UNIT 3   DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION: POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Structure

3.0   OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you should be able to:

•   Underscore the relationship of development administration with the external environment;
•   Understand the political context of development administration;
•   Highlight the economic context of development administration; and
•   Explain the socio-cultural context of development administration

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, it is underscored that development administration is closely related to its external environment. It is influenced by its political, economic and socio-cultural contexts and, in turn, influences effectively. Since development implies the ability of a social system to shape or reshape its environment, its study should naturally be ecological in character. As Edward Weidner has observed:

> "Environmental factors in general and cultural factors in particular are important to those who attempt to bring about major change in a society. Such factors condition the outcome of any governmental program or other innovation. Therefore, changes in man's culture and environment are among the goals of highest priority in the countries most committed to change" (Weidner, 1970).

Within any society, political, economic, and socio-cultural developments interact with the administrative system, as all social systems (including the administrative system) "enter into transactions with their environments, influencing and being influenced by them" (Riggs, 1970). An administrative system is influenced significantly by demands and supports from its environment, which in turn are shaped and reshaped by the administrative system through its outputs. The social environment of administrative systems must be seen as both multifaceted and in dynamic interaction with these systems.

The primary emphasis in the literature on the ecology of development administration has been on the political dimensions of the environment, while the economic context has received substantially less attention.

3.2   THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Fred Riggs has maintained that there are two kinds of politics "balanced" politics where the political system and the bureaucracy enjoy almost equal power in decision-making, and "unbalanced" politics where such a 'balance of power' is missing. Unbalanced politics are again of two types - those dominated by the political system and those dominated by the bureaucratic system. The former are called "party-run" politics and the latter "bureaucratic" politics. Balanced politics are most suited for promoting development administration.

Supporting the goal of a balanced polity, the protagonists of what Warren Ilchman has called "balanced social growth" (Ilchman, 1965) have advocated technical assistance to bureaucracies in developing nations only to the extent that such assistance would help to achieve and maintain a balance between the bureaucracy and the political system. A leading theorist of the balanced social growth approach, Riggs, has explicated his philosophical premise behind such a position as follows:

> My confidence in the self-restraint and integrity of any group is enhanced to the extent they are subjected to the discipline of countervailing powers. (Riggs, 1965)

Varying shades of this premise are found in the works of Henry Goodnow, Lucian Pye, Samuel Eisenstadt, and in the early writings of Joseph La Palombara. These scholars generally agree that a bureaucracy which controls the political system is likely to be more interested in enhancing its power than in increasing administrative effectiveness for developmental purposes. Such an equilibrium approach is not highly sensitive to the requirements of dynamic change in developing societies (Diamant, 1970).

Arguments for balanced social growth generally overlook the fact that "aid to the bureaucracy in generating growth in other institutional sectors of the social order may more than offset the risk of increased imbalance, since the bureaucracy may serve as a catalyst or as a diffusion source for modernising norms and technology (Braibanti, 1970). In other words, administrative development should stimulate other kinds of development in the society. In certain developing countries, bureaucracies may be the only social institution capable of bringing about rapid socio-economic change. Moreover, to say that a bureaucracy which controls the political system will be more interested in politicking than in development administration is to overlook the possibility that with its stabilisation a bureaucratic polity often develops its own somewhat distinct political and administrative wings, and that such diffraction brings about new kinds of checks and balances. Moreover, as noted already, a bureaucratic polity is not necessarily inefficient. To treat all bureaucracies in developing nations in a singular fashion is to overlook the subtle influencing and diverse ecological factors on bureaucratic polities operating in cross-national contexts.

Among scholars who do not believe that the approach of balanced social growth is an appropriate one for determining the premises of technical assistance to developing nations are the advocates of what Heady has called "standard technical assistance approach" (Heady, 1970), and those whom Ilchman has referred to as "administrative system approach" (Ibid). Among others, Merle Fainsod, Saul Katz, Jay b. Westcott, and A. H. Hanson belong to this category. These scholars generally base their views on the assumption that administrative improvement, or strengthening and upgrading of the bureaucracy is ipso facto desirable and that

efficiency of bureaucracy should be promoted regardless of the nature of the political system in which it operates. To a degree, then, these scholars are as "guilty" as the "balanced growth" group of developing a singular universal answer to developmental problems.

Ralph Braibanti and Milton Esman take an extreme position in their stress of an "unbalanced social growth strategy." Esman has viewed bureaucracy as "powerful, indispensable and generally beneficent agency of public service especially under conditions of rapid change when social and economic progress depends in great measure on governmental performance." Therefore, he has advocated a strategy, which "places higher priority on building its capabilities than containing its abuses" (Esman, 1970). Braibanti too has argued that "transitional inducement to administrative reforms as a stratagem must proceed as an autonomous action, irrespective of the rate of maturation of the larger political process" (Braibanti, 1970). He has argued further that in polities with a "low quality" of civic culture and the consequent lack of political participation, the administrative system needs to assume greater burdens of leadership and responsibility in a developing country than a developed one (Ibid).

Relatively Joseph La Palombara and Edward Weidner have offered less categorical presumptions. La Palombara has urged that technical assistance be provided to various nations, keeping in view the particular political environment in which development objectives have to be achieved (La Palombara, 1966). He has also argued that all nations have to confront certain crises such as those of legitimacy, integration, identity, penetration, participation, and distribution, but that these crises do not occur in all counties in the same sequence, with the same intensity, or with the same strain on capacity. Developing nations face the dilemma of closely spaced crisis management of problems that the older nations have faced over a much longer period of time. To handle these crises, he has argued, the civil and military bureaucracies must play an effective role in developing nations. Thus, administrative development should become an important priority in the face of rapid social change.

Likewise, Edward Weidner, although not explicitly critical of the balanced social growth approach, has asserted, "those responsible for technical assistance programs cannot wait for political systems, of whatever form, to mature before extending help" (TAP, 1964).

Even when the donor-nations want to increase the political development of aid-receiving nations, it is difficult to visualise what methods are effective for this purpose. Though Riggs has stressed the need for launching "soundly conceived programs for political development" (La Palombara, 1966), he has not suggested clearly how this could be accomplished. In fact, Ralph Braibanti has argued strongly "it is beyond the capacity of an aid-giving nation to directly and deliberately accelerate politicisation". The viewpoint of Braibanti and other scholars taking such a stand has been well expressed by Ferrel Heady:

> "The basic considerations to keep in mind in making judgments as to what is feasible … are these: (1) choices as to the direction of political development are primarily the business of domestic political decision –makers in the developing country; (2) participation in those choices by external aid-giving countries is at best secondary, peripheral, and limited; (3) therefore, acceptance of the objectives of aid programs by those wielding effective political power is a prerequisite to the success of such programmes" (Heady, 1966).

Heady's comments are indicative of a trend among many scholars toward the realisation that in spite of inter-dependence between the political and the administrative development, the two may not move together. Moreover, balance between them may not be necessarily an ideal for a rapidly changing social system. These considerations are important for technical assistance programmes designed to strengthen development administration in various ecological settings.

3.3 THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

It has been recognised that public administration is an important dimension of the process of economic growth in developing countries (Riggs, 1966). Taking the Riggsian notion of development in terms of an increase in the capacity of a social system to shape or reshape its environment, it can be hypothesised that economic growth would generally accompany administrative development. Ilchman and Bhargava have also stressed the need to consider administrative capabilities as important variables in any model of economic growth (Ilchman and Bhargava, 1970). The relationship between economic development and administrative reform has not paralleled that of developed (mainly Western) nations. In contemporary modernised states, economic growth preceded administrative reform, while in most of the developing countries it has been the opposite.

For faster economic development, economic planning has become an accepted strategy in most of the developing countries. As noted already, development administration in such countries generally revolves around the administration of planning. John Montgomery has observed that development administration connotes "carrying out planned change in the economy (in agriculture or industry, or the capital infrastructure supporting either of these) and, to a lesser extent, in the social services of the state (especially education and public health" (Montgomery, 1966).

In a developing country, generally, the state acts as the dominant change-agent and therefore its capacity to carry out economic development programmes is an important determinant of outputs. The administrative system, in order to enhance its capacity to achieve developmental goals, usually has to adopt a new set of values. The programmatic values of the polity have to be encased in terms of administrative values and institutional apparatus. " Essentially, this implies that " changes and modifications in the structural and behavioural patterns may have to be brought in line with the functional content of development administration" (Pai Panandikar, 1964). A lack of development-oriented structural and behavioural patterns has been the major cause of the low success of planning in most developing countries. For example, as Frank Sherwood has noted, public enterprises have proved to be almost parasitic from the viewpoint of economic growth in several countries. Sherwood has demonstrated that, although public enterprises are justified in the emerging nations as instruments of public administration capable of promoting economic growth, in fact, they cost more than they earn and survive because they are subsidised by the public treasury (Sherwood, 1970). However, considering the growing importance of such economic-administrative organisations in "developing" nations, due attention has not been given to their study in comparative public administration.

Limited economic resources of a country often put constraints on the ability of its administrative system to achieve developmental goals. A developing country may not be able to create an adequate salary system for the public officials; for the

existence of a sound salary system depends "not only on the mobilisation of funds by taxation and the distribution of wages through a responsible payroll system, but also on the existence of an economic base" (Riggs, 1970). Some scholars have even emphasised the need to provide market-based economic incentives for public officials (Berliner, 1970). This reflects a new trend of thought on the part of comparative administrative theorists.

It is increasingly recognised that public officials in the emergent nations are generally dissatisfied with their low salaries, and such dissatisfaction is seen to be a prime cause of official corruption. Still, in spite of the importance of the subject of official corruption in the context of politico-administrative development, not much research has been done in this area. However, it can be hypothesised that depending on different ecological settings, official corruption may or may not prove dysfunctional to development administration. "Formalism," as already noted, can likewise have positive consequences in certain situations (Huntington, 1968).

As such, low level of economic development also has an impact on the quality of human resources. Technical and managerial skills are scarce in the administrative institutions of developing countries, while training facilities are often inadequate to overcome such obstacles. In turn, lower administrative capability generally reinforces a low level of goal-achievement in economic life. Despite the significance of this subject, students of development administration have not studied extensively the relationship between administrative development and economic growth.

3.4 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Riggs has hypothesised that only in more advanced countries are formal or complex organisations (in the sense the term is used in sociological literature) created. "The less developed a social system, the more difficult it is for that system to create organisations; the fewer the organisation in a society, the more difficult it is for that society to develop" (Riggs, 1970). Riggs has not specified, however, the difference between the capabilities of complex administrative organisations and "non-organisations" to achieve developmental goals. Although the underlying objective of the study of comparative public administration has been to understand and explain the administrative systems in cross-cultural settings, not much study has been made of the interaction between development-oriented administrative systems and the cultural settings in which they work. It is recognised, however, that in institutionalising administrative change, cultural factors need to be taken into serious consideration.

Riggs has observed, "every culture offers both points of support for and obstacles to change or development" (Ibid). David Apter has described values supporting development as "instrumental " and those obstructing it as "consummatory" (Apter, 1965). Thus, he has suggested that modernisation is facilitated in a society having instrumental rather than consummatory values. However, no hypotheses have been advanced that the Western societies necessarily have more in the way of instrumental values or that non-Western societies have a more consummatory orientation. One theorist has gone so far as to argue, "genuine cultural hurdles to development are not very numerous in any particular region" (Bharati, 1963). Administrative behaviour is affected by the values cherished by the society in

which it works. The extent of this influence would depend on "the relative strength of special values developed by the administrative structure vis-à-vis the values of surrounding society" (Subramaniam, 1967). Thus, administrative culture is generally influenced by the society's value-structure. However, civil servants recruited at a young age and trained with some degree of isolation from the rest of the society can develop their own value system, which is somewhat different from that of the parent society. Such a semi-autonomous value-structure of the administrative system may or may not aid the achievement of developmental goals in socio-economic spheres. Perhaps this would depend upon the extent to which an "instrumental orientation" became dominant in the administrative system.

In the study of the cultural context of development administration, no concrete attempts appear to have been made to relate the nature of religious values, languages, and other cultural components with development administration, and this situation is reflective of the nascent state of the study of the ecological dimensions of development administration.

3.5   ACTIVITY

1.   Discuss the Political and Economic Contexts of development administration in developing countries.

2.   Do you feel the socio-cultural context of development administration has an impact on governance? Illustrate with examples.

3.6   CONCLUSION

Although the concept of development administration is becoming increasingly "fashionable" throughout the public administration literature, its focus, at least in the foreseeable future, is expected to remain on the study of those governmental administrative systems (or organisations), which are engaged primarily in the task of bringing rapid socio-economic and political change. Further, the dominant concern of those using the concept is likely to be with the "emergent" nations, which are facing the challenges of socio-administrative changes. It goes without saying that majority of the developing nations has traditional administrative structures, which are assigned the tasks of development administration.

In regard to the ecological context of development administration, the primary emphasis in the literature has been on the political dimensions. Here, the major concern has been largely with the question of creating balanced and unbalanced polities. Debate on this subject, however, has put little stress on the need to study particular socio-administrative conditions of particular societies. Likewise, there has not been much discussion of the "performance" of these balanced and unbalanced polities. In addition, not much research has been undertaken on the influences of the economic and the socio-cultural systems on the administrative system, nor has much attention been given to the capacity of an administration to bring about changes in its socio-cultural environment.   The need is to rectify this imbalance in the literature on development administration

3.7   REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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