

The Role of Public Administration in the Modern Democratic State and Socialist Goals

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Abstract

The role and functions of the Government and the bureaucracy is that which keeps constantly evolving in the wake of developments and changes in and around the world. During our discourse we have seen how the academic discipline of public administration has evolved. It has undergone reforms and has been influenced by developments in other sciences like social and behavioral. Democracy is a representative form of Government chosen by the people. The entire idea of public administration in a democracy is contradictory. Public administration as described by Frederick Camp Mosher is three steps removed from the people. According to Berkeley and Rouse public service and democracy are both opposing in nature yet complement each other. In a democratic state, the spirit of democracy needs to be maintained in the manner in which the public services are administered. The public administration of a democratic state needs to be transparent, efficient and most importantly should be open for public scrutiny and criticism. It should ensure scope for incorporation of public opinions and ideas for improvement and delivering better services. It needs to be representing the general interest of a large section of people rather than personal interests of specific few. In a diverse country like India where the social denominators like caste, religion, language etc. pose barriers at so many levels, the public administration should be such that it rises above and transverses all differences.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to the political scientist James Pfiffner, the politics and administration are so closely knit together that it becomes difficult to draw the line where one ends and the other begins. Politics is the study of power which is the latest definition of the term. According to Raymond Aron, politics is the study of authority relations between the individual and groups and the hierarchy power which establishes itself within all numerous and complex communities. As per this definition, since, power is kind of omnipresent, it is safe to assume that it has an important say in the matters of public administration as well. I have read about the dichotomy between the politics and administration. Subsequently, we also read about how the later authors and subject matter experts opposed the earlier dichotomy and insisted that politics and administration cannot be viewed in isolation. In this section let us try to understand the relationship between the politics and administration.

Another important figure in the field was Dwight Waldo, an American political scientist and a prominent figure in the area of modern public administration. In his book: The administrative state: a study of the political theory of American public administration, he explains an interesting phenomenon regarding the evolution of reforms in civil services in USA. The principal concern of early civil service reformers was not greater administrative efficiency but was cleansing and promoting democracy. The primary issue was not increasing efficiency but was protecting and building moral. There is no argument regarding the fact that public administration emerged as a discipline of political science, the former deals with the output of the Government machinery and the latter with the input. It can also be put as such that, political science provides the framework within which public administration functions. From the academic perspective, both these subjects share a number of common areas of study like constitutional law, administrative law, delegated legislation, government budgeting and local governments amongst many other. So, a comprehensive understanding of both the subjects is mutually inclusive to each other, to learn one, the other has to be mastered as well.

Another important academic field from which public administration heavily borrows and is deeply influenced is the Sociology. It is a branch of study which deals with social order, change, class, conflict, problems, associations and institutions. According to Marshal Edward Dimock, administration takes place

in a social setting and it is the society which determines the pattern of administration. He goes ahead and adds that through an administrative leadership however, the society itself can be changed for good. He says that the job of a public administrator is not mere administration but that of a social engineer who can bring about desirable changes in the society. In the modern times, the various activities which the society governed and administered itself like community welfare, health, security etc. have been taken over by the Government and public administration departments. The social control has been replaced by administrative controls and hence, it makes sense for the public administrators to be in sync with societal goals. I have constantly been referring to diverse subjects to understand public administration better; the reader is now in a position to understand the relevance, importance and vastness of this subject which has an immediate and direct interaction with us in our everyday lives.

2.0 ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN THE MODERN STATE

The critical role of public administration as defined by John Rohr (a leading scholar of the US Constitution and its relation to public administration and civil servants) is governing the society. The authors have also argued that a government can exist without a legislature, even without a judiciary but never without administration. The government will become as dysfunctional as a lame horse in a derby race. Public administration as a part of Government has existed since the time of the monarchies, ancient India's most prominent political scientist and economist Chanakya (373-283 BCE) in his treatise Arthashastra; dedicates substantial chapters to Statecraft or the public administration of a state.

Public administration provides numerous services to the public and serves their interests in many ways. As explained by Felix A. Negro, the real core of administration is the basic service which is performed for the public. It is the administration which ensures the security and protection of life and property of the members of the society by maintaining proper law and order. The economic, cultural and even spiritual progress for that matter; of a society depends on the public administration. The day to day functioning of the Government machinery, external affairs and the most important of all, the national defense are the other important functions performed by the public administration of the country.

In the modern state, the role and scope of public administration is ever expanding and all encompassing. We are way past the laissez-faire state which was responsible for maintaining law and order only. The modern state which expects government to provide much more has seen the role of public administration change dramatically, since those times. The current role and functions adopted by public administration owes its origin to the changes which the human history has witnessed in the last couple of centuries.

The first important change was the industrial revolution which resulted in the urbanization of the large cities of the world. Secondly, there was a change in the political philosophy from minimalist state intervention (or laissez-faire) and individualism to social welfare. The two World Wars combined with the changing international scenarios with new countries, alliances and organizations like the formation of United Nations, generated a need to reform the goals of administration in the society; not just of within a nation but also with respect to the world. Lastly, the increasing population of the world means tremendous pressure on the available resources. The role of providing for basic amenities like food and shelter has therefore fallen into the lap of the Government. According to E N Gladden, there are three characteristics of an efficient public administration:

- It needs to meet the functional aims for which it has been created
- It must be able to meet the long term needs which might arise due to change in administrative techniques or the changes in social environment which are more important and influential
- It needs to conform to a centralized plan but also accommodate the specific and special demand of particular department units

3.0 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION - CHALLENGES IN A DEVELOPED SOCIETY

The developed countries are identified by certain parameters like highly developed economy, greater technical infrastructure, high GDP and net income per capita, level of industrialization and also the standard of living of the people. Development and modernization of a state has an obvious and significant impact on its politics, culture and society. Subsequently, these changes find their ways in several other important institutions like judiciary, executive and legislative. USA has been one of the

nations, which have witnessed vast changes and reforms in its administrative history owing to the industrialization, two world wars and the various academic and experimental studies carried out in the areas of social and behavioral sciences. Let us also look at the general features of the public administration in developed countries before we proceed to study about the challenges they face.

- The government organizations are significantly differentiated and functionally specific. The bureaucracies are large and perform a myriad of specialized functions and are of the Weberian type
- There is a lot of internal specialization within the roles and the selection of people is based on merit
- The decision and law making process is largely rational
- The government institutions are present in all spheres of the life of the citizens
- Since there is popular interest in public affairs, there is a direct relationship between political power and legitimacy

Now, the problems that the public administration of developed countries faces are also complex. The first problem which is kind of basic is the lack of coherence between numerous service providing agencies and regulatory bodies. The problem especially surfaces at the local levels where the authorities design their own programs and also run the programs funded by the national authorities. The other example can be dominance of politicians in the matters of specialized domains of bureaucracy. Most of the developed states, especially of Europe are called Administrative States and their bureaucracies perform certain specific functions. Rumki Basu in her book *Public Administration: Concepts and Theories* explains these functions. According to her, the public administration in these countries performs regulatory functions while ensuring the enforcement of law and order, collection of revenues and the national defense against aggression.

The public administration provides a range of services like education, health, cultural, insurance, housing, unemployment benefits and communication and transport. They also play an important role in bringing about the economic growth of the country by operating industries, giving loans etc. The present day challenges in the developed countries are primarily economic. The economic depression has put immense pressures on the services provided by the government. A lot of reforms have been proposed in which the state resources are being closely administered. The withdrawal of certain benefits has left the public administration of the countries exposed to a lot of criticism and flag from the common people. The regulatory role of public bodies has also come under scrutiny for their failure to prevent major upheavals from taking place. As things improve, the role and challenges of public administration shall change once again.

3.1 Importance and Challenges in a Developing Society

The developing countries of the world are concentrated in the regions of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The developing nations are characterized by an economy which is transitioning from agrarian to industrial. You may recall Fred Riggs and his famous Prismatic Model from the earlier article, according to Riggs, the developing nations are the prismatic societies. There are a few characteristic features of these developing economies:

- They have all been an Imperial nation's colony at some point in their history
- The subsequent exploitation by these colonial masters has driven their economies into a state of deep national debts
- The national income as well as the per capita income is very low
- The social development in these countries are in early stages
- The main problems are poverty, population explosion, illiteracy, poor sanitation, insufficient infrastructure and in a rapidly developing economy like India, the problem of inequitable distribution of this economic prosperity between rural Bharat and urban India
- The conflicting interests and diversities based on caste, creed, language, regions etc
- There are constant conflicts between the traditional and the modern
- The public administration plays a crucial role in achieving inclusive developmental goals

Now, having understood the general scenario prevalent in these developing countries, we can take a step forward and try to understand the nature of public administration in these economies.

- The public administration system of these nations are often than not an imitation of that of their colonial masters
- The imitative system seems divorced and distant from the people and their problems
- There is an acute shortage of skilled manpower with technical and managerial competencies
- Also, there is a kind of monopoly of bureaucracies in these nations because of which they enjoy vast amount of autonomy however the goals intended to achieve by them often gets lost amidst all this
- An interesting phenomenon coined by Riggs called Formalism is common place in these economies. According to it, the bureaucratic officers and public servants insist on following law, rules etc and tenaciously hold on to them while providing services to the people however their own professional behavior is far removed from the laid down laws, rules and regulations

The problems plaguing the bureaucracies of these countries are that they are ill equipped to carry out developmental goals. Since, they came into existence to serve the goals and objectives of their colonial masters; they seem to be in disharmony with the changing needs and aspirations of the natives. For e.g. the Indian Police still follows the 1865 Police Commission guidelines which was laid out to address the law and order situation in the era of British Raj. In developing countries, the major challenge is development and modernization. The public institutions have the enormous developmental tasks in their hands; combined with rapid economic development due to the growth in the private sector and the economically wealthy young population, the demand for delivery of services is increasing. Finally, the rural areas have not kept up with the rapidly growing urban areas, whether in Brazil or in India, they look upon Government, public administration and public servants as their only hope.

4.0 CLASSICAL THEORY OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

There have been several discussions and arguments regarding whether public administration can be categorized as a Science or as an Art. During our discussion of the topic earlier, we had come across authors and social scientists who vehemently supported the cause that public administration was a science indeed and amongst the most notable supporters of this theory were Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick. Gulick and Urwick were born in faraway lands from each other, Gulick in Japan while Urwick in Britain. Gulick completed his studies from the Columbia University, served on the National Defense Council during the First World War. He served as the administrator of the New York City for 2 years during 1954-56 and was also the president of the Institute of Public Administration, New York from 1962-82. He was also the author of several books like Administrative Reflections of World War II, Metropolitan Problems and American Ideas, Modern Management of the City of New York and Papers on the Science of Administration.

Urwick completed his education from Oxford University and like Gulick served in the First World War as the Lt. Col of the British army. Urwick was also associated with several international management institutes and published several books like The Management of Tomorrow: The Making of Scientific Management, Leadership in XX Century Organizations, The Patterns of Management and also worked as an editor of several papers on science of administration. He was also a well reputed and renowned industrial consultant who worked extensively for introducing the management education in UK. Urwick edited the most important work, Papers on the Science of Administration presented by Gulick in 1937. Both of these thinkers were greatly influenced by Fayol and Taylor and the idea of machine model of the man. All this combined with their respective military and industrial background led them to propose the Classical Theory of Management or the Administrative Management Theory. The classical theory projects public administration as a science. Both these authors argued that like the stream of engineering became science through methods of empirical observation, systematic finding and recordings over a period of time similarly, public administrators can create the science of administration.

Both the authors also stressed on the importance of the structure of the organization. Urwick wrote that lack of structure can lead to a lot of inefficiencies and confusion within an organization and Gulick went ahead to identify 10 principles on which the organizational structure can be designed. Below are the 10 principles as listed by Gulick:

- Division of labor or what we call specialization
- Departmental Organization

- Hierarchical coordination
- Deliberate coordination
- Creating coordination committees
- Decentralization
- Unity of command
- Staff and Line
- Delegation and Span of Control

The last principle regarding the span of control of a senior executive or a leader, acted as a stimulant for other authors on writing about leadership. According to this last principle, the executive should have less number of people directly reporting to him to increase his efficiency.

Urwick believed that there are 8 principles on which an organization can function, the important points being:

- The objective of the organization
- Authority and responsibility
- The principle of span of control
- Coordination
- The principle of definition amongst other principles

And lastly, we can end the discussion without writing about Gulick's POSDCORB, each word signifying the various executive functions:

- P - Planning
- P - Organizing
- S - Staffing
- D - Directing
- CO - Coordination
- R - Reporting
- B - Budgeting



Management students shall find the above terms quite familiar, relevant and of everyday use. In the next section, we shall be talking about the Human Relations Theory. The reader is now getting a chance to understand in individuality and detail that how the progresses made in other streams had an influence on the thinkers of public administration.

4.1 Human Relations Theory of Public Administration

The Human Relations Theory has human beings at its center as can be understood by the name, but it also had more to it. It viewed human beings not as machine models but as individuals with differing psychological motivations and with distinct and dynamic group behavior affecting performances. There was an experiment conducted on the workers of the Hawthorne Works of the Western Electricals in the spring of 1927 in Chicago. The experiment was being conducted by Elton Mayo and Fritz Roethlisberger, the former being an Australian organizational theorist and the latter was his employee. The experiment was later known as the Hawthorne experiment and the findings were called the Hawthorne effect. Elton Mayo is often coveted as the father of the Human Relations Movement and his experiment and studies are the most referenced piece of work not just in public administration but also in people management in organizations.

The Hawthorne experiment set out to find the relationship between the work conditions, the general fatigue and resulting monotony in the employees. It was believed that the relationship can be gauged by studying the effect of temperature, humidity lighting and hours of sleep. The findings of the Hawthorne experiment shocked the social scientists in many ways. The experiment was carried out on a piece rate wage system for the participant workers. It was seen that the workers were motivated to work for money only till the time when they would ensure an adequate income and refused to work more than that. This simple but startling revelation created quite a shakeup for the scientists as it clearly challenged the Taylorian principle of scientific management. At the next level, some female workers were separated

from the rest of the workers and were put under observation. It was observed that with time and changed in the working conditions like lighting, humidity etc, their productivity kept raising. This puzzled the scientists even more, it was later discovered that the girls were aware of the experiment being conducted on them and therefore displayed their best performance.

The experiment conducted for over a year ended in some new understanding regarding people and performance. It was understood that human beings are motivated by several factors and not alone economic. They are greatly influenced by their social environment, form groups, have goals, beliefs, conducts and ethics which might not be in sync with that of the organization. So, for all practical purposes they were thinking, acting, conscious individuals who needed to be treated like one. This was a theory which made the thinkers move away from the earlier popular classical theory which proposed and emphasized on the structure, organizational planning etc as its core. It became very clear after the Hawthorne experiments that the informal relationships, the group dynamics and day to day functions of an organization are no less complex than the study of the mechanism of the organization. At the end of the day, it becomes important that the employees perform and their performance is sometimes far removed from the parameters and motivators understood by the organization.

4.2 Bureaucratic Theory of Public Administration

The bureaucratic theory of public administration owes its existence to Max Weber and his magnum opus *Economy and Society* published in 1922. It was Weber who popularized the term and in his book gave a glimpse of the extensive research he had carried out by studying ancient and modern states to understand the working of the bureaucracies in different eras. Before we dive into the details regarding Weber's ideas of bureaucracy, it would be interesting to understand his background and education to appreciate his philosophy and thoughts that run like a common thread all through his work. Max Weber was a German political economist, philosopher and a social scientist who along with Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx is considered to be one of the three founding pillars of sociology. Weber was a student of law and history throughout his career and later joined the Berlin University as a faculty and lectured and consulted for the Government. Weber was greatly influenced by the Neo-Kantianism wave that swept Germany during the 1860s. Heinrich Rickert the foremost scholars of Neo-Kantianism in Germany was a professional colleague of Weber in the University of Freiburg.

The Neo-Kantianism or the Back to Kant movement of 1860s was to revisit the theories of Immanuel Kant the most important and influential of German philosophers and scholars of the 18th century. The scope of this article is limited to throw light on Kant and his philosophies however it is advisable to the readers to read a little about Kant and his work to get a better understanding regarding Neo-Kantianism. Influenced by Heinrich Rickert and Kant, Weber came to a central core of his theories and that was Rationalization. Weber promulgated rationalization in all areas of life like economy, politics, society, culture and even religion. He went on further to say that Rationalization was the basis of the modern western society. Having said that, let us now make an effort to understand Weber's work in the areas of social sciences.

In his seminal work *Economy and Society*, Weber goes to extreme lengths to trace the evolution of bureaucracy and the State and their relations with each other. He cites the Chinese and the African empires that degenerated because of the lack of bureaucracy and methods of administration and the ancient Roman Empire which disintegrated because of increasing bureaucratization. According to Weber, the need for bureaucratization in the ancient empire state arises from the maintenance of armies, public finances and most importantly power and politics. In the modern times however, the complexity within the civilization is ever increasing and therefore the demands from the administration are also getting complex. Weber also emphasizes the importance of communication in running the bureaucracy of a State and adds that they act as pacemakers and are the prerequisites of the possibility of bureaucratic administration.

Trained bureaucracy is superior to other kinds of administration in many ways like efficiency, accuracy or precision, unity, discretion, continuity, cost and reducing overall friction in the government functioning. Weber went on to characterize a bureaucratic state by certain behavioral and structural features like:

- Division of Labor

- Hierarchy
- Rules and Rationality
- Impersonality
- Rules Orientation
- Neutrality

Weber also came up with the term called Rational-Legal authority which characterizes the modern liberal states. The tripartite classification of authority proposed by Weber explains that the states travel from Charismatic Authority to Traditional Authority and finally arrive at Rational-Legal Authority. The Rational-Legal Authority upholds that an individual or an institution has powers emanating from the legal offices that they hold. Once they leave, the power is lost as the power is associated with the office and not the office holder. The above Rational-Legal power lies at the core of the modern bureaucracies and is practiced widely across the world. The writing of constitutions and documents, establishing offices and institutions and holding elections are all in conformity to this kind of authority practiced by political systems in mature states.

4.3 Post Weberian Models of Public Administration

In the previous section we read about the Weberian Model of Bureaucracy and its various aspects, however like all models this one too has its share of criticism and dissection performed by scholars and subject matter experts. The critics of the Weber model said that his theories of bureaucracy heavily discounted the human aspect in theories and that it could work only in a controlled and ideal environment and was removed from reality. The standard structures and code of ethics which were the characteristic of the public administration studies carried out in the beginning of the last century underwent major changes after the Second World War. The Weberian models and the change in attitude towards the public administration had brought many welcome changes in the bureaucracy in the early half of the century. The authoritative, corrupt and unresponsive bureaucracy was made to turn around.

As Warren Bennis the social scientist had emphatically prophesized that every age evolves its own administration and bureaucratic functions in accordance with its needs, customs and traditions and which remains relevant for them and for only that time. When a new age arrives, the systems, traditions, administrations and bureaucracies are recreated, realigned and reorganized to suit the changes. A very good example was Riggs approach to the Weber model, he was aware of the fact that the Weber model shall not work for the developing countries which came up after the Second World War. The administrative structures in the developing countries did not enjoy the autonomy assumed in the Weberian model. Also, that in developing country, the realm of the work of public administration extended much beyond mere administration and involved a lot of work in the areas of development and upliftment of the society. The Governments were now working more as the Welfare state which cannot fit within the limitations of the Weberian model.

In the present times with the advent of technology in all realms of life, it has become a commodity which can be exchanged for tangible goods. The shrinking time and distance ensures that the information travels around the globe within seconds and the organizations both Government and private, across the globe do not live in rigid walls anymore. The technical and managerial skills and expertise required at various level of public administration and bureaucracy has changed manifolds. The increasing education, the internet and the social media, the globalization has ensured that everything is transparent and under spotlight for all times.

Bureaucracy is becoming more and more efficient with lesser response time despite of being added with array of responsibilities and duties. The organizations are restructured to ensure greater autonomy and mobilization within organizations. The inter-departmental transactions; coordination and cooperation are being improved using technologies like ERP or Enterprise Resource Planning. The way the government functions in many modern democracies has also changed. The structures and roles have become flexible; the democratic administration has found its way into public institutions and organizations, the inclusion of people and their opinions and ideas etc are some of the new developments.

5.0 CONCLUSION

There is an increasing awareness amongst the citizens of a country regarding their rights and the duties of the Government. Thus, the role and functions of public administration has also become quite dynamic in nature and is constantly evolving in response to the changing needs and demands of the society. Technological intervention, incorporation of new management principles, taking into accounts the needs and aspirations of the end customer are some of the new trends in the areas of public administration.

According to Richard C Box in his book Democracy and Public Administration, there are several important roles that public administration plays in a Democracy, like:

- Preserving and upholding democratic values and delivering democracy by ensuring the access to the fundamental and other rights of the citizens
- Ensuring that the general interest of the public is addressed through the routes of public services
- Administering all government institutions as per the democratic values
- Following the instructions of the legislative bodies carefully while implementing policies, laws, rules and regulations
- Acting as a role model of reliability, morality while being ethical and professional

I have read Karl Marx slamming bureaucracy as a government tool created and controlled by the dominant class to cater to their interests. Antonio Gramsci Italian socialist theorist's states that bureaucracy is a narrow minded and conservative force and it becomes dangerous when it detaches itself from the mass of members that constitute it and starts functioning as an independent entity. So if the resources and the power of their distribution lie with the state, the role that bureaucracy has to play can be:

- Ensuring equitable distribution of goods and services
- Improving the quality of living standards of people
- Expanding the scope of administrative function to include all
- Associating with people in more ways to make them a part of the administrative process

A reader may find these goals to be quite similar to that of a democratic set up and indeed it is. The only difference in a socialist set up is that the government tends to have more and centralized power. Critics have argued that democracy involves planning which means that the freedom and liberties of some will have to be given up for the greater good. However, in the long run, even to achieve socialism, certain level of democracy becomes essential.

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