

## **Approaches to the Study of Public Administration**

-There are three disparate approaches to deal with the basic question of what public administration is. These approaches are traditionally labeled as managerial, political and legal and they are often overlapped. Their primary influence has been to pull public administration in three separate directions.

-These approaches are orientated to follow the pattern of the separation of powers of a state established by the constitution. Thus, each of these approaches has their own intellectual tradition, emphasizes different values, promotes different types of organizational structures and views individuals in distinct terms.

### **The Managerial Approaches to Public Administration**

*Origin/tradition:* The managerial approach to public administration seems to have emerged as a result of the civil service reform movement of the late nineteenth century in the USA. Civil service reforms promoted this approach as a means of organizing public service. It was emphasized that the business part of the government should be carried out in a sound businesslike manner. Wilson himself considered public administration as 'a field of business as well as a **managerial endeavor**'. This approach was further strengthened by Frederick W. Taylor (he focused on protecting the values of efficiency and economy), LD White, (the study of administration should be started from the base of management rather than from the foundation of law) and Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urlick (POSDCORB). This approach was very influential in the 1930s.

*Value:* this approach focuses on the three core values of public administration: maximization of effectiveness, efficiency and economy. Thus, this approach is oriented to minimize the distinctions between public administration and private administration.

*Organizational structure:* the managerial approach to public administration focuses on the organization based on Max Weber's ideal type bureaucracy (*bureaucratic organization*). It stresses the importance of functional specialization (division of work on the basis of functions), merit based and politically neutral competence employees for promoting efficiency and effectiveness.

*View of the individual:* this approach tends to promote an impersonal view of individuals whether individual may be an employee or a client or a victim of a public agency. [**Dehumanization** i.e. lack of pity, sympathy, kindness, nepotism, and other type of favor towards people]

### **2. The Political approach to public administration**

*Origin/tradition:* The political approach to public administration appeared during the 'New Deal' era (1933-1938 and the Second World War period in the USA. *Paul H Appleby* (Big

Democracy -1945) viewed public administration as a 'political process' and public accountability and political character as the aspects of governmental functions. Similarly, *Wallace Sayre* (Classic of Public Administration-1978) stresses that public administration is ultimately a problem in political theory. The fundamental problem in democracy is the responsibility and responsiveness of the administrative agencies and the bureaucracies to the elected officials. Thus, political approach considers public administration to be an integral part of the political process, political nature of public administration and the role of bureaucracy in making public policies. More precisely, it views public administration as a **political endeavor**.

*Value:* the political approach advocates a different set of values than that of managerial approach. It stresses the political values of representativeness, (political) responsiveness and (political) accountability through elected officials to the people. [I.e. public administration should be organized around these political values]

*Organizational structure:* Instead of emphasizing functional specialization and hierarchical structure, it stresses political pluralism within public administration. The structure of public administration should be a **microcosm** of society (PA should have all features of society). More precisely, public administration should reflect the values, interests and competing forces/diverse groups to be found in a plural society.

The basic concept/argument behind pluralism within public administration is that since public administration is a policy making center of government, it must be structured by providing political representation to a comprehensive variety of the organized political, economic and social interests that are found in the society at large.

*View of the individual:* the political approach to public administration views individuals as part of an aggregate/organized group. It tends to identify an individual's interest which is similar and identical to those of others within the same group.

### **3. Legal approach to public administration**

It views public administration as applying and enforcing law.

*Origin/tradition:* The legal approach to public administration has historically been eclipsed by managerial approach. However, it has its own rich tradition and has emerged as a fully fledged vehicle/ way for defining public administration. It has three interrelated sources: *Administrative law, movement towards the Judicialization of public administration and the constitutional law.*

*Administrative law:* it determines/describes the position and liabilities of state officials including official procedures to be adopted; civil rights and liabilities of private individuals in dealing with public officials and official procedures. [It is the law relating to administration]

Administrative law: **Frank Goodnow** (The Principles of the Administrative Law of the United

States-1905), Kenneth Davis (Administrative Law and Government -1975) and **Marshall Dimock** (Law and Dynamic Administration -1980) have contributed to administrative law and stressed legal approach to public administration.

*Judicialization of public administration: (judiciary role of public administration)* If public officials/administrators engage in adjudication, they must exercise their discretions. It may become legal matter.

*Constitutional law:* governs the legitimacy of government action and the action of government is the function of public administration. [It defines the role of public administration.] Its concerns are: legal authority of government, abuse of power, individuals' fundamental rights, etc. it tends to check unconstitutional practices from the part of government and public administration.

*Value:* the legal approach to public administration embodies/represents three values: *Procedural due process* (can't be confined to any single set of requirements), *individual substantive rights* (real or fundamental rights of individuals) and *equity/fairness*.

Public administration/administrator should:

adopt due process while discharging or performing its tasks;

protect/respect the individual rights

be fair while solving conflict between government and individual.

*Due process:* it is viewed as requiring procedures designed to protect individuals/citizens from malicious, arbitrary, cruel or unconstitutional harm at the hands of government.

*Individual rights:* protection of constitutional and legal rights of individual people.

*Equity and fairness:* it prevents arbitrary or invidious (unpleasant) treatment of individuals

*Organizational Structure: [The precise structure may vary from context to context]*

The legal approach advocates *Adjudicatory structure* {formal legal structure} *since it tends to maximize the use of adversary procedure* {this structure that help to oppose an argument or competing with an argument}

[Administrative agencies exercising adjudicatory functions may enjoy a greater degree of independence from the rest of government since they are concerned with application of law [they should be free from political interference]

It stresses on the formal official duties of agencies and administrators; limitations of discretionary authority of public organizations and administration; disciplinary actions against employees, equal employment opportunities, employee/labor relations and presence of regulatory commissions in public administration.

*[This approach seems quite odd /unusual since its values are embodied in the managerial and political approach]*

*View of the individual:* it considers the individual as a unique person in a unique set of circumstances. The procedure (adversary procedure) enables an individual to explain his/her own unique and particular circumstances, his/her thinking, and motivation to the governmental decision makers / administrators.

*More precisely, public administration may treat different individuals in different ways.*

Decisions may depend on the circumstances.

One decision may not apply others.

**Summing up:**

*The traditional separation of legislative, executive and judicial functions are:*

- The primary task of the legislative branch is to make policy.
- The primary task of the executive branch is the execution or implementation of policy.
- The primary task of the judicial branch is the interpretation of the law.

These three functions of government are related to three views of the role of public administration.

1. The managerial approach to public administration is related to *executive functions* in the government which emphasizes the management and organization of public organizations. (It is emphasized that management in the public sector is very much similar to that in the private sector)
2. The political approach to public administration is related to legislative functions in government and is more concerned with the formulation of policy decisions.
3. The legal approach to public administration is related to the judicial functions in government which emphasizes the administrators' role in applying and enforcing the law. It is also concerned with the adjudicatory role of public organizations.

**Conclusion:**

- These approaches have different origins, stress different values and structural arrangements; and view individuals in remarkably different ways because each approach focuses on different functions of public administration.
- Each approach may be more or less relevant to different agencies, administrative functions and policy areas.
- The definition of the field of public administration must include a consideration of managerial, political and legal approaches. It is necessary to synthesize these three approaches for better understanding the value of public administration and government actions.