



Module 1

An introduction to public administration

Introduction

This module develops a definition of public administration.

It is often difficult to come up with a precise definition of public administration because public administrators are engaged in various practices, such as:

- preparing budgets for local governments
- classifying jobs in a post office
- carrying out road repairs, or
- evaluating the performance of a state's government drug treatment centre.

Some public administrators are highly educated professionals, who may be at the forefront of their fields of specialisation. In most countries public administrators possess few skills that differentiate them from the mass of the citizens in their respective field. Further, some public administrators make policies that have a national impact and may benefit millions of people. In some countries many public administrators do not have responsibility for policy-making at all. In such cases they carry out government tasks such as data entry, filing, record keeping and word processing.

According to Richard Stillman (2010), public administrators could be:

- engineers,
- law enforcement officers,
- scientists,
- doctors,
- educators,
- accountants,
- policy analysts,
- clerks,
- budgetary personnel,
- human resources experts, or
- individuals engaged in a host of other occupation and functions.

The vast areas of specialty help to explain why they are concerned with the major responsibilities of society. Public administrators are also engaged in the development of resources for achieving those goals within a rapidly changing political environment. It could be argued that public

administration does not operate in a vacuum but is deeply intertwined with the critical dilemmas confronting an entire society.

It is important to note, however, that knowing what public administrators do does not resolve the problem of defining what public administration is.

Module outcomes



Outcomes

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- *Define* public administration.
- *Compare* political and management systems.
- *Define* how systems theory helps explain the role and functions of public administrators in a nation.
- *List and explain* the scope, objectives and importance of public management in modern times.
- *Analyse and draw conclusions* as to how these concepts are applicable to public administration in different countries.

Terminology



Terminology

Administrative culture:	The set of shared values underlying administrative performance and the general structures and processes.
Administrative law:	The regulatory law of public administration, consisting of statutes, constitutional requirement, executive orders, and other regulations that control administrative matters such as rule-making, adjudication, enforcement and handling of information.
Advocacy administration:	A means of resolving disputes; in particular, impasses reached in collective bargaining. A leadership style characterised by managerial control of the decision-making process.
Brainstorming:	Used to foster creativity in consideration of policy alternative. In a small group-setting, individuals are encouraged to think of possible solutions without imposing constraints on the discussion or criticising ideas as they are offered.



Bureau ideology:	Belief developed in bureaucracies that tout their virtues.
Citizens' capacity:	The ability of citizens to participate in policy-making processes; that is, their level of interest and knowledge, and their ability to understand issues and play an active role.
Civic culture:	A type of political culture that emphasises the community and promotion of public interest over private interest.
Collective good:	The general good of all people in a community, state or nation.
Common pool resources:	Resources that are shared by a society and available to all to consume, such as oceans, lakes, rivers and public land.
Cost-benefit analysis:	A form of public analysis in which the costs and benefits of proposed policy action are considered carefully.
Cost-effectiveness analysis:	A comparison of the relative value of policy alternatives in terms of a given benefit that is delivered.
Decentralisation:	The transfer of policy authority from the federal government to the states or regional governments.
Decision analysis:	A way to consider several possible decision options or alternatives when the consequences of the decision are uncertain.
Executive budget:	A budget prepared by the executive branch of a government that is submitted to the legislative branch for consideration.
Expectation theory:	Job motivation will depend upon the extent to which individuals expect that a certain activity will lead to some degree of satisfaction of their goals.
Expressive leader:	Leaders who play a fundamental role in setting goals and gaining adherence to the norms and objectives of an organisation.
Federalism:	A form of governmental organisation that divides political authority between a central government and state or provincial government.
Good government:	Good government is democratic, honest and able.

Human relations approach:	An approach to management that attempts to develop ways of making work in organisations more socially and psychologically acceptable to employees while at the same time enhancing or at least maintaining efficiency.
Incremental model:	An approach to decision-making emphasising small steps towards a general objective.
Incrementalism:	An approach to budgeting or decision-making that focuses on limited changes in funding, programmes or policies.
Keynesian approach:	An approach to fiscal policy which holds that governmental spending can be used to counteract the normal boom-and-bust tendencies of the business cycle.
Mixed-scanning approach:	An approach to decision making that attempts to combine incrementalism with the rational-comprehensive approach.
Organisational development:	An approach for improving organisation that assumes that organisations will be more effective at problem solving and coping with their environments when there is more trust, support, and co-operation among their members.
Pluralism:	A distribution of political power characterised by disposal among many groups, none of which can dominate others in all policy areas.
Police power:	Government authority to regulate matters such as social behaviour, moral, health, public safety and zoning.
Public administration:	Step in the policy-making process whereby policy actors attempt to get an issue seriously considered for public action.
Public policy:	Public policy is a course of action adopted and pursued by the government.



Definition of public administration

There are many definitions of public administration. Every public administration text book has a different variety of definitions of the subject. The following are some of the most influential efforts to define the field (or subject) of public administration in the literature.

Public administration may be defined as all processes, organisations and individuals (the latter acting in official position and role) associated with carrying out laws and order rule adopted or issues by legislature, executive and courts.

(Milakovich, 2006)

Public administration is the use of managerial, political and legal theories and processes to fulfil legislative, executive and judiciary governmental mandates for the provision of regulatory and service functions for the society as a whole or for some segment of it.

(Rosenbloom & Goldman, 2009)

Public administration is concerned with the management of public programmes.

(Denhardt, 1995)

Public administration is the process of ensuring that the allocation and use of resources available to the government are directed towards the achievement of lawful public policy goals.

(Hill & Lynn, 2009)

Traditionally, public administration is thought of as the accomplishing side of government. It is supposed to comprise all those activities involved in carrying out the policies of elected officials and some activities associated with the development of those policies. Public administration is ... all that comes after the last campaign promise and election night cheer.

(Starling, 2011)

Public administration is both direct and indirect. The subject can be regarded as direct when government employees provide services to the public as varied as mortgage insurance, mail delivery and electricity. Public administration could be indirect when government pays private contractors to provide goods and services to citizens.

(Shafritz, Russell & Borick, 2011)

Public administration is a phase in the public policy-making cycle. The policy-making process never ends. Governments

are in a constant flurry over whether to do or not to do. Therefore whatever governments choose to do or not to do is public policy. Whenever government does something, critics will suggest ways to do it better. This feedback can be informal from citizens, complaints to journalistic investigations or it can take the form of an agency or legislative programme evaluation.

(Dye, 2011)

Public administration is what government does. It involves government services such as giving food stamps to the poor, mortgage interest deductions to homeowners and tax-free earning on municipal bonds to the rich.

(Henry, 2010)

Public administration is law in action. It is inherently the execution of a public law. Public administration could also be defined as regulation of industries. It involves government telling citizens and businesses what they may and may not do. Regulation is one of the oldest functions of government.

(Shafritz et al, 2011)

Public administration is the executive function in government. In most democratic countries, whether be they monarchies or republics, it is the government agencies that put into practice legislative acts that represent the will of the people. Management refers both to the people responsible for running an organisation and to the running process itself. Public administration also involves the use of numerous resources such as employees and machines to accomplish an organisational goal.

(Rosenbloom, Kravchuk & Clerkin, 2009)

Public administration is a profession. The subject involves the application of its unique arts and sciences to the problems of society. Despite the subjects generally covered, it is a profession such as medicine, engineering, law or architecture. Public administration possesses the three core features common to traditional professions:

1. A system of control over the professional practice that regulates the education of new members and maintains both a code of ethics and appropriate sanction
2. A body of academic and practical knowledge that is applied to the service of society
3. A standard of success theoretically measured by serving the needs of society rather than seeking purely gain.

(Shafritz, Russel & Borick, 2011)



Public administration could also be described as business administration in a fish-bowl. The press and the public feel that they have a right to know everything that goes on in a public agency and the freedom of information ensures that they can find out if they want.

(Starling, 2011)

Public administration is the process by which resources are marshalled and then used to cope with the problems facing a political community.

(Starling, 2011)

Public administration involves all processes, organisations and individuals associated with carrying out laws and other rules adopted or issued by legislators, executives and courts.

(Gordon, 1978)

Public administration encompasses the following:

1. A co-operative group effort in a public setting.
2. Covers all three branches — executive, legislative, and judicial — and their interrelationship.
3. Has an important role in the formulation of public policy, and is part of the political process.
4. Is different in significant ways from private administration; and is closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals.
5. The process of public administration consists of the action involved in effecting the intent or desire of a government. It is thus the continuously active, business part of the government, concerned with carrying out the law, as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by the courts, through the processes of organization and management.

(Rosenbloom, Kravchuk & Clerkin, 2009)

What is the appropriate definition to be derived from the variety of definitions of public administration? This course concludes that all the above definitions are helpful.

Public administration does involve activity; it is concerned with politics and policy-making and tends to be concentrated in the executive branch of government. It is different from private administration and is concerned with implementing the law. The line between the public and private sectors is often blurred (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk & Clerkin, 2009). There is a consensus that several aspects of management and law are generic to both sectors. Despite this consensus, public administration remains a separate enterprise.

Some scholars argue that public administration was thought of as the accomplishing side of government in the traditional perspective of the field. From that perspective public administration is supposed to comprise

all activities involved in carrying out the policies of elected officials and some activities associated with the development of those policies (Shafritz et al, 2011; McSuite, 2002; Kettl, 2002; Hill & Lynn, 2009; Kernaghan & Siegel, 1978).

In the twenty-first century, the field of public administration is perhaps the most important specialty area in the discipline of political science. The reason is that people in Europe, Canada, the United States and indeed most countries, want less government but governance. However, governance is just another way of saying public administration.

What then is governance?

Governance refers to the exercise of authority by government, or (more precisely) the system and method by which that authority is exercised. In most cases, governance is a slightly broader term than public administration. Governance further refers to the traditional concern of public administration (which this module introduces) in a broader context.

What is special about public administration and governance is the ability (or capacity) of a government to use its public administrators to make a difference. Making these differences requires integrating solid and true management skills with new approaches that emphasise enhanced flexibility and sustainable values. Therefore, successful government programmes are implemented effectively and efficiently in order to produce a greater and more positive impact.

Activity 1.1



Activity

1. Why does the rapidly increasing number and scope of activities involving public administration make it difficult to define the subject?
2. Do you consider a health officer, educator, energy or telecommunications expert (who works for the government) a public administrator?
3. Think of various government employees, departments, ministries and agencies in your country. How do they classify their public administrators?
4. Using one of the definitions of public administration provided, briefly analyse and evaluate what you consider to be the major management roles of public administrators.

Note: You don't have to do a thorough written report, but attempt to look for the various specific categories of managerial behaviour that could lead to or result in good governance.

Systems of management

According to Lussier (2006), system management is the combination of administrative resources working together to convert inputs into outputs. From this perspective, every organisation is a system. Lussier (2006) and Robbins and Judge (2011) contend that the system process has four components:

1. **Outputs:** The products or services offered to customers or citizens. In the most western industrialised nations welfare packages are delivered to citizens. The government welfare package is the output.
2. **Inputs:** The government's resources (financial, human, physical and informational) that are transformed into goods and services. The primary input is the millions of welfare packages to be delivered to citizens nationwide and daily.
3. **Transformation:** The conversion of inputs into outputs.
4. **Feedback:** This provides a means of control to ensure that the inputs and the transformation process are producing the desired results. For example, the government may use computers to gain feedback by tracking those who have received their welfare package in comparison to those who have not.

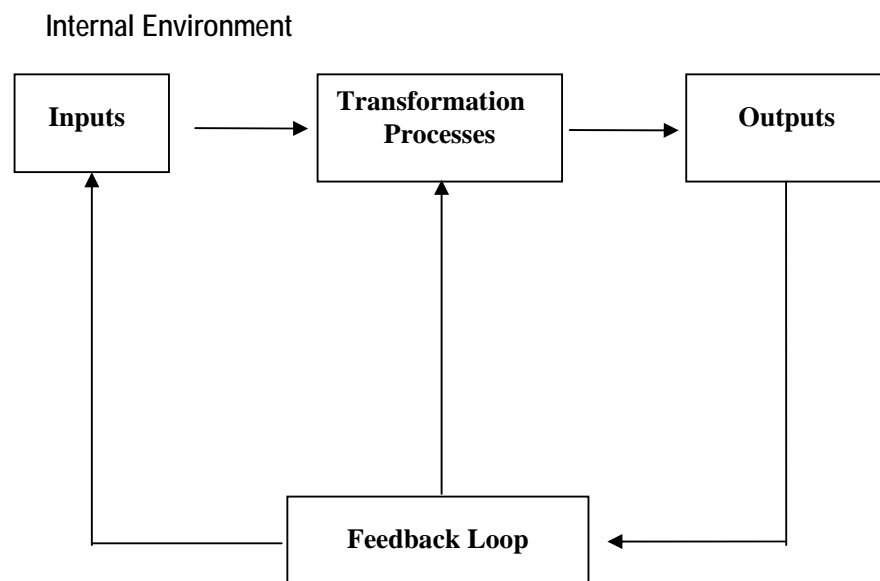


Figure 1.1 System model

Source: Dibia (2009)

System theory describes an organisation as a complex set of dynamically intertwined and interconnected elements, including its input, processes, outputs, feedback loops and the environment in which it operates and continuously interacts.

Any change in any element of the system causes change in other elements. The interconnection tends to be complex, dynamic (constantly changing) and often unknown. When management makes decisions involving one organisational element, unanticipated impact usually occurs throughout the system. System theories examine these interconnections, frequently using organisational decision processes, information and control systems as their focal point for analysis (Payne & Nassar, 2006; Shafritz et al., 2011).

The systems theory illustrates continuous reactions that must take place in a focal actor's environment if the focal actor is to survive as an authoritative force in the system. The focal actor must react properly to environmental feedbacks, expressed in terms of demands and support. Therefore, in systems theory, reacting properly to environmental stimuli (input) essentially means acting in ways that are consistent with furthering the actor's chances of survival. Appropriate reaction may not necessarily consist of maximising supports since it is not always necessary for the focal actor to have maximum support to survive. However, proper reaction does consist of action which must be committed to avoid demand overload.

Demand overload can be seen simply as a red alert in which the focal actor must respond immediately and appropriately to reduce the danger or, if the response is inadequate, face devastation.

Public administrators cannot respond only to what administrative law demands because public administrators must respond to other environmental demands as well. It could be argued that the administrative decision-making must be viewed within the context of an agency's environment.

Rosenbloom and Goldman (2009) argued two environments should be considered:

- The outer environment
- The inner environment

Both tend to influence administrators as they formulate agency decisions. Whether making internal procedural rules or major public policy statements, all prudent government agency decision-makers must acknowledge and respond to the common outer environmental inputs (demand and supports).

On one hand, outputs represent decisions which reflect agency responses to the inputs from the outer and inner environments (with inputs) as well. On the other hand, internal agency stimuli typically consist of influential forces such as internal agency rules and regulations, office politics, the chain-of-command network, budgetary constraints, staff competences, employee morale, attitudes and the like.

Finally, the crucial lesson for managers in systems management is the fact that all government organisations are part of their environment. The systems management concept should remind public managers that, in addition to managing the internal aspect of their organisation, they must also be sensitive to the rapidly changing environment which affects things

such as the acceptance of their products, their relationship with their clientele and the attitudes of their employees.

Activity 1.2



Activity

1. Why should a public organisation pay attention to its environment?
2. In a complex system, as the size of the system becomes larger, the individual parts of the system become more disorganised until they are no longer able to sustain the organisation as a whole. What should public administrators do to revive such systems?

Political system

According to Easton (1953), Esman (1991) and Danziger (2003) a political system is a system of behaviour. It is the authoritative allocation of values for a society.

Esman (1991) contends that systems are made up of plural components; the behaviour of each has implications for the others as well as for the system as a whole. In this respect, communications and transactions among them are more important than the internal behaviour of individual components. The system's performance is greater than the combined outputs of its members.

A political system is a term that applies to broad patterns of interaction among state institutions, economic co-ordination and political culture (Berman & Murphy, 2001). Every political system defines its boundaries of legitimate action differently. One political system might provide a total health care delivery system to its citizens, with no direct charges for doctors, hospital or treatment, whereas another system might subsidise hospitalisation for the poor. One political system might require daily religious instruction in school while another system might forbid even the general discussion of religious philosophies (Danziger, 2003).

Some political and social systems are conceived as teleological, goal-seeking structures, oriented to purposeful action. On the other hand, some political systems are macro-societal and essentially descriptive. Others are closer to the realm of human action. The latter touches on the role of development managers and are sets of interrelated complex structures that have to be integrated, co-ordinated or steered by central command and control (Esman, 1991). A more pragmatic definition of a political system might be described in terms of the authoritative allocation of values for a collectivity. Like the management systems approach of Easton (1953), conceptualisation of the political system is also based on the idea of an input-output system within a broader environment. From this perspective, once political decisions have been made they become outputs of the political system. Some political analysts find it useful to distinguish outputs, which are the decisions and the implementation process, from the outcomes, which are the impacts of those decisions.

It is important to note, however, that at some point, it is often possible that there will be changes in the political system. Such changes could take the following forms:

- The authorities who hold political positions might be replaced by election, political pressure or violence.
- The regime might change through the implementation of new governing structures or procedures.
- Significant alterations in the pattern of values allocations.

The major bone of contention is that the political system is open in the sense that the environment and inputs generate forces that affect the system and to which it must respond. Further, the political system is itself an active force, since its decisions and actions are aimed at modifying and shaping its environment and inputs by means of a constant flow of outputs (Danziger, 2003; Isaak, 1984). Many political scientists use this conceptualisation of the political system (either consciously or subconsciously), when they attempt to explain the dynamic processes of politics. This notion of the political system attempts to provide political scientists with the basic analytical concept for building a general theory of political entities.

Finally, the political system concept stipulates that every system has several components. For example, if we are treating the family as a system, the individual members of the family would be its elements. The components of a political system could be individuals, groups, political parties or nations depending on the scope of the system. Every political system has three characteristic components:

1. Identifiable elements
2. Relationships among the elements
3. Boundaries

Activity 1.3



Activity

1. Describe three situations in which the decision-making capacity of the most powerful actors in the political system is completely constrained by factors in the extra-social or intra-societal environment.
2. Describe the relationship between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government in the political system of your country.
3. What is the relationship between public administrators and the executive, judicial and legislative branches in the political system of your country? Why is this relationship necessary?



The relationship between public administration and the political systems

Public systems are government organisations that consist of similar subsystems. These organisations or government agencies are dependent on resources made available to them through public finance. In most cases, it is acceptable that public organisations exist to foster an organised, regulated society to fulfil the security and independent needs of the citizens through the maintenance of law and order. On the other hand, private sector organisations were to be engaged in profit-seeking activities. In several countries, governments own shares in profit-making organisations. One can also find a significant number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are not profit-oriented.

It is interesting to observe that government ministries, agencies and departments at national, state and local levels constitute the public sector. In most cases, however, public corporations, commissions and various other institutions established through statutes partially or wholly funded by government should also come within the premise of the public sector.

Based on this:

- What responsibilities should be reserved for the political executive?
- How large should the legislature be and how should its members be selected?
- How powerful should the public administrators be?
- What should be the relationship between the courts and the other branches of the government?
- Should state, provincial and local governments be under the control of the national government?

In an attempt to provide answers to the above questions we will figure out the relationship between public administrators in any political system. As previously discussed, public administration is the term used to describe the machinery and processes through which rules and policies are applied and implemented. In the political system, the treatment citizens receive can depend on the attitude of the public administrator with whom you interact, as well as who you are and who you know.

The term *bureaucracy* is used in this module to “describe a particular structure and style through which the government administration can operate.” (Starling, 2011).

In some countries, calling a government ministry, department or agency “bureaucratic” is not usually intended to be a compliment. Some criticisms of bureaucracy are really directed at all large administrative structures that exercise increasing control over the citizens’ lives and expand their organisational domain to a level where they are seen as too

large and powerful. Public administrators in the political system are seen to be relatively free of political accountability because they are protected by professional norms and hiring and firing rules that give them quasi-permanent tenure and insulate them from political pressure.

One common relationship between the political system and public administration is that as the government penetrates a larger sphere of the society and economy, it results in a corresponding need for a more extensive public administrative structure. This is because public administrators serve as the basic apparatus through which the government interprets, implements and monitors its values allocation decisions. The public administrative system tends to be larger (in relation to the society) as the political system becomes more totalitarian. Modern public administration has such wide-ranging powers and competencies that they are typically credited with maintaining political systems when executives and legislatures are ineffective, as in many African, Asian and Caribbean countries.

Where do public administrators work and who are they?

In most democratic countries the building block of government is divided into three branches:

1. The executive
2. The legislative
3. The judicial

The three branches of government are also distributed at the federal, state and local levels. In a country that has a federal system of government the configuration of public administration in the state and local levels are roughly similar to that of the national government. At the national government level there are typically 10 to 14 ministries or departments.

The following are typical ministries:

- Agriculture
- Defence
- Education
- Environment
- Foreign Affairs
- Health
- Internal Affairs
- Science and Technology
- Transportation
- Communication

The heads of ministries are called ministers and they are normally members of the president's or prime minister's cabinet. They also report directly to the head of government. In some countries' public administration systems, the minister in charge of specific agencies may



have more political influence than those that manage the affairs of a ministry as a whole.

Apart from the executive ministries and their departments, numerous executive agencies operate independently and generally report directly to the prime minister or president. One other organisation at national government level is called the independent regulatory commission. This commission normally acts independently to regulate certain segments of the economy. In some countries, once the prime minister or president has appointed the members of a commission, the application and formulation of regulations is largely beyond his or her control.

Next to the ministries and the independent regulatory agencies, the other type of institution where you could find public administrators is government corporations. A government corporation administrates government programmes that:

- require a greater flexibility than the customary type of ministry or public agency would be permitted to perform,
- are predominantly of a business nature,
- involve a large number of business-type transactions with the public, and
- produce revenue and are potentially self-sustaining.

In several countries, the most well-known government corporations are the post office and railways. Most developing nations' governments also own a national airline. In this module we have tried to clarify public administrators' work in government and attempted to show the differences between the public and private sector. It is very important to note the independence of the private, public and non-profit sectors.

The process of management, be it in public or private sector organisations, is the same (Cox, Buck & Morgan, 2011; Rosenbloom et al., 2009). There is a general consensus that all large organisations whether government, ministries or agencies, public corporations, labour unions, universities, factories or commercial enterprises, or hospitals must provide the functions of general management such as planning, organising, staffing and budgeting.

One of the most frequently cited differences between the public and private sector is that the overall mission of public administration is to provide a service to the public, whereas the primary objective of the private sector is profit-making — that which is often described as the “bottom line”.

There is another traditional argument for the difference between public and private administration. It has been argued that public administration operates less efficiently than private administration. There is a counter argument that public organisations are less inclined to be efficient because they do not have to be as sensitive as private organisations to the preferences and grievances of their consumers. From this perspective many government services are provided by the public sector because they would not produce sufficient profit to interest private sector organisations (Dibie, 2003).

The greater emphasis in the public sector on accountability and transparency is also a major difference between the public sector and public administration. Public administration is often said to operate in a “goldfish bowl”. One other major difference is that the personnel management system in the public sector is much more complicated and rigid in government than in the private sector.

Szypszak (2011) contends that in order for the government to promote sensitivity and responsiveness to the needs of certain minority groups, it has often hired a person from that group who is not as well qualified as other candidates in terms of education and experience. The complexity and inflexibility of public human resource systems also results from the general emphasis on accountability.

While managers in the private sector have certain government regulations that they are obliged to follow, they are normally not as constricted as their public sector counterparts. In many countries, public administrators are supposed to be accountable to the general populace (Szypszak, 2011; Warren, 1997). As a result of this, public servants’ places of work are markedly more regimented. Private and public system management is one and the same process taking place in two different environments.

Starling (2011) contends that the public sector is different, especially in deriving its revenue from taxes and the performance of some activities through contracting out or privatisation. The public sector uses its public administrators to perform many functions that are of critical importance to the health of the private and non-profit sectors. Some management theorists propose a long list of skills that are important in managing the affairs of a government.

Public administrators are generally equipped with the following skills.

Programme management

In order to effectively promote good governance, public administrators should also be good political and programme managers (Stillman, 2010). The nature of public policy could enhance the understanding of programme management. According to Dye (2011), public policies are the choices governments make in response to some problem, such as economic growth, education, natural disaster, crime, national security, income maintenance, health care, environment, transportation or energy. The public administrator’s skills at programme management ensure that these (and many other tasks) are done in an efficient and effective manner.

Resource management

The human resource management process (in the public sector) involves planning for attracting, developing and retaining public administrators. This is the staffing process. The external environment, (especially the competitive and legal environments) has a major impact on resource management. The public sector is not completely free to hire who they want. The human resource manager (also a public administrator) has the responsibility of seeing that the organisation complies with the law (Cox et al., 2011; Shafritz, et al., 2011). Therefore, efficiency in formulating and implementing public policies is predicated on the public

administrator's skills at resource management. At the same time one can argue that superior performance by the public administrator would ultimately depend on the calibre of the staff. Efficiency in the public sector therefore, calls for the right plans, structures and procedures. The capabilities that can lead to programme success come from the public administrator. The public administrator's skills, discipline, motivation, and intelligence help to enhance the effective delivery of services to citizens. Leading and developing public administrators is the heart of successful high-performance resource management. In short, public administrators make it happen.

Political management

According to Esman (1991), much of politics is economic, and most of economics is politics. Lindblom (1977), Theen and Wilson (2001) and Payne and Nassar (2006) respectively presented an argument that the relationship between politics and economics can be observed in many ways, such as:

- huge government budget and deficits,
- the economic nature of most government policies, and
- the fact that even in capitalist nations' private economic enterprises look to government for a number of services; for example, the bail-out of the automotive industries from bankruptcy in 2009 in the United States, and the protection of domestic companies from foreign competition.

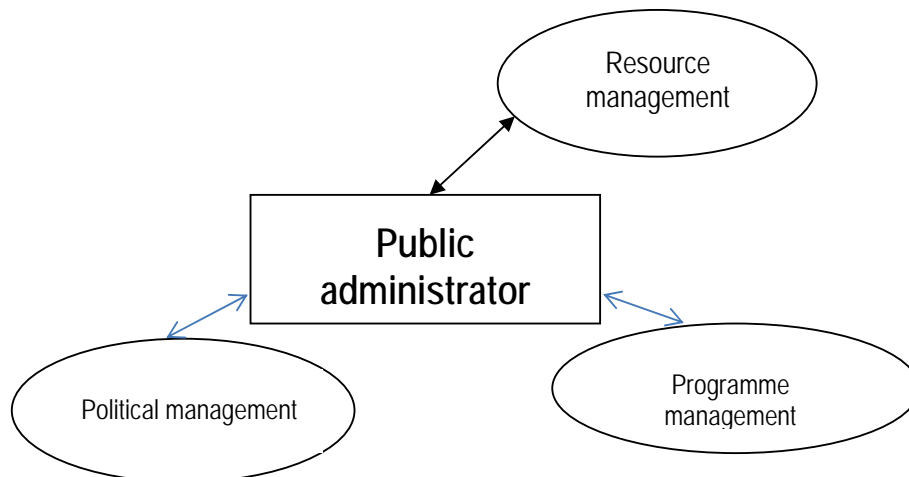


Figure 1.2 Relationship between politics and economics

Source: Dicie (2009)

It is important to note that public administrators must understand the formal procedures by which those who hold political power are chosen and held accountable. That is, there are formal procedures for accountability. The key mechanism for such accountability is regular, free and fair elections in which the voters may elect or defeat candidates for public office. They must be familiar with the methods for interpreting and implementing the values of democracy. At the same time all democracies

have laws restricting views, actions and threats to national security or public safety. Such laws place limits on political freedom and sometimes on political competition. Thus, public administrators must have a good knowledge of political institutions and processes.

A good public administrator must also have political skills to analyse and interpret political, social and economic trends. Public administrators also know how to evaluate the consequences of administrative actions, persuade and bargain and thereby further their ministries' or departments' objectives and goals.

Any nation suffers if its public administrators are not politically equipped to address democratic problems. Finally, given the public administrators' mandate to change in the pursuit of society's values, it is not surprising that knowledge of ethics is paramount in discharging their responsibilities. Given the wide range of government responsibilities, public administrators have emerged as the nerve centre of the public sector.

Activity 1.4



Activity

1. In your opinion why is it necessary for the public administrator to have public, political and resource management skills?
2. Why is it argued that although government, non-profit and private sectors might be engaged in delivery of social services, it does not follow that private and public management are the same?
3. Why is public administration thought of as the accomplishing side of government?

Module summary



Summary

The importance of public administration is universally recognised. Public administrators are, in essence, the administrative arm of government. Political and economic development cannot be achieved without a competent public administration. Policy decisions are not self-enforcing, public administrators carry them out. Decisions by policy makers represent hope. It is the public administrator who must transform the hope or the dream into reality.

Although public administrators are less visible than political leaders, their power is usually much greater in that it extends to every area of citizens' lives. If you need a driver's licence, passport, birth certificate, permit for a home extension or a tax auditor, you will need to see a public administrator.

Public administrators also do much more than simply carry out orders by decision makers. They are the ones with the information and expertise essential for policy makers. They are partners with the decision makers on issues of policy. In countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America and Latin America, public administrators not only administer laws but also (in the absence of national assembly or parliament) usually fashion them.

Public administrators often also organise and manage major financial, industrial and agricultural enterprises. In order to modernise, public administrations ought to consist of the experts and be the most efficient institutions in a country. As the core of the modern state, the public administrator is involved not only in running an ongoing system, but also developing new modes of operation, refining old norms and building the state. Finally, in all societies and countries, the public administrator has the task of implementing and regulation. Module 2 will examine various organisational theories that are useful in the study of public administration.

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Further reading



Reading

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Not all cases of public policy are presented as already analysed cases. However, you will be able to follow issues and find material to conduct your own analysis of policy cases. Read as many journals as you can and also follow policy development through the media — newspapers, periodicals, television, radio, etc.

Some international journals where you might find relevant policy case studies include:

- *Public Administration Review* (American and international sections)
- *Public Administration* (British and international sections)
- *International Review of Administrative Sciences*
- *Administration and Society*

Activity feedback



Feedback

Activity 1.1

1. The scope of the practice of public administration is so broad that it is difficult to achieve general agreement on where the boundaries of the field should be drawn. Public administration includes public policy fields such as transportation, energy, criminal justice and economic development, as well as the implications for public administration of such matters as inter-governmental relations, public sector collective bargaining, pressure group activity, programme evaluation, and information management. Other areas include human resources planning, affirmative action, administrative law, public policy-making and the associated accountability of senior servants.
2. Public administration is both direct and indirect. The subject can be regarded as direct when government employees provide services to the public as varied as mortgage insurance, mail delivery and electricity. Public administration could be indirect when government pays private contractors to provide goods and services to citizens. Yes, health officers, educators and experts who work for governments are public administrators.
3. Professional, administrative, technical, clerical and others.
4. The process of public administration consists of the action involved in effecting the intent or desire of a government. It is thus the continuously active, business part of the government, concerned with carrying out the law, as made by legislative bodies (or other authoritative agents) and interpreted by the courts, through the processes of organisation and management.
5. Public administration is thought of as the accomplishing side of government in the traditional perspective of the field. From that perspective, public administration is supposed to comprise all the activities involved in carrying out the policies of elected officials and some activities associated with the development of those policies.

Activity 1.2

1. The two environments are (a) the outer and (b) the inner. Both tend to influence administrators as they formulate agency decisions. Whether making internal procedural rules or major public policy statements, all prudent government agency decision makers must acknowledge and respond to the common outer environmental inputs.
2. Public administrators not only administer laws, but in the absence of a national assembly or parliament, usually fashion them. Given the public administrators' mandate to change in the pursuit of society's values, it should not be surprising that knowledge of

ethics would become paramount in discharging their responsibilities. Given the wide range of government responsibilities, the public administrators have emerged as the nerve centre of the public sector.

Activity 1.3

1. Systems are made up of plural components; the behaviour of each has implications for the others as well as for the system as a whole. In this respect communications and transactions among them are more important than the internal behaviour of individual components. Thus, the system's performance is greater than the combined outputs of its members.
2. The executive, legislative and judicial branches of government work together in the enactment of public policies and their implementation. In most democratic countries the building block of government is divided into three branches (a) executive; (b) legislative; and (c) judicial. The three branches of government are also distributed at the federal, state and local levels.
3. One common relationship between the political system and public administration is that as the government penetrates a larger sphere of the society and economy, there is a corresponding need for a more extensive public administrative structure. This is because public administrators serve as the basic apparatus through which the government interprets, implements and monitors its values allocation decisions.

Activity 1.4

1. A good public administrator must also have political skills because it helps him or her to analyse and interpret political, social and economic trends. Public administrators should also know how to evaluate the consequences of administrative actions, persuade and bargain, and thereby further their ministry's or department's objectives and goals.
2. Many government services are provided by the public sector because they would not produce sufficient profit to interest private sector organisations.
3. Public administration is the accomplishing side of government because it is given the mandate to change in the pursuit of society's values. It should not be surprising that public administrators' knowledge of ethics would become paramount in discharging their responsibilities. Given the wide range of government responsibilities, public administrators have emerged as the nerve centre of the public sector.