

# IMPORTANCE AND ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MODERN STATE:

## Importance of Public Administration

The study of administration assumed significance, according to Woodrow Wilson, as a consequence to the increasing complexities of society, growing functions of state and growth of governments on democratic lines. This exhaustive list of functions made to think as to 'how' and in what 'directions' these functions should be effectively performed. To this Wilson suggested that there was a need to reform the government in the administrative field. As per Wilson, the object of administrative study is to discover what government can properly and successfully do and how it can do these things with utmost efficiency and the least possible cost either of money or of energy.

The importance of public administration as a specialized subject can be attributed to the following reasons:

1. One of the important reasons is the practical concern that the government today has to work towards the public interest. The first and foremost objective of public administration is to efficiently deliver public services. In this context, Wilson's definition of the subject as efficiency promoting and pragmatic field was the first explicitly articulated statement on the importance of a separate discipline of public administration. During the first half of the preceding century, a number of countries have appointed committees to look into the problems of administration and recommended suitable administrative machinery to respond to diverse public needs. The Haldane Committee Report (1919) in Britain; the President's Committee on Administrative Management (1937) in the United States;
2. Administration is looked at, in the social science perspective, as a cooperative and social activity. Hence the concern of academic inquiry would be to understand the impact of government policies and operations on society. What kind of society do the policies envisage? To what extent administrative action is non-discriminatory? How is public administration functioning and what are the immediate and long term effects of governmental action on the social structure, the economy and polity?; etc. are questions requiring careful analysis. From the social science perspective, public administration, as a discipline, has to draw on a variety of sister disciplines such as History, Sociology, Economics, Geography, Philosophy, Psychology, etc., with the objective to explain and not just to prescribe.
3. Public administration has a special status in the developing countries. Many of these countries, after independence from the colonial rule have stressed upon speedy socio – economic development. Obviously, these countries have to rely on government for speedy development. The latter requires a public administration to be organized and effectively operated for increasing productivity quickly. Likewise, social welfare activities have to be effectively executed. These aspects have given birth to the new sub-discipline of development administration. The emergence of development administration is indicative of a felt need for a body of knowledge about how to study the third world administration and at the same time to bring about speedy socio-economic development with government's intervention. Development administration has therefore, emerged as a sub-

discipline to serve the cause of development.

4. Public administration, as witnessed holds a place of significance in the lives of people. It touches them at every step. For most of their needs, the citizens depend upon public administration. In view of the important role of public administration in the lives of people, the citizens of a country cannot ignore. Therefore, its teaching should become a part of the curriculum of educational institutions. People must get to know about the structure of government, the activities it undertakes and the manner in which these are actually performed. The study of public administration will contribute to the realization of the values of citizenship.

### **Importance of Public Administration as an Activity**

The contemporary age, which has witnessed the emergence of 'Administrative State', public administration has become an essential part of society and a dominant factor. The functions it is called upon to perform, have expanded in scope and nature, and what is more, are continually increasing. Many of them are more positive in nature because they care for the essential requirements of human life, be it health, education, recreation, sanitation, social security or others. It is, therefore, a creative factor, with its motto being 'human welfare'.

These functions are over and above its regulatory functions. The viewpoints of eminent scholars, as referred to below, amply reflect the significance of public administration.

**Woodrow Wilson:** "Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action, it is the executive, the operative and the most visible side of the government.

**Brooke Adams:** "Administration is an important human faculty because its chief function is to facilitate social change and to cushion the stock of social revolution".

**W.B. Donham:** 'If our civilization fails, it will be mainly because of breakdown of administration'.

**Paul H. Appleby:** 'Administration is the basis of government. No government can exist without administration. Without administration government would be a discussion club, if indeed, it could exist at all'.

### **The role of public administration in various facets is noted below:**

**Basis of the Government:** A Government can exist without a legislature or an independent judiciary. But no Government can exist without administration.

**An instrument for providing services:** Public administration mainly concerned with the performance of various activities performed by government in the public interest. Felix A. Nigro aptly remarks, "The real core of administration is the basic service which is performed for the public".

**An instrument for implementing policies:** Modern governments go a long way in formulating and adopting sound policies laws and regulations. It should not be forgotten that such policies, laws, etc. are not merely printed papers. Such paper declarations of intent are translated into reality by public administration thus converting words into action and form into substance.

**A stabilizing force in society:** Public administration is a major force for bringing stability in society. It has been observed that though government often changes, but violent change is

seldom experienced by administration. An element of continuity between the old and the new orders are provided by public administration. It does not hold true only of constitutional changes of government in democratic countries, but is also reflected when there is revolutionary changes in the form and character of government.

**An instrument of social change and economic development:** Public administration's role as a change agent is particularly crucial in developing nations. It is expected of the state at present to work for accelerating socio-economic change and not to be a passive agency to maintain the status quo.

**Technical Character:** The present day government is expected to provide various services to its population. The increase in the number of functions undertaken by the government require highly specialized, professional and technical, services. Modern public administration usually represents a galaxy of all of a nation's occupations.

According to Gerald Caiden public administration has assumed the following crucial roles in contemporary modern society:

- Preservation of polity;
- Maintenance of stability and order;
- Institutionalization of Socio-Economic changes;
- Management of large scale commercial services;
- Ensuring growth and economic development;
- Protection of the weaker sections of society;
- Formation of public opinion; and
- Influencing Public policies.

**The points mentioned below summarise the reasons for the growing importance of public administration:**

**• Emergence of Welfare and Democratic state**

Emergence of welfare and democratic state has led to an increase in the activities of public administration compared to that of the laissez-faire state. The state has to now serve all sections of people in the society. This amount to enhanced responsibilities of public administration. Public administration is also to regulate and control private economic enterprises to meet the objectives of the state.

**• Industrial Revolution**

The industrial revolution gave rise to socio-economic problems making the government to assume new roles and responsibilities such as protection and promotion of the rights of workers in industrial establishments, etc. Consequently, the state has enacted a number of Industrial and Labour laws and it is imperative for public administration to implement such laws in order to meet the requirements of labour welfare.

**• Scientific and Technological Development**

Scientific and technological developments have brought about welcome additions in infrastructure such as power, transport and communication system. The invention of telephone, telegraph and

other mechanical devices such as typewriter, tele-printer, and calculators, photocopying machines, computers, fax and the electronic mail has brought revolutionary changes in office administration. All these have made possible 'big government' and 'large scale administration'. Besides changing the ethos and character of public administration, the revolution in information and communication technologies have contributed to improved delivery of services to people.

### • **Economic Planning**

Centralized economic planning has been pursued in many developing countries as a method for socio-economic development. It requires a large number of experts and elaborate administrative machinery for plan formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

Apart from the reasons cited the rapid growth of population, modern warfare, increase in natural and manmade disasters, decline in social harmony, increase in violence due to conflicts, communal riots, ethnic wars, terrorism, etc. have increased the importance of public administration.

It goes without saying that public administration is not only the operative but also the most obvious part of the government. It is government in action and occupies a significant place not merely as an instrument of governance but also as an important mechanism for preserving and promoting the welfare of community. It has substantive impact upon the life of the people. It is a vital process charged with implementation of pre-determined, welfare oriented, and developmental objectives.

### **DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

L.D. White observes that although public administration varies in form and objects, and although the administration of public and private affairs differs at many points, there is an underlying similarity, if no identity. As an integral aspect of such generic concept, public administration could be related to that type of administration, which operates within a specific ecological setting. It is a means to carry out the policy decisions made by political executive.

To be seen along with it is the 'Public' aspect of Public administration, which attributes a special character and focus to it. 'Public' can be looked at formally to mean 'government'. So, public administration is government administration, government in action, or a socio-economic and politico-administrative confluence, the focus being especially on public bureaucracy.

Encyclopaedia Britannica defines public administration as 'the application of a policy of a state through its government.' Public Administration, therefore, refers to that part of administration, which pertains to the administrative activities of the government.

### **Definitions of Public Administration provided by various scholars.**

#### **Woodrow Wilson**

Public administration is the detailed and systematic application of law. Every particular application of law is an act of administration.

#### **L.D. White**

"Public administration consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfilment or enforcement of public policy". As per White, this definition covers a multitude of particular operations in many fields the delivery of a letter, the sale of public land, the negotiation of a treaty, the award of compensation to an injured workman, the quarantine of a sick child, the removal of litter from a park, manufacturing uranium 235, and licensing the use of atomic energy. It includes military as well as civil affairs, much of the work of courts, and all the special

fields of government activity-police, education, health, construction of public works, conservation, social security, and many others. The conduct of public affairs in advanced civilisations requires the employment of almost every profession and skill-engineering, law, medicine, and teaching; the crafts, the technical specialties, the office skills, and many others.

### **Percy Mc Queen**

Public administration is related to the operations of government whether local or central.

### **Luther Gullick**

Public administration is that part of the science of administration, which has to do with the government; it concerns itself primarily with the executive branch where the work of the government is done; though there are obviously problems also in connection with the legislative and judicial branches.

### **J.M Pfiffner**

“Administration consists of getting the work of government done by coordinating the efforts of people so that they can work together to accomplish their set tasks”.

### **M. Ruthanaswami**

“When administration has to do with the affairs of a state or minor political institutions like the municipal or country council (district board), it is called public administration. All the acts of the officials of a government, from the peon in a remote office to the head of a state in the capital, constitute public administration.”

### **H.A. Simon, D.W. Smithburg and V.A. Thompson**

“By Public Administration is meant, in common usage, the activities of the executive branches of national, state and local governments, government corporations and certain other agencies of a specialized character. Specifically excluded are judicial and legislative agencies within the government and non-governmental administration.” Corson and Harris “Public administration ... is the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realised.”

### **Dwight Waldo**

“Public administration is the art and science of management as applied to the affairs of State.”

### **M.E. Dimock**

“Public Administration is concerned with ‘what’ and ‘how’ of the government. The ‘what’ is the subject matter, the technical knowledge of a field, which enables the administrator to perform his tasks. The ‘how’ is the technique of management, the principles according to which co-operative programmes are carried through to success. Each is indispensable, together they form the synthesis called administration”.

### **Nicholas Henry**

“Public Administration is a broad-ranging and amorphous combination of theory and practice; its purpose is to promote a superior understanding of government and its relationship with the society, it governs, as well as to encourage public policies more responsive to social needs and to institute managerial practices attuned to effectiveness, efficiency and the deeper human requisites of the citizenry”.

The traditional definitions of Public Administration, which are given above reflect the view that the Public Administration is only involved in carrying out the policies and programmes of the government. It reflect that it has no role in policy making and also locates the administration in the executive branch but today the term public administration is used in a broader sense that it is

not only involved in carrying out the programmes of the government, but it also plays an important role in policy formulation and covers the three branches of the government. In this context, we may reflect on the definition offered by F.A. Nigro and L.G. Nigro. According to them Public Administration:

In this context we can reflect the definition offered by F.A. Nigro and L.G. Nigro. According to them Public Administration:

- is co-operative group effort in a public setting;
- covers all three branches-executive, legislative, and judicial, and their inter-relationships;
- has an important role in the formulation of public policy and is thus a part of the political process;
- is different in significant ways from private administration; and
- is closely associated with numerous private groups and individuals in providing services to the community”.

In sum, public administration:

- is the non-political public bureaucracy operating in a political system;
- deals with the ends of the State, the sovereign will, the public interests and laws;
- is the business side of government and as such concerned with policy execution, but it is also concerned with policy-making;
- covers all three branches of government, although it tends to be concentrated in the executive branch;
- provides regulatory and service functions to the people in order to attain good life;
- differs significantly from private administration, especially in its emphasis on the public; and
- is interdisciplinary in nature as it draws upon other social sciences like political science, economics and sociology.