



**COMPARATIVE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION**

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Indira Gandhi National Open University**

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BLOCK 1
COMPARATIVE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION: AN
INTRODUCTION



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UNIT 1 COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EVOLUTION, MEANING, NATURE, SCOPE, AND SIGNIFICANCE

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction of Comparative Public Administration (CPA)
- 1.2 Evolution of CPA
- 1.3 Meaning of CPA
- 1.4 Nature of CPA
- 1.5 Scope of CPA
- 1.6 Significance of CPA
- 1.7 Conclusion
- 1.8 References and Further Readings

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Highlight the factors that led to the evolution of comparative public administration;
- Explain the meaning of comparative public administration in the context of its goals and objectives;
- Discuss the nature of comparative public administration in terms of important trends in its study;
- Analyse the scope of comparative public administration in relation to its variegated studies and their content; and
- Explain the intellectual as well as applied significance of comparative public administration.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit discusses the evolution, meaning, nature, scope, and significance of comparative public administration. Besides, Comparative Public Administration (CPA) contributing to the science of administration by studying administrative systems in a cross-institutional, intra-national, cross-national, intra-cultural, cross-cultural, and cross-temporal studies has also been explained.

1.2 EVOLUTION OF COMPARATIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (CPA)

Comparison of various political systems has been a key concern of a political thinker, since the time of Aristotle. In contemporary times, there

have been published a good number of studies on comparative constitutions and governments. However, comparison of administrative system has been undertaken only rarely by scholars. When political systems are compared, there is an obvious reference to their respective administrative systems that function within them, but such studies are only sketchy. Traditional comparative government and administrative studies were confined to big powers, such as the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Italy. This was a limitation in the traditional studies. Besides, the traditional analysis focused mainly on the organization of government institutions, with a negligible emphasis on the behavioural or dynamic aspects of the government systems. Besides, most studies were descriptive in nature and not analytical or explanatory or problem-oriented. Moreover, these studies did not take into account the interaction between the government systems and their environment. Fred Riggs calls these studies the “governments of foreign countries” rather than “comparative governments”.

It should be appreciated that before the Second World War, there were hardly any ‘developing’ nations of the contemporary times. Most of them were colonies of the western powers and hence, there was hardly any interest in studying their government structures. Interest in comparative administration was only marginal in the pre-Second World War time, yet there were a few interesting exceptions. Woodrow Wilson in his seminal article “The Study of Administration” published in the *Political Science Quarterly* (1887) had suggested that the USA should learn from the patterns of European administrative systems without borrowing from them their centralized monarchical political systems. This was a clear comparative orientation. Even L. D. White, who published the first text book in Public Administration ‘Introduction to the Study of Public Administration’ in 1926, was interested in constructing principles of administration that would provide guidelines of action in public administration of Russia, Great Britain, Iraq, and the United States. Such a broad interest in traditional comparative public administration motivated the later advanced studies and orientations. Let us look at the factors that helped in the evolution of contemporary comparative public administration.

1. Experience during the Second World War

Several scholars of western countries, particularly of the United States, had the opportunity of holding administrative positions in certain non-western nations during the war. Their experience provided an important insight that there were noticeable differences among the western and non-western nations in the sphere of their administrative structures and behaviour. These differences were primarily because of the diversity in socio-cultural and economic contexts of both types of nations. The Philippines and Japan, which were occupied by the USA for a few years, offered eminent examples of such diversity.

2. International Technical Assistance Programme

With the creation of the United Nations in 1945, there was a substantial emphasis on providing financial and technical assistance to the non-western countries that were generally economically poor. Besides,

there was the Marshal Plan of the US designed to provide such assistance to European countries. Several scholars of the US were engaged in the working of such institutions of technical assistance. They also gave recommendations on reforming the administrative systems of certain nations, including India (Example: two reports of Paul Appleby in 1953 and 1956). Interest and insights into the administrative systems of developing countries thus became stronger and gave impetus to comparative administrative studies.

3. Administrative Reforms

Almost all developing nations conducted studies on the desirable areas of administrative reforms with the help of indigenous and foreign scholars. This created enormous information on the administrative systems of a number of countries.

In the preparation of recommendations on administrative reforms, administrators and scholars of developing countries examined and borrowed from the administrative practices of developed nations. This led to cross-cultural and cross-national analyses of administrative systems.

4. Emergent Developing Nations

With the decline and fall of colonialism after the Second World War, many countries became independent in the continents of Asia and Africa. These countries faced acute problems of socio-economic transformation. Addressing these problems in a systematic manner required the strengthening of administrative systems in the spheres of policy-making, planning, human resource management, financial administration, and administrative responsiveness. Several universities and private foundations, such as, the Ford Foundation joined the efforts intended to render technical assistance, guidance, and training to the administrative systems of developing nations. A good number of civil servants of such nations went to study and obtain training in several developed nations. Likewise, many foreign experts visited developing nations and worked, as advisors in administrative reforms and human resource development. These interactions led to remarkable interest and studies in comparative public administration.

5. Comparative Politics Movement

After the Second World War, the Comparative Politics Movement gained popularity and acceptance in the US and several other countries. A few scholars, while studying the political systems of different nations, also examined and analysed their administrative systems. They had to do so because the administrative system is considered, as a subsystem of the political system. Some scholars took interest in comparative politics as well as comparative public administration including Leonard Binder, Joseph La Palombara, Alfred Diamant, Fred Riggs, Edward Weidnar, and Ferrel Heady. The Comparative Public Administration Movement borrowed from Comparative Politics Movement several concepts, methodologies, models, and theories.

6. Behavioural Movement

The behavioural movement encouraged a series of studies on administrative behaviour in ecological settings, thus strengthening comparative public administrative literature. (Details in this respect are provided in Unit 1).

7. Comparative Administration Group

In 1963, the Comparative Public Administration Group (CAG) was set up, as a committee of the American Society for Public Administration. It was funded from 1963 to 1970 by the Ford Foundation. Fred W. Riggs was the chairman of the group from its inception till the end of 1970. The CAG conducted a series of seminars on comparative administrative systems, focusing on theoretical as well as applied perspectives. It published more than one hundred monographs and brought out several edited anthologies on various themes.

The group also sponsored many research studies in countries of Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Besides, it was instrumental in publishing a quarterly, 'Journal of Comparative Administration' through SAGE publishers; the journal was later re-named as Administration and Society, which still continues to be published. Among the scholars, who were pioneers in the Comparative Public Administration Movement were Ralph Braibanti, Milton Esman, Ferrel Heady, John Montgomery, Fred Riggs, William Siffin, and Dwight Waldo.

However, with the discontinuation of assistance by the Ford Foundation, the CAG was weakened and eventually disbanded. Later in 1973, with the efforts of Fred Riggs and other scholars, a Section on International and Comparative Administration (SICA) was set up, as a section of the American Society of Public Administration, which continues to promote study, and teaching and research in comparative public administration. SICA is comprised of practitioners and academics, who are involved in or have interest in international and overseas public administration. It has done a commendable job in keeping an interest in comparative administrative studies alive and vital. It awards annually the Fred W Riggs Award for outstanding contribution in the field of comparative public administration. It has also started the practice of bringing out "SICA Occasional Papers" on the pattern adopted earlier by CAG.

Current Status

As of 2021, the discipline of comparative public administration is characterized by the following institutional initiatives:

1. The subject of comparative public administration is taught in a large number of foreign and Indian universities and colleges at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
2. Almost all journals on public administration carry articles on comparative administrative systems.
3. The SICA of ASPA is vigorously strengthening research, communication, and teaching in comparative public administration.

However, the number of books on the subject is scarce and very few Ph.D. theses are being written on comparative aspects of administration in developing countries, including India.

The need is to give a further fillip to the discipline.

1.3 MEANING OF CPA

Comparative public administration is the study of public administrative system from a comparative perspective and in cross-national and cross-cultural contexts. It is a branch of the parent discipline of Public Administration, but over the years, it has evolved and sustained its own identity. It focuses on the structure, processes, behaviour, roles, and impact of public administrative system at the international level. Thus, it examines the similarities and differences among public administrative systems of various nations and regions and the sources of diversity among them. In this perspective, it also looks at the external environment of public administrative systems and the interaction between the two of them.

Comparative public administration is considered to have the following purposes:

1. To learn the distinctive features of a particular administrative system or a cluster of systems.
2. To explain the factors responsible for cross-national and cross-cultural similarities and differences in administrative structure, functions, behaviour, and impact.
3. To examine the causes for the success or failure of particular administrative systems in their ecological settings. Thus, the discipline looks closely at the dynamic interaction between administrative systems and their respective environments, including their positive and negative influences.
4. To understand the strategies of administrative reforms, their processes and impacts and the factors responsible for the level of success or failure of reforms.

1.4 NATURE OF CPA

Fred W. Riggs in his seminal article 'Trends in the Comparative Study of Public Administration' published in *International Review of Administrative Sciences* (1962) observed that the discipline of Comparative Public Administration was experiencing three important trends, which are seen in the discipline even till today.

1. From normative to empirical studies
2. From ideographic to nomothetic studies
3. From non-ecological to ecological studies

It is interesting to note that even today all the six types of studies co-exist in the discipline of comparative public administration and this co-existence represents the nature of the discipline. A brief reference to these characteristics will be in order.

1. Normative Approach

Traditional public administration focused on the themes of efficiency and economy in administration and stressed that these two goals were the key to administrative performance. To achieve these goals, certain principles of administration were devised that were prescriptive in nature. Some of these principles were: hierarchy, unity of command, span of control, balance between authority and responsibility, specialization, and others. The emphasis in this approach was on the 'should' aspects of administration rather than on the 'is' aspects.

Contemporary studies in comparative public administration continue to be characterized by the normative approach; the whole movement of administrative reforms is a testimony to this orientation. In fact, substantial stress on increasing the capacity to achieve progressive socio-economic goals is the prime feature of administrative systems in the non-western world. That is why the notions of "administrative development" and "development administration" have attained equal significance in the literature on comparative public administration.

2. Empirical Analysis

A large number of contemporary comparative public administrative studies are based on facts collected through observation, experimentations, and field surveys. Such studies have, as their 'locus' the national, state, regional, district, and local levels. There are a large number of studies on the existing nature and behaviour of administrative system, using empirical methodology being conducted in the world, including India. Such studies relate to the administrative response to developments in agricultural, industry, education, health, environment, gender justice, child welfare, care for the differentially able persons, transport, communication, and other areas. Such studies have been sponsored by international organizations, private foundations, national bodies, universities, and NGOs. This is a trend prevailing throughout the world.

3. Ideographic Studies

Ideographic studies are one-nation, one-society, one institution or one sector studies. Even Fred Riggs published, Thailand: Modernization of A Bureaucratic Polity, (1966). Likewise, Michael Crozier's 'The Bureaucratic Phenomenon deals with French bureaucracy and Morroe Berger's Bureaucracy and Society in Modern Egypt is also a one-nation study. Interestingly, these ideographic studies are empirical in their methodology and serve a great purpose in facilitating comparative analysis and even in theory building. In developing nations, there are hundreds of studies focusing on specific institutions or programmes that have significantly contributed to the understanding of administrative reality in cross-institutional and cross-national settings.

4. Nomothetic studies

Fred Riggs uses the term nomothetic for studies that contain generalizations based on empirical research or observations and, which facilitate the process of theory building. Such studies lend a

scientific character to comparative public administration. However, it should not be ignored that even 'ideographic' studies can help in creating hypotheses, which after testing, might lead to the construction of generalizations. Studies by Riggs, Berger, and Crozier, as noted above, though definitely ideographic are also nomothetic in character, for their analysis and conclusions have a great heuristic (helping further research) value.

In sum, both the ideographic and nomothetic approaches are mutually complementary.

5. Non-ecological Studies

It is true that a large number of traditional studies of comparative governments were only discussing the legal, formal, and defined functional aspects of governance, including administrative institutions. The aspect of environmental influence on the administrative system and, in turn, the impact of an administrative system on its environment was ignored or under-emphasized. Most studies on administrative law, personnel administration, and financial administration in most countries, even today, continue to be non-ecological. However, that does not negate their importance and contribution.

6. Ecological Analysis

No doubt, ecological approach is the key to the understanding of comparative public administration. For elevating the ecological approach to its present respectable status, credit goes to Fred W. Riggs, who in his analysis has emphasized the need to look at the relationship between an administrative system and its environment from a dynamic perspective. A large number of comparative studies in a public administration, whether ideographic or nomothetic, have been ecological in orientation. Thus, trend from non-ecological to ecological analysis, undoubtedly is a preferred path in the journey of comparative public administration.

In sum, the nature of comparative studies is currently transformational in character and co-existential in orientation.

1.5 SCOPE OF CPA

The scope of comparative public administration is, as large as that of public administration as such. Hence, any public administrative facet-- structures, processes, behaviour, impact, environment-- when examined from a comparative perspective, would fall within the scope of comparative public administration. A few types of studies in comparative public administration, which would explain its scope, are as under:

1. Cross-institutional Analysis

When two or more institutions or organizations are compared in terms of their structure, functions, processes, environment, and impact; such an analysis is called cross-institutional analysis. For instance, there can be a comparison between the Police Department of Uttar Pradesh with that of Tamil Nadu or there can be a study of the Agriculture Department in all the major states of India. Likewise,

a comparison can be made between the School Education Department with the Higher Education Department of West Bengal in term of efficiency and innovativeness. There can be innumerable and diverse examples in this context. This approach is most evident in traditional comparative studies.

2. Intra-national and Cross-national

Intra-national comparisons relate to the comparison of administrative structures within the same country. This comparison can be of inter-district or inter-division or inter-state levels, but within the same country (for instance, India). However, when any two administrative systems or their subsystems existing in two or more nations are compared, such a comparison will be called 'cross-national' analysis. When we compare the health administrative systems of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, and Bihar, these will be intra-national comparisons, but when India's health administrative system is compared with its counterpart in Bangladesh, it will be called 'cross-national' comparison. Such studies are only few because of massive resources and distinctive methodology required for conducting them.

3. Cross-national but Intra-Cultural

When comparisons are made between the administrative systems of two or more nations belonging to the same 'culture', these are called cross-national but intra-cultural comparisons. It is sometimes difficult to define the term 'culture' in this context. Yet, it is generally assumed that developed nations and developing nations belong to two different cultures. Thus, a study of the status of women in the administrative systems of India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka will be cross-national but intra-cultural, but a similar study involving Germany and Nepal will be cross-national as well as cross-cultural.

4. Cross-national and Cross-cultural

Studies of administrative systems in two or more nations belonging to various levels of socio-economic development will fall in this category. For instance, when comparisons are made between the administrative structures of social justice in the U.S., Argentina, UAE, and Nigeria, such studies will come under the category of cross-cultural (and of course, cross-national) comparative analysis. A culture also demotes the nature of the political system. Thus, the People's Republic of China and Vietnam will fall in a similar culture (both are communist and economically progressive) but a comparison of India with Vietnam or of Cuba with Italy will be cross-cultural.

We should remember that the cultural category of nations can change from time to time.

5. Cross-temporal Studies

Temporal relates to time. Comparative studies, which involve two or more specific distinguishable time-periods, are cross-temporal studies. For instance, district administration in pre-independence and post-independence periods will be considered cross-temporal. A

comparison of environmental administration in the Mauryan period and of independent India will also be cross-temporal.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF CPA

The positive influence and contribution of comparative public administration are summarized as follows:

1. Scientific Study of Public Administration

Robert Dahl in his well-known article entitled 'The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems' published in *Public Administration Review*, (1947) had observed that there cannot be a science of public administration without a comparative analysis. Even James Coleman, an eminent scholar of comparative politics, had observed "You cannot be scientific if you are not comparative." Through comparative analysis of administrative systems, new insights into the administrative reality in cross-national contexts are generated, which can be treated, as hypotheses to be tested empirically in order to draw generalizations that may apply to many or select groups of nations.

2. Inter-disciplinary Orientation

Comparative public administrative studies have several concepts and methodologies from Political Science, Sociology, Economics, Anthropology, Psychology, and other disciplines. This has broadened and enriched the study of public administration to a greater extent. A good number of scholars from different disciplines have contributed to the development of comparative public administration.

3. Strengthening Ecological Orientation

Traditional public administration was confined to the description of administrative structures prevailing in certain western countries like the U.S, Great Britain, and France. The environment of public administration was treated, as 'given'. There was no focus on this issue. Contemporary comparative public administration has boldly advocated for the adoption of an ecological approach to the study of administrative systems. This approach has made administrative analysis more realistic and dynamic.

4. Universalism

Comparative studies in public administration have challenged parochialism in western studies. The non-western world has experienced and nurtured its own administrative reality that has been elaborated by a host of comparative scholars of whom many of them are western. The conceptual transformation of even the western administrative analysis can be attributed to the insights provided by comparative public administration.

5. More Rational Use of Foreign Assistance

Comparative public administration studies have proved to be catalysts to the capacity building of nations receiving aid from international agencies and big powers. The utilization of such assistance has become more prudent, as a result of insights gained from the experiences of different nations.

6. Holistic Approach

‘Grand’ theories of comparative public administration, borrowed from Political Science, Sociology, and Anthropology may not have strengthened scientific analysis of administrative reality, yet they have expanded the vision of public administration by making its scholars and practitioners more aware of the need to look at administrative systems from a ‘holistic’ angle. This ‘systemic’ perspective has augmented the understanding of a variety of administrative systems and their subsystems.

7. Administrative Development

Comparative studies of public administration have stressed improvements in the structures, processes, and behavioural patterns of public administrative systems in diverse settings. This approach has highlighted that the processes of socio-economic and even political development get speeded up through effective administrative practices.

8. Development Administration

A related benefit of the study of comparative public administration has been in the emergence of the concept of ‘development administration,’ which has become a key strategy for holistic transformation of various societies. It is accepted widely that development administration is a goal-oriented and a change-oriented administration and is the main engine of all round progress of a country.

9. Administrative Reforms

Cross-national experiences of administrative reforms, such as of Britain, Zaire, Indonesia, Bolivia, Sweden, and India have inspired the process of goal-directed administrative change throughout the international community. Even international agencies, such as, the UNDP and World Bank, have given a fillip to this movement of administrative reforms. Little wonder, good governance has become a sterling strategy of administrative change in a large number of countries of the non-western world.

10. Responsiveness

An outcome of the systems and ecological approaches in comparative public administration has been the stress on ‘inputs’ from the environment in terms of ‘demands’ and ‘support’. The demands and aspirations of the common man and social groups have taken a central position in the analysis of the governance systems. It is now expected that the outcomes of administrative systems in the form of decisions and actions should be in consonance with their ‘inputs’. This approach has helped in making the administrative system more responsive to people’s needs and aspirations. Moreover, the ‘throughputs’ of an administrative system have made such systems more rational in their approach and functioning.

11. Overcoming False Impressions

In traditional administrative theory, a purely ‘structural’ approach was adopted and hence the non-western countries, not having certain

conventional structures of the west, were considered to be less-developed. The structural-functional approach in comparative public administration has highlighted that there are common functions being performed by administrative systems of most nations. In developing nations, there may not be one- to-one relations between structures and functions, since a large number of administrative structures in such nations are multi-functional in character. This insight has thrown new light on the competence of administrative systems in developing nations.

In sum, the comparative study of public administration has positively influenced the intellectual development of the discipline of public administration and has broadened its structure, processes, roles, and behaviour, as such.

1.7 CONCLUSION

This Unit has discussed the evolution of CPA since post– Second World War time to its current status and its meaning, nature, scope, and significance. It highlights the co-existence of normative studies, empirical studies, ideographic studies, nomothetic studies, non-ecological studies, and ecological studies in the discipline of comparative public administration and this co-existence represents the nature of the discipline. The structures, processes, behaviour, impacts, environment of public administration, when examined from a comparative perspective define the scope of comparative public administration. Finally, CPA contributing to the science of public administration, re-enforcing the Inter-disciplinary and ecological orientation, calling for development administration and administrative development has positively influenced the intellectual development of the discipline of public administration and has broadened its structure, processes, roles, and behaviour, as such.

1.8 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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