There are a number of approaches, models and theories presently characterising the subject-area of Comparative Public Administration. Particularly after Second World War, a number of approaches have emerged in comparative administrative analysis. Much of this effort is based on an adaptation of the developments in comparative anthropology, comparative sociology and comparative politics. We will now study different approaches in a nut-shell.

5.8.1 Bureaucratic Approach

The most influential of the approaches is Max Weber’s ideal-type bureaucratic model. This has structural characteristics of hierarchy, specialisation, role-specificity, recruitment by merit, promotion by seniority-cum-merit, career development, training, discipline, separation between personal and official means, etc. The emphasis in the model is on rationality and efficiency.

There have been a number of studies conducted in a comparative context employing the bureaucratic model of Weber. Notable scholars in this area include Michael Crozier (on France), Roy Laird (on the Soviet Union) and Monroe Berque (on Egypt). The methodological inspiration of an ideal-type model and specific context of a legal-rational authority system poses constraints in the application of Weber’s model to the comparative study of bureaucracies. Nevertheless, for an analysis of the bureaucracies, of the developed countries, the model is still considered eminently useful. Dwight Waldo views Weber’s bureaucratic model as a "paradigm" of Public Administration.

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5.8.2 Behavioural Approach

The behavioural approach emphasises “facts”, rigorous scientific methods of data collection and analysis, quantification, experimentation, testing, verification and an interdisciplinary orientation. It focuses on the analysis of human behaviour in administrative settings.
5.8.3 General Systems Approach

Further, the general systems approach views an administrative system as a subsystem of the society. It looks at various parts of an administrative system (formal organisation, informal organisation, roles, individuals) and examines the interlinkages among various parts. Besides, the approach analyses the dynamic interactions between the administrative system and its external environment.

5.8.4 Ecological Approach

One of the most popular approaches in Comparative Public Administration is the ecological approach which has been stressed considerably by Fred Riggs. This approach examines the interactions between an administrative system and its external environment. Thus the impact of the political system, economic system, social system and the cultural system, on the structure and behaviour of the administrative system as well as the influence of the administrative system on these environmental structures is highlighted in the ecological approach.

5.8.5 Structural—Functional Approach

A related approach, drawn mainly from Anthropology and Sociology, is the structural-functional approach. A structure, according to this approach, is a pattern of behaviour that has become a standard feature of a social system. Further, a function denotes the impact of a structure on another structure and the interrelationships among various structures.

Fred Riggs has successfully applied the ecological and structural-functional approaches in his analysis of societies and their administrative systems. His typology of “agraria-transitia-industria” systems, developed in 1957, was superseded by the typology of “fused-prismatic diffracted” societies that was constructed in 1959. For the past thirty years or so, Riggs's model of prismatic society and its administrative system known as "sala" has ruled the contemporary model-building scene in Comparative Public Administration. Despite criticisms and certain inherent methodological limitations, the prismatic-sala model has fascinated the students and practitioners of Public Administration in "developing" countries. A prismatic society, according to Riggs, is characterised by a growing degree of structural differentiation but not matched by an equal degree of integration (coordination). This integration lag is reflected in almost all aspects of the functioning of a prismatic society.

A prismatic society and its 'sala' are characterised by 'heterogeneity', formalism and overlapping. Further, overlapping has five dimensions: poly-communalism, poly-normativism, bazaar-canteen model, authority versus control and nepotism. These features relate to the social, cultural, economic, political and administrative systems of the prismatic society. The details of these characteristics are found in all important books on Public Administration.

5.8.6 Development Approach

A very well-known conceptual approach in Comparative Public Administration is of 'Development Administration' which has been elaborately dealt with in a separate unit. This approach focuses on certain characteristics of a dynamic administrative system, e.g. goal-orientation, change-orientation, progressiveness, innovativeness, participation and responsiveness.

Besides, the above, there are a number of other less-known approaches to comparative administrative analysis. These include "information-energy" model of John Dorsey and decision-making model of Martin Landau. Nevertheless, other models have not been able to match the comprehensiveness and acceptability of Weber's bureaucratic model, Riggs's prismatic model and of course, the construct of Development Administration.

It appears that the experimentation phase in model-building in Comparative Public Administration is not vigorous anymore. However, the enthusiasm for understanding the varieties of administrative patterns is alive in the scholarship of Public Administration. That is why, one can hope for newer dimensions of Comparative Public Administration emerging on the scene in the times to come.
References


