

BLOCK 2
APPROACHES TO THE STUDY
OF COMPARATIVE PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION



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UNIT 2 BUREAUCRATIC APPROACH

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Bureaucratic Approach
- 2.3 Conclusion
- 2.4 References and Further Readings

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss essential features of the bureaucratic approach to the study of comparative public administration.

Before the discussion on bureaucratic approach, we will briefly deal with theory, models, and approaches in the study of CPA.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Comparative Public Administration is a sub-system of the broader discipline of Public Administration. Since it is a social science, it cannot have theories that can match the scientific constructs of natural sciences that are a result of empirical (factual) studies. A theory is the consequence of certain tested hypotheses in a particular context with well-defined concepts and definitions. It can describe, as well as predict certain outcomes based on the maxim of cause and effect. Such theories do not generally characterize the study of social sciences, including comparative public administration.

A theory is a model. Again, the term ‘model’ is used in a loose sense in comparative public administration. As eminent scholar Dwight Waldo observes that a model is “simply the conscious attempt to develop and define concepts, or cluster of related concepts, useful in classifying data, describing reality, and /or hypothesizing about it.” Thus, a model: 1. Simplifies concepts 2. Relates various concepts with each other. 3. Classifies data 4. It attempts to create hypotheses concerning possible reality.

A theory is a more sophisticated tool than a ‘model’. While a model contains logical consistency and has analytical utility, it cannot assert the truth or falsity about a described reality. A model helps in studying reality, but it cannot be, as exact as, a theory. And, of course, it does not have predictive competence.

There are two significant examples of models in the study of comparative public administration: the ‘bureaucratic’ model of Max Weber and the ‘prismatic-sala’ model of Fred Riggs. Both are ‘ideal-type’ models which ‘imagine’ what a fully developed administrative system in the ‘developed’ and ‘transitional’ societies’ is likely to be.

The most common conceptual constructs in comparative public administration are ‘approaches’ - which focus on the way an administrative

system can be viewed. An approach is an orientation and a way of looking at a system. There are no testable hypotheses inherent in any approach, though one can create hypotheses on the basis of various relationships among variables that are prominently used in any model.

An approach can help in constructing models which, in turn, can propose hypotheses for testing in order to create a theory. Thus, in the hierarchy of conceptual constructs, in terms of sophistication, 'theory' is at the top, models in the middle, and approaches at the bottom. Nevertheless, an approach can open the gates of ideas, thoughts, and probabilities, which can be used for advancing the conceptual and theoretical basis of a particular object of analysis.

In comparative public administration, there are five eminent approaches and models that have helped in understanding administrative realities in various societies and nations.

1. Bureaucratic System Approach (also known, as Bureaucratic Model)
2. Behavioural Approach
3. Systems Approach
4. Structural-functional Approach
5. Ecological Approach

The above approaches are being given in separate Units. The ecological approach is examined in the unit on Fred W Riggs. This has been done because the Riggsian analysis has borrowed most from this approach.

To begin with, is a discussion on bureaucratic approach.

2.2 BUREAUCRATIC APPROACH

Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German sociologist, who created a series of 'ideal-type' models. More specifically, he was a historical sociologist, who looked at the administrative systems of various nations of the past and logically constructed certain relationships and events pertaining to them.

We have to first understand the concept of 'authority,' as used by Weber. Authority, according to Weber, "is the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." The notion of authority, as given by classical thinkers of Public Administration such as Henri Fayol and Harvey Walker, assumed that it had a legal basis. Thus, a leader, who has legal authority or who is conventionally treated, as the head of a social system possesses the right to get his orders obeyed by his subjects or subordinates. Weber did not subscribe to this viewpoint. He looked at authority from its 'acceptance' viewpoint, meaning thereby that authority will be presumed to exist only when it is 'accepted' by the persons to who command is made. Suppose, they do not comply with the order, then authority does not seem to exist. Thus, authority is a relationship that is determined by the giver as well as the receiver of an order, more so by the latter.

A person will accept an order only when he considers it 'legitimate' or worthy of being accepted and complied with. This legitimacy might depend on any of the following three factors:

1. **Rational Grounds:** Authority based on laws and rationality is called 'Legal-rational' authority. It rests on a belief in legality of normative rules and the right of those who give orders under such rules.
2. **Traditional Grounds:** Authority rests on a belief in the sanctity of traditions and the legitimacy of those who exercise authority under them. This is known as 'Traditional' authority.
3. **Charismatic Authority:** It rests on a faith in the specific and exceptional qualities, a 'charisma' or supernatural qualities of the person, who gives an order. This is called 'Charismatic' authority.

In brief:

- Legal- rational authority depends on laws and rules.
- Traditional authority is rooted in traditions.
- Charismatic authority emerges from the charisma of a leader.

All the three authority systems have their respective administrative systems. These administrative systems are characterized by the features of their respective authority systems. Thus, the administrative staffs of traditional authority is guided through traditions and conventions and lacks clearly defined job-descriptions, a system of hierarchy, regular administrative appointments or promotions, and even training.

An administrative system in a charismatic authority system is run at the will and the wish of a charismatic leader, who determines the decisions concerning recruitment, powers, responsibilities, promotions, and benefits of the members of his staff.

An administrative system in a legal-rational authority is known as 'Bureaucracy', the characteristics of, which are explained in the following section.

The Bureaucratic Model

The bureaucratic model, as postulated by Max Weber, has the following characteristics:

1. Administrators are subject to authority only in their official positions. Only formal authority is considered legitimate, and not the informal authority.
2. All offices in an administrative system are arranged in a hierarchy. These positions are arranged in order of importance of their official authority and responsibility in an ascending and descending order. However, at the top of the bureaucracy, is a non-bureaucrat (an elected representative of the people).
3. Each officer has defined and clear-cut competencies and job-responsibilities.
4. The staff members are appointed through a free selection system.

5. Officers are appointed on the basis of their technical competence determined through systematic rules and procedures.
6. Specialized knowledge is the basis of entry into bureaucracy. It is also the primary source of superiority in the system.
7. Members of bureaucracy are paid in money on the basis of fixed, graded salary scales. Pensions are granted to retired officials, who have served the administrative system for a specific period, laid down in rules and, as per the responsibilities and status of such officials.
8. 'Office' is the primary occupation of the members of bureaucracy. They are not expected or allowed to accept part-time or parallel occupations.
9. There is a career system applicable to the officials of bureaucracy. Advancement or promotion in service is made through seniority and / or achievement or merit.
10. An official is separated from means of organization. S/he cannot use official property or facilities for his personal gain. (This condition is intended to control corruption).
11. All officials are subject to discipline and conduct rules framed for this purpose. (It implies a system of punishment for those violating discipline and conduct rules).
12. Administration is run on the basis of 'rationality,' which ensures maximum results from the invested resources of money, manpower, and time.
13. Compared to the administrative systems of traditional and charismatic authority systems, bureaucracy is the most efficient pattern of administrative organizations.

Weber observed that the system of capitalism has been a catalyst to the evolution and strengthening of bureaucracies. Capitalism is institutionalized through large-scale organizations, which require for their management bureaucratic systems. It should be clear, therefore, that the term 'bureaucracy' is applicable not to government system alone, but to all large scale organizations, including of the private sector. It is interesting to note that Weber considered Vatican (the highest seat of Catholic Church) to be the most developed system of bureaucracy.

Merits of Bureaucracy

As has been noted above, an ideal type bureaucracy is not found in actual or empirical situations. It is an 'imagined' system that postulates a 'fully developed' administrative system. It is a 'utopia'. Nevertheless, most developed countries have tried to model their administrative systems on Weber's bureaucratic model. Likewise, most developing countries also aim to create bureaucratic systems based on the Weberian model. There are no doubt gaps in the ideal-type characterization of bureaucracies and their translation into empirical (actual) reality. However, these gaps do not in any way reduce the value of bureaucratic model of Max Weber.

There has not evolved any other model of bureaucracy that could compete with the Weberian model of bureaucracy. Dwight Waldo had termed it, as the 'paradigm' of public administration. Even the Riggsian prismatic-sala model draws its inspiration from the Weberian typology of authority systems and their administrative organizations. Why is the Weberian model accepted universally, as the most appropriate one in almost all societies and nations? There are a few positive features of bureaucracy that make it worthy of being at a supreme position among all administrative systems.

1. It is governed by laws and rules.
2. It is objective in approach.
3. The bureaucratic system is highly efficient and rational, more than the administrative systems of traditional and charismatic societies.
4. It prescribes a well-organized hierarchy of offices.
5. Specialization of knowledge is given great importance.
6. Specific job responsibilities are determined for all personnel.
7. Compensation system (salary, pensions) is well-organized.
8. Merit is the key factor in personnel administration. It can be improved through training.
9. Discipline and conduct rules are specified.
10. It leads to social levelling, wherein all sections of society get the opportunity to compete for bureaucratic positions.
11. It discourages corruption.

Impact

Almost all countries of the world-developed or developing-have institutionalized the bureaucratic systems in one form or the other. Even countries with monarchies or one party system have adopted the basic features of bureaucratic structures and procedures. There is diversity in the application of these features but that is common to all patterns of governance. Weber's bureaucracy is ideal-type and no real bureaucracy is expected to fully match it in application. It needs to be re-stated that ideal type bureaucracies are not the empirical (real) bureaucracies; they are imagined systems that inspire the development of real-life administrative systems.

There is generally a reference to the weaknesses of bureaucracies in most countries. These weaknesses are the flaws not of the bureaucratic model as such, but of the actual conduct of bureaucratic systems.

2.3 CONCLUSION

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UNIT 3 BEHAVIOURAL APPROACH

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Behavioural Approach
- 3.3 Conclusion
- 3.4 References and Further Readings

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss essential features of the behavioural approach to the study of comparative public administration.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will discuss the behavioural approach with its features, positive impact, and limitations in the study of CPA.

3.2 BEHAVIORAL APPROACH

During the late 1940s, 1950s, and 1960, the behavioral movement had become the dominant approach to the study of societies and organizations. It was concerned essentially with the scientific study of human behaviour in various settings. In political science and public administration, it started, as a protest against the traditional, historical, and normative analysis.

Behavioural approach in public administration has borrowed concepts and methodology from Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, and Political Science.

Features

Behavioural approach in public administration, including comparative public administration, has the following characteristics:

1. Its literature is descriptive and analytical and not prescriptive or normative. Its emphasis is on 'What is?' And not on 'What Should be?'
2. It uses rigorous methods of field research, experimentation, and observation.
3. Most behavioural studies use quantification and mathematization in analysis.
4. It aims at formal theory construction through a proper systematic methodology.
5. It is inter-disciplinary in character.

Behavioural approach has helped the development of comparative public administration. Theory building necessitates the testing of hypotheses in

various organizations, societies, nations, and cultures. There have been several studies of cross-national administrative systems within and between nations. Among eminent scholars, those who have used behavioural approach in comparative public administration are Robert Presthus, Morroe Berger, Michael Crozier, Kuldeep Mathur, and Richard Taub.

Decline

In the late 1960s, there was a movement known as 'Post Behaviouralism' that emerged with great force. It also led to the New Public Administration movement. This new approach emphasized that in public administration, 'normativism' or the issue of 'what should be?' cannot be ignored. Values and ideals are important. Hence, values and facts-both-should be integral parts of the study of public administration, including comparative public administration. Thus, comparative public administration started focusing on tackling problems of social and economic development while using rigorous methodology of research. Accordingly, contemporary studies on comparative public administration are policy-oriented and action-oriented, with a major concern on the issues like poverty, education, health, environment, and gender justice.

Positive Impact

Behavioural approach has made the following positive influences on the study of comparative public administration:

1. It took comparative public administration from the 'normative' to the 'empirical' studies. This point was emphasized in an article published by Fred W Riggs in 1962.
2. It made the comparative study of public administration more scientific than before. Data collection, observation, and quantification constructed a sound basis for the scientific development of the discipline.
3. It introduced the element of 'dynamics' in public administration by focusing on the behaviour of administrators and administrative organizations in cross-national and cross-cultural contexts. Thus, a limited focus on the structure of administrative organizations was replaced by a wider canvas of an understanding of public administration.
4. It promoted awareness of the environmental context of public administration and made comparative studies more ecological in character.
5. It promoted intellectual cooperation among scholars and institutions of public administration across nations.
6. Its impact on the general discipline of public administration was also positive, making it more scientific and broader in perspective.

Limitations

Behavioural approach in comparative public administration could not continue in its original form for long because of the following reasons:

1. With the advent of post-behaviouralism, its more focus on 'facts' alone was challenged, and rightly so.

2. It is difficult to study cross-cultural administrative systems with the help of uniform operational definitions and methodology. There are innumerable differences in the structures, perspectives, and behaviour of administrative organizations in various continents and nations and therefore, comparing them becomes highly problematic.
3. There was a dearth of scholars focusing on comparative public administration in the non-western world, the communist nations, and even in several countries of the west.
4. The financial and technical resources required for conducting cross-national studies were difficult to find, particularly after the disbanding of the Comparative Administration Group in 1970.

Nevertheless, the impact of behavioural movement on the study of comparative administrative studies is indelible, although the nature of behavioural studies has transformed and has amalgamated empirical as well as normative orientations in its fold. Its methodology has become an accepted feature of contemporary studies in comparative public administration.

3.3 CONCLUSION

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UNIT 4 GENERAL SYSTEMS APPROACH

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 General Systems Approach
- 4.3 Conclusion
- 4.4 References and Further Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss essential features of the general systems approach to the study of comparative public administration.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will discuss the features and initiatives of the systems approach in the study of CPA.

4.2 GENERAL SYSTEMS APPROACH

The general systems approach had its roots in the disciplines of Sociology and Anthropology. It focused on the analysis of a society, its parts, and their interdependence. Talcott Parsons through his seminal work, 'The Social System' (1951) deserves the credit for popularising the concept of social system.

The concept of system involves the study of:

1. Parts of a system, which are known, as sub-systems.
2. Interactions and interdependence among various parts.
3. Dynamic interrelationship between a system and its environment.

While examining the interaction between a system and its environment, one examines the influences of the environment on a system. These influences are of two types: 'demands' and 'support'.

1. The 'processing' of the 'inputs' is called 'throughputs,' which integrates the various inputs into the system to make it functional.
2. The response of the system to its environment is through 'outputs,' which takes the form of decisions and actions of a system.
3. Through a system of 'feedback,' output leads to more inputs and this process of input-throughput-output becomes a continuing one.
4. There is a balance among various subsystems and processes within a system and between a system and its environment. It is known as 'dynamic equilibrium'.

Initiatives in Comparative Public Administration

In his perceptive book, 'The Study of Public Administration,' (1955), Dwight

Waldo had suggested that the then emergent approaches to study of social sciences should also be adopted by the scholars of public administration. It was Fred W. Riggs, who in 1957 used the general systems approach in his well-known typology of 'Agraria-Transitia-Industria,' the three types of systems, a reference to, which is made, in the later unit on Fred Riggs. Later, Riggs came out with his eminent typology of 'fused-prismatic-diffracted' societies and their administrative systems that used this approach.

Merits

The general systems approach has the following positive influences on comparative public administration:

1. It focused on the study of 'whole' administrative system, and not just its parts.
2. It argued for the study of interactions and interdependence among various subsystems like personnel administration, financial administration, planning, policy sub-system and decisional sub-system, thus rendering the whole analysis 'dynamic.'
3. It promoted the study of influences of political, economic, social, and cultural environment on an administrative system and the response of the administrative system to such influences through its policies, decisions, and actions. Thus, the systems approach gave a fillip to the ecological approach, a reference to which is made in the unit on Riggs.

Limitations

General systems approach in the study of comparative public administration in its original form had certain limitations:

1. The concepts of 'environment', 'system', 'input', throughput', 'output' 'dynamic equilibrium' etc., were abstract and difficult to be operationalized for research purpose.
2. The approach was too general to be used for empirical studies in the absence of operational definitions and other facets of empirical methodology.
3. It was difficult to identify all possible inputs, throughputs, and outputs, leading to only a selective approach to analysis. The idea of the 'whole' system was undoubtedly attractive, but to translate it into empirical research was difficult.
4. Any study of the whole administrative system would require a good group of scholars, common analytical tools, huge financial resources, and time. In the case of comparative public administrative systems, however, such problems got magnified.

Little wonder, with the decline of 'grand' theories since mid-1960s, the systems approach also lost much of its usage and impact, although it did make students of public administration more aware of the need to be broader or 'holistic,' while analysing administrative systems and of the importance of looking at a system in its proper ecological context.

4.3 CONCLUSION

In this Unit we have discussed about the general systems approach in the study of CPA.

4.4 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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UNIT 5 STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Structural-Functional Approach
- 5.3 Conclusion
- 5.4 References and Further Readings

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss essential features of the structural functional approach to the study of comparative public administration.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The Unit will discuss the structures and functions of a system and their interdependence and influence.

5.2 STRUCTURAL-FUNCTIONAL APPROACH

The structural-functional approach, like the general systems approach is a 'grand' theory. Among scholars, who have used and contributed to its development, are sociologists such as Talcott Parsons, Robert Merton, and Marion Levy, Jr. and political scientists such as Gabriel Almond and David Apter. In comparative public administration, Fred Riggs has been the chief proponent of this approach.

Premise

We have to understand the meaning and implications of the twin terms, 'structure' and 'function' in the context of the structural-functional approach. These terms have a distinct meaning in this approach than what are used in traditional social analysis. In this approach, a social structure is considered as "any pattern of behaviour, which has become the standard feature of a social system." Structures may be of two-types: 'concrete' such as government departments, corporations, bureaus, or they may be 'analytic', i.e., concepts abstracted from concrete reality such as structures of 'authority', 'power', 'control' or 'accountability.' Generally, analytic structures have some concrete referents or bases. Thus, the term 'structure' in the structural-functional approach goes beyond formal structures and carries an additional connotation.

Generally, in traditional administrative analysis, 'function' is a synonym of 'task', like the functions of a chief executive or of President, Prime Minister, Chief Minister, or Chief Secretary. However, in structural-functional analysis, a 'function' has two meanings:

1. It is a pattern of interdependence or relationship between two or more structures.
2. It refers to the consequences of a structure on other structures or on the whole system.

Essentially, 'interdependence' and 'influences' are similar in nature. They denote reciprocity of relationship between and among various structures or sub-structures or between structures and the total system. For instance, we examine in administrative analysis the relationship between financial management and planning or between control and accountability or between authority and responsibility. An analysis of such interdependence brings out the actual dynamics of an administrative system.

Further, we also study under this approach the influence of a structure on the larger administrative system and the impact of the total administrative system on a particular structure. For instance, we would study in this approach the effect of personnel policies on the overall performance of an administrative system and likewise, the influence of important policies and decisions on human resource management.

Multi-functionality

It is important to note that a structure may be 'unifunctional' or 'multifunctional'. A unifunctional structure may perform only one function, like the Central Bureau of Investigation does, while a multifunctional structure like the Prime Minister's Office or even the Police Department may perform several inter-related or distinct functions.

In developed countries, where the level of specialization is relatively high, we might find certain unifunctional structures, while in the developing world, where the degree of specialization is relatively lower, we tend to find structures that are multifunctional. In public administration, a unifunctional administrative system is difficult to envisage, since the bureaucracy is involved, directly or indirectly, in a variety of functions.

Let us take an example of the formal or informal roles of bureaucracy in a developing country in democratic set up:

1. **Political:** Occasionally bureaucrats align with politicians in sharing influence and power, and sometimes, political leaders use administrators to achieve their political goals.
2. **Economic:** An administrative system has the responsibility to regulate and promote an economic system in the domains of agriculture, industry, irrigation, transport etc.
3. **Social:** Bureaucrats have the responsibility of playing an important role in designing policies in the spheres of education, health, gender justice, child welfare etc.
4. **Cultural:** The attitudes and behaviours of administrators influence the development of social attitudes and values in a society and vice versa.
5. **Technological:** An administrative system influences a technological system by determining its scope of operations, assigning its

responsibilities, providing its resources, and preparing technocrats for specific obligations.

Structural-Functional Approach

Herein, an administrative system influences the political, economic, social, cultural, and technological systems, and in turn, is influenced by all of them.

Multi-structurality

In the structural- functional approach, it is postulated that a function may be performed by one structure (which is rare) or by more than one structure. The administrative function is performed not just by bureaucrats but by many other actors of society. For instance, politicians make laws and policies that determine the scope of the administrative system; the economic system provides resources to the administrative system and gives it the responsibility of implementing economic policies; and at the social level; tribes, castes and innumerable socio-cultural groups put pressure on the administrative system to safeguard and promote their specific interests.

Requisites and Pre-requisite Functions

In structural-functional analysis, it is postulated that there are certain 'requisite' functions in a society or organization that ensure their health and continuity, while there are also certain 'prerequisite' functions that are essential for the birth and survival of a social system. Riggs has identified five functional requisites for any society: economic, social, communicational, symbolic, and political. We can assume that any administrative system will have the requisite functions of policy making, decision-making, planning, financial management, human resource management, engagement and participation of citizens etc. Likewise, creation of an administrative organization will need law, manpower, and finances, as prerequisites.

Application

While Gabriel Almond refers to the 'rule-implementation' function of a political system performed through the administrative system, he is conscious of the fact that bureaucracy is also involved in 'rule-making', though not in a formal manner. No law can be made without inputs from administration. David Apter also underlines the importance of administrative system in the modernization process. However, it is Fred Riggs mainly, who has used the structural-functional approach in constructing his models of 'agraria' and 'industria', and 'fused', 'prismatic' and 'diffracted societies.' Perhaps no other comparative administration scholar has gone beyond Riggs in the application of this approach in explaining the cross-national or cross-cultural administrative reality.

Merits of the Approach

Certain merits of the structural-functional approach are as follows:

1. Structural functional approach takes dynamic view of administrative structures and functions.
2. It is 'systemic' in nature, looking at interactions and interrelationships among various structures.

3. It is value-neutral.
4. It emphasizes that certain structures that are found in developed administrative systems may not have their counterparts in developing nations, yet administrative functions are common in both.
5. It points out that the absence of a structure does not mean that certain functions are not being performed. May be they are performed by certain other structures.
6. It convinces that various indigenous structures in non-western nations may be useful in their distinct settings, even though they appear to be 'dysfunctional' from the point of view of western nations.
7. The approach is ecological in character.

Limitations

1. It is too 'grand' an approach to offer operational definitions and researchable concepts.
2. It is difficult to identify all the functions performed by a structure.
3. Likewise, it is almost impossible to identify various structures performing particular functions.
4. Its premises are too general, making it difficult to compare administrative systems across various nations and culture.

Despite the above limitations, the structural functional approach offers a new vision to look at the diversity in the nature, scope, performance, and impact of administrative systems in a comparative context.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This Unit has dealt with the structural-functional approach with its multi-functionality in terms of political, economic, social, cultural, and technological premises; multi-structurality, requisites and pre-requisite functions, applications, and merits and limitations.

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