

COURSE DSC 306: Public policy and Administration in India.
Citizen Administration Interface.
3rd Semester Hons.
Compiled by Sushila Baraily,
Asst. Professor, Political Science Department,
Sonada Degree College.
University of North Bengal

CITIZEN ADMINISTRATION INTERFACE.

No system of governance can survive for a long time without the support of the citizens. It is evident from the history of the nations that longevity of their governments largely depended on the cooperation and support rendered to them by their citizens. Wherever this support was missing, the nations found themselves in deep trouble that made their future uncertain. The administration-citizen relations are significant because the support and consent of the governed (citizen) is a prerequisite for the sustenance of a representative government like the one in India. The traditional theories of relationship between the State and society or government and the citizens, in different political systems, be it laissez- faire or democracy or military dictatorship are now inadequate to cope with the new and difficult dimensions of administration that are gradually emerging. Position of the public or citizens from being mere recipients of the administrative help has now shifted to their being the prime movers in the affairs of governance - a change from local 'beneficiary' status to active 'participant status'.

MODES OF INTERACTION BETWEEN CITIZENS AND ADMINISTRATION

Today, governance is all about efficient and effective provision of goods and services. Public Administration exists for the betterment of the public by providing services such as health, education, economic security, maintenance of law and order, national defence, etc. The public interacts more intimately with public agencies at the cutting edge level. Local government, for instance, affects people's lives in various ways. The encounters may pertain to water supply, electricity, garbage disposal and so on.

There are different ways in which the public interacts with the public administrative agencies in real life situations. These interactions could be in the form of:

. i) **Clients:** This is the most common form of interaction with the administrative

agencies. In this form, citizens seek to obtain benefits or services from governmental agencies. For example, a patient visits a government hospital for health check-up or medical treatment.

ii) **Regulatees:** As a regulatee, the public interacts with many public agencies viz., police, income tax authorities, licensing authorities, etc ^[1]_{SEP}

[Regulate(VERB

control or maintain the rate or speed of (a machine or process) so that it operates properly

- *control (something, especially a business activity) by means of rules and regulations]*

iii) **Litigants:** The harassed citizens turn litigants (*a person who is taking legal action in a court of law*) when they seek redressal of their grievances from the courts, tribunals and Lok Adalats. As litigants, public can hope to get justice for their complaints.

. iv) **Participants:** Democracy entails increased people's participation in governance. This is institutionalised through various means like community policing, guardian committee, beneficiary associations etc. In almost all programmes/projects, the people participate at the levels of planning, implementing and monitoring. People's participation democratises both administration and public, and also brings in new inputs that help sound project designing, implementation, and facilitation of assets maintenance.

. V) **Protesters and those engaged in struggles and people's movements:** People often interact with government agencies on public policy as protesters, critically opposing the injustice in government policy and action. People's struggles like the one over Narmada Dam or forests in Uttar Pradesh (Now Uttarchanal), symbolise articulation of genuine grievance and demands and not just questioning of grievous faults in public policies faults. (Recent example is the protest by Indian farmers against the Farm Law, which was assured to be repealed by PM on 19/11/2021).

THE STATE'S RESPONSES TOWARDS PARTICIPATION

State's (government in practice) responses to the varied interactions would be dependent on three crucial factors: (a) The *overall politico-administrative culture* which may be formally democratic but actually authoritarian or patriarchal (b) The *capacity of the people evolved through democratic learning processes to articulate demands and put pressure* for just administrative functioning, and (c) The *status-fairly independent and impartial of other cognate(related) institutions like the judiciary and the media.*

In this connection **James Midgley's typology of State's responses towards citizens' participation** are worth mentioning. The four ideal typical responses suggested by him are '**anti-participation**', '**manipulative**', '**incremental**' and '**participatory**'.

These interactions take place daily and the ordinary citizens form an opinion about public administration out of these happy/unhappy encounters with public officials:

. i) The '**anti-participatory**' mode explains that State in the capitalist system is not interested in ameliorating(make better) the conditions of the downtrodden. Power is concentrated and not dispersed to facilitate accumulation of wealth. People's participation is, thus, not politically acceptable.

. ii) The '**manipulative mode**' seeks to neutralise political opposition by co-opting autonomous movements with the ulterior motive of gaining control over them. There is the rhetoric of participation but not its reality, as the State's motive is to prove to the people that the regime is accommodative merely to give legitimacy to the regime in power.

iii) The '**incremental mode**' has an ambivalent (having or showing mixture of feelings or opinions about something or somebody) approach to community participation. There is no lack of government support to participation, but the policy is unclear and the general tendency is to muddle through (cope in a more or less satisfactory way despite lack of expertise, planning, or equipment.) In theory, participation is not rejected but what actually takes place is bureaucratically managed development in the name of efficiency.

. iv) The '**participatory mode**' is characterised by State's own initiative to create institutions of community participation to ensure effective involvement of the people in grass roots development. But, this mode works on the assumptions that there is a presence of a positive political will and the bureaucracy is also positively inclined towards development and participation (C. F. Bhattacharya, 2002).

v) Yet another response not included in Midgley's list, but which is important in the Third World context, is the '**repressive mode**'. Very often, what is noticed is that the State reacts negatively and ruthlessly to people's movements and struggles. Instances are not rare when the people's genuine demands for basic needs like water, forest, cheap food has been construed as anti-state and the regime in power

has sought to unleash brutal force to suppress these demands.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZEN AND ADMINISTRATION

The modern State has to undertake not only regulatory functions in the form of maintenance of law and order, but also has a more positive role to play. It has the major responsibilities of providing major amenities of life education, health, wider employment opportunities, improved means of transport etc. All this affects the individual and collective life of a very large numbers of people concerned. There has been a tremendous increase in the points of interaction between the administration and citizen. Hence the pattern of relationship between the administration and citizen is becoming increasingly complex in nature and larger in scope.

Before the advent of the democratic Welfare State the administration kept the citizen informed only about certain major decisions which it considered desirable.

This limited relationship has undergone a change with the progressive growth of the developmental and welfare role of the modern State. The main objective should be promotion of citizen satisfaction, just as the concept of consumer satisfaction governs the production and distribution of goods, in economics.

In practice it is seen that the administrators continue to be authoritative, paternalistic and the relationship between citizens and administration seems to have changed outwardly and not in spirit. The citizen feels frustrated, dissatisfied, unhappy in his dealings with the administration. The expansion of bureaucracy and multiplication of administrative processes have led to increase in opportunities for abuse of power and discretion.

CITIZEN-ADMINISTRATION ALIENATION

The citizen in day to day life is constantly interacting with administration. As has been pointed out by Jagannadhan and Makhija, "much of the administrator's image is made or narrowed during such contacts. An air of conceit or arrogance, a show of irritation, misdemeanour, lack of proper response, a tactless 'no', procrastinations and delay, all these may contribute to tarnish the image of administration in the eyes of citizens"

There are certain factors which are responsible for alienation of citizens and administration. This could be due to individual human factor, or in the organisational structure as such, or in the systems and procedures which guide

the working of administration. Discontent among the citizens which is due to the result of a wide disparity between the performance of administration and popular expectations has become a normal feature.

Another **general feeling which persists among the people** is that the policies are not being implemented properly. Administrative procedures, are found to be cumbersome, or the processes of administration found unjust. Yet another important problem is the deterioration in the standards of honesty and integrity in both, politics and administration due to corruption. Rigid observance of rules and regulations, non- acknowledgement of complaints, representations from citizens, inordinate delay in disposal of various matters account for lack of faith of public in administration.

According to Mohit Bhattacharya, the general perceptions of the people about administration include:

- a) unhelpful attitude of officials especially lower level functionaries
- b) citizens' ignorance about procedures involved in getting things done .
- c) inordinate delay and waiting period
- d) favouritism in administration
- e) corruption among officials
- f) reliance of middlemen to get things done
- g) rich-poor discrimination in administration, the rich having access to administration and the general tendency of officials to avoid the poor and underplay their needs and interests.

Responsive administration is essential to have a healthy citizen-administration interface.

Responsive administration is ensured in what has come to be known as the **Batho Pele Principles**. These principles put the citizens first in a search for efficient public service delivery. These principles were proclaimed by South Africa in 1997. These are:

- 1. Service Standard:** Citizens should be told what level and quality of public services, they will receive so that they are aware of what to expect.
- 2. Access:** All citizens should have equal access to the services, which they are entitled, for example, increasing access to public services for those who have not previously received them. Many people who live in remote areas can be reached by setting up mobile units and redeploying facilities and resources closer to those in greatest need.
- 3. Ensuring Courtesy:** Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
- 4. Providing More and Better Information :** Citizens should be given full, accurate information about the public services they are entitled to receive, especially those who have previously been excluded from the provision of public services.
- 5. Increasing Openness and Transparency:** Citizens should be told how national and provincial departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
- 6. Remediating Mistake and Failures (Redress):** If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation and a speedy and effective remedy and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response.
- 7. Getting the Best Possible Value for Money:** Public services should be provided economically and efficiently in order to give citizens the best possible value for money.
- 8. Consultation:** Citizens should be consulted about the level and quality of the public services they receive and wherever possible, should be given a chance about the services that are offered. In that way, consultation can help to foster a more participative and cooperative relationship between the providers and receivers of public services

Policymaking should show sensitiveness to citizen's problems and must not be

influenced by extra national interests. Therefore, it can be concluded here that to foster the good relation between the administration and citizen, the people dealing with administration should follow very positive attitude and religiously follow the Batho Pele Principles and the citizen too should be conscious and aware to receive the best from the administration.

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