

# *Development Administration in Post-Independence Guyana*

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## INTRODUCTION

Development administration, as a discipline, has gained rapid recognition in recent years and has resulted in a growing amount of literature being published on it. It is a concept which embraces the array of new functions assumed by developing countries embarking on the path of modernization and industrialization and ordinarily involves the establishment of machinery for planning economic growth and mobilizing and allocating resources to expand national income (1). At its fullest range, development administration embraces every area and activity governed by public policy. By established usage, however, development administration has come to signify primarily the organization, personnel, practices, and procedures essential to effective performance of the civilian function entrusted to the executive branch of government.

Hence, development administration is decision-making, planning, formulating objectives and goals. It is the action part of government, the means by which the purposes and goals of government are realized.

This paper examines development administration in the post-independence economy of Guyana within the framework of the definitions of development administration that have been outlined above. The paper will be developed in the following manner. First, the structure of development administration in Guyana will be examined. Secondly, we will discuss and analyze the major factors affecting Guyana's development administration. Thirdly, some policy solutions will be offered.

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(1) Merle Fainsod, "The Structure of Development Administration", in Irving Swerdlow (ed.), *Development Administration: Concepts and Problems* (Syracuse University Press, 1963), p. 2.

## THE STRUCTURE OF DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN POST-INDEPENDENCE GUYANA

Development administration in Guyana was shaped by the British during their period of colonial rule and although, after independence in 1966, there has been an attempt at reorganizing, changing, and improving the entire administrative structure to function effectively in the service of an independent nation, development administration in Guyana still remains a product of the colonial era, maintaining many of the features and attitudes of the former colonial establishment.

The administration of development in Guyana is the responsibility of the Civil Service through a system of various agencies called ministries. Each ministry is charged with the task of implementing the government's planning programs for which it was created. For example, the Ministry of Education is responsible for administering programs pertaining to education throughout Guyana.

In 1967, a Public Service Ministry was created. This was the major institutional consequence of a 1966 United Nations Report (2). In 1968, the government of Guyana appointed a Commission to inquire into and make recommendations on the classification and recruitment of public servants, and the principle on which the salaries and wages of public servants should be fixed and the machinery for salary and wage determination. The Com-

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(2) The United Nations *Report on Public Administration in Guyana* was prepared by Messrs. J. Hunn and G. Burgess in 1966.

mission Report (3) recommended a structure of unified service in which it would be clear that a worker's position depended on his current abilities and in which his career prospect depended solely on his capacity to perform jobs in the Public Service.

Since the inception of the attempted administrative reform program in 1966 significant technical input was received from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (4). However, there are still a number of factors affecting development administration in Guyana and these are discussed in the next section. In concluding this section, it is necessary that we briefly indicate the evolution of the system of development administration up to its present post-independence state in Guyana (5).

The system of development administration in Guyana can be traced to have evolved in four basic phases. These phases manifest themselves in the historic and political dimensions of a nation striving toward economic independence and reflect the simple analytics of the socio-economic history of Guyana.

The first phase, the period up to 1850, was marked by an almost complete subjugation of the administrative will of the people. What existed was the administration of a colonial sugar plantation-type economy based on African slave labour producing for export to Europe. Administrative functions, the main intent of which was for the maintaining of this type of system, were the responsibility of the Chief Secretary or Colonial Secretary.

The second phase, from 1850 to 1953, was marked by political awakening and the relinquishing of some of the strings by the metropolitan power. However, the administration of development remained in the hands of expatriates — a Governor and his officials — who were accountable only to the British government and monarchy, and were primarily concerned with their future careers elsewhere in the British civil service.

The third phase, the period from 1953 to 1965, began as a backward step into what really was already Crown Colony status. How-

ever, internal self-government was granted and decision-making and executive authority was transferred from the Governor and his Executive Council to the Premier and his Council of Ministers.

In 1966, Guyana became a politically independent nation and the fourth phase came into being. This fourth phase covers the period from 1966 to present and has been a direct attempt — though slow, grudging, and insufficient — at creating a development administration system tailored to Guyana's needs under a system of ministries headed by a native cabinet member, called a Minister, who is appointed by the Prime Minister (6). Each ministry is staffed with a Permanent Secretary who is the Civil Service Head of the ministry and principal adviser to the Minister. The Permanent Secretary has administrative responsibility for the entire ministry, including responsibility for all personnel and matters relating to finance.

#### FACTORS AFFECTING DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN GUYANA

The administration of development in Guyana has always had some serious drawbacks, both during and after colonial rule. Despite serious attempts after independence to restructure the system of development administration and to increase its effectiveness and impact, there still exists a number of factors, primarily a legacy of the colonial past, which impede the process. The fundamental factors responsible for that situation are as follows.

Firstly, there is a general lack of high-level manpower necessary for policy implementation. Here, we are referring, particularly, to the scarcity of trained administrators. No lasting and significant process of development can be achieved in the economy of Guyana, or any developing economy for that matter, unless there are sufficient human skills and resources present in the economy that can be used to implement and thereby assist in prolonging the development cycle (7). The lack of trained administrators in Guyana is the direct result of three factors: 1) chronic brain drain, 2) poor recruitment policies, 3) lack of proper manpower planning and assessment.

(6) For an analysis of this ministerial system in Guyana, see M.K. Bacchus, "The Ministerial System at Work: A Case Study of Guyana", *Social and Economic Studies* 16 (March 1967), pp. 34-56.

(3) See B.A.N. Collins et al., *The Public Service of Guyana: A Report of the Commission of Inquiry* (Georgetown, Guyana: Government Printery, 1969).

(4) See UNDP, *Country and Intercountry Programming — Guyana* (New York: UNDP, 1973).

(5) For a more general discussion of this evolution as it pertains to the entire Caribbean see G.E. Mills, "Public Administration in the Commonwealth Caribbean: Evolution, Conflicts and Challenges", *Social and Economic Studies*, 19 (March 1970), pp. 5-25. Special number edited by G.E. Mills.

The first two factors were brought about from the third. The lack of proper manpower planning and assessment produced haphazard recruitment policies, underemployment and unemployment, and, ultimately, frustration on the part of the few skilled administrators present that forced them to emigrate.

Also, there exists a highly bureaucratic civil service and excessive centralization of authority and control. The excessive centralization of authority and control is reflected in Permanent Secretaries and Government Ministers assuming overall and total control of their respective ministries and departments, in terms of decision-making, and playing inadequate attention to middle and lower-level civil servants or giving them little opportunity to participate not only in the decision-making process, but in the development process as well. This situation continues to be perpetrated because Guyana's civil service has become an institution in which personnel survival, in terms of longevity of service, depends on political affiliation — a situation which does not conform to the regulations governing the non-political nature of the civil service (8).

The ultimate result of these manifestations is a lack of coordination of policies among departments and a lack of dissemination of information for effective decision-making. Invariably then, the few individuals at the apex of the decision-making pyramid are hard pressed to cope with the range of decisions they have to make. The effect is necessarily either procrastination and long delays, or inadequate and inept policies.

It is clear that the centralized nature of Guyana's civil service contributes to the destruction in the channels of communication in the organization and tends to immobilize development administration. After independence then, the bureaucratic colonial-oriented administration was transformed into a bureaucratic organization that emphasised the sovereignty of politics rather than the supremacy of administration. Politics became the most important activity and the politician (Minister)

(7) Kempe R. Hope, Wilfred L. David, and Aubrey Armstrong, "Guyana's Second Development Plan 1972-1976: A Macro-Economic Assessment", *World Development* 4 (February 1976), p. 141.

(8) To make participation in the political process by civil servants legal, the government of Guyana has recently espoused that the ruling political party is supreme to the national government and that therefore implied that everyone should be affiliated to a political party. For fear of reprisals, the majority of Guyana's civil servants are currently members of the ruling party, the People's National Congress.

and his usually hand-picked Permanent Secretary came to occupy a position of unquestionable supremacy in matters of decision-making (9).

Another factor affecting development administration in Guyana is that of the level of economic development. The degree of economic development and the state of development administration are closely linked. Reasonably good development administration is one of the conditions of economic development; at the same time the level of economic development influences the level of administration. In Guyana, the level of economic development is rather low, hampered particularly by low growth of agriculture, weak balance of payments performance, sluggish private investment, and persistent high unemployment. For the past two decades, real growth of the economy of between 3 and 4 percent annually, barely kept pace with the increase in population.

At low levels of economic development, the demand for efficiency of government agencies is less urgent. The rhythm of life is slower and things move in set patterns. There is little difference between the ways of administration and the ways of life beyond the office (10). On the other hand, however, higher levels of economic development create demands on the efficiency of government agencies while at the same time providing the input to allow the agencies to cope with the increasingly complex and technical tasks. Administrative systems tend to grow to cope with the developing needs of a modern society and the process of expansion that results.

Associated with the inhibiting factors of development administration in Guyana is that of the lack of adequate financial resources for the day-to-day operations of the ministries. This is a direct result of the, already discussed, low level of economic development.

Extremely small budgets have affected the range and scope of the operations of government agencies and ultimately created a huge

(9) For more on this see S.C. Dube, "Bureaucracy and Nation-Building in Transitional Societies", *International Social Science Journal* 16 (1964), p. 233; and C.A.P. St. Hill, "Towards the Reform of the Public Services: Some Problems of Transitional Bureaucracies in Commonwealth Caribbean States", *Social and Economic Studies* 19 (March 1970), p. 143.

(10) L. Dabasi-Schweng, "The Influence of Economic Factors" in M. Kriesberg (ed.), *Public Administration in Developing Countries* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1965), p. 21.

gap between planned and realized development targets. With low operating budgets, government ministries are unable to procure the necessary inputs required for plan implementation. Operating budgets are low because the government's total revenue available for development projects is low, notwithstanding the fact, also, that capital inflows from traditional sources, such as the World Bank, are currently limited in disbursement. Disbursement is limited because of the low absorptive capacity of the economy. In speaking of the low absorptive capacity of the economy, we are referring to the capital absorptive capacity of the economy. By this is meant, in simplest terms, the amount of capital that Guyana can use productively during a specific time period. This concept should not be confused with capital formation which refers both to the supply of financial resources and to their transformation into real capital goods (11). The significance of the absorptive capacity concept derives from the generally accepted view that economic growth, though fundamentally a function of the volume of the capital used, is equally determined by the productivity of its use (12). Budgets play crucial roles in the development process partly because of their importance relative to the other operations in most developing nations and partly because they entail a compulsory and direct transfer of resources.

Of major significance among the factors affecting development administration in Guyana is that of the lack of the political leadership's total support for the improvement of the nation's administrative system. Administrative change inevitably involves challenge to accepted modes of action and to traditional values and prerogatives (13). Projects for administrative reform, if they are other than routine and minor, must be backed fully by the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. In speaking of the vital importance of leadership here, we are alluding to the critical place of authority in national development. If political leaders are to inspire a population and to direct the bureaucracy to higher levels of performance and development, their words and actions must

carry an aura of legitimacy (14). Historically, political leaders in Guyana have been primarily concerned with maintaining their own existence as politicians and this resulted in much confusion between the administrative and political function in decision-making processes and also in the creation of political elites. Elites who among themselves alone cannot execute the services and achieve developmental goals.

#### SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN GUYANA

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that in Guyana administrative reforms are necessary so as to make administration a fit instrument for carrying out social and economic policies and achieving socio-economic goals of development. The administrative changes which are necessary must be different from the conventional organizational reforms, given Guyana's commitment to development through "cooperative socialism" (15). Thus, western concepts applied in the interest of development administration cannot be introduced into the administrative system in Guyana. Hence, all of the remaining attitudes, features, and characteristics of the colonial Civil Service need to be urgently eradicated through processes of re-education and re-orientation to bring the native civil servants in line with the current development thrust. This process of re-education and re-orientation can be easily effected through government organized and sponsored seminars or workshops.

This brings us then to the necessity for training in Guyana. Apart from the removal of the continued existence of the colonial mentality, education and training is necessary to create a stock of trained administrators. This therefore means an attempt at proper manpower planning and assessment. Manpower planning and assessment go far beyond tabulation of supply and demand indices of the labour force. It must take into consideration the broad spectrum of problems of human resources development. Planning and assess-

(11) For a satisfying discussion of the differences between these two concepts, see Willy J. Stevens, *Capital Absorptive Capacity in Developing Countries* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1971).

(12) See Hollis Chenery and A.M. Strout, "Foreign Assistance and Economic Development", *American Economic Review* 66 (September 1966), pp. 679-733.

(13) John C. Honey, *Toward Strategies for Public Administration Development in Latin America* (Syracuse University Press, 1968), p. 69.

(14) Kempe R. Hope, "Guyana's National Service Programme", *Journal of Administration Overseas* 15 (January 1976), p. 37.

(15) For an analysis of this approach to development in Guyana, see Kempe R. Hope, "A Note on Cooperative Socialism in Guyana", *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economy* 44 (July-September 1973), pp. 233-240; and also Kempe R. Hope, "Cooperative Socialism and the Cooperative Movement in Guyana", *Review of International Cooperation* 68, No. 2 (1975), pp. 56-65.

ment of manpower should be a part of the development plan of any developing country, and should be coordinated with education planning and training. In Guyana, manpower planning is of vital necessity, but has always been a shortcoming of post-independence development planning in the economy. This shortcoming manifests itself in the negligence or unconcern of the government and, to a lesser degree, in the lack of the qualitative and quantitative techniques necessary for such planning.

Training and education will, undoubtedly, increase the quality of Guyana's development administrators — both politicians and career civil servants. Since the quality of development administration and public decision-making depends largely on the quality of the policy-makers (16), then education and training will indirectly increase the quality of development administration in Guyana.

Development administration in Guyana has been consistently plagued with the tendency toward excessive centralization. As mentioned earlier in this paper, the problem is expressed in the reluctance of Ministers and their Permanent Secretaries to delegate authority. Insecurity seems to be the major motivating force and centralized authority is maintained under the banner of political sovereignty and unquestionable supremacy. What seems not to be understood is that this phenomenon creates lags in the administration of development and attempts should be made at attaining and maintaining a proper balance between the contributions to the quality of decision-making by the various units participating in that process. Quite recently it was alleged that the Minister of Finance, for one reason or the other, withheld information of some pertinence from the Ministry of Economic Development, thus affecting important policy decisions on matters of national economic significance with which the latter Ministry is responsible (17). Here again, is a vivid example, as exhibited by the Minister of Finance, that Guyana's politicians do not understand that their contribution to public policy-making should be primarily

(16) Moshe Weiss, "Some Suggestions for Improving Development Administration", *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 32, No. 3 (1966), p. 194; see also the well organized papers in Irving Swerdlow and Marcus Ingle (eds.), *Public Administration Training for the Less Developed Countries* (Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, 1974).

(17) Information obtained in interviews with officials of the Ministry of Economic Development in Georgetown, Guyana.

limited to the extra-rationality components such as a feeling for what the populace will stand. On the other hand, the contribution of civil servants to the decision-making process involves professional knowledge, scientific data processing and analysis, and systematic search for alternatives.

Undoubtedly, excessive centralization will be a long-standing phenomenon in Guyana, given the political nature of things. Civil servants currently carry out the decisions made by politicians, thus rejecting their own professional duty to advise. They cling to the privileges and security of their positions without making a serious attempt to contribute to the quality of public policy. Primarily what is needed is a role definition of the political part of civil servants in the administration of development and not in national politics as has been advocated. With that reference point civil servants will have reason to be secure and assert themselves in the process of administering development. It has been recognized, before this piece of work, that "if Guyana is to fulfill the expectations of its people, if the visions of its leaders are to become realities, the effectiveness of the Public Service will be all important. Such a Public Service must ... be politically non-partisan, financially contented, and confident in its competence" (18).

Decentralizing the administrative machinery would also serve to improve communication channels and the level of coordination both within and among various departments. The dissemination of data and information is vital to a successful development effort and even more so in Guyana's case because of the paucity of data. Improved coordination would tend to remove the time-consuming, energy-wasting, and patience-exhausting checks and counter-checks, references and cross-references, conferences and consultations, often at the wrong levels and about unimportant matters.

It is very timely now to focus our attention on the need for accelerating the economic development process in Guyana. Apart from the obvious need and advantages of economic growth, within the context of this paper, it influences the level of the administrative machinery. Government machinery and its operations are of the greatest consequence in developing countries, and the success or failure of that machinery hinges on the effectiveness of the development effort. Increasing levels of

(18) B.A.N. Collins et al., *The Public Service of Guyana: A Report of the Commission of Inquiry*, p. 82.

economic development would indicate the need for increasing levels of development administration which in turn influences the impact of development planning — since the secret of successful development planning lies not only in sensible politics but in good public administration also (19).

Moreover, higher levels of economic development do result in more revenue being available for the implementation of development projects and it also tends to increase the absorptive capacity of the country. With more readily available financial resources, government budgets can be properly augmented and the necessary inputs required for administering the development effort can be acquired.

Budgets play crucial roles in the development administration process because they entail a compulsory and direct transfer of resources. In Guyana, it became increasingly recognized that the budgets of the various ministries were limited in their ability to achieve administrative goals because of their limited size vis-a-vis development projects. Hence, it is very important that the budget reflect the relative levels of resource allocation and capital formation to be achieved in the economy with respect to the existing revenue available.

Finally, the development administration machinery in Guyana can be best improved through that most vital and important factor of all: the influence of the political leadership. The role of the political leadership is indeed the most crucial factor to be ascertained in the process of national development (20), and hence in the improvement in the administration of development. Political leadership is the arbiter of, rather than one participant or factor among many in, the process of national development. In Guyana, as mentioned before, the lack of the political leadership's role in support of administrative change can be traced to have resulted from their own concern for maintaining their elite status and authority. An elite status and authority so crisply controlled that it is difficult for society to penetrate.

Lending support to administrative change and reform requires, therefore, commitment on

the part of the political leadership. Commitment here involves an overriding desire to promote rationality, rise of productivity, social and economic equalization, improved institutions and attitudes. All of these aspects of national development combined will hopefully produce the administrative machinery needed while at the same time generating further change. The promotion of these ideals points toward modernization and is directly opposed to the desire for the maintenance of the status quo in Guyana. Not only should the political leadership be committed to these ideals in the interest of a just society and better development administration but it should also be resolute enough to recognize such actions as helpful in resolving its identity crisis.

## CONCLUSION

The administration of development in Guyana, after independence, is still a legacy of the colonial past. The colonial political system was a mere bureaucratic system. It was centralized and no separate institution for political and administrative functions existed. This created a blurred distinction between the "administrative" and the "political" and the result was obviously a highly politicized bureaucracy. Policy was largely formulated and implemented by the same people — the Governor and his chosen subordinates (21). In Guyana today, a similar situation exists. The bureaucratic colonial administration having now been replaced by native politicians who also exercise centralized authority and control. Politics is now the order of the day and the development administration machinery is in a state of ineptness. Development administration, however, is a process. It is a process that can be instituted at any point in time — no matter how late that may be. This paper has pointed out some of the steps that can be taken for improving the administrative structure and the decision-making process. Hopefully, if adopted, they will serve to complement those actions that were taken shortly after independence was achieved in Guyana, but were abruptly forsaken.

(19) W. Arthur Lewis, *Development Planning* (London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1966), Preface.

(20) T. Tsurutani, *The Politics of National Development* (New York: Chandler, 1973), p. 25.

(21) Edwin Jones, "Tendencies and Change in Caribbean Administrative Systems", *Social and Economic Studies* 24 (June 1975), p. 240.