned departments at the state level. The line control of these departments at the regional level and at the state level are controlled by the District Collector at the district level. The project approach of any sector and with a special reference to Minor Irrigation sector as explained in the sectoral report will have a link to achieve the integrated approach to derive the anticipated effective results of the project. However, the participating agencies or departments in this regard are many in an integrated Minor Irrigation Project. The coordination among those departments is most essential and as a coordinator the District Collector alone could not do justice in effectively coordinating the various projects.

Institutionalisation:
Institutionalisation based on the action research process was understood to mean the creation of conditions for the ultimate withdrawal of professional
support of the researcher for planning and management of rural development projects and to create such an organisation called District Project Planning Cell which can play the role of a researcher. It is expected that individuals in the local organisations, by imbibing new knowledge and skills would develop the capability themselves to design interventions for changing the planning and management system at the district level. However, the process being every time innovative, there is a need to have such an organisation which can play the role of interventions it (researcher) so as to take care of problem identification - Problem solving - providing solutions or methodologies or techniques - adoption process by duly interacting and coordinating with the concerned development departments as well as with the district administration. Also the institutionalisation of such an organisation would help in an effective way to achieve the effective planning, implementation, monitoring, management and maintenance of the rural development projects at the district level. Institutionalization of an intervention in forms of change in procedures and processes would also require appropriate government orders and or a structural change in the organisations.

It may be mentioned in this regard institutionalisation of action research process was accepted by the district administration as the institutionalisation of management culture. It can also be thought of that any effort to graft an institutional set up on a district system would fail because the danger at any minor level could not be divorced from the macro economic policy frame-work. In such a case it is necessary to bring about simultaneous changes at the central and state level for sustaining any process of change at the district level. In this context it is viewed that the system had an extraordinary resilience to revert to its original form no matter what interventions were made at any time, unless these interventions also brought simultaneous changes
at central or state level. Institutionalising a process of decision-making, planning and management that would call for an approach to problem solving radically different from the one existing was agreed by most to be a stupendous task.

However, the institutionalisation of action research process by augmenting an organisation's structure to the existing organisation involved in planning and management of rural development projects would improve the decision making process, implementation, monitoring, management and maintenance process by playing the role of interventionist at the district level and working as liaison department between the technical or development departments and district administration in improving the efficacy of the planning and management process of rural development projects.

7.3. ORGANISATIONAL DESIGN:

Research and experience have multiplied what we knew about rural people and their environment. Abundance of institutions and agencies have been created to supply information, programmes and projects for rural regions. This has led to a proliferation of professional competencies in specialised agencies and organisation but has not usually produced an adequate formal mechanism for interrelating programmes or projects or services at the local level, specially in modern management techniques. An improved rural planning and development programmes or projects of public agencies with the interests and priorities of local officials and citizens, the institutional design at the district level should provide for greater involvement of the public and must incorporate a wider array of agencies and organisations and should contain several major elements such as - Over all responsibility for planning at the district level and should become the central source of consultation and
information on key planning issues for district level decision makers and should have direct ties with the state level government planning and development agencies - A subunit of this institution at the district level should be capable of securing access to applied and developmental research results which provide social, economic, political and other knowledge on which planning should be based - A subunit for analysing, interpreting and projecting information as a basis for better short range discussion and long range goal formation should rely heavily on external assistance from centre or resource people with competence in applied research, modeling, projection, projectisation and process for reducing data to comparable forms. This unit should also be in a position to help the executing or implementing agencies of different sections in planning for implementation, implementation, coordination, monitoring, evaluation and feed back to the decision makers as well as to the executors.

A generalised diagram of a district level planning unit and the corresponding linkages with the state and central government planning organisations and the expert organisations is outlined in figure 7.1. A continuous monitoring, investigative and corrective process to illustrate the most effective means for a continuing dialogue among elected leaders, appointed officials and professional staff would seem essential if the planning and management process at the district level is not to become sterile. Educational institutions should become more involved with district, state and central governments in developing improved process for application of knowledge and building collaboration and integrated working relationship. However, since most of the work involved could be the responsibility of existing organisations or individuals a permanent district planning unit should have access to it. Installa-
FIG. 7.1: SUGGESTED ORGANISATIONAL LINKAGES FOR ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS IN PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF RD PROJECTS
tion of an effective unit would mainly require a broadly trained planning administrator who has a high level of management skill and a clear understanding of and appreciation for the political - governmental process. Also specialised staff would be required who could fulfil the other roles called for.

**District Planning Cell - Function and Scope:**

Accepting district as a planning unit, the success of planning cell, it was realised, largely depends upon the interest that state government takes in staffing cells professionally and using them for planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and in providing the feed back to the District Administrator as well to the technical departments (Sectoral departments) who are closely involved in decision making and execution of rural development projects. The role of link institute in this regard becomes very crucial because it is the expertise at their level which guides the activities of the cell in adopting the developed theories to the practical situations and judging the applicability for decision making process as well to the effective implementation of the micro-level rural development projects and in turn determines its acceptability in the district system. Hence it can be agreed that the cell will have to concentrate on developing data, helping the sectoral officers in formulation of the sectoral projects by adopting the modern appraisal and management techniques, providing a forum for information exchange and feed back amongst various sectoral officers, installing the monitoring and concurrent evaluation system to strengthen the decision making process at Collector's level etc. In addition to these roles, the cell would also need to influence planning culture in the sectoral departments so that inter-sectoral linkages, needed at the implementation levels, become a part of project planning exercise itself. Thus, it was hoped to reduce re-
liance on coordination mechanism for ensuring success of rural projects, which by definition are multi-sectoral. The Collector, through monitoring of these linkages rather than sectoral activities, may contribute towards strengthening of management culture and others of group working for a common purpose.

**Functions of the District Planning Cell:**

The District Project Planning Cell will contribute consistently towards the institutionalisation of project formulation, including planning for implementation (i.e., preparing Detailed Project Report as mentioned in the manual), implementation, monitoring, evaluating to understand the problems (diagnostic studies), developing solutions and solving the problems during implementation, defusing the solutions to the various executing or implementing agencies and adopting management information system for an effective reporting system and further implementing the plan. The procedure will be replicated every year in diagnosing - providing solutions - defusing solutions - and making these solutions get adopted. These repetitive functions will be adopted by the District Planning Cell in order to standardise the formulation, implementation monitoring and evaluation procedures by the District Project Planning Cell staff. Certain projects which will have state level importance will be referred to the State Planning Board and some of them which are of country-wide importance as well as huge financial constraints will be referred to the Central government (Planning Commission). This serves the process of bottom to top planning approach which accounts for the local resources and the applicability of plans to the local needs. The functioning of the District Planning Cell are detailed in the flow diagram 7.2.

**Training:**

As detailed in chapter five/ assessment of training needs, training the sectoral
FIG. 7.2: FLOW DIAGRAM INDICATING THE SUGGESTED FUNCTIONS OF DISTRICT PROJECT PLANNING CELL
staff at the district level and also the lower staff who are closely involved in implementation of rural development projects and also creation of expertise among different levels of personnel who are involved in project formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural development projects will be identified by the District Project Planning Cell at various levels in different sectoral departments. The development of guidelines and manual will be utilised for imparting training at local level. Also workshops and seminars like the one of Action Seminar conducted as mentioned in Chapter Five will be periodically organised by the District Project Planning Cell in collaboration with the link institutions such as training and research organisation like NIRD universities, Post graduate centres etc., in order to understand the actual procedures adopted, to find out the deviations and to incorporate solutions for the future projects by the different sectoral officers. If necessary for conduct of training, workshops and seminar the expertise of state institute of rural development and National Institute of Rural Development can be availed and the training needs can be fully met.

**Location and linkages of the District Project Planning Cell:**

Whatever may be the distinctive administrative system existing, since the present day district system has really taken the turn from revenue orientation to a development orientation, the collector at the district level being more a development person than a revenue person at least in the views of policy makers if not among the people, the location of the planning cell need to be connected with the Collector's Office. It was also repeatedly mentioned that the programmes such as Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), RLEGP etc., are being implemented in the district by different organisations such as District Development Authorities (DDA),
District Rural Development Authority (DRDA), NREP either directly by the Collector or through his line authority (Revenue), but again with the help of the Block Development Officer at the block level, of course again through the village panchayat presidents without much of the involvement of non-official bodies at the district level and Panchayat Samithi level unlike at the state level which essentially results in a non-involvement of the people and the dominance of the bureaucracy at the district level. Here again the recent development of District Planning Boards at the district level should also be meaningfully integrated with the non-official body, Zilla Parishad at the district level to bring about the real participation of the people with in the perview of the planning cell which should maintain an independent identity at the district level under the umbrella of District Planning Board, Zilla Parishad, Collector and the different organisations and sectoral departments involved in implementation of special programmes projects. Since the micro level project planning gains utmost importance in the circumstances of limited resources for an optimum utilization, the planning process at the local level should help in achieving the equity growth and social justice which are of the major objectives of the democratic system of development process; the district planning cell should necessarily be an organisation with liaison and coordinating role with various agencies involved in formulation, implementation monitoring, evaluating and providing feedback mechanism to not only to policy makers but also to the decision makers and programme or project executors at the micro-level (district level). In fact District Project Planning Cell should be a separate wing or department or agency at the district level just like at the state level in the Secretariat.

The linkage of the District Planning Cell with the state planning machinery was very much relevant for bringing in adequate seriousness among the secto-
eral departments at district level for using the resources of the District Planning Cell. Furthermore, the studies have shown that decisions at state level have an important bearing on the functions of various departments at district level, while projects will continue to be planned in the sectoral schemes, monitoring within the sector or among the sectors can certainly be improved with the advantages of District Project Planning Cell which will be formulating the projects itself in terms of providing a better implementation planning and clear cut monitoring procedures.

However, the linkage between the District Project Planning Cell and the State Planning Board could help in bringing out the coordination of developmental activities or projects since the financial allotments would mainly flow from the state to the district in addition to the central funds linked with state's contributions. In order to adjust and accommodate a limited augmented institution at the district level to establish District Project Planning Cell, linking with the State Planning Board and the data at the state and district level, the organisational linkage is as proposed in figure 7.3.

**Staffing of District Project Planning Cell:**

Regarding the professional strength of the cell, it was felt that the cell could not be staffed with as many professionals as the sectoral departments functioning in the district. Only those functions that strengthen formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and feedback mechanism in coordination with the sectoral professionals, administrators and the policy makers need to be strengthened. However, an officer of the rank as that of Joint Collector or Project Administrator with management skills and orientation need to head the project planning cell. He has to be assisted by the two Deputy Directors who are well versed in modern management techniques.
such as financial appraisal, economic appraisal and social cost benefit analysis and Network analysis such as PERT/CPM oriented management techniques. This should be the criteria for one Deputy Director. Also with the help of performance appraisal techniques, monitoring procedures through network analysis (PERT/CPM), management information system analysis and clear cut evaluation procedures and techniques to provide feedback mechanism have to be possessed by another Deputy Director. To each of these Deputy Directors two Assistant Director cadre officers who possess professional skills in the same area and expertise may be attached. Each of the Assistant Directors should be assisted by two senior and two junior investigators. This would be the additional staff that should be provided at the district level for District Project Planning Cell. As usual at the taluq/block/Mandal levels the statistical assistants and progressive assistants are to be involved closely with the District Project Planning Cell. These two cadres will serve the purpose of data collection within the district in respect of various projects and other relevant situations. Senior and Junior Investigators will assist in terms of compilation, analysis and other requirements to the Assistant Director. The Assistant Director and Deputy Directors will develop projects at the local level and district level by integrating the block level projects in consultation with the sectoral officers under sectoral departments. The District Planning Cell will act as a liaison department in between the technical (sectoral departments), Administrators and policy makers in all aspects such as project formulation including planning for implementation, actual implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the various rural development projects at the district level. The structure and line authority and the design of the organisation for district project planning cell are as depicted in diagram 7.3.
FIG. 7.3: SUGGESTED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DISTRICT PROJECT PLANING CELL

PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT SPECIALIST (DIRECTOR CADRE)

DEPUTY DIRECTOR TECHNICAL

DEPUTY DIRECTOR MANAGEMENT

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

SENIOR INVESTIGATOR

SENIOR INVESTIGATOR

SENIOR INVESTIGATOR

SENIOR INVESTIGATOR

JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR

JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR

JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR

JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR

PROGRESSIVE/STATISTICAL ASSISTANTS, ONE FOR EACH MANDAL

MANDAL LEVEL

DISTRICT LEVEL