

Public Personnel Administration

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ABSTRACT: Public personnel administration, which is a significant aspect of public administration in the modern state, is rightly described by Herman Finer, a renowned British social scientist, as the sovereign factor in public administration. It is also called by such names as manpower management, personnel management, labour welfare management, and so on. The term personnel administration is known to have a wider connotation as it deals with numerous elements as classification is civil servants, recruitment, training, promotion, compensation, discipline and retirement benefits of the personnel in the government. All these aspects constitute the subject – subject of the article.

Keywords: public personnel administration, sovereign factor, integral component manpower, labour welfare, and wider connotation.

I. Introduction

Public personnel administration which is viewed as the sovereign factor in public administration in the modern state is also called by various names and has a wider connotation that will be examined in this article.

II. Purpose Of The Article

The purpose of this article is to:

- a. Define and examine what public personnel administration is;
- b. Show its distinct characteristic features;
- c. Explain the crucial role of civil service in developing societies; and
- d. Outline briefly the various fields of public personnel administration in public administration.

III. Role Of Civil Services In Developing Societies

Here the meanings, distinct features and role of civil services in developing societies will be examined.

3.1 General observations

Public personnel administration is an important aspect of public administration in the modern state. Herman Finer, a renowned British social scientists, rightly describes that personnel is the sovereign factor in public administration. Personnel administration, it is observed, is also called by such names as personnel management, manpower management, labour welfare management, and so on. The term personnel administration, however, has a wider connotation as it deals with broader elements including classification; recruitment; training; promotion; compensation; discipline; and retirement benefits of the personnel in the government. But the questions are:

What then is meant by public personnel administration?

What are its distinct characteristic features?

What is the role of civil service in developing societies?

3.1.1 Meanings

The under mentioned statements bring out the meaning of the civil service in any democratic society either developed or developing.

British Tomlin Commission: 1929 – 31 “Civil service includes those servants of the crown not being the holders of political or judicial offices who are employed in a civil capacity and whose remuneration is wholly and directly paid out of the monies voted by the parliament.”

Encyclopedia of Britannica: “Civil service is a body of professional, full time officials employed in the civil affairs of a state in a non – political capacity.”

Herman Finer: “Civil service is a professional body of officials, permanent, paid and skilled.”

E. N. Gladden: “The requirements of the civil service are that it shall be impartially selected, administratively competent, politically neutral, and imbued with the spirit of service to the community.”

3.1.2 Distinct characteristic features

Distinct features which characterize the civil services in developing societies are as follows:

3.1.2.1 Professional and permanent institutions:

- a. It is a body of professional administrators as opposed to amateur politicians.
- b. impartial selection, that is, its members are appointed by an open competition as against politicians who are elected on party lines.
- c. They are paid regularly by the state and do not have the incentive of private profit while in civil service.
- d. It is a career service in the sense that its members take up public service as lifetime occupation.
- e. Its members are skilled in the sense that they become experts in their profession due to continuous training and work experience.
- f. It is organized in the principle in hierarchy in which, a chain of command stretches in a pyramid fashion from the lowest office to the highest.
- g. Neutrality, that is, its members serves different political regimes impartially
- h. Anonymity, that is, it works without praise or blame.

3.1.2.2 Various organs of government

All the foregoing arguments are supported by W. Fox and Ivan H. Meyer [1995:20] who maintain that the civil service comprises various organs of government, such as state department, parastatal institutions, and government corporations and enterprises which are charged with facilitating and carrying out legislation, public policy and government decisions. Sometimes used exclusively in respect of the civilian employees

3.1.3 Typologies of bureaucracy

E. M. Max in his book *The Administrative State* gave a *four – fold classification of bureaucracy*, namely, guardian, caste, patronage and merit.

- a. **Guardian bureaucracy:** under this system, the civil servant is considered as the guardian (custodian) of justice and welfare of the community (common good). He is selected on the basis of his education and then trained in right conduct. Marx gave two examples of such bureaucracy, that is, ancient Chinese bureaucracy, and the Prussian bureaucracy during seventh and eighteenth century.
- b. **Caste bureaucracy:** according the Marx, such a bureaucracy “arises from the class connection of those in the controlling positions. “Under this system, persons belonging to only the upper castes and classes become the civil servants. For example, only Brahmins and Kshatriya were appointed to administrative posts in ancient India. Further, Marx says that such a bureaucracy also manifests in another way by “linking the qualifications for the higher posts with arrangements that amount to class preference.” For example, the members of British Civil Service till recently, were drawn from the graduates of the universities of Cambridge and Oxford, who belonged to the rich class (aristocratic families) Willoughby described it as the aristocratic personnel system”
- c. **Patronage bureaucracy:** under this system, recruitment to civil service is based in personal favour or political reward. This type is also known as the ‘spoils system’. The traditional home of this system has been the USA. It also prevailed in England till the end of first half of the 19th century.
- d. **Merit bureaucracy:** this is the most widely prevalent type of civil service which has replaced the patronage system. Under this system, the civil servants are selected and appointed on the basis of their merit only. Government jobs are thrown open to talent. In the words of Marx, “The merit bureaucracy is governed by objective standards, specifically by the principle of admission, on the basis of prescribed qualifications as attested by the outcome of a written examination. Thus, by winning an appointment, the successful candidates do not incur a personal debt to any sponsor or patron.”

The elements of the merit system are: *recruitment by open competitive examinations; life tenure of office, that is, tenure during good behaviour; in-service training programmes; position classification; rational approach to pay and allowances; promotion based on merit principles, that is, qualifications and achievements; and retirement programmes.*

3.2 Major elements of personnel administration

Public personnel administration has a wider connotation as it deals with such major elements as classification; recruitments; training; promotion; compensation; discipline; and retirement benefits. Each of these elements is briefly outlined as follows

3.2.1 Classifications

A proper and systematic classification of personnel in government is very essential for the management of civil service in the modern state. W. F. Willoughby said “classification and standardization of public employment constitutes, indeed, the starting point or the basis upon which the whole personnel structure must rest.”

Herman Finer said, “upon proper classification depends the efficiency or recruitment, the possibility of creating a rational promotional system, and the equitable treatment of people working in different departments.”

Two different systems of classification in the world exist. They are – position classification and rank classification. The USA, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines, Canada, and soon have adopted the stem of position classification, while UK, France, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Laos, Germany and soon have adopted the system of rank classification.

3.2.1.1 Position classification

This system of classification is also known as the duties classification. It involves the grouping of positions on the basis of duties, responsibilities, and qualifications. In other words, a position is classified in accordance with the nature of the job rather than the person holding the position.

To explain it further, position or post is the lowest/basic unit in this system of classification. A position connotes a set of duties and responsibilities assigned to an employee. A distinction is made between a position and the incumbent of the position. The position at any given time, may be occupied or vacant, and is immaterial for the purpose of classification. Further, an employee’s status and salary depends on his duties and responsibilities.

A number of similar positions put together form a class. In the words of Glenn Stahl, a class is a group of positions, sufficiently alike in respect to their duties and responsibilities, to justify common treatment in various employment processes. Thus, a class is a group of positions/posts which have identical duties and responsibilities, with similar levels of difficulty. All positions which are covered in a class have the same qualification requirements and pay scales. Therefore, Glenn Stahl says if positions are the raw material of classification, the class is the operating unit.

A class specification is prepared for each class of positions. Generally, it specifies these factors, namely, title of the class; description of duties and responsibilities; examples of work to be performed, or typical tasks; description of minimum qualifications; scales of pay; and line of promotion.

Glenn Stahl mentions the following four steps in the development of positions classifications, namely,

- analysis and recording the duties and other distinctive characteristics of the positions to be classified (job analysis and description);
- grouping the positions into classes on the bases of their similarities;
- writing such standards or specification for each class of positions as will indicate its character, define its boundaries, and serve as a guide in allocating individual positions to the class and in recruitment and examinations; and
- installation by allocating individual positions to the classes thus described

Advantages of position classification

The advantages of the system of position classification are:

- It provides for a high degree of specialization. Hence, it is suitable for specialist services like engineering, geological, and so on.
- It upholds the principle of equal work. This is due to the act that the employees in this system are paid according to the difficulty and responsibility of their job.
- It defines the contents of any job in detail. Hence, the performance appraisal of an employee can be objective and rational.
- It is conducive to the formulation of scientific standards on which various aspects of personnel administration like recruitment, training, promotion, manpower planning, career development can totality of civil service
- There is a match between the requirements of a job and the qualifications of the incumbent.
- It facilitates lateral entry into the government service from the private sector.
- It puts an end to discriminations in service matters on political personnel considerations. This is because, all the employees of a class are treated similarly
- It facilitates the adoption of uniform nomenclatures.

Disadvantages of system of position classification

The disadvantages of the system of position of classification are:

- It brings an element of rigidity in personnel administration. Thus, it hinders horizontal and vertical mobility.
- It is a detailed system of classification having many classes. Hence, its preparation consumes more time and money
- The classification plan under this system tends to get outdated in a short period. Hence, it has to be revised continuously to keep it updated.
- It makes the employees feel insecure about his status and compensation. Hence, there is a constant pressure from the employees to seek more favourable job descriptions for themselves, to upgrade their positions.
- It is not suitable for developing societies undergoing speedy socio-economic transformation. This is because, the duties and responsibilities of many officials like District Collector in India, cannot be defined precisely.
- It is difficult to administer as it requires various types of sophisticated technical skills.

3.2.1.2 Rank classification

The basis of the rank classification system is the rank and the personal status of the incumbent. The employees are classified in a hierarchical order according to their rank. In this system, the employees are classified, and not the job. Each employee is placed in a particular class. Thus, civil service is organized around the incumbent, who is a member of a broadly defined group or service, and not the position/post. The salary and status of an employee depends on his ranking in a group or service, and not on posting. In other words, the status and salary of an employee are determined with reference to the service he is assigned after recruitment.

Advantages of the system of rank classification

The advantages of the system of rank classification are:

- It brings an element of flexibility in personnel administration. Thus, interdepartmental transfers can be made easily.
- It is more suitable for the generalist cadres of civil services. This is because it lays more emphasis on the generalist qualities in an employee, and not on the specialist qualities.
- It is general or less detailed scheme of classification having fewer numbers of classes. Hence its preparation consumes less time and money.
- It promotes loyalty to the civil service as a whole, rather than to a post/position in it.
- The classification plan under this system can be used for a longer period. Hence, frequent revision of the plan is not necessary.
- It makes the employees feel more secure about their status and salary, because they are independent of posting and are not affected by the changes in the duties and responsibilities of a post/position.
- Unlike position classification system, it is easy to understand as well as administer.
- It emphasizes on the career opportunities of civil servants and hence, promotes mobility in the service.
- It attracts competent personnel to the services

Disadvantages of system of rank classification

The disadvantages of the system of rank classification are:

- It does not promote much specialization in the civil servants. Hence, It is not suitable for specialist services
- It violates the principle of equal pay for equal work. This is because employees in this system are paid regardless of the difficulty and responsibility of their job.
- It does not specify the contents of any job in detail, Hence, the performance appraisal of an employee can be subjective.
- It smacks of class distinctions and feudal tendencies as it revolves around the individual, not the position.
- It is not conducive to the preparation of scientific and objective standards on which various aspects of personnel administration like recruitment, promotion, training, manpower planning, and career development can be organized. Hence, it makes the entire field of personnel management subjective.
- There is no match between the requirements of a job and the qualifications of the incumbent.

The present classification systems are criticized mainly on the ground that they promote class consciousness which is not conducive to the efficient, smooth and harmonious functioning of the civil service. However, a definite conclusion exists that classifications serve on practical purposes. The time has come to give a decent burial to the present system and to make it a true representative of futuristic working environment in the government. Importance is given for developing among civil servants a feeling that they all belong to a common

public service. With the proposed reorganization of various grades into levels, the existing systems of classification of services can be better rationalized.

3.2.2 Recruitment

Recruitment is the heart of public personnel administration since the efficiency of the government machinery and the quality of the services rendered by it depends upon the soundness of its recruitment system. In the words of *Glenn Stahl*, recruitment is the 'cornerstone of the whole public personnel structure. Unless recruitment policy is soundly conceived, there can be little hope for building a first rate staff.'

Meaning

Recruitment means filling up the vacant posts in civil service. It has negative and positive connotations. Negatively, it aims at eliminating the unqualified and those not suitable for the posts in the service. It eliminates political influence; favouritism and keeps the rascals out. Positively, it aims at filling the vacant posts with the best qualified and most competent persons. It attracts best qualified, most talented, and highly competent personnel through concentration on the sources of supply.

Rise of merit system

Before the rise of merit system of recruitment, three different systems were prevalent, namely, spoils system, patronage system, and the system of sale of offices in the USA, the UK and France respectively. The merit system stands for the selection, retention and promotion of civil servants on the basis of the demonstrated fitness, emphasizing that conditions of the civil servants are governed by their qualifications, that is, educational, technical, personal and physical fitness which are tested and judged objectively on the basis of well-defined standards.

Process

The recruitment process consists of steps in the order given below:

- job requisition that is, asking the various ministries, departments and other administrative agencies about their personnel requirement.
- determination of qualifications (educational, technical and personal and other conditions of recruitment policy.
- designation of the application forms.
- advertisement/announcement of vacant posts and examinations through media of various types,
- scrutinizing of applications
- conducting examinations to determine the qualifications and abilities of applicants,
- certification, that is, submission of the list of eligible candidates by the recruiting agency for consideration of the appointing authority
- selection, that is, the act of choosing from the eligible candidates by the government.
- appointment that is, issuing of the formal letter of appointment by the government to the concerned candidate.
- probation, that is, the entry of the selected and appointed candidates into the service on a temporary basis. if the performance of the candidate is satisfactory during the period of probation, he is given confirmation in the service.
- placement that is, posting of the recruited candidate in the right job.
- orientation, that is, induction of the candidate into the service through a training course, to acquaint him with the organisation, work environment, and methods of his job.

Methods

There are two methods of recruitment, namely, *direct recruitment and indirect recruitment*.

The merits of direct recruitment method include:

- It provides equal opportunities to all qualified persons for entry into public service. Hence, it is in consonance with the democratic norms.
- It broadens the area of recruitment, as the source of supply is much wider.
- It attracts capable and qualified people from universities to public service.
- It brings in new blood with new ideas freshness of outlook and progressive approach into government service.
- It checks stagnation in public services, as they are kept attuned to the changing social, economic, political, administrative, and technical conditions of the nation due to the constant intake of young men.
- It is suitable for recruitment in technical and professional fields, as they require latest knowledge.

- It motivates persons already employed, to keep themselves up-to-date in knowledge, with a view to compete with young people for higher posts.

The demerits of direct recruitment method are:

- It results in the selection and appointment of persons having no administrative experience.
- It necessitates a prolonged and intensive training which is expensive.
- It curbs initiative of the employees as higher posts are thrown open.
- It causes jealousy and heart burning among the senior and experienced employees as they are placed under the young and inexperienced persons.
- It demoralizes those employees who fail to get promotion leading to inefficiency.
- Persons already employed cannot compete with outsiders in the open competitive examinations due to several reasons.

The merits of direct recruitment can be cited as the demerits of indirect recruitment, and the demerits of direct recruitment can be cited as the merits of indirect recruitment.

Qualifications of the employees

The qualifications required of the public servants are of two types, namely, general qualifications and special qualifications.

General qualifications: apply to all public servants and include: citizenship or civil status; residence or domicile; sex; and age.

Special qualifications: do not apply to all public servants and these are: educational qualifications; experience; technical knowledge, skills and competencies; and personal qualifications.

Systems of recruitment: four systems of recruitment in the civil service exist, and these are explained below:

- Cadet system
- General mental ability system
- Expertise system
- Lateral entry system

3.2.3 Training

Meaning

Training is:(a) an action process, (b) by which capabilities of the personnel can be improved, (c) to meet the organizational needs in terms of their knowledge, skills and attitudes required in performing organizational tasks and functions, (d) within relatively short period of time.

William G. Torpey defines training as the process of developing skills, habits, knowledge and attitudes in employees for the purpose of increasing the effectiveness of employees in their present government positions as well as preparing employees for future government position. Training is a well-articulated effort to provide for an increased competence in the public services, by imparting professional knowledge, broader vision, and correct patterns of behaviour, habits and attitudes. It is, or should be a continuous process in response to a continuously felt need.

Roles and objectives

The role of training for civil servants was thoroughly analyzed for the first time by Assheton Committee in its report of 1944, in the UK. On the objectives of training, it stated, "In any large –scale organisation, efficiency depends on two elements, the technical efficiency of the organisation as a corporate body, derived from the collective spirit and outlook of the individuals of which the body is composed. Training must have regard to both elements. The five objectives of training according to the report are:

- To produce a civil servant who can transact his business with precision and clarity.
- To attune the civil servant to the tasks he is called upon to perform in a changing world. The civil service must continuously and boldly adjust its outlook and its methods to the new needs of new times.
- To make the civil servant community consciously. There is a need to develop resistance to the danger of the civil servants becoming mechanized by the machine; whilst we must aim at the highest possible standard of efficiency our purpose is not to produce a robot like, mechanically perfect civil service.
- To develop the capacity of the civil servants for higher work and greater responsibilities.
- To improve the morale of the civil servants.

Following can be added to the above list of Assheton Committee Report:

- To make up for the deficiencies of the new entrants to the civil service.
- To broaden the vision and outlook of the civil servants.
- To promote integrity in the civil servants
- To promote spirit de corps in the employees.

According to Herbert A. Simon, the following three factors have given particular urgency to the training of civil servants in developing countries.

- The need for innovation in administration to meet the demands and challenges of our times.
- The rapid multiplication of government tasks and duties.
- The acute shortage of skilled manpower.

Typologies of training

Basically, training is of two types, namely, informal training and formal training.

Informal training means learning the work by actually doing work under the guidance of senior officers. Thus, it is training by experience or learning by trial and error method. The trainee acquires administrative skills in the course of actually doing the work, that is, through practice. It is also called 'on-the-job-training'. This has been a traditional method of training in public administration.

Formal training, on the other hand, is imparted in an orderly manner through prearranged and well-defined courses under expert guidance and supervision. It consists of the following types:

- Pre-entry training
- Orientation training
- Induction training
- In-servicing training
- Vestibule training
- Circular training
- Refresher training
- Retaining
- Post-entry training
- Short-term and long term training
- Departmental and central training
- Skill and back ground training

Training Techniques are methods of training which listed as follows:

- Lecture method
- Syndicate method
- Case study method
- Incidence method
- Role play
- Management games
- Sensitivity training

3.2.4 Promotion

Significance

W. F. Willoughby stated that promotion of employees from one position to another probably ranks first in importance. To the employee's promotion is of direct significance as a reward or possible reward. Actual promotion is a reward, while the opportunity for promotion is a possible reward.

L. D. White has rightly pointed out, "A badly planned promotion system harms an organisation not merely by pushing ahead unqualified persons but also by undermining the morale of the group".

The British Fulton Committee (1966 – 68) observed, "The right promotion at the right time is an essential part of the process of developing full talents of men and women in the services.

Meaning

Following are the element (components) of promotion;

- Change of position, that is, from lower position to higher position.
- Change of duties, that is, from less difficult type of work to more difficult type of work.
- Change of responsibility, that is, from lesser responsibility to greater responsibility.
- Change of title, that is, from lower designation to higher designation.

- Change of pay, that is, from lower salary scale to higher salary scale.

However, from the employer's angle, promotion implies filling up the vacant higher posts with suitable and experienced persons from within the public service. Thus, in this respect, promotion can also be called 'indirect recruitment' or 'recruitment from within'.

Demotion is the opposite of promotion. It implies the degradation of an employee from a higher position to a lower one. In fact, it is a type of penalty imposed on the employee for violation of civil service conduct rules.

Types

There are three types of promotion.

- Promotion from a lower grade to a higher grade, for instance, from a junior typist to senior typist.
- Promotion from a lower class to a higher class, for example, from the clerical class to the executive class.
- Promotion from lower service to a higher service, for instance, from state civil service to IAS.

Principles: three principles of promotion are: seniority principle; merit principle; and seniority-cum-merit principle. These are briefly explained as follows:

Seniority principle is the oldest and still prevalent. Seniority means, the duration of service of an employee. Thus, according to this principle the order of precedence in making promotion is determined by the duration of service of the employees. For example, if an employee X has longer service to his credit than employee Y in a given position, then X is eligible for promotion.

Merit principle implies that the most meritorious employee should be promoted. According to this principle, the order precedence in making promotion is determined by the qualifications and achievements of employees irrespective of the length of service. The following three methods are used to test and judge the merit of the candidate for the purpose of promotion.

- a) Personal judgment of the head of the department that is promotion-making authority
- b) Promotional examination (written/oral)
- c) Efficiency ratings (service ratings)

The *seniority-cum-merit principle* provides that promotion should be determined on the basis of both, the in general the first principle is applied at lower levels, the second principle at higher levels, and the third principle at the middle levels.

Sound Promotion System

W.F. Willoughby laid down the following essentials of a sound (proper) promotion system.

- i. Adoption of standard specifications setting forth the duties and qualifications required for all promotions in the government service.
- ii. The classification of these positions into distinct classes, series, grades and services.
- iii. The inclusion within this classification of all the higher administrative positions except those having a political character.
- iv. The adoption, as far as possible, of the principle of recruitment from within for filling up of higher posts.
- v. The adoption of the principle of merit in determining the promotion of employees.
- vi. The provision of adequate means for determining the relative merits of employees eligible for promotion.

3.2.5 Pay and conditions of service

The conditions of service of a government servant includes pay, allowances, periodical increments, leave, promotion, tenure or termination of service, transfer, deputation, various types of rights, disciplinary action, holidays, hours of work and retirement benefits like pension, provident fund, gratuity and so on.

3.2.6 Retirement benefits: three methods of raising funds out of which the retirement benefits are paid. These are briefly given below

- i. Contributory system, in which the employee makes total contribution (by way of salary deductions).
- ii. Partly contributory system in which both, the employee and the government share the cost of retirement benefit
- iii. Non – contributory system in which the government alone bears the cost or retirement benefits.

3.2.7 Disciplinary action

Disciplinary action is taken against a civil servant who has violated the conduct rules in the performance of his job. The important conduct rules include: civil service conduct rules; central civil services rules, and in some countries railway services conduct rules.

A formal disciplinary action constitutes the imposition of minor as well as major penalties. The following are the minor penalties

- Censure or reprimand
- Withholding increments
- Withholding promotion
- Recovery of pecuniary loss

The following are the major penalties

- Reduction to lower scale or rank
- Compulsory retirement
- Removal from service
- Dismissal from service

The difference between removal and dismissal is that the former shall not disqualify for future employment, while the latter shall disqualify for future employment.

IV. Summary

Public personnel administration is the heart of public administration. It has been defined, its distinct features explained and the role of the civil services in developing societies was attended to. Each of the major elements of personnel administration has been treated briefly and separately. These elements include classification of personnel; recruitment; training; promotion; compensation; discipline; and retirement benefits of the personnel in the government services.

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