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## **UNIT-22 : STATE OF ADMINISTRATIVE THEORY IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY**

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### **22.0 Learning Outcome**

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- understand the impact of globalisation on administrative theories.
- highlight the changing nature of public service
- know the state of administrative theory in a dynamic environment

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### **22.1 Introduction**

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In the world, remarkable changes took place in the 1980s and the 90s as governments in the West sought to adopt themselves a new technology, new societal demands and keen competition. This led to an emergence of a new kind of public

administration based on managerial orientation. There is a criticism on control-oriented, people-avoiding and rule-bound Weberian bureaucratic model and emphasised construction of a model focus on results and cost effectiveness in public governance. In this scenario many of the flexible organisational designs and practices pioneered by the private sector have introduced in public administration with suitable modifications. It is noted that rigid bureaucratic system was inefficient and ineffective in delivering of effective public services.

David Walker stated that “the government is on a burning plat form” and the statuesque way of doing business is unacceptable. This perception that the old ways are no longer up to the new tasks has prompted new actors using instruments of civic action to emerge to meet citizens’ needs. New Right thinkers and Public Choice theorists have criticised the pre-eminence of the state and government in delivering of public services. They advocated in favour of grater role for the market and lesser role for the state and government.

To make public administration receptive to global pressures, the reforms like debureaucratisation, downsizing, disinvestments, marketisation, liberalisation, privatisation have brought discernible changes in the philosophical concepts of public administration. A series of reforms that have initiated are directed towards bring about a change in the public systems and institutions. In this context the state of administrative theory in 21<sup>st</sup> century should looked into. We have analysed development and growth of administrative theories in unit-3, in this unit an attempt is made to know the state of administrative theory in rapidly changing environment.

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## **22.2 Administrative theory – A constant state of flux**

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Public administration in the past has been limited by two important positions deeply rooted in the history of the discipline viz.:

1. a view of moral and political accountability conceived in hierarchical terms in terms of responsiveness of agencies to elected officials, and
2. a transposition of business values or at least managerial values into the conduct of public agencies.

While such views may have been responsive to the concerns of the nineteenth century, they may not be appropriate to the concerns of the late twentieth century and beyond.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, administrative thought has been in a state of flux. It has been modifying its premises and prescriptions according to the demands of the fast-changing socio-economic and political environment. Stephen. K. Bailey identified that public administration is concerned with the development of four kinds of theories viz.

1. **Descriptive Theory:** It consists of descriptions of hierarchical structures and relationships with their sundry task environments.
2. **Normative theory:** the “Value goals” of the field – that is, what public administrators (the practitioners) ought to do given their realm of decision alternatives, and what public administrationists (the scholars) ought to study and recommend the practitioners in terms of policy.
3. **Assumptive theory:** A rigorous understanding of the reality of the administrative persons, a theory that assumes neither angelic nor satanic models of the public bureaucratic.

4. **Instrumental theory:** The increasingly refined managerial techniques for the efficient and effective attainment of public objectives.

The current periodical literature in public administration theory illustrates a vast range of topics including the role of the public bureaucracy in the governance process, the ethics of public services, citizenship and civic education, alternative epistemologies, organisational dynamics, inter organisational policy implementation and political economy and public choice. The periodical literature demonstrates the diversity and complexity of the theoretical enterprise. Robert. B. Denhardt stated that public administration theorists have continued to address many traditional concerns of public administrationists, such as the role of public organisations in the governance process. In his view public administration theory draws its greatest strength and its most serious limitation from this diversity. Public administration theorists are required to understand a broad range of perspectives relevant to their theory-building task. The basic concern of public administration theory still revolves around structures of public organisations, processes of administrative bureaucratic behaviour, and organisation-environment interaction. The issues related to the relationship between public administration, state, market and non-state groups have not been sufficiently analysed.

Globalisation and subsequent new World Order have implications for public administration and its sub-fields. It was widely acknowledged that globalisation has changed the nature of public administration worldwide. Globalisation, marketisation and privatisation processes have totally altered the boundaries of public administration. Almost all the countries around the world have initiated by process of restructuring their administrative apparatus in order to enable it to adjust itself to the new developments. It resulted emergence of global public administration. The emergence of

global public administration along with the global bureaucracy characterised by extreme diversity, extensive complexity and significant interdependence will have major implications for administrative theory, public administration education and practice. These developments require the scholars and students of public administration to think globally rather than parochially. Parochial solutions will not work, but only exacerbate the problems. Thinking globally enables public administration scholars to understand better the field now than in the past. Riggs and Caiden called for an expanded, comprehensive, pluralistic and public role for public administration in future.

One significant feature of public administration in recent times is the free exchange of administrative practices between the capitalist and socialist countries. In future there is likely to evolve a culture of shared practices and theories. Public administration theory should have citizen-orientation and achievement zeal. For developing countries the role of government is engineering socio-economic change and brining about goal directed progressive multi-dimensional development. Therefore, the contemporary emphasis in public administration theory is not on less government but on better government. This is where the value of sound managerial practices has permeated the field of public administration. In future, public administration is destined to flourish in a Poly-paradigmatic environment facilitating its multifaceted growth.

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### **22.3 Changing nature of public service**

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The defining characteristics of the old public service are a product of industrial era. Those who comprised the old public service were government employees carrying out functions in centralised, hierarchical, bureaucracies according to routine standard operating procedures. Their discretion was limited their position in the vertical chain of

command and they were accountable to their superiors. Elected officials set public policy, defined the public interest, and monitored program management. Authority flowed from top to bottom services were provided directly to citizens, control or regulation was government centred, staff roles were clear and skill were specialised. Civil service protection was granted to permanent employees whose pay and benefits came directly from government.

The new public service has a different set of characteristics more suitable to a post-industrial, service based economy. Today vertical hierarchy is giving way to horizontal networks; bureaucracies are diminishing and shared leadership structures are emerging. The public interest is identified and pursued as a collaborative process based on dialogue with relevant stakeholders. Employee job boundaries are flexible and skill sets are versatile. The transition from the old to new style of providing public services has altered the role of the public sector emphasising collaboration and enablement rather than hierarchy and control.

Now public services have become quality conscious. They laid increasing stress on result orientation through rigorous performance oriented mechanisms. They should be accessible, transparent and accountable to citizens. In government many works previously handled by the bureaucracy are now being entrusted to the private agencies on contract basis. Low cost coupled with output is now a yardstick in the delivery of public services.

Management of public services is a developing theme in the discipline of public administration. Under the changed circumstances the traditional model of public administration based on Weberian bureaucracy is no longer viable to provide efficient public services. In the changed environment governments operate indirectly as

‘enablers’ to provide public services allowing non-government agencies to operate directly in a wide range of social activities. Governments have been adopting contracting out and privatisation methods to provide public services. The basic traditional norms of public service values such as neutrality, impartiality, accountability, responsiveness and equality are being replaced by pro-market values like competitiveness, efficiency quality productivity and profitability in the provision of public services. The future portends a smaller role for government, an enlarged role for non-profit sector and an increased role for public-private partnerships in delivery of public services. The blurring of the boundaries between government, private and non-profit sectors have given public service a broader meaning.

Today’s environment is characterised by a rapid change. This fast paced change poses new challenges for public service. The rapidly changing external environment -- corporate globalism, cyber technology, changing values and management philosophies has affected the delivery of public services. Likewise, changes in the internal environment – increased sector mobility, privatisation and devolution require rethinking of public services who and how they are to be delivered. The dynamic external and internal environment creates the need for professional managers who possess technical, ethical and leadership competencies to meet the complex governance challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In other words, today’s public service requires skills in three areas – technical, ethical and leadership competencies. Technical competencies include strategic planning, programme management, and resource stewardship, and ethical competencies such as moral reasoning, value management and prudent decision making are needed for public servants to cope with the changes in the external and internal environment. Technical competencies help to ensure that things are correct,

while ethical competencies leads public servants to do good things. Leadership competencies such as skill in assessment, negotiation and change management are needed to harness the energies of disparate service providers and orchestrate their efforts to advance the general interest. Citizens will be well served by those public servants who possess these skills in abundance.

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## **22.4 The State of Administrative theory in a dynamic environment**

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Public administration both as a discipline and as a profession has been changing in view of contemporary changes in socio-economic forces of the world. Issues arising out of globalisation namely information technology, global institutions and efficiency and productivity have radically altered the nature and scope of public administration. The term “public” in public administration has got wider connotation. In other words the “public” aspect of public administration lends special character to it. It has been expanded to include any administration that has considerable impact on the public. It would, therefore, not proper to maintain the distinction between “public” and “private” rigidly as it was constructed earlier. Kuldeep Mathur argues that, “an examination of the genesis of institutions of public administration because it reflects those social and political forces that dominate at a particular time. The effectiveness of achieving aims of public policy will depend on the motives of those groups or interests that brought these organisations into being. This perspective demands that we look beyond the boundaries of organisation and take into account wider societal forces which give rise to specific interests that lead to the establishment of organisations”. Therefore, administrative theory no longer confined to the analysis of traditional concepts, it has to respond to the challenges of the ‘new economic order’. Changes in the ideological climate are to have a decisive impact on administrative theory. The market model of



governance has been holding the centre stage since 1980s. Drawing upon the basic thrust of this model, several new models--participatory model, flexible government model, reinventing government, deregulating government was constructed to articulate the emerging trends in governance. In terms of administrative theory building, the current emphasis on new public management needs to be viewed in a proper historical perspective.

Momentous changes have been taking place in the Third World public administration. On the one side, the structural adjustment policy tends to down size government and allow the market more free play of the governance concept. On the other hand mooted to move away from the traditional model of organisation of formal government and instead recommended plurality of societal actors. In this context, the traditional concept of public administration revolving around a sheltered bureaucracy is no longer viable. It has been alleged that bureaucratic failures, affected the society so badly. On Third World public administration theory and research, Prof. Haragopal rightly stated that even though the Western theories stand challenged by the Third World scholars, no alternatives indigenous theories are being developed. Whatever is there in the form of conceptual and implementation growth of public administration appears to be borrowed, initiated and applied out of context. The socio-economic cultural and political milieu of public administration is not a part of research.

In changing scenario government prefer to act indirectly as 'enablers' allowing non-government agencies to operate directly in a wide range of social activities in most countries of the world. With the changes in the role of government globally, some of the major theoretical concerns in the public administration discipline according to Bidyut Chakrabarty and Mohit Bhattacharya are:

- Application of public choice theory to public administration seeking to assess the relative importance of both market and state as contending providers of public good.
- Participation and empowerment of people at the grassroots.
- The inadequacy of the Weberian rational bureaucracy, which is being assailed as self-aggrandizing, priority-distorting and budget maximising.
- Organisational Pluralism striving to ensure absolute freedom of the individuals in choosing without interference. As a consequence, lead sheding of government, privatisation, decentralisation and empowerment and also encouragement of NGOs in the voluntary sector.
- Networking of government, NGOs and private agencies, public-private joint partnership ventures in public service delivery.
- Small government in terms of downsizing and grass roots peoples efforts.
- Transparency of governance and open citizen-friendly administration via citizen's charter are advocated.

This paradigm shift has brought governance as a theory of public administration. The term governance has transcended the word "government". In the new dispensation, government is a part of governance. Government is endowed with formal authority, whereas governance refers to activities backed by shared goals that may and may not derive their legitimacy from the government. Other sources of legitimacy for activities and goals are civil society and the market. Thus, governance goes beyond government and encompasses non-governmental mechanisms to meet the

needs and aspirations of citizens. Governance as a theory helps providing a guide to the changing world of government. It identifies key trends and development. According to Gerry Stoker, Governance as theory has the following five propositions:

1. Governance refers to a set of institutions and actors that are drawn from but also beyond government.
2. Governance identifies the blurring of boundaries and responsibilities for tackling social and economic issues.
3. Governance identifies the power dependence involved in the relationships between institutions involved in collective action.
4. Governance is about autonomous self-governing networks of actors.
5. Governance recognises the capacity to get things done which does not rest on the power of government to command or use its authority.

Governance as a theory has brought greater democratisation and liberalisation in the public administration system, with an increased emphasis on accountability, rule of law, independent judiciary, right to information and congenial coordination with civil society organisations. In the 1980s concepts like efficiency of state vs. market, increasing managerial orientation in governmental activities, and promotion of privatisation as a panacea for several problems gained popularity in the public administrative theory.

Contemporary public administration needs a theory that can easily relate its underlying philosophic and social ideas to the ground reality. Theory building must help the discipline to cope with dynamic change. In the changing scenario, the nature of the discipline needs to be redefined and its domain clearly demarcated. Administrative

theory in future must attune itself to the changing face of information technology, ecology-environment, administrative capability, gender sensitivity and participatory development. The role of values and ethics in governance, organisational reforms, responsive administration, decentralisation, participatory resource management, creation of alternative institutions of governance such as the civil society organisations are the pertinent areas public administration theory need to be looked into. Administrative theory of coming decades should address issues like privatising public services, rightsising the government, attaining and maintaining efficiency, effectiveness and transparency in public service delivery and ensuring cost-effectiveness along with enhanced productivity due to impact of globalisation on public administration. Administrative theory has to transform, innovate and adapt to these changing trends. The researchers in the field of public administrations should always address their work primarily to practitioners. Denhardt stated that public administration theorists as well as researches in the field have dual obligation: one to enhance the state of knowledge of public organisations generally and second to transmit our understanding of the world of public organisations to those active in that world. In his view the shift toward a subjectivist position in public administration theory holds forth considerable promise for establishing a better connection between theory and practice.

Modern organisations of all kinds have enormous impact on the personal lives of individual in society. In these context public administration theories especially theories of democratic administration might come to be models for organisation theory in general. In Denhardt view the connection between thought and action, theory and practice, demands that public administration theorists share a moral obligation with practitioners in public organisations. The responsibility of the theorists is developing a

normative theory of practice. They have to understand the moral implications of their own work. The discussion on the state of administrative theory in 21<sup>st</sup> century can be concluded with the words of Denhardt that. “We are students not merely of public administration but students of public organisations, that our concern is with managing change in pursuit of publicly defined societal values. We have to build a new theory of public organisations one that recognises the diversity of our field but also acknowledges our common purpose. There is something distinctive about administrative action in public organisations, and that distinctiveness should provide the basis for a coherent and integrated theory of public organisations”.

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## **22.5 Conclusion**

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Today’s administrative environment is characterised by a rapid change. Globalisation, marketisation and privatisation processes have totally altered the boundaries of public administration. It was widely acknowledged that globalisation has changed the nature and scope of public administration worldwide. This led to a emergence of new kind of public administration based on managerial orientation.

Management of public services is a developing theme in the discipline of public administration. Under the changed circumstances the traditional model of public administration based on Weberian bureaucracy is no longer viable to provide efficient public services. The blurring of the boundaries between government, private and non-profit sectors have given public service a broader meaning. Low cost coupled with output and quality is now a yardstick in the delivery of public services. The performance of public administration is now measured in terms of efficient public service delivery. The rapidly changing external and internal environment has affecting

public service delivery. Administrative theory of 21<sup>st</sup> century should address this issue by developing conceptual models for effective and efficient service delivery.

Contemporary public administration needs a theory that can easily relate its underlying philosophic and social ideas to the ground reality. Administrative theory in future must attune itself to the changing face of information technology, ecology-environment, administrative capacity, gender sensitivity and participatory development. Administrative theory has to transform, innovate and adapt to these changing trends. Administrative theory should address the problems of practitioners. There should be better connection between theory and practice.

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## 22.6 Key Concepts

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**Autocracy:** Government by one.

**Democracy:** A political system in which decision-making power is widely shared among members of the society.

**Distributive Policy:** Policy involving use of general tax funds to provide assistance and benefits to individuals or groups.

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## **22.8 Activities**

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Q.1 Analyse the impact of globalisation on administrative theories.

Q.2 Discuss the state of administrative theory in a dynamic environment