

Proposing a Conceptual Model for Effective Administrative System

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Abstract

Social and economic changes together with increased public costs have forced public organizations to pay much attention to promotion of their performance as a vital issue. Many scholars believe that success or failure of governments and social health and happiness depend on its public management. It is well documented that through the time, the necessity for dealing with new demands in managerial, political, legal and professional fields in public organizations is increasing, and legitimacy and survival of governments depend on their attempts to revise their administrative systems making them proportional to managerial, political, legal and professional aspects and responsive to these four demands in society; and consider a combination of these dimensions in solving the problems. The objective of the present paper is to propose a conceptual model for effective administrative system integrating managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions with an ecological approach. In the other words, administrative system of each country should be studied in the light of value framework dominating the society or native culture.

Keywords: administrative system, managerial dimension, political dimension, legal dimension, professional dimension, culture, conceptual model

Introduction

Public administration is an order covering public affairs flow; and public affair refers to governmental activities (Waldo, 1975:3). The history of public administration as an aspect of social activities goes back to formation of the first governments and political systems for management of the societies. Efficient public administration has played crucial role in formation and survival of civilizations; while inefficient has led to deterioration of civilizations (Farazmand, 2002).

According to Cleveland (1985:121), public administration has been shifted from intra-organizational concentration on formal and traditional duties such as leadership, direction, control, etc to issues out of organization especially citizens and citizen-orientation. Osborne and Gaebler (1992:56-62) maintained that once public administration was concentrated on inside of administrative system but now it acknowledges the necessity for dealing with external issues especially citizens. Denhardt (1999:286-287) remarked that public management will face challenges such as fast growing of new knowledge and technological innovations, flexible organizational patterns, increased consistency, reduced trust in public units, loss of hierarchy and formation of lean collaboration, diversity of social demands, acceptance of managerial techniques of private sector in public sector, and new leadership roles of public managers. Denhardt (1986) expressed that public organizations should be sensitive to public profits and they should be responsive to public demands and success of public organizations should be assessed based on the same criteria.

Based on the explanations mentioned above, it can be said that an administrative system whose goal is merely efficiency can't accelerate development process and supplying public services. Moreover, an administrative system that can be the pattern of public and market economy not only won't boost the development, but also impedes the development and complexity is so high that it may make staff and policy makers of public administration exposed to critical conflict. Thus, in designing an administrative system, in addition to efficiency dimension covering economic and managerial aspects of public administration, other aspects of effectiveness including political, legal, professional and cultural ones should be considered and an integrative approach of efficiency and effectiveness should be implemented in designing administrative system of interest and this vision help policy makers and staff of the government in achieving their goals in development plans and providing public services for citizens. We tried in this article to propose a theoretical model for effectiveness of administrative system or public administration based on ecological and institutionalism approach in the field of public administration. According to contingency theory, it can be said that there is no best model of public management. Therefore, effective model of public administration can be understood only in proportion between managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions that is indeed conditional state of administrative system of the countries.

The Concept of Effectiveness in This Study

According to Robbins (1998), the first vision on effectiveness (1950) was so simple defining effectiveness as the rate of organizational achievement to its goals. Robbins (1998) maintained that the necessary requirement for organization's success accepted by the majority of authors is "survival". Organization undergoes activities to retain its survival. Robbins (1998) added that assessment of effectiveness requires multiple criteria evaluating various duties of organization according different properties; moreover in effectiveness appraisal, both the facilities (process) and goals (outputs) should be considered. Willcocks (2001) remarked that effectiveness concept is perceived as a subjective concept instead of an objective or rational concept. Public sector stakeholders have different perceptions about effectiveness and thus, effectiveness needs multiple dimensions.

Administrative system of each government describes government perspective on the way of managing the country and the role of administrative system in realization of social goals in macro level is so critical that without an efficient and effective administrative system, these goals can't be achieved. Effectiveness of management of executive system is vital factor in achieving the objectives of development programs. Thus, in the best definition, effectiveness is a combination of managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions. In the other words, these dimensions don't have identical weight in an administrative system and optimal combination of them should be considered. An administrative system can be to some extent managerial, political, legal and professional; meaning that regardless of its effectiveness, it is a mechanism that should achieve the goals of these dimensions, and within a society formation of these dimensions and their evolutionary trend is a way for achieving development, progress and evolution and the goals achieved by each of these dimensions are not similar. Therefore, we used the concept of effectiveness in this paper as optimal combination of these four dimensions in administrative systems of countries.

Importance and Necessity of the Study

Public administration is the vital part of government in many countries (Jreisat, 2010:616) and revolution of public administration to improve administrative capacity for executing policies and providing public services is an indispensable issue (Jreisat, 2010:626).

Regarding the role of public administration as the main basis of government, providing suitable services and effective execution of policies require improvement of public administration patterns in managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions. Administrative system is the toolkit of public administration realizing visions and practical approaches of public administration at operational level and supplies social demands via application of technical strategies. According to Montgomery (2006:340), no administrative system can easily and simultaneously solve all the problems and facing the problems requires changes in public policies. Thus it can be said that progress and improvement in administrative system occurs when the problems are considered in combination form.

In the other words, integrative approach refers means that all the problems and challenges are studied from managerial, political, legal and professional viewpoints and by analyzing such problems, effective policies for providing public services and improving administrative capacity can be set. In the field of public administration, its managerial, political and legal dimensions, whose realization can be seen in parliament, government and legal power should be considered in planning of administrative system. Riggs (1994) argues that the majority of governments in the third world countries which are based on power separation have experienced failure and have to change their strategy. Therefore, designing and determining effective model of administrative system according to country-wide requirements to provide effective public services can be regarded as a necessity encountered by policy makers and public staff.

Ecological Approach for Public Administration

An ecological approach was used in the present research to design and determined effective model of administrative system in Iran. Ecological approach to public administration not only can be used as a resilient basis of the investigation, but also can predict and determine public administration behavior. Such an approach is effective in identification of administrative system illness and their remediation. In implementing such an approach in public administration, unidirectional relation between environment and administrative system based on the hypothesis that administrative behavior is only determined by environment should be avoided (Peng, 2008:537-544). According to ecology based approach, without a deep insight on political, social, cultural and economic properties of a country, no global generalization can be assigned for public administration (Olsen, 2005). Among environmental factors, social factor especially culture of society is of great importance with high influence on political, economic and administrative systems as a comprehensive system. As social culture can promote public affairs and development of a country, it can act as a hurdle toward improvement and development of public organizations' performance (Haruna, 2008).

Institutionalism Approach for Public Administration

According to conceptual framework of the research which is based on Shafritz et al (2000) public administration theory, it can be said that this model has an institutionalism approach, the approach largely neglected by many authors in the field of public administration. We tried to study administrative system of Iran from managerial, political, legal and professional perspectives. Institutionalism theory has been developed fast since 1970's. Scott (2003) quoting from Zuker (1983) maintained that organizations are apparent institutional forms in modern societies. The author, quoting from Mier and Ravan (1977), added that the main application of institutional theories is their use in analysis of organizations.

The authors reasoned out that modern societies are formed by a large number of embedded complicated patterns and rules resulting from professional groups, government and public thoughts. These social facts create a framework for formation and explanation of official organizations. Institutionalism theory argues that organizations are open systems largely influenced by their surrounding environment; however many determinant forces are not the result of rational forces for improvement of performance; rather they are consequences of social and cultural pressures for adaptation to predetermined believes. Powell and Dimaggio (1991) stated that intuitionalism theory originates from Weber's theories about application of bureaucracy.

According to Weber, the reason for dominance of legal/rational structured organizations in the modern society is that they are the most efficient forms of organization. Bureaucracy system is based on logical thinking about the way of achieving favorable results. Bureaucracy is a hierarchical system equipped with experts in special fields and apparent rules and regulations that ultimately control whole the organizational activities.

An obvious manifestation of modern institutionalism is seen about the norm issues relating to traditional concepts such as public interests. Hodi (2001) expressed that public interests is an ideal whose supplying is the duty of agencies; however, the attempt to realize this ideal- even imperfect- and its retention – even at the cost of reduced performance- is the duty of scholars.

Theoretical principles

Waldo (1975:172) proposed two Definitions for Public Administration:

a) Scientific Definition

Public administration is a scientific course which is composed of a series of hypotheses, theories and scientific principles.

b) Operational Definition

Public administration includes activities such as planning, organizing, control and budgeting. Rosenbloom (1989) defined public administration as “application of managerial, legal and political theories and processes to perform governmental duties in legislation, executive and judicial fields for accomplishing service and monitoring services for whole the society or some of its parts”. Regarding interviewing principle of policy and administration, Appleby (1974) proposed that public administration is a type of policymaking which is not independent or separated from other players of political process. In this vision, public administration is one of political processes by which people realize governance. Wilson (1887:197-222) expressed that good public administration is one that both executes the policy and considers people demands.

Based on these definitions, public administration is a wide field and is different from private management. Public administration properties compared to private administration include:

a) Constitution

Constitution defines the environment of public administration and dominant requirements; meaning that constitution divides the power at first and then controls public administration performance.

b) Public interest

Government obligation to promote public interests characterizes public administration from private administration. In public administration, everything is influenced by public interest; whereas in private administration, individual interest is the determinant.

c) Lack of market priority

Difference between public administration and private administration is largely related to market. Market is less constraining in public administration compared to private administration and only under high financial pressure, market become important for public administration. Separation of public administration from market makes it difficult to measure value and evaluate public administration operations.

d) Sovereignty

Sovereignty is a concept regarded as final resource of power and the highest level of authority in apolitical society. Persons who perform as agent via government have sovereignty. In the other words, public administration is the result of public trust and public managers as sovereignty agents are in a position making them distinctive from private managers (Rosenbloom, 1989).

There is a large volume of literature as to whether public administration is related to politics, economics, legal science or other course (Wilson, 1877; Rosenbloom, 1989; Shafritz et al, 2000). Thus, for proposing a model for administrative system that is responsive to social demands and accelerates sustainable development process, it is necessary to make more obvious description about public administration from a scientific viewpoint for further elucidation of public administration concept. From theoretical perspective, it can be said that public administration is an academic course composing of various aspects that includes numerous facts.

Presence of theoretical and practical variation in public administration has brought about approaches in this field for which different definitions have been proposed by authors. Rosenbloom (1989) proposed public administration with three approaches as political, legal and managerial; Shafritz et al (2000) added professional aspect and proposed four-dimension approach which provides more comprehensive image about public administration.

To retain the position of public administration in the context of systematic vision, it is necessary to consider all of these approaches and a proper combination of these four aspects makes public administration more effective in achieving its goals. It should be noted that political considerations are proposed before economic ones in public administration and as maintained by Waldo (1975), politics is the background context of public administration. In this regard, some authors such as Rosenbloom (1989) accentuated economic, politic and legal dimensions to make public administration more efficient, while Shafritz et al (2000) added professional aspect for further efficacy of administrative system.

i. Managerial Dimension

According to most of scholars, when public administration is dealt with a managerial vision, the vision is fairly economy-oriented and approaches business management. This perspective makes separation between politics and administration and as remarked by Wilson (1887), public administration is placed under the class of business management. This made public administration to perform political decisions to maximize efficiency and to become economical. Shfritz et al (2000) expressed that public administration is a management course with three branches of public, private and non-profit in management faculties. Without managerial aspects, public administration is nothing more than a public business. In managerial approach, separation between politics and administration is emphasized as reflected by authors such as Wilson (1887). Wilson believes that by taking politics away from administration, an efficient public administration can be achieved.

ii. Political Dimension

Politics is a complicated and difficult concept regarding its undefined kingdom. Some scholars maintain that every definition on politics has relative value and all the definitions in this field only cover a part of fact and our knowledge about politics is slight. Duvergue (1979) expressed that both conflict and consensus are the main principles for creation of a political situation. Thus, politics includes a range of situations in which people's goals are changing; however they collaborate with each other to achieve the common goals or sometimes are conflict and thus compete with each other. Shafritz (2000) maintained that public administration can't be out of its political framework.

In the other words, this political framework gives a public nature to public administration characterizing it from private administration. In political approach of public administration, decisions are made on based on people, beneficiaries and public thoughts' ideas. This approach shows that providing public interest does not essentially correspond to referring to experts and scientists. Although public administration implies public demands, this demand may be in contrast to those of organizations and science (Rosenbloom, 1989). Wallassir (1987) maintained that public administration is an issue in the field of political theories. If public administration is proposed as a political process, efficiency of administrative system finds lower importance, while achieving political goals finds higher importance.

iii. Legal Dimension

From legal perspective, public administration accentuates on obligatory rules and as long as the rules are not abolished, they should be obeyed. Like constitution, these rules protect public interest and should be followed because courts and public organizations punish the violators. The territory of public administration practices is determined by constitution and basic rules, regulations and instructions, etc. public administration is responsible for executing the legal policies rooting from constitution. Due to following reasons, this approach is regarded as an independent vision:

- Emphasizing official rights: marshal Dymuck claims that official rights for public employees determine three points: policymakers' expectation from employees, employees' authority, the rights of various individuals and groups.
- Accentuating on legalization of issues: in this regard, administrative affairs are considered as a practical process in a court and its objective is to protect people's rights.
- Constitution: this is the third and the most important resource in legal vision on public administration. Public administration determines the framework of people and public employees and its duty is exact execution of constitution and protection of people's rights.

In legal approach three requirements are of great importance:

- Supporting the people and being fair to prevent people from illegal behavior
- Regarding people's rights in the context of constitution
- Equality before law

According to Shafritz (2000), since public administration is “what government should do”, it is created and limited by law. In many societies, public administration is an academic issue never separated from law faculties. Rosenbloom and Pitrawsky (2003) maintained that territory of public administration is determined by constitution and other basic laws, rules, regulations, etc. Public administration executes the policies rooting from constitution. Constitution determines activity range of public, private and cooperative sectors. Constitution determines people and public employees' rights and public administration is the same as exact execution of constitution and protects people's rights. In this regard, if public manager disturbs legal rights of individuals, he will responsible for its action that is in contrast to constitution.

iv. Professional Dimension

According to Shafritz (2000), an advantage of public jobs is providing numerous opportunities for participation in evaluation and analysis of public plans. Although all public employees don't get engaged in issues beyond policies, rules and managerial performance and are not eager to their jobs, it is necessary that public administration be studied as a job. In professional vision on public administration, ethical issues are also emphasized (Danhardt, 1999, Fredrickson, 1991) with the dominant values being justice, equality, fairness, responsiveness to public interest and accountability. Rosenbloom (1989:39) stated that in ethical perspective on public organizations, units are deployed based on citizens' demands and the people within and outside the organization are regarded as citizens who are the owners of government and public administration.

Conceptual Model of the Research

The conceptual model of the research, as presented in figure 1, was developed based on theoretical principles. As can be seen, administrative system of countries is influenced by managerial, legal, political and professional dimensions. Regarding theoretical principles and implementation of an ecological approach to administrative system, countries should consider the values dominating the society. Many scholars (Gass, 1920; Riggs and Arura, 1972; Hodi, 2001) believe that administrative system of each country should analyzed based on apparent cultural aspects of that country because administrative system is formed according to cultural context of that society and culture of administrative system reflects the values that dominate the society by which, worldview, beliefs and traditions of the society are reflected.

In general, conceptual model of this research implies that countries should consider for managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions in designing their administrative system. The arrow in the figure shows that should determine managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions in designing their administrative system and naturally, value of each dimension will vary from one country to another one. In the other words, the magnitude of managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions in countries with capitalism, socialism, communism and Islamic nature is different. Thus countries, in designing their effective administrative system, have to determine the optimal magnitude of these dimensions according to their own requirements and then assess the system.

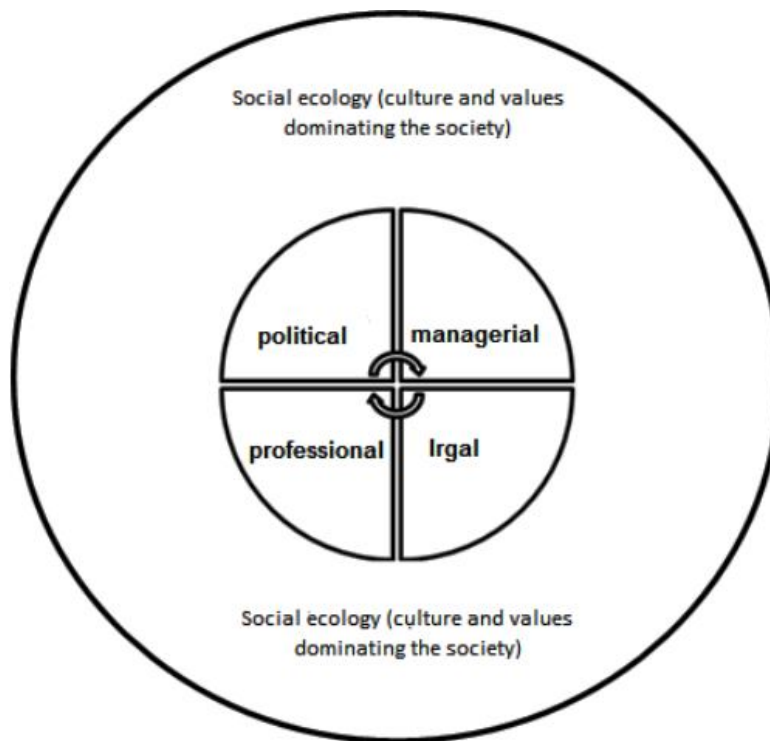


Figure1. Conceptual model of the research

Result

Public administration is a main basis of government and providing efficient services to society and citizens and effective execution of policies require change and improvement of public administration in managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions. Current administrative systems in countries especially in third world ones- regarding existing changes and revolution- are inefficient and act as a major impediment for development ; thus these countries should consider apparent managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions in setting the administrative systems in the light of values, norms and believes dominating the society. In the other words, administrative system is regarded as a tool for growth and development and should be organized according to managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions to direct the countries to development.

Administrative system of countries- especially those of the third world- have defects and problems such as imitative nature of organizational structure, formations and management, low efficiency and ineffectiveness of administrative system, incompetent system in human resource management, official corruption and unlimited bureaucracy which impose serious challenges for these countries. Keeping these notes in mind, we tried in the present study to determine an effective model for administrative system based on managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions in the light of values dominating Iran society. Designing administrative system based on managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions with an ecological approach help public staff and policymakers revise the current administrative system in managerial, political, legal and professional dimensions regarding local and national condition.

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