

MEANING, NATURE, SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Before discussing the meaning of public administration, it is necessary to first understand the meaning of the term 'Administration'. Administration is a co-operating human effort towards achieving some common goals. Thus every group activity involves administration whether in a family, factory, hospital, university, or in a government department. Whenever two men co-operate together to do a thing that neither could have done alone, the rudiments of administration appear. The word 'Administration' has been derived from the Latin words '*ad*' and '*ministrare*' which means to serve. In simple words it means the management of affairs, or "looking after the people." To administer is to manage, 'direct' or 'serve.'

Public administration is a part of the wider field of administration. Administration is a process permeating all collective effort, be it public or private, civil or military, large-scale or otherwise. Administration, being a characteristic of all enterprises in pursuit of conscious purposes, is not a peculiarity or specialty of modern age alone. Indeed, its glimmerings could well be perceived quite early in the growth of civilization. Building the pyramids was an astonishing administrative feat. So was the running of the Roman Empire. Public Administration of today, however, has three distinguishing features: "Its purposes have been completely reoriented, its functions have enormously increased in number, variety and complexity, and its methodology has grown from the trial-and-error stage into an orderly discipline with an organized, ever-increasing body of knowledge and experience."

Administration, thus, permeates all organized human activities. Pfiffner and Presthus define administration as "the organization and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired ends." Administration, according to John A. Vieg, "is determined action taken in pursuit of conscious purpose. It is the systematic ordering of affairs and the calculated use of resources, aimed at making those things happen which we want to happen and simultaneously preventing developments that fail to square with our intentions. It is the marshalling of available labour and materials in order to gain that which is desired at the lowest cost in energy, time and money." According to L. D. White, administration is "the direction, coordination and control of many persons to achieve some purpose or objective." Herbert A. Simon points out "In its broadest sense, administration can be defined as the activities of groups cooperating to accomplish common goals." Public

Administration lends itself to two usages: it is an activity; and it also refers to the discipline (or subject) of intellectual inquiry and study. Maintaining law and order is an activity and is part of Public Administration. But Public Administration is also a discipline like Economics, Sociology, History, etc., and is a subject of study: it studies these activities and functions, formulates concepts and builds models and theories.

Public Administration

As stressed at the outset, Public Administration is a segment of the wider field of 'administration'. But on its meaning, there are differences. According to some, the use of the word 'public' before 'administration' restricts its coverage to the administrative activities of the government- government being the only organization which covers within itself all the people living in the state. According to them, Public Administration is defined as the organization and management of human and material resources to fulfill the objectives laid down by the government. But government, as we all know, consists of three branches- legislature, executive, and judiciary. Is Public Administration to study all these three branches that make up the government? Views on this question are also divided. To some, Public Administration is identified with the entire range of government activities covered under the three branches: whereas others restrict it (*i.e.*, Public Administration) to the operations of the executive branch only. It may be appropriate here to quote W.F. Willoughby: "The term 'administration' may be employed in political science in two senses. In its broadest sense, it denotes the work involved with actual conduct of governmental affairs. It is, thus, quite proper to speak of the administration of legislative branch of government, the administration of justice or judicial affairs, or the administration of the executive power as well as the administration of affairs of the administrative branch of government, or the conduct of the affairs of the government generally. In its narrowest sense, it denotes the operations of the administrative branch only." L. D. White defines Public Administration in the broader terms. According to him, Public Administration "consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public Policy." Luther Gulick, on the other hand, views Public Administration as embracing the executive branch of government only. "Public Administration," he writes, "is that part of the science of administration which has to do with government and, thus, concerns itself primarily with the executive branch, where the work of government is done,

though there are obviously administrative problems also in connection with the legislative and judicial branches.”

It is clear from the above definitions that the term public administration has been used in two senses- wider and narrow. The wider view has been taken up by White, Wilson, Willoughy, Pfiffner while narrow view has been taken up by Gulick, Simon and others.

We in India cannot accept the restricted definition of Public Administration. So much is the mutual dependence and so intensive is the interaction between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary that Public Administration must be defined in the broader terms. It covers all the three branches of the Government- the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Necessarily, it is to be studied as part of the larger political processes in a country. There is besides, that sector of activities which though not governmental in the strict sense is nevertheless supported, either wholly or partially, by the public exchequer. Educational institutions, cooperatives, etc., fall in this category and all of them are part of Public Administration. The scope of Public Administration is, thus, wide enough. Keeping this in mind one may say that Public Administration refers to the organization of public affairs and their direction.

Administration and Management

It is relevant here to make a distinction between administration and management in view of a common tendency to use these two terms interchangeably. There are two broad views on this issue. According to one view, administration is a wider term encompassing activities like the spelling out of policies and objectives, establishment of suitable organizational structure to conduct and promote an organized task, providing necessary resources for the realization of the objective, etc. Administration is “a variety of component elements which together in action produce the result of getting done a defined task with which a group of people is charged. Administration, primarily, is the direction of people in association to achieve some goal temporarily shared. It is the inclusive process of integrating human efforts so that a desired result is obtained.” The role of management, on the other hand, rests confined within the framework of policy, organizational structure and resources. Management is primarily concerned with those operations leading an organization towards success within this broader framework set up by administration.

Oliver Sheldon very emphatically propounds this view. He observes, "Administration is the function in industry concerned in the determination of the....policy. Management proper is the function....concerned in the execution of policy, within the limits set up by administration." Sheldon continues "Organization is the formation of an effective machine, management of an effective executive, administration of an effective direction. Administration determines the organization, management uses it. Administration defines the goal; management strives towards it. Organization is the machine of management in its achievement of the ends determined by administration."

Another view equates administration with management. This view has gained acceptance since the mid-seventies when the well-known text prepared by the United Nations categorically observed that 'administration' and 'management' are synonyms.

Nature

When we come to analyse the nature of administration, we find ourselves confronted with two broad views, which may conveniently be called the 'integral' and the 'managerial' views. According to some writers, administration is the sum total of all the activities- manual, clerical, managerial, technical, etc.,- undertaken in pursuit of an objective in view. Thus, the activities of the errand boy, the foreman, the gatekeeper, the sweeper as well as the secretaries to government and the managers in an enterprise constitute administration. This is the integral view, and acceptance of this view would have us count the work of all persons, ranging from the lowest to the highest, working in an enterprise as part of administration. L.D.White seems to share this view. According to him, Public Administration "consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy. This definition covers a multitude of particular operations in many fields- the delivery, of a letter, the sale of public land, the negotiation of a treaty, the award of compensation to an injured workman, the quarantine of a sick child, the removal of litter from a park, manufacturing plutonium, and licensing the use of atomic energy." The other view regards the work of only those persons engaged in performing managerial functions in an enterprise as constituting administration. The activities concerning Management unite, control and coordinate all those operations undertaken in the enterprise, thereby making the whole complex of activities look like an integrated effort. This is the managerial view of administration. Simon, Smithburg and

Thompson subscribe to this view. They observe, “The term ‘administration’ is also used in a narrower sense to refer to those patterns of behaviors that are common to many kinds of cooperating groups ; and that do not depend upon either the specific goals towards which they are cooperating or the specific technological methods used to reach these goals.” Luther Gulick writes, “Administration has to do with getting things done, with the accomplishment of defined objectives.”

These two views manifest differences. Acceptance of the integral view makes us count the entire personnel of an undertaking as engaged in administration. Furthermore, administration would differ from one sphere (*e.g.*, education) to another sphere (*e.g.*, public works), depending upon the subject matter. The managerial view, on the other hand, holds that administration is the organization and use of men and materials in the pursuit of a given objective. It is a specialized calling of the manager whose function is to organize, and to use men and materials to realize a given objective. In fine, Administration is to be identified with the managerial techniques common as they are to all the fields of activities. Luther Gulick sums up these techniques in the word ‘POSDCORB’, each letter of which describes one technique, namely, Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting.

It may here be pointed out that neither of these views can be summarily rejected. Exact meaning of administration would depend on the context in which the term is used. Dimock, Dimock and Koeing sum up by observing that “as a study Public Administration examines every aspect of government’ s efforts to discharge the laws and to give effect to public policy; as a process, it is all the steps taken between the time an enforcement agency assumes jurisdiction and the last brick is placed (but includes also that agency's participation, if any, in the formulation of the programme in the first place); and as a vocation, It is organizing and directing the activities of others in a public agency.”

Scope

In the definition of public administration, we come across two viewpoints, one taking the broader view and the other taking the narrow view. In the broader sense, the study of public administration includes the entire complex of all the three branches of the government, In the narrow sense, its study includes only the managerial part of the executive branch of

government work. The differences of opinion centre round whether administration is mere execution or application of policy or is a factor in the formulation of policy also. This controversy over the scope of public administration is unfortunate. During the last more than 100 years we have witnessed the growth of public administration as a 'growing discipline.' It is bound to grow despite prejudiced reservations of narrow disciplinaries, even from the field of social sciences. In the present developing age we have to make public administration as a scientific growing discipline. For this our approach to the study of public administration has to be modern, scientific and broad. Thus public administration embraces the entire area and all the activities of the government. We in India do not and cannot accept the restricted view of public administration. So much is the mutual dependence and so intensive is the interaction between the three branches of government that public administration must be defined in the broader terms. Necessarily, it is to be studied as a part of the larger political processes in a country. The scope of public administration is, thus, wide enough. Writers have defined the scope of public administration in different terms. There are broadly two views about the scope of public administration. These are:

1. The POSDCORB View.
2. The Subject-matter View.

The POSDCORB View of Public Administration

This is a narrow view of public administration and takes into account only the executive branch of the government. In other words, this view corresponds with the managerial view. Henri Fayol, L. Urwick, Percy M. Queen and Luther Gulick are supporters of this view.

According to Henri Fayol the main categories of administration are: Planning, Organization, Command, Coordination and Control. L. Urwick, fully supports Fayol's views. P.M. Queen says that the study of administration deals with 'Men, Materials and Methods'. Views of L. Gulick regarding the scope of Public Administration are not only known but he has dealt with them in detail. He sums up these techniques in the word 'POSDCORB', each letter of which describe one technique. These letters stand for:

P = Planning

O = Organizing

S = Staffing

D = Directing

Co = Co-ordinating

R = Reporting

B = Budgeting

Let us see what do they mean?

Planning means working out in broad outline the things that need to be done, the method to be adopted to accomplish the purpose set for the enterprise.

Organizing means the establishment of the formal structure of authority through which the work is sub-divided, arranged, defined and coordinated for the defined objective.

Staffing means the whole personnel, bringing in and training the staff, and maintenance of favorable conditions of work.

Directing means making decisions and issuing orders and instructions and thus guiding the enterprise.

Co-ordinating means the all important duty of inter-relating the work of various divisions, sections and other parts of the organization.

Reporting means keeping those informed to whom executive is responsible about what is going on.

Budgeting means all that goes with budgeting in the form of fiscal planning, accounting and control.

POSDCORB activities are common to all organizations. They are common problems of management which are found in the different agencies regardless of the peculiar nature of the work they do. But POSDCORB view takes into consideration only

the common techniques of administration and ignores the study of the 'subject-matter' with which an agency is concerned. Gulick's approach is 'technique-oriented' rather than 'subject-oriented', Lewis Meriam says, "Public Administration is an instrument with two blades like a pair a scissors. One blade is knowledge of the subject-matter in which these techniques are applied. Both blades must be good to make an effective tool." Marian denies the existence of such a thing as a general administrator, because each case of general administration is specially conditioned by its peculiar subject-matter. The proper scope of public administration should include both .the views, i.e., POSDCORB and subject-matter.

The Subject-matter View of Public Administration

The subject-matter view of Public Administration has come into reckoning in reaction to the POSDCORB view. This view comprises line functions or services meant for the people. They include law and order, defence, social security, public health, etc. These services have specialized techniques of their own, which are not covered by the POSDCORB activities. Moreover, even the techniques of management are modified by the subject-matter of the services in which they have to operate. Consequently, organization and even the techniques of coordination in two different services are different. Therefore emphasis on the subject-matter cannot be neglected. In short, it can be said that, there is no need to reject either of these views of the scope of Public Administration. Both represent the whole truth.

Pfiffner has 'divided the scope of public administration into two heads:

(A) Principles of Public Administration;

(B) Sphere of Public Administration.

In the first category, public administration covers the organization, management of personnel; method and procedure; material and supply; public finance and administrative responsibility. In the second category, the sphere of public administration includes the central and state government, its regional and local authorities and also public corporations. Thus, in the words of Prof. Pfiffner, "Public Administration, in sum, includes the totality of government activity, encompassing expertise of endless variety and the techniques of

organization and management whereby order and social purpose are given to the efforts of vast numbers.”

Besides the above, Walker has given a more comprehensive account of the scope of public administration. He has divided it into two parts: administrative theory and applied administration. Administrative theory includes the study of structure, organization, functions, and methods of all types of public authority engaged in carrying out the administration of all levels, i.e., national, regional, local, etc. It also studies all the problems connected with external control of parliament and the cabinet over administration, internal and judicial control over administration, etc. It is difficult to give a comprehensive statement as to what the applied administration should include because of the new and fast growing field of public administration. He has made an attempt to classify the main form of applied administration on the basis of ten principal functions, namely, political, legislative, financial, defensive, educational, social, economic, foreign, imperial, and local. Today, the administrator is concerned not only with developing the administrative techniques but it has also become important for him to study the ecological and human aspects of public administration. It may be said that the scope of public administration varies with people's expectations of what they should get from government. A century ago they expected that government should only maintain law and order. Now people expect the government to promote positive welfare, guarantee social security, from birth to death, guarantee a good peaceful living etc. The activities of public administration will be wide in scope. Prof. White supports this view : “In their broader context, the ends of administration are the ultimate objects of the state itself, the maintenance of peace and order, the progressive achievement of justice, the instruction of the young, protection against disease and insecurity, the adjustment and compromise of conflicting groups and interests in short, the attainment of good life.” Thus, it is obvious that though public administration studies the administrative branch of the executive organ, yet its scope is very wide and it varies with the people's conception of good life.

