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Public Administration and Development

by Professor Keith Henderson, New York

When considering the economic resources of the developing countries, it is necessary to analyze the role of public administration in the development of those resources. By public administration we refer to the apparatus of government including structure, procedures, and personnel involved in the effort to secure economic change as well as to maintain the existing economic pattern. The apparatus of public administration consists of the ministries of health, education, finance, interior, public works, etc., which are part of the traditional structure of government and the newer "development" agencies such as development banks, rural development agencies, cooperatives, and credit agencies which have been established outside the traditional government structure.

An Impediment to Economic Growth

From a Western point of view, the public administration apparatus, particularly the traditional agencies, represents a major impediment to economic growth. An extensive list of "vices" may be cited to show the inadequacy of public administration in the developing regions:

- ☐ widespread corruption (for example, the custom of "Bakshish"—or petty bribes—in the Arab world);
- ☐ nepotism and favoritism;
- ☐ incredibly cumbersome procedures requiring numerous signatures and counter signatures, stamps and stamp cancellations;
- ☐ delays, extending to months and even years, in processing the routine work of government;
- ☐ overlapping and duplication of functions;
- ☐ overstaffing at the bottom and middle levels and understaffing at the top;
- ☐ extreme centralization;
- ☐ seniority systems which preclude advancement on any other standard than age;
- ☐ excessive cross-checking and auditing of accounts to prevent malfeasance (not always effectively, however);
- ☐ budgeting practices based on outworn colonial or European patterns.

When a Western public administration advisor sees the above "vices", he might well wonder how any work at all gets done. He might also be inclined to suggest the obvious (to him) remedies based on his

own experience. In fact, many experts have given advice on public administration matters under the auspices of the United Nations, bi-lateral agencies (in the US, the Agency for International Development), the OECD, private foundations, or other sponsoring agencies.

Technical Cooperation

The public administration advisor has a specific task to accomplish and immediate, officially imposed responsibilities. He is generally under contract to undertake a training, advising, counselling or other job in conjunction with a particular project. The project might entail complete government reorganization, civil service classification and pay, archives management, or any other matter within the province covered by technical cooperation in public administration.

Since it is now widely recognized that the concepts of public administration oriented to Western institutions and practices are not necessarily the best guide for developing nations, the call is for ideas which are relevant and applicable in the cultural contexts of developing areas rather than ideas which are inseparably bound to particular Western circumstances. A growing literature and a number of conferences have been concerned with cultural variables and problems of transferring technical skills; cross-contact among new schools and institutes of public administration and definition of the nature and scope of public administration in developing areas.

Considerable recognition of the inadequacies of their administrative systems is evidenced by indigenous political leadership. In public pronouncements there is frequently emphasis upon the importance of strengthening public administration, and technical cooperation is actively sought.

The Middle East: An Example

The case of the Middle East is particularly interesting in this respect.

In the 1967 Regular Budget Program of the United Nations, public administration assistance for the Middle East amounted to approximately \$ 36 million.¹ While by no means insignificant, this figure is vastly overshadowed by bilateral public administration as-

¹ United Nations, Document DP/RP/1, p. 5.

sistance to the Middle East, primarily from the US Agency for International Development. In effect, political leadership in the Middle East looks to the US Government for help in strengthening its administrative machinery, although that leadership neither asks for nor receives as much as Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Specifically, numerous scholarships are provided for students to study public administration at regional centers such as the American University of Beirut or abroad; in-service training programs are sponsored; organization and methods study is undertaken; civil service and budgetary systems are proposed; numerous attempts are made to restructure existing ministries; and new organizational forms are installed. Even though the June 1967 war interrupted these programs, most are now continuing as before.

Different Approaches

In Saudi Arabia a group of experts is engaged in an administrative survey designed to update the administrative machinery, personnel, and processes in this rich but primitive land. Customs administration, the post office, public works, and other activities have been examined by American and Pakistani advisors. Next door Royalist Yemen, if it were to triumph militarily and politically, is prepared to pursue a course of administrative improvement. The personal advisor to the Yemeni Imam is a young man trained in public administration at the American University of Beirut.

The Egyptian government has put into effect some ideas presented in the administrative advisory report prepared by Luther Gulick and James Pollack² and American influence remains dominant in the training programs undertaken for government employees such as the extensive program at the Institute of Public Administration, Cairo.

Lebanon, an economically more advanced country, finds succor in French administrative advice and its comprehensive macro-planning has been guided, in part, by the 1st and 2nd IRFED (Centre International de Formation et de Recherche en Vue du Développement Harmonisé) missions, 1960–1964. A two-year pre-service training school, the Institute of Public Administration, differs considerably from its Egyptian counterpart in that it reflects the French influence and is intended to be mandatory for all entrants into the Civil Service. Under the influence of the American University of Beirut, and with the help of a Ford Foundation American advisor to the Lebanese Civil Service Commission, some rapprochement is occurring between the French and American patterns of training, education, research, and consultation in public administration.

Turkey has experienced outside public administration assistance since 1952, and currently has an active Cornell University advisory group at the Middle East

Technical University, Ankara. Together with the BA and MA programs at Lebanon's American University of Beirut, METU's undergraduate curriculum forms the dominant academic influence in American Public Administration manifested in the Middle East. The Public Administration Institute for Turkey and the Middle East, separate from METU although it too is in Ankara, has undertaken training and technical studies for the Turkish government on administrative reorganization.

Among the best examples of successful administration are those found in Israel. Now at a stage of development where little foreign technical help is required, Israel has itself undertaken programs of help to emerging African countries. Modern techniques such as role-playing are used for civil service training as well as conventional classroom methods. Overall emphasis, under the intellectual guidance of persons such as Dr. Yehezkel Dror of the Hebrew University, is upon policy planning and systems analysis. Technical advice by indigenous experts is available to the Israeli or other governments.

Israel, along with the Philippines, India and Thailand, is a country which explains administrative problems and programs to the world through a recognized English-language academic journal.³

Africa: Comparisons and Contrasts

To sketch the story of public administration in Africa is no easier, and perhaps harder, than in the Middle East. In broadest perspective, African administrative institutions and practices are at an extremely primitive stage and, in many cases, are being built from scratch upon only a colonial foundation. In French-speaking Africa, as might be expected, training and administrative improvement are under French influence.⁴ Similarly, British ideas concerning public administration are found in former British Colonies. Nigeria offers two examples of a melting of British and American influences: The Institute of Administration at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Northern Nigeria, where the University of Manchester and the University of Pittsburgh are cooperating in a joint effort, and the Institute of Administration at the University of Ife, Ibadan, Western Nigeria, a joint venture begun in 1963 of several British centers and the Institute of Public Administration, New York City.

The Stress Lies on Training

The overall stress in Africa is upon training. Numerous African Civil Servants have studied or are studying in Europe, England and the United States. Overseas efforts in training and education extend from short tours of a few weeks duration to Ph.D. programs

³ Public Administration in Israel and Abroad, published annually since 1960 by the Israel Institute of Public Administration, P.O.B. 1077, Jerusalem. Hon. Edwin Samuel, C.M.G., is founder of the Institute and Editor of the Journal.

⁴ For an interesting presentation of the French view, see, Michel Rougevin-Baville, "The Organization and Content of Training for Public Administration in Africa", *Journal of Local Administration Overseas*, Vol. 2 (1963), pp. 123-136.

² Government Reorganization in the UAR, A Report Submitted to the Central Committee for the Reorganization of the Machinery of Government, Cairo, June, 1962.

in public administration or related subjects. To a considerably greater extent than in the Middle East, a wide variety of programs are in operation for the African administrator or potential administrator.

In several countries, multi-purpose Institutes of Public Administration are the prime instrumentality for administrative change in the public sector. For example, the Ethiopian Institute of Public Administration at Addis Ababa provides advisory services to the government, recommends Civil Service and other regulations, and also undertakes applied research. The Ethiopian Institute differs from others in emphasizing consultation and research more than training, but it also conducts training programs. In the Sudan, another strong Institute of Public Administration has developed an important Round Table Conference technique of co-opting government servants into the mainstream of current thinking.

In Africa, as of 1968, the process of "Africanization" of the Civil service is still occurring. Although many colonial administrators left before or immediately after independence, some were invited to stay as employees of the independent nation. Gradually those officials who remained are being replaced by Africans.

Failures and Accomplishments

The record of public administration assistance—in the Middle East and Africa—is both brief and disappointing. Brief in that it only extends back for some fifteen or so years⁵), and disappointing in that the public administration apparatus has not been suddenly transformed. The original goals for strengthening public administration by training officials, improving procedures and re-organizing government departments have not been achieved.

Perhaps the reason, however, that public administration assistance to developing areas has not been successful is that almost magical accomplishments were expected from it. American advisors came into countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Ethiopia and attempted to establish personnel and record keeping systems comparable to what they were familiar with, without appreciating even to a minimal extent the culture in which they were operating. French public administration experts in Lebanon, with high regard for French patterns, often contradicted American advice. British advisors in Jordan (including the eminent Sir Eric Franklin) attempted to install a British personnel classification system. Obviously, one does not change a culture overnight and, hence, it should not be a surprise when the administrative system—which reflects the culture—does not respond readily to foreign expertise. However, in all fairness, Jordan does have a civil service commission of sorts and a nominal merit system, as well as improved record keeping

systems in some of its ministries. It also has a corps of young administrators trained in public administration at the American University of Beirut, which is the primary training ground for junior-level Jordanian civil servants.

Hence, some changes have been wrought through the intercession of American aid. Other changes may be indirectly traced to American recommendations. The Gulick-Pollack report on the re-organization of the Egyptian government, recommended, for example, the reduction in President Nasser's span-of-control from a number over sixty (that is, more than 60 top officials reported directly to Nasser) to a more manageable number. Some time later, President Nasser designated Vice Presidents, presumably to reduce his span-of-control. European experts can also claim similar successes.

Prospects

Foreign public administration advisors, as well as their indigenous counterparts, have become more sophisticated with increasing field experience. Thus, the early tendency to think solely in terms of re-organizing and reforming existing ministries has been supplemented by an interest in establishing new agencies specifically for development purposes. In terms of traditional public administration "principles", there is no good reason to establish a rural agricultural program apart from an existing Ministry of Agriculture. There are good reasons for so doing, however, if the Ministry of Agriculture is staffed by aged incompetents committed to routines of the past. The essential reason, then, for creating a parallel organization is to avoid the administrative obstacles of working through the entrenched bureaucracy.

An astute political leadership can also remove some of the burdens from administration by simplifying requirements for processing forms and by providing incentives to decision-makers willing to adjust to the new requirements of economic development. One possible "solution" to the administrative dilemma is decentralization through establishing district offices staffed by competent personnel responsive to local needs. By separating these offices from the rigid controls of the central ministries, innovation can take place. New traditions of staff agencies containing the "bright young men" can be diffused throughout the administrative apparatus by a policy of promoting personnel who have the desired training and motivation. All of this is done, of course, without offending the older bureaucrats and, indeed, often without their knowing what is going on. No panacea exists for any developing region. However, through careful case studies, analysis of advisors' reports, and other means we can discover those programs which are more successful than others and grope our way towards the goal of strengthening administrative structures, processes and personnel so that administrative obstacles to economic development are ameliorated and the administration can facilitate and control the direction of economic growth.

⁵ With, however, some notable exceptions. The financial missions to Persia date back to 1910. For an apologia by the person heading the 2nd and 3rd missions see, Arthur C. Millspaugh, *Americans in Persia* (Washington, D. C. The Brookings Institution, 1946).