

People's Participation in the Administrative Process

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Abstract: *In the broader field of Public administration, one of the integral elements of **public accountability and control** is the concept of **people's participation**. According to available literature, the concept of people's participation **means** participation of people in the process government and administration. It implies citizens' control over administration or **public influence** on public administration. It is essential for the smooth and effective performance of the administrative machinery of the country. What this means is that people's participation makes the public administration **responsive** to the **needs and wants of the people**. It secures public support to the government policies and programmes and makes them a success. The concept of people's participation which constitutes an important **means of enforcing administrative accountability** is the subject of this article.*

Keywords: *people's participation, accountability and control, administrative process, responsive to people's needs and wants and public influence.*

I. Introduction

People's participation means participation of people in the administrative process. It implies citizens' effective performance of the administrative machinery. It makes the administration responsive to the needs of the people. It secures public support to the government policies and makes them a success. It constitutes an important means of enforcing administrative accountability.

A democratic government is based on the 'doctrine of sovereignty' which means that the people are supreme in a democracy, or the final authority in democracy is vested in the people. Therefore, administration in democracy is or should finally and ultimately be responsible to the people. It is in this context that the people's participation in administration assumes importance. It transfers the representative democracy into participatory democracy. It facilitates what is known as "**bottom-up rule**".

II. The Purpose Of The Article

The purpose of this article is to articulate the concept of people's participation in general administration and participation which is pertinent to African countries on account of them belonging to a group of developing countries of the world. .

III. People's Participation

To do justice to this aspect, we single the following elements for analysis: definition of participation, election- recall pressure groups, advisory committees, public opinion, and participation in development administration.

3.1 Definition

People's participation **means** participation of people of a country in the administrative process.

The people's participation in administration can be studied under two heads, namely,

- a. participation in general administration, and
- b. participation in development administration.

Each head is dealt with separately for analytical purposes on follows:

3.2 Participation in general administration

The people, being **ignorant** and **unorganized**, cannot generally have a definite and regular influence on administration. Hence, the public influence on administrative process is mainly **indirect** and **informal**. However, there are **certain formal modes** of people's participation in administration. They are election, recall, pressure groups, advisory committees, and public opinion. Each element is analyzed separately as follows:

3.2.1 Election

The representative democracy is classified in two kinds, namely, the Presidential Government and the Parliamentary Government.

- a) In the Presidential Government prevalent in the USA, the President is directly elected by the people. He is the Chief Executive enjoying all powers of the executive organ of the government control over Chief Executive in a presidential government like USA is direct.
- b) In the Parliamentary Government prevalent in **Britain** and **India**, the real executive, that is, Cabinet is drawn from the legislature and remains responsible to it for its policies and actions. The legislature in turn is responsible to the people. Thus the popular control over the executive in a parliamentary government like **Britain** and **India** is indirect as it is exercised through the elected Parliament.

People`s confidence in a **democracy** whether **presidential** or **parliamentary**, when the **government becomes insensitive, unresponsive, corrupt, irresponsible and inefficient**, it can be removed from office by means of **periodic elections**. The **elections** are the **medium** of expression of people`s confidence in the popular government. This characteristic attributes of western democratic system of government.

3.2.2 Recall

It is a **direct democratic device**. It is used in Switzerland and thirteen states of USA where the administrative officials are directly elected by the people. The system of recall enables the people to remove the elected official from office before the expiry of his tenure, when he fails to represent their will. In other words, the official has to vacate office before the completion of his tenure, if he is defeated in a recall poll. The device of recall can be used when the people are not satisfied with the performance of the elected official while in office and it does not require any charges of illegal actions. The chief merit of recall is that it enables the people to hold their public officials continuously responsible for their professional role and duties.

This recall device distinguishes western democratic governmental system from the communist and African governmental system, as the latter system contains some tendencies of authoritarianism and feudalism some where the will of the people may be manipulated to meet the demands of the unpopular ruling parties.

3.2.3 Pressure groups

The term “pressure group” originated in USA. It is a group of people who are organized actively for the purpose of promoting their common interest. Some examples of such groups are voluntary agencies, trade unions, employment associations, professional associations, student unions and so forth. These groups are also called as interest groups or vested groups.

They exert pressure on the administration to promote their objectives. They influence the policy-making and policy- implementation in government through legal and legitimate methods like publicity, propagandizing, petitioning, and public debating, maintaining contacts with their legislators and so forth. They act as liaison between the administration and their members.

However, sometimes they resort to illegitimate and illegal methods like strikes, violent activities and corruption which damages public interest and administrative integrity

3.2.4 Advisory committees

These are also called as Advisory Councils or Boards. They are attached to the administrative system at all levels from top to bottom. They consist of expert citizens and representatives of the special interests.

They act as a link between the **administration** and the **public** and provide advice to the government on administrative policies, problems and procedures. The recommendations made by these agencies are only advisory in nature and are not binding on the department to which they are attached. However, they act as an effective instrument of the department`s public relations and make administration democratic in character.

3.2.5 Public opinion

Unlike the above formal modes, public opinion is an informal mode of people`s participation in administration. Public opinion of people is expressed in relation to the government policies and actions. It is expressed through various agencies like:

- press,
- public platform,
- political parties,
- radio, television, cinema,
- pressure groups, educational institutions and so on.
- Of these, independent press is the most effective agency of public opinion. It is described as the “fourth estate” of democracy.

The importance of public opinion as a mode of people`s participation in government and administration is highlighted by the following points:

- a. It influences the policies and programmes of the government.
- b. It keeps the administration responsive and acts as a watchdog on it.
- c. It acts as a source of laws and facilitates their successful implementation.
- d. It safeguards individual liberty by keeping a check on unpopular and undemocratic activities of the government.

3.3 Participation in development administration

People`s participation in development administration means direct involvement of people in the process of administering development programmes meant for bringing about socio-economic changes in the society. It embraces the following dimensions:

- a) Participation in decision-making
- b) Participation in implementation
- c) Participation in monitoring the activities and the evaluation of the policy results
- d) Participation in the sharing of benefits including profits and services

People participate in development administration through various mechanisms like Panchayati Raj institutions, cooperative institutions, mahila mandals, farmers service societies, yuvak kendras and other voluntary/ non governmental organizations.

People`s participation in development administration is beneficial in various respects in that it:

1. **provides** administration a wealth of information on local socio-cultural, economic, ecological and technical conditions. This information is highly useful in the process of planning, programming and implementation of development programmes.
2. **leads** to the selection of those projects which are of direct relevance to the people.
3. **facilitates** mobilization of local resources in the form of cash, labour, materials and so on which are very essential for the programmes success.
4. **acts** as a safeguard against the abuse of administrative authority and thus reduces the scope for corruption in the operation of programmes.
5. **prevents** the hijacking of programme benefits by richer and powerful sections due to the involvement of poorer and weaker sections of the society. Thus, it leads to the equitable distribution of benefits.
6. **makes** the local community easily accept the developmental change and more tolerable to mistakes and failures.
7. **reduces** the financial burden on government by sustaining the programmes even after the withdrawal of its support. They can be managed by the volunteers or community-based workers.
8. **enhances** the ability and competence of the people to assume responsibility and solve their own problems. It develops a spirit of self-reliance, initiative and leadership among the people.
9. **promotes** spirit de corps in the community and thus strengthens democracy at the grassroots level.

However, various factors **limit the degree and effectiveness** of people`s participation in government and administration, particularly in development administration. They are:

- a. aristocratic and mechanical bureaucracy.
- b. unfavorable socio-economic environment like casteism, communalism, poverty, illiteracy and so on.
- c. negative political interference
- d. time constraints, that is, time-bound nature of programmes.
- e. role of middlemen and sycophants
- f. corruption and low standards of conduct in administration
- g. faulty administrative procedures
- h. lack of participative culture

IV. Conclusion

It has become apparent that people`s participation is a very essential element of public accountability and control. It has been analyzed under two main heads, namely,

- a. participation in general administration under which such aspects as election, recall, pressure groups, advisory committees and public opinion, and
- b. participation in development administration which is intended to bring about socio-economic changes in the society. It embraces a number of dimensions such as participation in :
 - policy making and decision making,

- implementation,
- monitoring and evaluation, and
- sharing benefits.

However, it has also become apparent that a number of factors impact negatively upon development administration with special reference to developing societies.

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