

Human Resource Development, Public Administration and the Need for Reforms: A Case of Pakistan's Public Sector

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Abstract

Keeping in view the complexity of work environment in the changing organizational environment caused by advancement in technology on the one hand and the diverse needs of the a rapidly growing population on the other hand, the role of training and development becomes more stark in terms of quality and quantity both. Training and development as an HR activity enables organization members to capture knowledge and skills required for their effective performance. It also helps them to adapt to changing circumstance and to shoulder new responsibilities. Needless to say, this recognition of training by the government and management experts in the country, the approach toward this concept in the public sector service appears to be of mere waste and ruse. This paper is supposed to look into the concept of manpower training and development in the quality of service in the public sector of Pakistan so as to have some in-depth understanding of the problems being faced. The study will be recommending some recommendations as to how improvement could be affected.

Key Words: Administration, human resource development, reforms, bureaucracy.

Introduction

The field of development administration got attention in the 1950 due to the practical needs of administrators and academics who felt the demands for action and explanation in the face of concrete phenomena and operational necessities (Hess, 1995). The phenomenon of globalization of the world economy has necessitated the transformation of societies through the process of development. The traditional approach to development was questioned and the need for a more holistic approach to development was severely felt (Stiglitz, 1998). With this in mind, the conceptualization of development was broadened. From mere infrastructural development it transitioned to development in all aspects. Development, is now, a deliberate effort to build or strengthen institutions, with the end to enable them to manage public services and design good policies (Natsios, 2010). To affect all these, the role of state has got more intensified in terms of both quality and quantity. If state wants to successfully dispense away with this responsibility, the development of administration is essential for it

ensures the equitable distribution of public goods and incentives and sustains the economic institutions--the prime tasks of welfare regimes.

Therefore, it is of prime importance to understand the politics--as development seen as a political process and not a technical one. This requires the intervention of a legitimate state with will and capacity to bring it about--which determine how development administration, HR development, and public sector reforms are brought about or hindered.

Administration has a very critical function of facilitating and supporting all the organs of any organization to ensure the implementation of policies in letter and spirit. According to organizational model organizational mental products or outputs are the results of bargaining and interactions among different players and stakeholders. These players have different objectives and interests that influence the overall organizational milieu in different degrees. Therefore, one has to be cautious about jumping at the conclusion that organizational outputs are only caused by calculated decisions by management. Effective administration is the one that helps to minimize the conflict and engender cooperation among the players. However, effective administration can only be manned with experienced and trained personnel which in turn are the output of training institutes in a country.

The Role of Training Institute

The importance of training institutes has widely been acclaimed given the growing complexity of organization environment in the presence of advancement in technology and the relative importance of stakeholders/ customer. These institutes are supposed to help organizational HR assets to have the required potential for performing their assigned jobs effectively, enable them to adapt to the fluid organizational conditions and betterly dispense away their new responsibilities (Jones, George, & Hill, 2003). In case of Pakistan this need was realized in the very early years of the country life. The system in vogue is primary a colonial legacy and has been questioned largely. Therefore, it was realized that the administrative system could not meet the expectations of the new nation. The need for “this fundamental reforms in the administrative machinery of Pakistan was expressed in the First Five Year Plan (1955-60)” (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2006, p. 121).

To affect that on the desired lines training of the administrators was thought highly imperative. And in this way the need for pre-entry and in-service training of civil servants and public administration education was recognized. In this regard the United States extended technical assistance in setting up a number of training institutes for education in Public Administration. And by the mid of 1960s some 06 training institutions were fully operational for public administration education.

During this helping process, American professors, consultants, and some American educated Pakistani administrators and academicians got involved and through this way American style of affecting public administration attracted the attentions of managers

in these institutions. This influence can be gauged from the fact that in the 1960s, “public administration was the major category in the technical assistance program of the United States, which aimed at improving the administrative capability of developing countries” (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2006, p. 123).

However, despite the proliferation of universities offering degrees in Public Administration and the establishment of various training institutes for in-job trainings, the service delivery of public sector is as poor as it was. This connotes that despite the recognition and importance of training institutes and public expenses on these institutes, and the claims by the managements of these institutes in their various reports, the experience of manpower training and development in the public sector of Pakistan happens to be more of ruse and waste. Therefore, there is a need to examine the quality of public service affected by the manpower training and development and to understand the issues that are faced.

Bureaucracy in the Change Process

Pakistan has acquired a bureaucratic legacy from the Britain and has since remained a bureaucratic polity. “Both civil and military bureaucracy occupies most powerful position in the political system of Pakistan. Bureaucratic elites, military and civil, have directly and indirectly ruled Pakistan throughout its history as an independent nation” (Jadoon & Jabeen, 2006, p. 133). Countries where bureaucracies rule are subject to stern regulation in knowledge creation and dissemination and do not encourage intellectual endeavors outside state control. It has been observed that academicians and universities have very strong opposing point of view vis-à-vis the bureaucracy as the latter enjoys authoritarian psyche. In this milieu the generally perception is that the authoritarian nature of the country bureaucracy is considered the main reason of hindrance of bringing any positive change process in the status quo.

The Bureaucratic Politics Model (BPM), defined by Allison (1969), is considered one of most referred to decision-making perspectives and has great relevance with change process. The focus of the model, in terms of public sector, can be paraphrased as whatever we see in the bureaucracy is the consequence of give and take and interactions of interests amongst the interest groups with different degree of influence. Thus change can only be affected either if one group interest dominates the rest or in ideal case if there happens to be some congruence among the interest group.

In this model the bone of contention is: pursuing narrow self-interest by the bureaucratic agents which determines the directions of the national policy formulation. The result is a vast variation among public policies from state to state. Whatever the case may be, the output is definite: the more the number of the players with efforts to maximize their self-interest the more directionless national policy seems to be. From this one can conclude that formulation of any national policy seems to be a distant reality.

The Politics of the Bureaucracy

In such situation the critical element to understand is to the dimensions of national politics and its implications for overall development of the nations. To further understand the politics of bureaucracy one has to recognize the existence of *two distinct but related levels*. And according to Lindner and Rittberger (2003) here politics and maneuvering over policy formulation occurs. These levels are:

- a) The first level is concerned with the creation of the institutions (*rules of the game*); and
- b) The second is concerned with the operation (*games within the rules*).

(a) The first level is the formulation of rules. These rules are formally expressed in office manuals that are fundamental for any decision from minor to major. However, the rules involve much more than the formal office manuals. There exists wider “*informal* institutional aspects expressed in the culture, political culture and ideology which can have a critical part to play in maintaining, preventing or undermining the consensus and adherence to the formal rules” (Leftwich, 2008, p. 7). For example CSS culture, PCS culture, rank culture, union culture, etc. Researchers (Helmke & Levitsky, 2004; Lauth, 2000) consider them part of the rules of the game. It is to be remembered and one has to recognize that it this level which, in essence, establishes the ‘regime’ type: here the “basic processes are constituted which pertain to the formation, maintenance and enforcement of the institutions and standard procedures for conducting politics...administrative and judicial institutions which will facilitate growth and development” (Leftwich, 2008, p. 9). It is here that desired change is affected. By analyzing bureaucracy in Pakistan it seems to be happy with the status quo as it protects their interest of more perks and privileges with fewer responsibilities. After all what is the need of shaking it and bringing change?

(b) *Games within the rules*: This occurs on daily basis in diverse debates and dialogues over the issue of policy as theory and policy as practice (Leftwich, 2008). This sort of bureaucratic politics is predictable in outcomes and does not cause major structure change. This sort of politics can be observed in the red-tapism and the bureaucracy seems to cherish it.

Pakistani bureaucracy has many salient features. One among them is its unwanted preference for generalists (Kennedy, 1987). The perks and privileges that this cadre (includes Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) and the District Management Group (DMG) has been enjoying since long are the driving forces that lend the required blood for its sustenance. This cadre, in majority cases, occupies top positions in the state machinery at both provincial and federal levels and other state-owned corporations. This issue of the role of professional versus generalists had a burning issue and has come under discussion in the First Five Year Plan. The decision came out of this debate was in favour of the generalists and it was decided not to eliminate the generalists. However, a glimpse of change was observed when it was also decided to give due importance to the professionals. The generalists, therefore, were successful in retaining their

preeminent positions till today. On the other hand the professionals have been found less active in snatching any prominent position in the bureaucracy. The general psyche in this regard is that the generalists and the elitists bureaucracy in the top policy in no way would allow any entity in the federal as well as in provincial secretariats to change the rule of the game and let the professionals to have a tool-oriented and professional discipline of Public Administration. It was because of such reasons that discipline of Public Administration has never been in good books of the bureaucracy.

The Politics of Development

Development by analysis is a transformative process (Stiglitz, 1998). And “*the politics of development* is about changing not only *how* resources are used, produced and distributed, but also about how decisions are taken about such changes and about the politics which sustain, implement and extend them” (Leftwich, 2008, p. 10). Leftwich (2008) sums up the political nature of development in two simple propositions:

- “*When people change the way they use, produce and distribute resources, they also change their (social and political) relations – relations of power - with each other*”; and
- “*When people change their political and social (power) relations with each other, they usually change the way they use, produce and distribute resources*”.

The problem in development countries is the absence of any established rules of the game which encourage making developmental choices and formulating developmental strategies. Furthermore, the existing institutions do not promote growth and development (Leftwich, 2008).

What Determines Players’ Interests?

While looking into the difference between what the bureaucratic system was supposed to do and what actually it has been doing since long, one finds an array of disturbing, and at the same time interesting, questions like “what happened”; “why it happened”; and “how it happened”. However, if one wants to give one sentence answer to these questions it can be summarized that it is story of good intentions—accountability and transparency—gone bad. The consequences of these counter-bureaucratic trends explain a great deal about why bureaucracy in Pakistan has been designed the way it is. This journey of compliance and bureaucracy "gone bad" is neither a single person’s effort nor a one-time act. There are a number of players like persons involved, culture, and power structure relationship and the time the journey has taken. They can be summarized below:

- ▶ Individual attributes of players
 - Personal goals (including unassociated political considerations)
 - Personalities
 - Views of the “national interest”

- ▶ Parochialism – “where you stand depends on where you sit”
 - Concern for welfare/perpetuation of bureau colors goals
- ▶ Sense of service to superiors and charges

It will not be out of place to mention Wilson (1989) four types of bureaucracy:

- **Procedural organization:** In these organizations managers observe only the process and are not concerned with the result or outcome of the process.
- **Craft organizations:** In these organizations the activities of the employees are hard to observe but their outcomes are relatively easy to evaluate. Military Accounts Department is a good example of such organizations which this paper addresses.
- **Coping organizations:** In these organizations the outcomes cannot be observed.
- **Production agencies:** In these organizations there are observable outputs and routine work processes, laws, and regulations.

The story of Pakistani bureaucracy is a history of worse routinization. There hardly seems any development within its rank and file. One can observe diverse forms printed some 50 years back, with the same obsolete working procedure. It appears to be a marvelous example of apprenticeship. The input of officer esp. the CSS cadre can hardly be observed. The lower and lower middle level operators are the de facto decision makers. The higher level bureaucracy is simply a stamp body. The concept of organizational development neither peeped into nor there seems any sign of such change intrusion. It is important to explore how this obsolete system persists? Why routinization is preferred over change/organizational development? It may be called a story of "good intentions" that benefit less and cost the public exchequer more.

Challenges and Opportunities

Public administration is, no doubt tasked with a huge responsibility. Public sector universities as well as private sector universities have been offering diverse programs in public administration. At the same time Govt. has been encouraging scholars for research in the field of public administration. Public administration in Pakistan is recognized as a management discipline. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan treats Public Administration under the category of management sciences.

The greatest challenge to the public administration today, is the restoration of not only diminishing but almost the diminished trust of the common man on its capacity to deliver. This erosion of trust has caused a serious dint in the public-state relationship. The rising militancy, regionalism, sectarianism, unrest within the rank and file of the public are the products of failure of state machinery and public administration is soul of the state machinery. The role of the universities prior to the job stage and training institutes during the job has to be quantitatively and qualitatively strengthened.

The second challenge is the weak moral education and no emphasis on nationalism and state-hoodship. No doubt technical education is essential, however, until and unless it is

controlled and directed by the moral education, consequences have always been found disastrous.

The third challenge is the existence of power syndrome. The common adage of power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely happens to be very true. Power thirst is a very common phenomenon within the human psyche. But when one gets unlimited power, its judicious use becomes the test of one's technical and moral nerves. The absence of any control mechanism causes serious damage to the person's integrity, trust, honesty and service delivery responsibility.

The country has a history of experimentations with the devolution plan under which it is generally presumed that power will be shifted to the newly established either basic democracies or district governments and local bodies provides a great opportunity for growth of Public Administration as an academic and professional discipline. Looking into the need of expert public administration experts, one can easily conclude that these experts with the required skill of management and are fully educated to safeguard and protect the democratic values can provide the new local government institutions with an unprecedented human capital needed for the successful implementation of the devolution plan. Such a blend of managerial skills and sensitivity to public interest could only be provided if training institutes are strong and up-to the mark for provision of the desired training.

The rising non-profit sector in Pakistan also provides tremendous opportunity for growth and demand of trained personnel. Universities and training institutes are required to design programs which may prepare their graduates for this expanding sector. Once the public sector universities and training institutes create their niche in the job market, private sector universities will definitely respond and will most likely initiate them. To reach this stage, the government has to play its role by recognizing and appreciating the importance of public training.

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