

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: MEANING, SCOPE AND ITS NATURE

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Abstract:

This article purpose to analyse the meaning, nature and scope of Public Administration. Firstly, discusses the concepts i.e, meaning of administration and public administration. Thus, Administration a broader concept which includes both organisation & management. But,the PA is the detailed a systematic execution of public law. Every particular application of law is public administration. Secondly, the understanding of two divergent views on the nature of public administration, viz. Integral and Managerial view. Thirdly, those definitions of Public administration which has been used in two senses i.e, Narrower sense (view of traditional writers) and Wider sense (view of modern writers). Lastly, discusses the scope of the Public Administration.

Introduction

Public Administration is a species of genus 'administration'.To understand the meaning of "Public Administration" we must, therefore,first understand" What is Administration?".The term 'administration' is derived from two Latin words "ad" and "ministrare" which means to serve, too direct, to control, to care for or, to look after people. Literally, the term "administration" means management of both affairs i.e, public or private affairs.

Definitions of Administration

According to Simon,Smithbourg and Thompson, "In its broadest sense administration is the groups activities co-operating to accomplish common goals."¹

"The real core of administration is the basic service performed for public such as police and the protection, public works, education, recreation, social security,national defence & others."²-Nigro.

¹ Simon and others, Public Administration,p.2

" Administration is determined action taken in pursuit of a conscious purpose."³ -Z.A. Vieg.

"Administration is concerned with 'the what' and 'the how' of the government.The 'what' is subject-matter,technical knowledge of a field and the 'how' is technique of management.Each is indispensable; together they form the synthesis called administration..."⁴ -Dimock.

"Administration the organisation and use of men and managers who accomplish a purpose.It specialized vocation of managers who have organizing skills & directing men and materials."⁵

Thus, Administration includes all types of work which primarily needed to achieve goal,but also considered as skill or art it implies in management functions which common to all rational group-endeavour.

Opposite to this view, Merriam stated that "differences between administrative positions are of more practical significance than similarities".⁶

Meaning of Public Administration

'Public Administration',formed by two different terms, public and administration. The term 'public' means 'governmental' .The justification of the equation of 'public' and 'governmental' which focused on government activities and actions.

Definition of Public Administration(PA)

"PA is detailed & systematic execution of public law. Every particular application of law is public administration."⁷ -Woodrow Wilson

"PA is government action part,means by which the purposes and goals of government realized."⁸ - Corson and Harris

" PA consists of all those operations having for their purpose of fulfillment or enforcement of public policy."⁹ -L.D. White

² Nigro, Public administration:Readings and Documents,p.2

³ Public Administration,edited by F.M. Marx,p.3

⁴ Dimock, American Pol.Sc. Review,Vol.XXXI,pp.31 to 32

⁵ James L.McCanny quoted,Nigro, Public administration,p.11

⁶ Book ,Public Administration in Theory and Practice,p.4

⁷ W. Wilson,The study of Administration, Political Quarterly,1941pp.481-566

⁸ Public Administration, M Laxmikant,p.4

"PA is that part of science of administration which has to do with government and concerns itself primarily with executive branch where work of government is done through there are obviously problems also in connection with legislative and judicial branches."¹⁰ -*Gulick*

"PA in all modern nations identified with executive branch of government. It includes policy shaping, policy execution after it made, and as a necessary part of execution, decision making about policy matters on the way down."¹¹ -*Fesler and Kettl*

"PA is concerned with the public programs management."¹² -*Robert Denhardt*

"Public administration:

- a) cooperative group effort in a public setting
- b) covers all three branches – legislative, executive & judicial- and also their interrelationships
- c) important role in public policy formulation, thus part of political process
- d) is different in significant ways from private administration
- e) closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals."¹³ -*Felix Nigro and G. Nigro*

"Public administration consists of doing work of government whether it be running an X-ray machine in a health laboratory or coining money in mint."¹⁴ -*Pfiffner*

Nature of Public Administration

On the basis of foregoing discussions, it observed that these scholars of public administration have expressed two divergent views on the nature of public administration, namely, integral and managerial view which are briefly discussed as follows:

1. The Integral view

⁹ White, Introduction to the study of Administration, P.1

¹⁰ L. Gullick and L. Urwick, paper on the science of Administration, N.Y p.191

¹¹ Public Administration, M Laxmikant, p.4

¹² Public Administration: Meaning, Scope and Its Nature Ishwor Thapa MPA Student, Public Administration Campus, Tribhuvan University, Balkhu, Kathmandu

¹³ Public Administration, M Laxmikant, p.4

¹⁴ J.M. Pfiffner, Public administration, p.4

In this view, PA is the sum total of activities- manual, clerical, technical, managerial etc, which undertaken to accomplish the objectives. It believes that PA comprises all types of operations undertaken by all persons ranging from lowest to highest in order to implement different public policies. The administration depends on subject matter of concerned agency. Thus, it differs from one to another sphere. Woodrow Wilson, M.E. Dimock, Piffner, L.D. White etc, are supported & adopted this view.

2. Managerial View

In this view, administration comprises the work of only those people who are engaged in performing managerial functions in an organization and not technical, clerical and manual activities which non-managerial in nature. If we take a managerial view, PA mainly focused on planning, organizing, directing, controlling & coordination of governmental operations. This view believes in getting things done, not doing things. Gulick, Henry Fayol, Robert Dhal, Simon etc, supported and also adopted this view.

Scope of Public Administration

According to the view of its definitions there is also argue over scope of public administration between followers of two different views namely, the traditional and modern views.

1. Traditional view:

In this, there are restrictions in the scope of public administration to the executive branch of government only. The narrower view mainly emphasis on the organization, personnel, practices and procedures essential to effective performance of the civilian functions entrusted to the executive branch of the government only.

2. Modern view:

This view, extended the scope of public administration activities to all the three branches of government i.e, legislative, executive and judiciary; public administration is whole government in action. In a democracy all major administrative policies from legislative in form of laws and the legislature also exercise control over administration with the view to see that the policies are implemented as it intends. The judiciary has power to restrain public administration from unconstitutional, illegal and arbitrary acts. Therefore, all three branches of government are part of the study and practice of public administration. By the scope of public administration, we mean the major concern of public administration; as an activity and as a discipline.

[A.] As an Activity:

In general, public administration holds all activities of the government. As an activity, the scope of public administration is no less than the scope of state. Specially, in modern welfare state people expect many things such as a wide variety of services as well as protection from government. Gulick believed that administration consisted of seven elements which means:

P= Planning, O= Organizing S= Staffing D= Directing C= Coordinating R= Reporting and B= Budgeting.

According to Gulick, the POSDCORB activities represent the techniques which are common to all fields of administration or management, planning, organization, personnel management, financial management are equally important no matter what the particular field or purpose of administration may be. Thus, POSDCORB gives unity, certainty, and definiteness and makes the study more systematic.

[B.] As a discipline

Eventually, the fact we all know that public administration deals not only with processes but also with the 'knowledge of subject-matters' (i.e. services & functions) of administration, such as defence, health, agriculture, education, social security, etc. These services have their own specialised techniques which aren't covered by common POSDCORB techniques. Hence, the subject matter view of the scope of public administration arose. It emphasizes on services rendered and functions performed by an administrative agency.

According to M.E. Dimock, "Administration is concerned with 'what' and 'how' of government." The 'what' is the subject-matter, the technical knowledge of a field which enables an administrator to perform his tasks. The 'how' is the technique of management, the principles according to which co-operative programmes are carried to success. Each is indispensable; together they form the synthesis called administration...¹⁵

Public administration as a discipline consists of five branches:

- i. Organisational Theory and Behaviour.
- ii. Public Personnel Administration,
- iii. Public Financial Administration

¹⁵ American Pol.Sci. Review, Vol.XXXI p.7

- iv. Comparative and Development Administration.
- v. Public Policy Analysis

Conclusion

Public administration covers every area and activity of government. In the context of the newer and the wider duties and responsibilities on the state, the role of public administration is more vital and important than of almost any other branch of government. Public administration is not merely a preserver of the civilized life as we know it today. It is also the great instrument of social change and improvement. It is a dynamic force which follows the will of people as well as leads it.



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