

SOME ASPECTS CONCERNING THE ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS*

by Sydney T. Divers

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honoured to be one of the guest speakers at this General Assembly of the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration.

Everywhere one witnesses the urge for development which today has its true basis in the progressive advancement of the welfare of peoples. This is no less true for countries which have already reached a high level of development, than for countries still in the early stages of development.

Successful development efforts, through which means only can even a reasonable level of living be secured for many millions of people within a reasonable period of time, depends upon a competent system and organization for governmental management and administration. The business of government becomes increasingly complex, and interferes increasingly with the lives and needs of peoples. With barriers of time and space crumbling, private industry and other activities cannot in any country escape from some governmental influences and controls. Government management and administration, which I believe describes more accurately what is popularly known as public administration, must be more dynamic and imaginative, and have wider horizons than before, if the needs and challenges even now around us, and growing, are to be met.

It is important, however, to recognize that systems and even methods of administration can rarely be transplanted from one country to another unchanged and be expected to thrive. Traditions, customs, political factors, family and social classes, and many other factors will influence perhaps decisively the development of systems of administration which can never be static.

* Acting as Advisor to the EROPA Work Group on Academic Preparation of Government Officials, Mr. Sydney T. Divers gave the above speech at The Second General Assembly of EROPA in Bangkok on Oct. 8, 1962.

Many have still to learn that this art or science of management and administration permeates all activities. It cannot be picked up casually, and must not be left to chance. The general management practitioner or consultant is likely to be as valuable to an engineering project, as an engineer is to a general development project containing engineering activities. Training and experience in management and administration aspects should be essential parts of the make-up of any technical officer aspiring to the higher levels of his profession, or indeed outside his profession.

This complex subject of management and administration, the systems which evolve therefrom, and the ever-increasing volume of learned, and sometimes inspired, thinking, studies and writings, depends in the ultimate result upon the actions of men, individually and collectively. All of us know examples of well designed plans, with adequate, if not lavish supply of resources, proper instructions, and yet failing badly in achievement, through some form of inertia in the operations of people. The demands of the times cannot tolerate this inertia.

The vital role which people play in all activities has resulted in the development of Personnel Management as an essential component of general management. It is so vital because conduct, self-discipline, and urge to achievement cannot derive satisfactorily from academic institutions alone, but must be inspired and arise from within the organization itself in which people serve. The essence of personnel management is to get the best possible results from the co-operative efforts of people. The results to be obtained from such co-operative efforts will depend materially upon two main factors directly connected with academic preparation: Firstly, the quality of the raw material to be used, that is the quality of recruits to the public services; and secondly, the training given after entry to the public services. And it is in these matters particularly that we ought to adjust our thinking; that we are clinging too much to past customs and methods, designed for reasons and situations now greatly changed; that in a world demanding progress, we are static; and that changes rarely result from conscious research and forward thinking, but mostly from force of circumstances. There is another factor which influences academic preparation, namely, the organizational pattern and structure which must ensure that qualities and experience are used effectively and are not wasted.

There should always be reasonably clear appreciation of the public service manpower

requirements of all kinds and the potential supply for a long period ahead. Twenty years is not too long.

Let us first consider the new entrant to public services. In nearly all countries, may be all, public service commissions, or boards, or similar bodies have been established, sometimes constitutionally enjoying almost complete independence from the government of the day, for all primary purpose of controlling all recruitment to the public services, and to ensure that recruits are obtained without privilege and by fair competition, and that they meet prescribed standards required for the public services. Some public service commissions, of course, have additional functions.

Taking the long term view, which we should, the recruitment of a new entrant serves more than the immediate purpose of filling a vacancy in a particular grade. He should have the potential to justify the further preparation and training which will be expended upon him by qualifying in due time for higher rank. But far more important, the new entrants being recruited for all activities and at various levels, provide the field from which, probably many years later, will come the public service leaders of the future in general administration and technical fields.

Academic preparation, and all forms of training prior to and after recruitment, must therefore be so designed that future needs, even for the highest, will always find a reasonable field of men of adequate calibre, experience and competence from whom choice can be made on the basis of merit.

Generally, the practice in the Region is to require academic preparation to a standard commensurate with the level of proposed entry, to be completed at school or university, and for the public service commission to select the successful candidates by means of competitive examinations, or some other selective method maintaining the principle of fair competition.

There are exceptions, mainly in the technical and professional fields such as medical, where later entry is permitted after private employment. For certain grades there is often an essential qualification that a university degree must be held appropriate to the particular grade or class to which entry is sought. But can we be satisfied that this academic preparation upon which the system of recruitment is mainly based, is sufficient to produce the quality of personnel capable of meeting future needs and to provide that field of selection in future years from which

leaders will be chosen? Are we relying too much upon tests imposed within too limited a period of a person's life, and creating such an inflexible structure that it becomes difficult to find and bring up the brilliant man who could not fulfill the initial entry conditions? Or denying transfer from a field in which initial academic preparation and qualifications were secured, to an entirely new field for which practical experience demonstrates superior qualities and aptitudes?

Perhaps preparation for government service should include prior service to some outside enterprises and entry conditions made to encourage this. Some interchange between local authorities staff and central government staff is good. I believe that much more is possible in technical fields to recruit young persons at higher certificate or matriculation level by means of skilled selection methods who disclose the potentials for honours degrees or the equivalent, and to provide them with special academic preparation under governmental arrangements. This might be through the medium of government institutions or "sandwich" courses at technical colleges or universities and actual working experience. Final qualification could confer some distinction acceptable as equivalent of a good university degree, and those who fail could continue in government service as supporting technicians.

The academic preparation of public service officials must not stop on entry to the service, or be considered as satisfied by attendance at initial training courses, and an occasional one in later years, as so often happens. This is too easy a solution and an inadequate one. Initial entry training is important and often sets the seal on what a young man or woman will subsequently become. It must be well planned and designed to give him a good start to his career, whilst making him a useful member of his chosen profession. Initial training must not, therefore, consist almost entirely of classroom work and lectures, but should include also a planned rotation of jobs under experienced officials. The higher the entry class, the longer generally should be the period of preparation, that is initial training. It is well worthwhile treating new entrants to what in the Region are usually termed gazetted posts, as supernumerary to the normal establishment of the ministry, department, etc. to which posted whilst undergoing this period of preparation, and which might well equate with the period of probation.

I mentioned earlier the necessity to make certain that when future requirements for the most senior officers arise, there will always be a field of selection available based upon quality and only tempered by seniority. Such objective demands preparation.

Intermediate and senior grade officers must not consider it beneath their dignity to attend training courses and seminars concerned with the higher levels of administration. It is a good thing also that the most senior officers should participate occasionally in training courses to give the benefit of their practical experience to the students. A valuable expedient is to have a confidential system whereby senior officers can identify those junior ones in the relatively early years of the latter's service, say after 10 years, who appear to possess potentials for very high rank. Some of the officers thus identified should be moved around judiciously in order to provide them with wide and general experience.

It has also been found of value to send young officers of quality to industry for one to two years to gain outside experience, particularly in such activities as financial controls, management, accounting, personnel management, executive planning, and control of operations generally, and particularly research and development activities.

Personnel research work is necessary to study the performance of officials recruited from different sources and from different pre-entry academic courses and subjects. Variations of post-entry training may become necessary, and the information is likely to be of value to education authorities.

A valuable research project was carried out, part of which was a study of the higher grades of the British Civil Service from 1870 until 1954.¹ The changing pattern of the origin of the higher civil servants (relatively few in number) was interesting and the changes became most marked after 1959. Prior to that date nearly all the higher grades originated from the leading universities, although there were always some who were privately educated and succeeded at the competitive entry examinations. Since then, there has been an increasing number promoted from lower entry classes and who had their academic pre-entry preparation in ordinary schools. The transfer of members of the professional, scientific and technical branches of the service to the administrative service is not uncommon.

The needs for academic preparation materially depend upon the structure of the public services and the methods of entry. Suffice it to say in this short talk, that the development needs of the Region would seemingly best be met by having various levels of entry, with the ability for

¹ Higher Civil Servants in Britain, R.K. Kelsall. Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London.

the outstanding man to rise from bottom to top in practice as well as theory. Academic training should facilitate this. Training in management and administration should be provided as a matter of course to all promising technical officers and there should be no insurmountable barrier to a technical officer becoming the head of an administrative department, etc. if he is so fitted. The whole question of the structure of public services warrants closer study.

Perhaps I have been provocative. I hope I have. As I said at the start of my talk, insufficient attention of the right kind has been given to this important subject of producing an adequate supply of competent public servants in all fields, with pride of profession, and the ability determination to make a success of the development activities upon which the hopes of millions rest, and which is the hallmark of our times.

Idea

Our ideas are for the most part like bad sixpence, and we spend our lives in trying to pass them on one another.

Samuel Butler

ความคิด

ส่วนใหญ่ของความคิดของเรานั้นคล้ายกับเหรียญ (หกเพนนี) เกือบ ๆ และเราก็ใช้ชีวิตของเราด้วยการพยายามถ่ายทอดความคิดนั้น ๆ ให้กับคนอื่น ๆ

แซมมวล บัตเลอร์
