

Role Perception of Administrators and Politicians: A Study of Himachal Pradesh

Simmi Agnihotri*
Sapna K Sharma**

INTRODUCTION

There is a rapid increase in the function of the state under an ideological obsession of a welfare concept. There is increasing infiltration of politics into administration. With the increase in the activities of the government in the field of economic and social well being of the people, the responsibilities of the government have greatly expanded. Therefore, the three organs, namely, parliament, cabinet and the administration, are constantly helping one and other in the process of arriving at decisions.

Administration is generally a sub-system of the political system. Administration is an important aspect in the political process. Government today has both preventive function, like maintenance of law and order and collection of revenue, as well as welfare oriented functions, like providing education, transport and sanitation. Politics is the means by which society responds to these issues and decides how to resolve them. Politics involves a choice among alternative values, philosophies and goals. Policies are an area of change and indeterminacy and administration is one of stability and routine.

Politics-administration relationship has been an old theme since the beginning of intellectual inquiry into the structures and processes of administration. The relation between politics and administration – and especially the distribution of power between the two spheres - is a classic theme in political science since the writings of Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson and several other prominent writers. Today, it seems as if the idea of a total separation between a political and an administrative sphere has been abandoned. Rather than a dichotomy, politics and administration is today seen as two overlapping spheres. In practical terms, this notion implies that administrators most probably are important political actors. An overlapping between politics and administration also opens up for the possibility that there may be both conflict and co-operation between politicians and administrators.

A developing democracy cannot function properly when harmonious relationship between politicians and administrators are strained and if there is lack of mutual respect and absence of any identity of goals. The

* Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla (H.P.)

**Assistant Professor, Government College Bhoranj, District Hamirpur (H.P.)

relationship between politics and administration has evolved over a fairly long period of time. Its seeds were perhaps sown by Montesquieu in 1748 when he postulated the need to separate legislative and executive powers and their union would militate against individual liberty. But with time the complexities of the governmental functions increased and the concentration of politicians, administrators and academicians started over the separation and relationship between the administration and politics. The study of relationship between politics and administration became a very important aspect to define an identity in the field of public administration.

The role of administration is important in the field of policy formulation though politics plays a pivotal role in the policy in the modern democracies, the distinction between politics and administration is not watertight, is in fact often overlapping, even though the two processes, political and administrative have different roles to play in a governmental system, despite interlocking and interfering of politics and administration, they do retain their separate values and styles. The relationship between the permanent and political executives has been a subject of debate ever since the local government was started. It has also been found that in several places the unholy alliance between them had made the local government bodies dysfunctional thus resulting in increasing corruption, nepotism and opportunism in a raw form. But it is strange that in the post-independence era of the country which is devoted to the ideals and principles of liberty, equality and social system, the qualities of administration as well as those of political leadership both have declined disastrously. However, continued differentiation between the administrative and political aspects of the government is essential for the protection of the national and public interests. So there is dire need to conduct an original research on the relationship between administrators and politicians. While studying the relationship between administrators and politicians, a researcher has to study various aspects, such as role perception, performance, images, interaction and conflict. The present study attempts to examine the role perception of politicians and administrators at the district level in Himachal Pradesh. The present paper aims at studying the role perception of administrators and politicians at the district level in Himachal Pradesh.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on the primary data. The data was collected through a sample survey. For the collection of primary data well prepared schedules, which consisted of both open-ended and close-ended questions, were administered to the respondents selected through sampling method. For the collection of first hand data in the present study multi stage random-cum-purposive sampling was adopted. At the first stage, two districts (Chamba and Una) were selected to represent Himachal Pradesh. At the second stage, two blocks, one from each district, were selected purposively. At the fourth stage, a

total of 220 respondents, which includes 116 politician (58 from Chamba district and 58 from Una district) and 104 administrators (51 from Chamba and 53 from Una district) were selected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Role perception means what the actor himself thinks is required of him in the office. The actor is placed in some institutional setting in which he occupies a particular position. He is therefore, exposed to two related influences: one emanating from the position he occupies and the other from the institutional setup he belongs to. What he expects from his own position and what he can actually do while performing his role are influenced, to a considerable extent, by the norms the institution he belongs to has developed over the years. It is, therefore, necessary to look closely at what the actor believes to be his role and, at the same time, what norms he believes to be salient for his role performance. Therefore, it is important to find out the normative referents an administrator perceives to be pertinent for his behavior and the role he defines for himself.

Each of them (politicians and Administrators) occupies a different set of roles with its own normative referents a behavioural code. But in actual practice there are many occasions when both the administrators and the politicians have to interact and influence the behaviour of each other. The determination of policy goals, supposedly, is an exclusive preserve of the politician. Here also administrators influence the behaviour of the politician by their virtual monopoly on collections of facts as bases of policy decisions, determining policy alternatives. Implementation of policies is supposed to be the exclusive concern of the administrator. But in actual situations behaviour of administrators is much more influenced by political leaders with whom he comes into contact in the process of programme implementation.

Administrators' Role Perception

Administrators' Perception: Primacy of Rules and Regulations

To perform the task of organization, administrator has to follow bureaucratic rules and regulations. These rules and regulations help them in the performance of their expected roles in an administrative organization. Administrators may refuse to be guided by these rules and regulations in performing their roles in the organization, or they may go on being guided by rules and regulations without taking any interest in their work. Thus it is important to know whether or not administrators give primacy to rules and regulations. District-wise frequency distribution in this regard has been presented in table 1.

The table 1 reveals that 75.00 per cent of administrators were agreed with the statement 'Administrators' primary concern is to see that rules and regulations are strictly followed', whereas 16.35 per cent were

partly agreed and 8.65 per cent were disagreed with the statement. This indicates that to a majority of administrators, adherence to rules and regulations is the primary concern of administrative system.

Table 1
Administrators' Perception: Primacy of Rules and Regulations

Sr. No.	Statement	Responses			
		Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Administrators' primary concern is to see that rules and regulations are strictly followed.	78 (75.00)	17 (16.35)	9 (8.65)	104 (100.00)
2.	Administrative procedure should be strictly observed even if it delays implementation.	59 (56.73)	24 (23.08)	21 (20.19)	104 (100.00)
3.	Administrator should use his judgment to meet the demands when the existing rules either confusing or do not exist at all.	51 (49.04)	35 (33.65)	18 (17.31)	104 (100.00)
4.	Administrators should not hesitate to ignore rules and regulations if it solves certain problems.	70 (67.31)	20 (19.23)	14 (13.46)	104 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

Regarding the statement that administrative procedure should be strictly observed even if it delays implementation, it was found that 56.73 per cent of administrators were agreed, 23.08 per cent were partly agreed and 20.19 per cent were disagreed. This indicates that to a majority of administrators adherence to rules and regulations is the primary concern in performing the functions of administration.

However, administrators may face situations where the existing rules and regulations are confusing or do not exist at all. Alternatively, administrators may find that strict adherence to rules and regulations would either lead them to make wrong decisions or would not help them in making any decision. In such situations, administrators depend upon their own judgment and experience instead of waiting for instructions above or stick to existing rules. As the table indicates that out of total administrators, 49.04 per cent were agreed with the statement that administrator should use his judgment to meet the demands of a situation when there exist either confusing rules or do not exist any rule at all. It is worth mentioning that only 17.31 per cent of administrators were found disagreed with the statement. They think that administrators should not act according to their own judgment.

While furnishing their opinion with regard to the statement that 'Administrators should not hesitate to ignore rules and regulations if it solves certain problems', it was found that out of total selected administrators, 67.31 per cent of administrators were agreed, 19.23 per cent were partly and 13.46 per cent were disagreed with the statement. Data reveals that majority of administrators prepared to ignore rules and regulations if this facilitate solution of certain problem.

It can be concluded from the above table that the primary objective of the administrators is to see that rules and regulations are strictly followed. Though in some situations administrators agreed to use their own judgment is resolving some problems.

Administrators’ Perception: Responsibility

Responsibility denotes an obligation of an individual to carry out his duties. Administrative responsibility means administrators’ responsiveness to public will. It is important to know the perception of the administrator about the importance of the responsibility in administrative organization. Here an attempt has been made to know the administrators’ perception about the role and importance of responsibility in performance of administrative tasks. The data in this regard has been presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Administrators’ Perception: Role and Importance of Responsibility in Performing the Administrative Jobs and Tasks

Sr. No.	Statement	Responses			
		Important	Less important	Not important	Total
1.	In dispensing off the defined duties and functions.	90 (86.54)	14 (13.46)	0 (00.00)	104 (100.00)
2.	In providing better services attitude towards accepting more responsibilities.	92 (88.46)	12 (11.54)	0 (00.00)	104 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

Table 2 shows that to a majority of administrators, responsibility plays an important role in the performance of administrative jobs and tasks. To 86.54 per cent of administrators role and importance of responsibility in dispensing off the defined duties and functions is very important. And to 13.46 per cent of administrators it is important to some extent. With regard to second statement 88.46 per cent of administrators recognized that the role and importance of responsibility in providing better services attitude towards accepting more responsibilities is very important. Thus it is clear from the above analyses that administrators recognized the role and importance of responsibility in administrative system.

Administrators’ Perception: Hierarchical Values

Perception of administrators about the hierarchical values has been shown in Table 3 exhibits that 51.92 per cent of administrators were agreed that in all the situations administrators should be guided by the instructions received from their superiors, 31.73 per cent were partly agreed and 16.35 per cent were disagreed. It can be concluded that this norm is found to be most strong in the administrative hierarchy. This is further confirmed by the fact that 65.38 per cent of administrators consider it important that they should keep their superior satisfied. This satisfaction may mean either act according superior’s instructions in the implementation of public policies or establishment of personal relationships with the superiors. It can be inferred that obedience of superior’s instruction has a great relevance for

administrative behavior. Upward differences are reflected from the responses related to the proposition that 'If the instructions do not apply to certain situations, the administrators should not be bound by them'. In this regard, 55.77 per cent of administrators were found agreed; whereas 23.08 per cent were partly agreed and 21.15 per cent were disagreed with it.

Table 3
Administrators' Perception of Hierarchical Values

Sr. No.	Statement	Responses			
		Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Administrator should be guided only by the instructions received from his/her superior.	54 (51.92)	33 (31.73)	17 (16.35)	104 (100.00)
2.	The concern of an administrator should be to see that his/her superiors are satisfied.	68 (65.38)	28 (26.93)	8 (7.69)	104 (100.00)
3.	If the instructions do not apply to certain situations, the administrators should not be bound by them.	58 (55.77)	24 (23.08)	22 (21.15)	104 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

It can be inferred that majority of administrators do not feel themselves bound by the superior's instructions when these instructions prove inadequate in certain local situations.

Administrators' Perception: Superiors Attitude and Behaviour

Superior's attitude and behaviour towards the subordinates and towards the development of an organization has an important impact on the better performance of the organizational tasks. There may attitudinal and behavioural aspects which would be pertinent to see the superior's attitude and behaviour in the organization. Some of the aspects have been taken to know the administrators perception about superiors attitude and behaviour. The data collected has been presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Administrators Perception: Superiors Attitude and Behaviour

Sr. No.	Statement	Responses			
		All the time	Some time	Not at all	Total
1.	Superiors take interest in better methods of work and welcome new ideas.	7 (6.73)	53 (50.96)	44 (42.31)	104 (100.00)
2.	Superiors provide necessary co-operation, support and guidelines in performing the difficult tasks.	41 (39.42)	51 (49.04)	12 (11.54)	104 (100.00)
3.	They take subordinates in confidence before doing any important functions.	33 (31.73)	41 (39.42)	30 (28.85)	104 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

Figures in Table 4 clearly indicate that 42.31 per cent of administrators do not take interest in better methods of work and welcome new ideas as furnished by the subordinates. 50.96 per cent of administrators feel that sometime superiors welcome new ideas and better methods of work. Only in 6.73

per cent of cases superiors take interest in welcoming subordinate's new ideas and better methods all the time. It can be inferred that superiors attitude towards their subordinate's new ideas and better methods of work was not found to be healthy one. They do not take any interest in new ideas and better methods of work.

With regard to the statement that 'Superiors provide necessary co-operation, support and guidelines in performing the difficult tasks', 49.04 per cent of administrators were of the opinion that sometime superiors provide necessary co-operation, support and guidelines in performing the difficult tasks, 39.42 per cent of administrators opined that all the time superiors provide necessary co-operation, support and guidelines in performing the difficult tasks and 11.54 per cent of administrators do not find their superiors co-operative and supportive in difficult tasks.

Superiors can implement development programmes with greater success by taking their subordinates into confidence. In this regard, 31.73 per cent of administrators recognized that superiors take subordinates into confidence before doing any important function, 39.42 per cent of administrators felt that superiors do it sometimes and 28.85 per cent of administrators opined that superiors do not take their subordinate into confidence at all. It can be concluded that superiors do not take their subordinate into confidence and act independently. They also do not extend their cooperation, support and guidance their subordinates and also do not taking interest in better methods suggested by the subordinates.

Politicians' Role Perception

Politicians have occupied a crucial position in the system. Not only they have a major share in defining systems goals, but also a prime responsibility of deciding the strategy for realization of these goals, mobilizing support and supervising their implementation. Consideration of such issues rendered that it is of utmost important to explore the attribute of leadership in order to ascertain whether or not they are supportive of systematic values. Furthermore, it is important to know their perception about the role and performance. Here an attempt has been made to discuss role perception of politicians. This discussion is based on their perception about democratic ideals, representative roles and partisan identity. All these have been enumerated in successive paragraphs.

Politician's Perception: Democratic Orientation

Politicians are a part of democratic system. They are believed to tackle the problem democratically. That means they should have faith in democratic ideals. There consistency of belief in adopting democratic methods for tackling problems has an important stimulation to the political as well as administrative progress in a democratic country. Politician's perception about the democratic ideals has been shown in Table 5.

Table indicates that the majority of politicians have responded favourably on first two questions. Here it is important to clarify that if a respondent is consistent in his beliefs in adopting democratic methods for solving problems, he should react favourably to the first question and unfavourably to the second one. But the frequency distribution presents a different story. In response to first question 59.48 per cent of politicians and in response to second question 46.55 per cent of politicians responded favourably leading to a conclusion that there is no consensus among political leaders on both the questions.

Table 5
Politicians' Perception: Democratic Ideals

Sr. No.	Statements	Responses			
		Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Democratic principle should be obeyed even if it delays development.	69 (59.48)	32 (27.59)	15 (12.93)	116 (100.00)
2.	If some misguided sections of the people do not listen to persuasion they should be suppressed in the interest of the country.	54 (46.55)	30 (25.86)	32 (27.59)	116 (100.00)
3.	One should leave the democratic principle if the unity of country is at stake.	92 (79.31)	22 (18.97)	2 (1.72)	116 (100.00)
4.	Political parties which involve in dividing the country should be banned permanently.	102 (87.93)	14 (12.07)	0 (0.00)	116 (100.00)
5.	Under certain compelling conditions a politician is justified in acting un democratically.	72 (62.07)	30 (25.86)	14 (12.07)	116 (100.00)
6.	You cannot act according to the principles of democracy with those who themselves do not believe in democracy.	54 (46.55)	40 (34.48)	22 (18.97)	116 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

Responses to third statement reveal that 79.31 per cent of politicians were agreed that if unity of country is at stake, then one should leave the democratic principle, 18.97 per cent were partly agreed with this and 1.72 per cent were disagreed. With regard to banning of political parties involved in dividing the country, 87.93 per cent of politicians were of the opinion that the political parties involved in such activities should be banned permanently, whereas, 12.07 percent of politicians were partly agreed with this. Agreement of majority of politicians on the statement that political parties which involve in dividing the country should be banned permanently is quite clear. Further, out of total politicians, 62.07 per cent of politicians approve politician's acting undemocratically under certain compelling situations. It seems that the politicians are not much attached to the democratic principles. It is also in conformity with the responses to third statement, where majority of politician are in the favour of leaving democratic principles when the unity of country is at stake. This is again confirmed by the responses to other item, that 'you cannot act according to the principles of democracy with those who themselves do not believe in democracy'. 46.55 per cent of politicians found agreed with the proposition, 34.48 per cent of politicians were partly agreed and 18.97 per cent of politicians were disagreed with the proposition. This

is somewhat ridiculous that the politicians do not believe in democratic principles in dealing with those who do not believe in democracy.

Politicians’ Perception: Democratic Orientation

Here an attempt has been made to examine politicians’ conception of the role of a representative. This has been presented in Table 6. Table depicts that out of total politicians, 48.28 per cent of politicians recognize that they should implement the demands and expectations of the people and should not act independently. But on the other hand 27.58 per cent did not respond positively, that they disagreed with this statement and 24.14 per cent agreed only partly. This indicates that there is no strong conformity among the politicians to this norm. Regarding the pressure exerted by the politicians on the administration, 55.17 per cent of politicians recognized that politicians should use pressure on the administrators to implement his action if he convinced that his action is good for the society as a whole. It is clear from the data that the percentage of politicians who were found agreed was highest but there seem no conformity among the politicians related to it. Because 30.17 per cent of politicians partly agreed with this and 14.66 per cent of politicians showed their disagreement with this statement.

Table 6
Politicians’ Perception: Politicians’ Representative Roles

Sr. No.	Statements	Responses			
		Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Political leader should only implement the demand and expectations of the people and not act independently.	56 (48.28)	28 (24.14)	32 (27.58)	116 (100.00)
2.	Politicians should use pressure on the administrator if he convinced that his action is good for the society as a whole.	64 (55.17)	35 (30.17)	17 (14.66)	116 (100.00)
3.	A political leader has to fulfill the wishes and aspiration of the community even if he thinks the people are misguided.	60 (51.72)	20 (17.25)	36 (31.03)	116 (100.00)
4.	Politician should follow his conviction even if this is different from what the people expect.	54 (46.55)	20 (17.24)	42 (36.21)	116 (100.00)
5.	A leader must implement his wishes over the popular wishes if it yields well for the people.	44 (37.93)	45 (38.79)	27 (23.28)	116 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

The responses to the next item in the table 8 show that politicians do not usually define their role as representative in terms of subservience to those whom they represented. Only 51.72 per cent of politicians recognized that they would be willing to follow the wishes and aspirations of the community even if he thinks the people are misguided. There seems no consensus among politicians on this item, non

agreement on this statement by 31.03 per cent of politicians and partial agreement by 17.25 per cent of politicians indicates their weak attachment to this norm.

What is more important is the fact that politicians are more in favour of autonomous role of the representative. 46.55 per cent of politicians agreed with the statement that politicians should follow his conviction even if this is different from what the people expect. But 36.21 per cent of politicians showed their disagreement with this statement, whereas 17.24 of politicians were found partly agreed with it. It can be concluded that the politicians give more preference to autonomous role of the representative to a subservient one. It is clearly indicated by their response patterns.

Further, there found lack of consensus among the politicians on the proposition that a leader must implement his wishes over the popular wishes if it yields well for the people. Out of total, 37.93 per cent of politicians agreed with the statement, 38.79 per cent were partly agreed and 23.28 per cent of politicians were disagreed with it. This indicates that politicians want to work with autonomy and try to implement their wishes.

Politician's Perception: Partisan versus Universal Identity

Identity of a politician is of two kinds, that is, partisan and universal. It is necessary to find out what is it that politicians identify themselves with. Our assumption in this respect is that a politician, who is excessively partisan, will always try to give priority to the interest of his party in preference to other entities. In behavioural terms he will tend to support his partymen even if they are in error, and will give more preference to the preservation of consensus in the party than working for the good of the community. Four items have been observed to measure all these facets of partisanship. The data in this regard has been presented in Table 7.

The table reveals that 75.86 per cent of politicians expressed themselves against the adoption of unfair means even for the purpose of strengthening one's party. Only 13.79 per cent of politicians accept that use of unscrupulous means by a politician may sometimes be forgiven if they lead to strengthening of his party. This indicates that majority of politicians do not consider partisanship as a legitimate value.

Table 7
Politicians' Perception: Partisan Identity

Sr. No.	Statement	Responses			
		Agree	Partly agree	Disagree	Total
1.	Use of unscrupulous means by a politician may sometimes be forgiven if they lead to the strengthening of his party.	16 (13.79)	12 (10.35)	88 (75.86)	116 (100.00)
2.	A political leader should always support his partymen even if their actions are at times unjustified.	10 (8.62)	14 (12.07)	92 (79.31)	116 (100.00)
3.	A politician should refrain from making proposals that may cause division in the party even if these proposals are important for the community.	58 (50.00)	23 (19.83)	35 (30.17)	116 (100.00)
4.	A political leader should give importance to the interest of the community than the party.	80 (68.97)	22 (18.97)	14 (12.06)	116 (100.00)

Note: Figures in parentheses represent percentage.

It is further confirmed from the responses to the statement that a politician should always support his partymen even if their actions are at times unjustified. Out of total politicians, 79.31 per cent of politicians responded against supporting their partymen whose actions cannot always be justified. Mere 8.62 per cent of politicians agreed with the statement. It can be concluded that politicians were not intensely partisan; their commitment to the party does not blind them to the necessity of drawing a line between what is fair and what is foul.

When asked to respond to the statement 'A politician should refrain from making proposals that may cause division in the party even if these proposals are important for the community', 50.00 per cent of politicians showed their agreement with it. But 30.17 per cent of politicians did not show any agreement with it and 19.83 per cent of politicians partly agreed with it. It can be inferred that as much as 50.00 per cent of politicians were willing enough to go the extent of even sacrificing the interest of the community in order to prevent division in the party. But there found a contradictory response regarding fourth item in the Table. The responses with regard to the statement that a politician should give importance to the interest of the community than the party, show that 68.97 per cent of politicians agreed to put the interest of the community above the party's interest, 18.97 per cent were partly agreed and 12.06 per cent of politicians were disagreed with it. From the above discussion it can be concluded that there is lack of intense partisanship among majority of politicians.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of above discussion it can be concluded that to a majority of administrators adherence to rules and regulations is the primary concern in performing the functions of administration. When there exist

either confusing rules or do not exist any rule at all, 49.04 per cent of administrators tried to use their judgment to deal with a problem. It was also found that majority of administrators prepared to ignore rules and regulations if this facilitate solution of certain problems. Administrators believed that superiors don't want to delegate. Instead they want more and more control in their hand so that they can maintain their superiority in administrative system. This very tendency harms the commitment on the part of subordinate towards their tasks and duties. Administrators considered it important that they should keep their superior satisfied. This satisfaction may mean either act according superior's instructions in the implementation of public policies or establishment of personal relationships with the superiors. The analysis of role perception of the politicians reveals that the majority of politicians believed in democratic principles. They showed their rigid attitude in following democratic principle even if it delays development. They found agreed that those political parties who involve in dividing the country should be banned. But it is somewhat ridiculous when about 81 per cent of politicians responded that one should not act according to the principles of democracy with those who themselves don not believe in democracy. But it is also noteworthy that politicians don't want to follow democratic principles when the unity of country is at stake. Politicians do wanted to work independently to some extent but they thought that implementation of public demands and expectation should be their first priority.

REFERENCES

- A. R. Tyagi, **Public Administration, Principles and Practices**, Atma Ram and Sons, Delhi, 1993.
- C. P. Bhambri, **Administrators in a Changing Society**, National Publishing House, Delhi, 1972.
- Karl Mannheim as quoted in Peter Self; **Administrative Theories and Politics**, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1979.
- Mohit, Bhattacharya, **New Horizons of Public Administration**, Jawahar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1998.
- P. N. Parashar, **History and Problems of Civil Services in India**, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2003.
- Paul H. Appleby, **Policy and Administration**, Oxford I.B.H., New Delhi, 1949.
- Shanti Kothari and Ramashray Roy, **Relations between Politicians and Administrators at the District Level**, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1969.
- <http://www.essex.ac.uk/ECPR/events/jointsessions/paperarchive/grenoble/ws21/jacobsen.pdf>.