



Fred W Riggs' Ecological Approach to Administrative Theory



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- **Fred W Riggs, pioneers in developing administrative models and theory**
- **Most represented administrative thinker in modern society.**
- **Comparative Public Administration (CPA) specially Riggisan's Model- 'Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted models'.**
- **Professor Emeritus at Political Science Department of University of Hawaii, USA**
- **Recognition due to understanding of Administrative Theory.**

• **Conti**



- **Several Governments have introduced administrative reforms and modernized the organizations, during the past decades.**
- **This has necessitated the scholars to critically examining the relevance of these models to the developing nations, especially in the context of globalization**
- **F W Riggs -objective and effective model for analyzing public administration in developing countries with ecological and comparative perspectives.**
- **Developed the 'Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted models' for understanding the administrative structures and organizational behavior.**
- **The main thrust of his model is that 'Western Models are relatively less relevant to the developing countries,**
- **have unique environment/contexts- social structures, economic life, cultural practices, political symbols, allocation of power, division of labour, etc.**

The Present Scenario of Public Administration

- The landscape of public administration-both in theory and practice- has fundamentally changed in terms of
 - ✓ unprecedented shifts in its ideological underpinning,
 - ✓ structural configuration and normative inclination
 - ✓ largely based on market-driven assumptions or principles.

Paradigmatic changes are encapsulated often as

- ✓ New Public Management (NPM) form of divergence-convergence debate, the world over.
- ✓ It represents a more drastic transition in the developing world
- ✓ The post-colonial state centric model of management known as 'Development Administration' and Riggs's Ecology of Administration came under greater challenge posed by this newly emerging market-centered model.

Riggsian Models



- Inspired by Second World War, the Cold War, Ford Foundation Funding for training and undertaking research on administrative systems of developing countries S Develop CPA based on a contextual/ ecological perspective and Structural-Functional approach.

Study of CPA

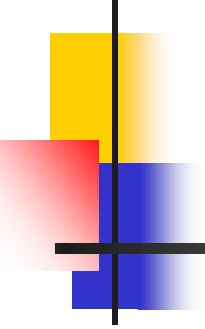
In the study of CPA Riggs identified three major trends, viz,

- (i) the shift from a normative approach emphasizing the ideal or desirable and universal principles of administrative behavior to a more empirical approach covering both ideographic and nomothetic studies based on analysis of actual administrative situations
- (ii) the transformation from ideographic approach -as reflected in studies of a single agency or country- to a nomothetic approach - giving greater priority to generalizations, laws and theory building based on regular patterns of administrative behavior or institution
- (iii) the shift from a non-ecological approach- study of formal administrative institutions without considering contextual



influence- to a more ecological approach - that emphasis on interaction between institutions and their contextual factors such as social structure, tradition, culture, etc.

- **Riggs emphasized the need to study administrative systems in the ecological perspective**
- **To gain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the administrative dynamics.**



Tools to understand the Administrative Theory

Two analytical tools

- **Ecological Approach**
- **Structural and Functional Approach.**
- **Ecological Approach**
 - **The ecological (approach to the study of public administration first initiated by JM Gaus, Robert Dhal and Robert A Merton and later Riggs made distinctive contribution to this approach.**
 - **Ecology of public administration, according to Gaus, includes the study of people place/property; physical and social technology; personality and aspirations of people; emergency conditions/ catastrophes.**



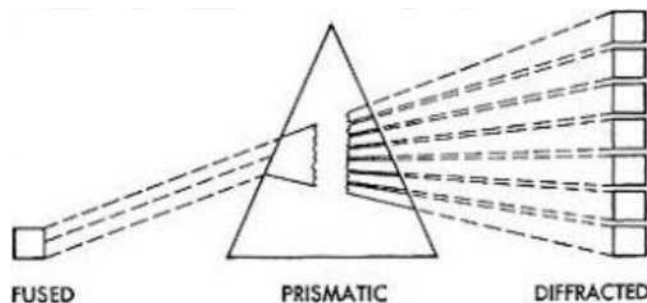
- Riggs analyzed the relationship between administrative systems and ecological factors- history, social structures, traditions, customs, economic situation, political symbols, technology and communication, etc, in a larger perspective.
- On the basis of his studies in Thailand and Philippines, he illustratively explained how environmental conditions influence administrative systems.



Structural- Functional Approach

- **Riggs analysis of public administration primarily relies upon a structural- functional approach. He refers to structure as a society's pattern of activity.**
- **This approach envisages that in every society certain important functions have to be carried out by a number of structures with the application of certain specified methods. Based on this, Riggs attempted to explain the various societies.**
- **The traditional agrarian societies, highly developed industrial societies, and developing societies are functionally and structurally distinct.**

- He termed functionally diffused societies as ‘fused societies’ (in traditional societies various social functions and social structures are highly functionally diffuse, that is, there is no organized division of labour) and functionally specific’s societies are ‘diffracted societies’ (as found with in an industrialized societies).
- In addition to these two diametrically opposed extremes, there is a third society called prismatic society- Riggs’ most popular model. Riggs emphasized that ‘Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted models’ are designed to be ‘ideal’ types not to be found in any actual society.

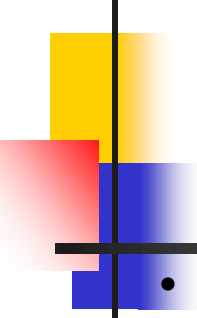




FUSED MODELS



- **Based on the experience of imperial China and prerevolutionary Siamese Thailand, Riggs proposed the concept and characteristics of fused societies.**
- **In these societies, a single structure carries out a number of functions. These societies heavily depend on agriculture with no industrialization and modernization.**
- **The economic system is based on law of exchange and barter system. The King and royal family members and officials nominated by the king carry out all administrative, economic and other activities by themselves.**

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- **The administrative systems in a fused societies, is based on the structure of family and strives to protect the special interests of the family and certain sects rather than aiming at universal happiness and development.**
 - **These societies do not differentiate between justice and injustice; formal and informal setups and governmental and non-governmental activities.**
 - **Ascriptive values play a dominant role in the society and the behaviour of people would be highly traditional. Age old customs, beliefs, faith and traditional ways of living enable people to live together and control their behavior.**

Diffracted Model



- Riggs uses American society as model of diffracted society. A diffracted society will be dynamic with high degree of specialization and each structure carries out a specialized function.
- All organizations and structures in the society are created and based on scientific rational. Ascriptive values cease to exist, giving way to the attainment values in the society.
- Governments would be responsive to the needs of people and protect human rights. People would bring pressure on the government to get their demands fulfilled. There would be a general consensus among the people on all basic aspects of social life.
- Public pay attention and give respect to the laws of the nation on their own. This would enable the government to implement the laws and discharge its responsibilities without any difficulty.
- The economic system of diffracted society is based on market mechanism. The influence of market has both direct and indirect effects on the other facets of the society. Riggs called it marketised society.



Prismatic Model

- Riggs concentrated all his efforts on prismatic model to explain the nature and administration in the post-colonial developing nations.
- While doing his field work in Thailand (1957-58 and teaching in Philippines (1958-59), articulated prismatic model based on the metaphor of prism- as the fused while sunlight (which represents the fusion of several colors) passes through a prism, it becomes diffracted into several separate colors.
- The fused light signifies fused structures of a traditional society (single structure performing all necessary functions)
- The diffracted colors represent the specialized or diffracted structures of modern society (separate structures or institutions for major functions)
- The situation with in the prism (which is transitional phase between the fused and diffracted stages) reflects the conditions in developing nations, which Riggs began to define as prismatic societies.
- In explaining the nature of administration in these transitional societies, Riggs systemically used an ecological approach to explore their non-administrative domains of society, politics, economy and culture.

Riggs Prismatic Society



According to Riggs prismatic society has three important characteristics features

- (i) **heterogeneity** (co-existence of the traditional and the modern; the simultaneous presence of quite different kinds of systems, practices and viewpoints);
- (ii) **formalism** (the extent to which a discrepancy exists between the prescriptive and descriptive, between formal and effective power, between the impression given by the Constitution, laws and regulations, and actual practices and facts of government and society; gap between the stated objectives and real performance);
- (iii.) **functional overlapping** (similar functions are performed by different institutions; the extent to which formally differentiated structures of a diffracted society co-exists with undifferentiated structures of a fused society).

Sala Model

(Administrative Sub-system of a Prismatic Society)

- Riggs termed the administrative systems in prismatic societies as Sala Model, which has variety of meanings; in diffracted societies it is known as such as bureau or office and in fused society it is termed as, chamber. The Sala has certain features of diffracted bureau and fused chamber.
- The heterogeneous values system and the traditional and modern methods of the prismatic society reflect in administrative dealings and functional management. The administrative rationality and efficiency found in bureau are absent in Sala.
- In prismatic societies or Sala- model, family, community, nepotism, etc, play important role in the appointment to various administrative positions and in taking decisions or performing administrative functions. Universalization of laws/norms is disregarded.
- In a diffracted society, the considerations of kinship are kept away from the administrative behavior and apply the norms equally.

The Way Ahead



- Riggs observes that, while it is important to describe the environment's influence on other subjects, inversely, one should also acknowledge the influence individuals have on the environment.
- Only by taking into consideration the dual aspects of interacting influences can we hope to develop an authentic ecological model.
- In light of the fact that each scholar has his or her own interpretation and criticisms, one shouldn't completely ignore the "fused-prismatic-diffracted" model's contributions and strengths

Quiz

1. Who is the proponent of Riggisan's Model- 'Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted models'?

- (a) Robert H Dahl
- (b) Max Weber
- (c) F W Riggs
- (d) Henri Fayol

2. Which model by Riggs was developed for understanding the administrative structures and organizational behaviour?

- (a) Fused-Prismatic-Diffracted Models
- (b) Sala Model
- (c) Structural Functional Approach
- (d) Behavioural Approach



3. Which approach envisages that in every society certain important functions have to be carried out by a number of structures with the application of certain specified methods?

- (a) Behavioural Approach
- (b) Structural Functional Approach
- (c) Structural Approach
- (d) Prismatic Approach

4. According to Riggs prismatic society has how many important characteristics features?

- (a) Two
- (b) Three
- (c) Five
- (d) Ten

References



- **Ravindra Prasad and et al (1989) (ed) 'Administrative Thinkers', Sterling Publishers, New Delhi**
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