

Politicization of Public Administration in Nepal and its Impacts in Good Governance

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Faculty of Humanities and social sciences
Department of Political Science
Mahendra Multiple Campus, Dharan

Submitted by:
Anil Raj Bhandari
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Abstract

This paper discusses about the concept of public administration and its relationship with politics. It is an analytical and descriptive paper as it tries to analyze the public administration of Nepal relating to the political phenomenon since the establishment of democracy in 1950 up to the establishment of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal. The situation of political instability and its influences in the public administration and personnel administration of Nepal has been analyzed in this paper. What is the concept of good governance, what are the features of good governance, are another important aspects discussed in the paper. There is serious issue of politicization in public administration and its impacts on the hindrance of good governance and democratic practice. What impacts of political interventions and influences are on the good governance is major analytical part of this paper. Thus this paper analytically and descriptively tries to study the political influences and its impacts on public administration and good governance of Nepal.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	3-4
2. Objectives.....	4
3. Methodology.....	4
4. Concept of Public Administration.....	4-5
5. Relation between public administration and politics.....	5
6. Politicization of public administration.....	5-6
7. Politicization of public administration in Nepal.....	6-8
8. Good governance.....	8
9. Conceptual framework of good governance.....	9
Figure (i): conceptual figure for eight points features of Good Governance.....	9
10. Concept of good governance in Nepal.....	9-10
11. Challenges of politicization in Good Governance in Nepal.....	10
12. Conclusion.....	10-11
11References.....	11

Introduction

Public administration is the implementation of government policy and also an academic discipline that studies this implementation and prepares civil servants for working in the public service. As a "field of inquiry with a diverse scope" whose fundamental goal is to "advance management and policies so that government can function.

In the context of public administration of Nepal, modern history of Nepalese public administration dates back to 1770 when Nepal was united from smaller princely states. However, situation changed a lot after first revolution in Nepal in 1950, which witnessed the overthrow of The Rana oligarchy. Since then, after establishment of Public service commission (PSC) of Nepal in 1951, common Nepalese, too, started to function as prominent public servants. After the promulgation of the constitution of Nepal 2015 by the second Constitution Assembly, Nepal has been a Federal state i.e. it has come across a new system of federal practice with seven provincial systems. Nepal now has entered into this very new state and governmental practice. Along with this, Nepal Government has held the election of local bodies which is in the form of local government. Altogether now there are three forms of government namely federal government in the central, provincial government in seven provinces and 753 local level governments in the whole country in total.

Governance is the exercise of political power to manage a nation's public affairs. Good governance means "governing well" by establishing a system of clean governance to achieve the anticipated goals and objectives of the public and the government. It leads to good management, good performance, and good mobilization of resources, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes. In the context of Nepal, with different revolutions and democratic movements, it has been tried to practice good governance in Nepal. Several significant milestones have been achieved in terms of good governance after each movement. However, there is still a long way to go before the concept of good governance is fully implemented.

Nepal has experienced and confronted several political movements and social circumstances during a very long transition phase of political instability since the abolishment of Rana Regime in 1950. It clearly seems that it has been lacking a lot in the process of establishing political

culture and its exercise along with the smooth public administration which is free from politicization so as to establish and promote the rule of law and develop good governance.

The long phase of political and social circumstances has affected the public administration and bureaucracy of Nepal in several aspects. Among which politicization of public administration and whole bureaucracy has been a chronic issue of Nepal which ultimately has adversely affected the spirit of good governance for the development of the nation. Political influence has encroached in the public administration and has been spoiling the each and every sectors of the country.

Objectives

The main objective of this paper is to explore and analyze the status of public administration of Nepal and impacts of politicization on it and consequently in the good governance of the country. This paper tries to analyze the circumstances of political phenomena in the state and its intervention on the public administration.

Along with this, the study on this paper may help on fulfilling the following objectives:

- a) To get knowledge about the concept of public administration and its situation in Nepal.
- b) To attain the conceptual knowledge about good governance, its elements and its importance for a welfare state as a whole.
- c) To know about political affairs of Nepal and its impacts and intervention on public administration.

Methodology

This paper makes a brief description and analysis about the politicization of public administration of Nepal and its impacts in good governance. So it is descriptive and analytical paper. It makes the best use of data from secondary sources i.e. the use of library, text books and websites on public administration, good governance and impacts of politicization.

Concept of public administration

Public Administration comprises of two words, “public” and “administration”. “Public” word has several meanings like as it refers “to the people as a whole”, “governmental” and also means “the opposite of private”. Similarly, the word “Administration” is derived from the Latin word “administrare” which means “to serve or to manage”. Thus to serve the people and to manage the public affairs is an ultimate goal of public administration. The word “Administer” which also means to care for, to look after people or to manage affairs. Administration may be defined

as group activity which involves co-operation and co-ordination for the purpose of achieving desired goals or objectives.

According to Felix A. Nigro, “Administration is the organization and use of men and materials to accomplish a purpose.” Similarly L.D. White defines Public Administration as, “Administration is the organization and direction of human and material resources to achieve desired ends.” Another scholar Luther Gullick says, “Administration has to do with getting things done, with the accomplishment of defined objectives.”

Similarly while defining “Public Administration” as a whole, Woodrow Wilson, an American former president and a scholar says, “Public Administration is the detailed and systematic application of law. Every particular application of law is an act of administration.” “Public Administration consists of all those operations having for their purpose the fulfillment or enforcement of public policy”, says L.D. White. In sum, public administration is the non-political bureaucracy operating in a political system which deals with the public interests and laws. It is concerned with policy execution but it also concerns with policy making. It provides regulatory and service functions to the people in order to attain good life. It differs significantly from private administration which is in fact interdisciplinary in nature as it draws upon other social sciences like political science, economics and sociology.

Relation between Public Administration and Politics

Relations between administration and politics are often described in the context of the political process. Typically, a distinction is made between the two stages of policy-making and policy implementation, in which the administration may play a more or less active part. Policy-making includes an analysis of conditions and changes in society that may lead to political activity in certain circumstances. If there are majorities for an activity, then goals will be formulated and a legal basis will be created for this activity. Policy implementation consists of those measures which are taken in order to attain the given goals. They end in outputs for the benefit of stakeholders in society, which ultimately are intended to trigger off the desired outcomes. It is frequently quoted in New Public Management (Hood, 1991:5) and assumes that Politics is the “Principal” and the Administration is the “agent” about the services to be provided. This shows the interdependence between administration and politics.

Politicization of Public Administration

Politicization is to give a political tone or character to something or certain aspect. Thus in this paper, the politicization of public administration means the influence of party politics penetrating into public administration and pushing the special interests of political parties into the foreground at the expense of the realization of a unified national policy.

In a study of the politicization of public administration special attention must be paid to two partly separate, partly interrelated issues- political appointments (patronage) and political party activities of civil servants. Only these aspects of political influence are considered in the following. It must be remembered though that the politicization of public administration can include much else. The government can support political groups it favors by giving grants or by other methods. On the other hand various interest groups, especially economic ones, which have more or less direct contacts with the actual political groupings, can try to interfere in the public administration. No further mention of these outside pressures on administration will be made in the following - except to mention that the stronger the politicization of the administration is, especially in political appointments of public officials, the greater are the opportunities for this kind of outside influence. The passing out of favors through the administration to supporters of those who are in political power is, after bribery, what most deeply tends to weaken confidence in the democratic system of government. It strongly emphasizes the fact that the politicization of administration is of interest not only to theoreticians, but has a much wider importance. It is a phenomenon which, if given free rein, could badly shake the foundations of a democratic society. The experiences of several countries indicate that a large-scale politicization of administration can develop into a malignant disease of society. The intention of the following is to present some information and thoughts about: how the politicization of administration develops in practice, how it should be evaluated from the legal point of view and what its positive and negative consequences are. In this context it should be noted that there can be no problems about political influence on administration in totalitarian and authoritarian states. In these, as in the Communist states; the state and the party are the same. It is characteristic of these systems to permit only one political party, which completely controls the administration and receives from it all the support it desires.

Politicization of Public Administration in Nepal

In the context of Nepal, politicization has been a major issue or a phenomenon that has prevailed in the Public Administration since the restoration of democracy in 1950 A.D. onwards till now after the formal declaration of Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal by the new constitution promulgated in 2015 A.D. Nepal has exercised the democracy since 1950 after the end of Rana

Regime though it was not the situation of complete freedom of people's rights. Somehow and somewhere Nepal's Democracy and Freedom was always under the control of traditional rulers of the country whether they were Ranas or the Kings. This fate was continued till 1990 A.D. till the end of Panchayat system and restoration of multiparty system in the country. Thus political parties emerged and participated in open political ground so as to practice parliamentary system of democracy. Unfortunately was started after the establishment of multi party political practice which gave rise to many of political and social issues. It always lacked capable political leaders who could lead the country to the way of progress and development. Self centered political leaders never acquired the visionary traits that could show the progressive path of the nation. Major problems were the situation of without proper majority of specific political parties in the parliament. Thus it always led to form government of coalition. The major parties that participated in multiparty system formerly were namely Nepali Congress, CPN UML (Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist), Rastriya Prajatantra Party and others. But due to lack of proper complete majority in parliament by either of the parties, there created the situation of coalition of parties to form the government. But unfortunately, governments never served a complete tenure of five years. Political instability was prominent due to this circumstance. It always provoked the situation of government to fail and dissolve before the time. Again and again this type of situation went on in a row. It directly and indirectly helped in the lack of proper exercise of power which ultimately led to the gradual abuse of authority. Political leaders intended to reach into the power and abuse the power for their selfish motive. Abuse of authority, corruption and lack of accountability created serious situation that was oriented towards the threat of democracy and even the national integrity.

The condition of political behaviors never changed in political parties. The own selfish motive, personal and party centric political activities and the trends of acts that is power centric prevailed in all the major political parties.

These political attitudes encroached in all sectors of Nepal. And among all the sectors, the only sector that is completely captivated by politics is none other than public administration.

The major points how the public administration of Nepal is politicized are as follows:

- I. Scarcity of self discipline in the non-visionary, incapable and unqualified political leaders is major cause of politicization. It is because the leaders made politics a gateway to the exercise of power and its use for their party politics, selfish motive, and especially nepotism which is self centered rather than nation or state centered.

- II. Political leaders' desire is always oriented towards reaching into the power and to do maximum abuse of the authority for their own. They completely discarded the rule of law and tried to misuse the power.
- III. Nepotism is another serious cause of politicization. Political leaders not only abused the authority in mainstream politics but also trespassed into public administration in their own favor.
- IV. For their selfish motive they hired their own favored personnel in organizations so they could work in their favor without any obstacles.
- V. Denying existed rule of law and norms of public administration system, they hire their favored people in the specific position in an organization to full their selfish motive.
- VI. Personnel administration in turn has been suffered from these political affairs. The personnel in an organization are not free from politics. But they are devoted to political leaders and aligned in some political party and leaders. This attitude has suffered almost all organizations.
- VII. No rule and regulations, no accountability, lack of co-ordination and no efficiency in the work of public are serious issues created by the political intervention.

For instance, the recent case of announcement of vacancy by Public Service Commission (PSC) can be considered to illustrate this politicizing issue. Public Service Commission on 2076 Jestha 15 had announced vacancy in 515 local bodies for 9161 seats. Though it was protested by most of the leaders of political parties and leaders alleging PSC for announcing the vacancy without following the norms of inclusiveness. Even the constitutional bodies like PSC are not free from political influences in the process of hiring personnel in the public administration.

There are many instances that political leaders pressurize the government to hire the personnel of their favor in contract rather than systematic process. There is no co-operation and co-ordination in organization because of political fractions among the personnel. Their political involvement has affected the public affairs of the country.

Good Governance

Governance is the exercise of political power to manage a nation's public affairs. Good governance means "governing well" by establishing a system of clean governance to achieve the

anticipated goals and objectives of the public and the government. It leads to good management, good performance, and good mobilization of resources, good public engagement and ultimately good outcomes. According to Kofi Annan (former General Secretariat of UNO), “Good governance comprises the rule of law, effective state institution, transparency and accountability of all citizens in the decisions that affect their lives.” Accountability, legitimacy, rule of law, participation, efficiency and effectiveness, equity and inclusiveness, freedom of information and independent judiciary are the key features of Good Governance.

Conceptual framework of Good Governance:

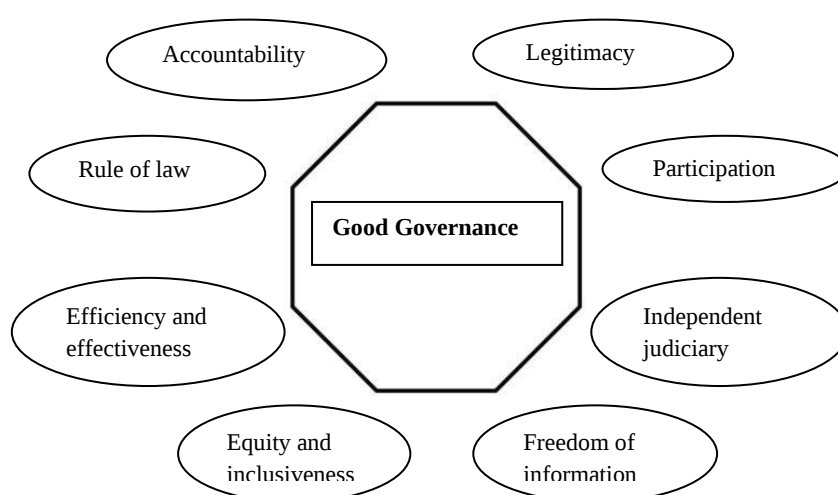


Figure (i): conceptual figure for eight points features of Good Governance.

Concept of Good Governance in Nepal

In addition to the devotion for democracy, people have also been equally concerned for good governance in the nation. Good governance includes people’s rule, rule of law, participatory, equitable and inclusive democracy, effective, responsive, transparent, accountable and efficient institutions. The term 'Good Governance' is coined by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and World Bank. UNDP defines 'Governance' as the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in management of a country's affairs at all levels. They have defined it in new ways such as rule of law, legitimacy of the government, accountability to the people, transparent economic sector, corruption less activities of government and non-governmental sector. Good governance is corruption-free government based on the rule of law

and efficient in public sector management. The main root of Good governance is *Ram Rajya* meaning the ideal state. Vedic norms and values of Nepal were guided by this philosophy. It is a prospective of statesmanship in the eastern philosophy. Ram was a model King in eastern society. He was very famous and popular among the people. He even did not hesitate to send his wife to jungle to address the public voice (Ramayana). Thus, Nepal is a country which is influenced by the Vedic culture *Ram Rajya* as well as new term Good Governance. Governance comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which all the stakeholders, viz., the state, private sector, civil society and citizens articulate their interests. Both of these concepts have the same theme, i.e. to be responsible to the people. New constitution of Nepal has tried to strengthen Ram Rajya as well as Good Governance in Nepal.

Challenges of politicization in Good Governance in Nepal

Good governance is not fully exercised in Nepal. There are many hurdles to its successful implementation. Several factors are directly and indirectly responsible for the poor performance of good governance in Nepal. Corruption, no local level election for long time, lack of timely political consensus among major political parties and political instability, weak civil society, problem in bureaucracy, unregulated private sector, underdevelopment and ignorance/ lack of awareness are the major challenges to good governance in Nepal. Corruption is prevalent everywhere in Nepal. Political and bureaucratic corruption is even more severe. Officials from grass root level to top level officials are involved in corruption. Corruption is the toughest challenge to good governance in Nepal. There had been no local level election for more than 20 years. Political instability has been the characteristics feature of Nepali politics. There is no political consensus among the political parties on key political issues. Even if they come to common understanding, it would take relatively longer time for them to reach up to that point. Public administration is highly influenced by major political parties. So they are more like sister organization of political parties. As bureaucratic system is the main implementing body of good governance, but in Nepal it has several weaknesses and loop holes. It is traditional. Bureaucrats lack to show professionalism in their work. There is the practice of red-tapism, nepotism, favoritism in the bureaucracy.

Conclusion

The politics and public administration are always interrelated in many aspects. It is inevitable in the state affairs. But the issue is ethics and norms of political matters that should be maintained rather than interference of the jurisdiction of Public Administration. Politicization of Public

Administration has adverse impacts in the state affairs. It has led to the failure of smooth functionality. There is no accountability from the side of politicians, leaders and the personnel of the organization in the issues of state affairs and the people. Abuse of authority, nepotism, bribery, impunity, lack of efficiency and effectiveness in work, lack of people's participation, and political nexus in every sector has been serious challenges for the good governance. Thus politicization has created problems in the good governance of Nepal. Political intervention should be stopped and administration should be made clean and smooth so as to maintain accountability, transparency, rule of law and legitimacy so as to initiate practice of good governance in the country.

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