

Chapter 2: Theoretical constructs in public administration

2.1 Introduction

A literature review of some theoretical constructs in public administration will be conducted. The historical development and separation from political science are discussed and attention is briefly focused on the different schools of thought in the study of Public Administration. For the purpose of this thesis, the generic approach to public administration will be used, especially taking into consideration that personnel administration is a core generic function of public administration. A short description of the functions of public administration are provided. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the integrated approach to human resource management and how it has evolved from the generic approach in public administration.

2.2 Historical perspectives on the development of Public Administration

The historical foundation for the study of Public Administration originated from political ideology. Aristotle (384-322BC) described the civic life of a citizen as the highest expression of humanity. The principal aim of government was to foster civic virtue. Citizens participated in the political process, not out of selfish concern, but primarily to ensure the common good. Public employees were examples of civic virtue and as such led people with only their good in mind (Bagby & Franke 2001:624).

Opposing this idealist view, Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) depicted civic virtue as the diversion of attention away from political and economic goals that were realistic and achievable. His realism was based on government as the provider of safety, power and prosperity. The leader of government should have, as his or her first goal, the safety of the state and secondly, the prosperity of the state. Virtue was obtained through the enforcement of laws (Bagby & Franke 2001:624).

Modern communitarianism and positivism are, respectively, the equivalent of Aristotle's idealism and Machiavelli's realism. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke opposed both views and propagated the enlightenment philosophy. Enlightenment philosophy was important in the development of political thought and particularly, in the development of thoughts on Public Administration. Hobbes propagated that there was a natural equality among humans and that the equality was based on humans being individualistic. Equal individuals entered into a social contract with government to preserve life, but because humans are individualistic, it could not be expected from them to agree on what constituted common good for all. In contrast to Hobbes' monarchy, Locke constructed a social contract based on the individual's pursuit of liberty and property, thus, preparing the way for a liberal democratic state (Bagby & Franke 2001:624-625).

Both Hobbes and Locke held that government was not aimed at producing virtuous citizens, but that government was merely a means to an end. Government was supposed to keep citizens safe through the lawful execution of legislation. Locke also communicated his belief in government as the maintainer of the private enterprise - where individuals are free to prosper without being hindered by too much taxation or government regulation (Bagby & Franke 2001:625).

In the wake of the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the commercial classes, political activity was seen as a bargaining activity among individuals and interest groups for power, position and wealth. Government would escape politics, in its original sense, in favour of utility. Administrative thought developed into an approach entitled, "new public management". The new public management approach goes beyond the separation of politics from administration and uses the economic market for political and administrative relationships. All that are required are rational inputs and outputs to satisfy the demands of the public. Consideration for the common good is absent from this approach. Within the market-driven principles, public organisations are made to

compete, because of their exposure to market forces. According to Bagby & Franke (2001:626), the language of contracts and transactions replaces the language of politics with its consideration for equity, fairness and the common good.

The 19th century was the age of positivism and Public Administration emerged as a discipline. Woodrow Wilson (1887:12), in his essay "The Study of Administration" stated that politics and public administration belong to different spheres and that public administration should be separated from values (thereby closely aligning with the enlightenment philosophy). Proponents of positivism, including John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and Max Weber, agreed that separating facts from values was not only possible, but also desirable. A politically neutral public service commission recruited the bureaucracy, described by Max Weber, and professional behaviour was expected from employees. Bureaucracies were instrumental in the efficient implementation of policies and programmes (Dobuzinskis 1997:299-300).

The postmodern government of the 20th century believes that the management of complex public organisations by technical experts has failed, and that the hierarchical structures and top-down approaches to policy implementation no longer address the problem situations faced by policy makers. Public administration is becoming more client-centered, emphasising public involvement in policy formulation and implementation. Managerial hierarchies have to be redesigned and focus is placed on innovative leadership and cooperation among employees in order to ensure efficiency in public service delivery (Dobuzinskis 1997:300-302).

The aim of this thesis is not to get involved, nor make statements, regarding the politics-administration dichotomy. The previous discussion was a brief description of the development of Public Administration as a field of study. The main emphasis of this chapter is to provide a literature background to the theories of

Public Administration that, in the end, contributes to an integrated approach to human resource management.

2.3 Defining public administration

Cloete (1981:1) states that administration is found wherever two or more people take joint action to achieve an objective. Administration takes place wherever people work or play with a common goal in mind and, thus, is found in all spheres of human activity where joint action is required to achieve a goal. Administration does not take place in a vacuum and has as its aim the realisation of effective and efficient goals. Simon *et al.* (1968:4) describe administration as cooperative group action with an emphasis, not only on the execution of an activity, but also on the choices describing how the activity was implemented. Thus, answering the questions relating to how and why become an integral part of administration. Henri Fayol, quoted by Urwick (1937:118-119), defined administration as planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling. To plan is to study the future and arrange a plan of operations to deal with the future. To organise is to build up the material and human organisation is business and to command is to make the employees do their work. To coordinate is to unite and correlate all activities while controlling deals with seeing that everything is done according to the rules, which have been laid down, and the instructions, which have been given.

Public administration relates to the activities of the executive branch of government, deals with the formulation and implementation of public policies and involves issues of human behaviour and cooperative human effort (Stillman 1980:3). Gladden (1961:12) maintains that public administration is concerned with the activities of government and that the word "administration" means to care or look after people, to manage their affairs and that an "administrator" is a servant and not a master. Gladden (1953:17-18) also states that administration is increasingly becoming concerned with persons, more than things and as a human activity. Administration has three stages, namely the stages of decision,

of preparation and of execution. Gladden (1953:21) quoted HA Simon who determined the four generally accepted principles of administration. Firstly, administrative efficiency is increased by task specialisation among group members. Secondly, administrative efficiency is increased by a hierarchical arrangement of group members. Thirdly, administrative efficiency is increased by limiting the span of control to a small number, and lastly, administrative efficiency is increased by grouping employees together for the aim of control according to purpose, process, client or place.

2.4 Schools of administrative theories

Within the historical perspective of the development of public administration, eight schools of administrative theories will be discussed, including the empirical school, the school of human behaviour, the bureaucratic school, the decision-making school, the mathematical school, the business management school and the administrative process school. Before a discussion of these theories will take place, a brief overview of the Gladden views of administration will be provided.

Gladden (1972:VII) identified various views through which Administration, as a discipline, could be approached. The different views include the constitutional law-, the institutional-, the business economics-, the implementation-, the comprehensive-, the conventional-, the management- and the generic view. The constitutional view regards administration as a function of organisations concerned mainly with the execution or implementation of governmental activities while the institutional view refer to administration as the work of specific organisations such as health- or provincial administration. The business economics view regards administration as reporting, archives control and general office organisation, thus, the operational routine matters. The management view holds that administration is limited to specific categories of employees with the purpose of activating and fulfilling functional activities. The implementation view refers to administration as the act of implementation found in forms such as administration of legislation or the administration of schools. The comprehensive

view sees administration as the total product of human behaviour (individually and collectively) towards the realisation of any goal. The generic view of administration constitutes the functions of public administration, described by Cloete (1981). The functions are generic in nature, because of its universal applicability. Furthermore, the generic functions are also mutually inclusive, implying that collectively they constitute the effective and efficient functioning of the public service (Rowland 1987:62). Several of the above views can be related to the different schools of administrative theories, which will now be discussed.

The **empirical school** describes administration as the study of theories and opinions about the truths of administration, discovered through the practice of it. The empirical school of thought was evident in countries where the practice of administrative law was apparent, such as Germany, Britain and France. The proponents of this school of thought included Gladden and Dicey. The empirical school of thought can also be closely associated with the historical approach to public administration. The development of the state and public administration is captured on paper, in order to ensure that future generations have the correct facts when deliberating on the nature and impact of public administration (Botes *et al.* 1992:280). However, the current dynamics of public administration is not taken into consideration and thus, this school of thought contributes to the historical understanding of public administration, but not necessarily to its current realities.

The **school of human behaviour** describes how administration takes place among people and intends to determine the levels of happiness and satisfaction based on various sociological and psychological criteria. The proponents of this school of thought include the motivation theorists such as Maslow, Argyris and Herzberg (Botes *et al.* 1992:281). This school of thought bases its assumptions on the principle that an internal need could only be satisfied through an external expression (Halloran 1978:93). Thus, public administration is perceived as an enabler for job satisfaction and happiness. The school of human behaviour will

have a strong influence in this thesis. However, not only human behaviour will be examined, but organisational (structure) response will also be determined. The foundation for the integrated approach to human resource management has its origins in the school of human behaviour.

The **bureaucratic school** is based on the principles of Max Weber. He described the organisation as the culmination of the process of historical rationality and bureaucratisation of social interactions. The bureaucracy is a control system based on the rational rules that regulate the organisational structure and processes in compliance with technical knowledge and maximum efficiency. He proposes a high degree of specialisation, firm and unyielding hierarchical authority, impersonal relationships, a merit system of appointments, promotion and charismatic management (Botes *et al.* 1992:281). Weber's emphasis was on the understanding of the sociology of administration as a benchmark for the understanding of organisation in society. He was interested in the nature of authority and suggested three bases for authority, namely traditional, charismatic and legal. Traditional authority is found in a council of elders. Charismatic authority is inherent in a leader's ability to exercise power and legitimacy through his or her personal charisma, while legal authority rests with the normative rules and legal patterns established to control individual behaviour and activities. Weber described the three primary characteristics of the bureaucracy as being the division of labour into offices based on competence and responsibility, the development of a hierarchical structure comprising superior and subordinate offices and the operating through general and accepted rules to provide systematic internal control and order (Simmons & Dvorin 1977:480-481). The current trend in the DPSA is to move away from the strictly hierarchical structures of the past. A matrix structure, comprising work groups from the different levels in the organisation, arranged around the implementation of projects and programmes, is proposed to make the organisational structure more effective and efficient.

The **social system school**, promoted by Chester Barnard, is based on the assumption that organisational units are comprehensive systems of mutual cooperation, united in a common objective, with both a formal and informal form of organisation, which provides a social life to the unit (Botes *et al.* 1992:281). The theory of organisations, according to Chester Barnard (as quoted by Fry 1989:156-157), is based on the view that subordinates' needs must be satisfied through a free contractual arrangement between the subordinate and organisation. The terms of the contract can either be expressed in an implicit or explicit agreement about what the organisation will offer in the form of inducements and what will be expected from the individual, in terms of contribution. This particular school of thought is a basis for the current performance management system implemented in the public service. However, the degree of participation from employees, is more extensive than Barnard originally intended. The importance of linking individual performance to organisational demands, is evident from this school of thought and the contribution that it has in this thesis, is obvious. The performance management agreement, which will be discussed in chapter 6, stipulates the training and development initiatives employees should be exposed to. The problem statement of this thesis discusses the extent to which current training and development initiatives in the DPSA contribute to the implementation of a learning organisation. Thus, the relevance of the social system school, as a school of thought determining the link between the employee and the organisation, cannot be denied.

The **decision-making school**, proposed by Herbert Simon, makes a strong argument for the continuous responsibility of managers to make decisions. Only through decisions can correct actions be obtained (Botes *et al.* 1992:282). Simon used an inductive approach based on logical positivism to revise the concept of the decision-maker in order to develop a descriptive model of organisational decision-making. Decisions are taken, based on specific premises. Simon contends that decisions can best be analysed by focusing on the underlying

premises that influence the decision, discovering the sources of those premises and tracing the communication channels by which the premises were transmitted, in the organisational context. According to Simon, once an individual employee decides to participate in an organisation, he or she takes on an organisational personality and the issue of compliance becomes central to the decisions taken (Fry 1989:184-185,198-200). For the purpose of this thesis, the decision-making school will not influence the integrated approach to human resource management. The reasoning behind training and development decisions will not be discussed, rather the perceptions of employees on the effect that the decisions have on their own personal career development and organisational effectiveness and efficiency.

The **mathematical school** proposes that administrative problems could be analysed through mathematical simulation coordination. Models are identified using the variables and their relationship to one another as basis. The model is then used to quantify objectives, characterise shortcomings and define the unknown. Singleton, Tyndall and Deutsch are proponents of this school of thought (Botes *et al.* 1992:282). However, the human dynamics and changing nature of the current public service cannot be explained in pure mathematical equations and thus, for the purpose of this thesis, the mathematical school will not influence the integrated approach to human resource management.

The **business management school** bases its argument on the ability of the public service to reduce its efficiency to business principles and apply business principles to the public service in order to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. However, if services become privatised, it would no longer fall within the realm of public service delivery (Botes *et al.* 1992:283). The pressure of effective and efficient service delivery is a reality in the South African public service. However, the argument can be made that with the correct placement of appropriately trained employees, productivity should increase. Through training, the DPSSA strives to become an enabler for human resource development and,

thus, providing a positive impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation. The principles promoted by the business management school is relevant within the current South African public service and the issues of effective and efficient service delivery will have an obvious impact on the integrated human resource management approach.

The **administrative process school** is based on the arguments of Frederick Taylor and Henri Fayol. Gulick and Urwick with their administrative acronyms SLOCUS (staff, line, organisation, communication, unity of command, span of control) and POSDCORB (planning, organising, staffing, directing, coordination, reporting and budgeting), are also proponents of this school of thought. Closely related to the administrative school of thought is the generic view of administration (Botes *et al.* 1992:283). For the purpose of this thesis, the generic view of administration will be used as the main point of departure for the study of Public Administration. However, the approach to the study of human resource management, as one of the generic functions of administration will be more integrated in nature.

2.5 The functions of public administration

Cloete (1993:56) divided administration into specific generic administrative functions, including policy-making, organising, financing, personnel provision and utilisation, division and rationalising work methods and procedures, and controlling. These functions were initially described, by Cloete, as processes but renamed functions by Thornhill and Hanekom in 1979 (Rowland 1987:62). For the purpose of this thesis, each function will be defined, but emphasis will be placed on the personnel provision and utilisation function.

No administrative action can be taken if specific goals and objectives have not been set. Taking this into consideration, Roux (2002:72) defines **public policy** as the proposed course of action of government to reach specific goals and objectives, while continuously being influenced by the effects of environmental

changes. Policy formulation, analysis and implementation can be defined as the identification of needs, preparation of policy statements, legislation, regulations, instructions and directives as well as the analysis of existing policies and systems. The implementation entails a mission statement, objectives and priorities as well as the communication of these in order to determine how to report on policy shortcomings (Cloete 1993:59).

Cloete (1993:59) defines **organising** as the design and improvement of organisational structures as well as the division of functions, design and implementation of communication channels. Organising is, also, defined as the steps taken to formalise and balance the relations among individual employees. Line functionaries are described as the employees responsible for primary functions such as medical doctors providing basic health care in a government clinic. Within the generic view of public administration, line and staff functionaries are identified, as part of the organising function of public administration. Staff functionaries are those employees responsible for supporting line functionaries, such as human resource managers or financial auditors (Botes *et al.* 1992:245 *cf.* Botes *et al.* 1996:343). However, within the current South African public service, the line managers have been assigned the support functions as well. Thus, a medical doctor in charge of a provincial hospital will also act as the human resource manager for all the staff employed in the hospital. The same example can be provided for the DPSA. The Chief Director: Integrated Human Resources will not only be responsible for human resource policy formulation and implementation, but will also be held accountable for the effective and efficient implementation of human resource management practices within his or her own Branch.

Financing is the function through which monies are obtained, spent and controlled. No public institution can function without finance and every administrative action taken by employees will have either a direct or indirect financial implication. Government receives its funds from the public in the form of

taxes, tariffs, levies, fees, fines and loans. Thus, government is responsible for the accountable appropriation of public money with the aim of ensuring public service delivery. Financing can also be defined as the design of financial systems for the preparation of budgets and the audit of financial statements (Cloete 1993:59).

Personnel provision and utilisation is defined as the function through which suitable employees are employed and utilised according to their potential. Personnel administration covers two areas including the functionally specialised activities such as recruiting, placement, training and promotion, as well as the administrative activities associated with the implementation of functions, such as the training policy, training control and training management (Botes *et al.* 1996:322-323). Cloete (1993:59) defines personnel provision and utilisation as the design of personnel systems and the support activities associated with the management of employees, including supervision, motivation, training, maintaining discipline and the merit system. Human resource management has evolved from the concept of personnel management. Stahl (1976:442) states that personnel management is another aspect of general administration and, as such should be the responsibility of anyone in any position of leadership and authority. Personnel management is woven into all the levels of the hierarchy and into all facets of supervision and direction. The scope of functions ascribed to a personnel manager include (Stahl 1976:450-453):

- a) policies and instructions regarding personnel management;
- b) job analysis and evaluations;
- c) staffing;
- d) salary and wage administration;
- e) employee services and working conditions;
- f) performance standards and evaluation;
- g) staff training and development;
- h) employee rights and obligations;
- i) union bargaining and agreements;

- j) records and reports;
- k) personnel research; and
- l) public relations.

The approach to the study of human resource management, as a generic function of public administration, will be discussed later in this chapter. However, mention should be made of the definition provided by Klingner & Nalbandian (1993:2), that public personnel management comprises four fundamental functions through which elected officials, administrators, personnel specialists and supervisors manage their human resources, including planning, acquisition, development and sanction. For the purpose of this thesis, the development function will be examined and the link between development and the rest of the functions will be highlighted. Development is defined as training, motivating and evaluating employees to increase their knowledge, skills and abilities (Klingner & Nalbandian 1993:2).

The **revision and analysis of procedures and methods** is based on the principle that every action, taken by an employee, requires a single-minded, systematic and orderly procedure and/or method. The utilisation of modern technology to enhance service delivery should be considered as part of the revision and analysis of procedures and methods (Botes *et al.* 1996:331). Work methods and procedures should continuously be revised, in order to ensure proper adaptation to environmental changes and, thus, enhancing service delivery. Cloete (1993:59) defines this function as the compilation of procedural codes and instructions as well as the design of work study systems and methods to increase productivity.

The **control** of government action is one of the cornerstones of efficient administration. Cloete (1993:59) defines control as the design of control systems in order to implement reporting mechanisms to ensure that work standards are met, while guaranteeing quality and quantity in service delivery. Control is

defined as the function implemented to ensure that government activity is measured against a predetermined standard, and that, should deviations exist, corrective steps be taken to ensure goal fulfillment (Robbins 1995:64-71). Control over government activity is part of the unique nature of public administration and should be implemented to ensure effective and efficient rendering of services. In the case of human resource management, and specifically development and training, control will manifest itself in the evaluation of training courses to ensure that training priorities are communicated and realised by the management of the DPSA.

Since 1988, management was added as a seventh generic cross-function of public administration by one of the scholars of Public Administration. Management describes aspects of leadership, in terms of the manager's ability to plan, organise, communicate, inspire, coordinate and control. The public manager is responsible for the effective and efficient realisation of government plans in order to ensure that the functional mission of the organisation is implemented (Botes *et al.* 1992:255-256). Cloete (1993:60) maintains that the generic administrative functions are relevant to all the functional fields in the public service, but it should be kept in mind that the processes constituting the functions will have to be adapted in order to comply with the specific requirements of each functional field.

2.6 An integrated approach to human resource management

The key to the integrated approach to human resource management is found in the definition stated by Halloran (1978:5). He defines the study of human relations as the study of how people can work effectively in groups in order to satisfy both organisational goals and personal needs. Personal needs such as job satisfaction, recognition and career advancement are influenced by organisational conditions in the work environment. Frederick Taylor, in his discussion of scientific management, indicated that the objective of management was to remove the cause of antagonism between a supervisor and a

subordinate, because only when working together can the productivity of an organisation be increased (as quoted in Halloran 1978:8). Elton Mayo, in his research, developed the concept of the informal organisation and determined the extent to which it could influence employee behaviour and, thus, production rates. From this period on, the strategic link between employee and productivity could not be denied. Employees are not isolated from the production process, and no matter how sophisticated the technological advances become, complex human beings' normal human interactions would affect the total production output (Halloran 1978:10-11).

When an employee's abilities and ambitions match the demands of a specific position, the employee will be productive and experience personal satisfaction. However, within the current human resource management system in South Africa, this is not always the case. The government's emphasis on human resource development is an attempt to address the gap between human resource organisational needs and human resource supply. Human resources are not in limitless supply, and the DPSA needs to analyse and explore ways to utilise its current human resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. The approach to human resource management, proposed in this thesis, is based on the integration of all human resource functions in order to ensure a coherent system that will address human resource issues responsibly.

The integrated approach to human resource management is based on the argument that organisations do not, only, have to be clear on their purpose, but more specifically on the strategy that would operationalise the purpose. Thus, the structure and system of the organisation need to be integrated and the focus placed on the development of employees as key resources. An integrated approach to human resource management will also enable the employees to identify a clear career path, as well as determining the development and training initiatives that would have to be undertaken to reach a specific position within the structure of the organisation.

A key aspect in the integrated approach to human resource management, is the individual identification of positions. However, employees should not just know how they fit into the overall organisational structure, they should, also, understand the relationships affecting and support needed, which would enable them to be successful in that position. While the main aim of the institution remains the effective and efficient realisation of organisational strategy, it should be considered within the context of achieving optimum well-being for its employees, placed within a structure where each position adds value to the overall organisational strategy.

Throughout this thesis, constant reference will be made to the importance of strategically aligning individual performance with organisational effectiveness and efficiency. The incorporation of all human resource functions, will not be discussed, but emphasis will be placed on the importance of the performance management system, stipulating development and training initiatives, as a tool to ensure integrated human resource management.

2.7 Conclusion

From the above, it could be argued that (P)ublic (A)administration, both as a discipline and an activity, has a history comprising various perspectives and schools of thought. The origins in Political Science, was briefly described and reference was made to the different ideological approaches to the study of Public Administration. A brief definition of "public administration" was also provided and the different schools of public administration theories were discussed. The relevance of some of the schools of thought to the integrated human resource management approach, was mentioned, but the main school of administrative theory used in this thesis, is the generic functional view.

The generic functional view of public administration identifies six specific functions, universally applicable to the study of activity of public administration. A brief discussion of each was provided and the development of personnel

administration into human resource management, was highlighted. The last part of the chapter dealt with the specific approach that will be applicable to this thesis, namely the integrated human resource management approach. In the next chapter, the historical development of the DPSA will be discussed within the time frame stipulated in chapter 1.