

BOOK REVIEWS

Mehta, Prayag 1989 Bureaucracy, Organizational Behaviour and Development (New Delhi: Sage Publication) pp. 188.

The book under review is likely to generate a great deal of interest among policy makers, bureaucrats and academics. The book is based on an empirical study conducted by the author and throws light on the organizational and work behaviour of civil servants. The behavioural orientation of bureaucrats, their perceptions of some important policies of the administrative system and of development performance forms the substance of the book.

The first chapter reviews the stated objectives of India's development effort and compares them to actual performance. The conclusion is that the performance over the years has left much to be desired. In actual practice the important national goals namely growth, modernisation, self-reliance and social justice have been achieved it at all, only partially. The author lays the blame for India's dismal performance on the development front solely on the bureaucrats who have acquired more power and clout without becoming effective in achieving the development goals.

Having made a severe indictment of the bureaucracy, the author goes on to present the result of structured in-depth interviews conducted with 21 senior bureaucrats drawn from a variety of departments. The author's analysis reveals that there is a split between the desirable and what actually happened in practice. While senior bureaucrats hold liberal and democratic views and espouse people's participation in development programmes, their concern for "neutrality", their fears about emergence of organized interest groups in society and their lack of confidence in people at lower levels of the administrative hierarchy leads to a situation where they preside over a system which is not sensitive to the aspirations of the people. This according to the author is the main reason for low efficacy, credibility and responsiveness of the administration.

The senior bureaucrats also perceive the existing system as highly centralised, rigidly rule bound, uncoordinated in its functioning and marked by lack of adequate expertise and preparedness for undertaking developmental tasks. They perceive the morale and working conditions for middle and lower level officials to be poor and their concern for development to be low. They regard the prevailing administrative culture, the existing system of administration and job design, poor service and working conditions, poor political and

bureaucratic leadership as factors shaping such behaviour at middle and lower levels of the bureaucracy. The findings reported by the author are significant since they represent the perceptions of senior bureaucrats who have a great deal of influence in determining the way the administrative system works. However, other studies on middle level bureaucrats such as that by Sharma 1986 have come to identical conclusions; on the basis of a study of 67 middle level officers he concluded that they were disillusioned with their work roles and lack of opportunities available for their growth and development.

The most useful part of the book are chapters 4 - 8 where the author reports the analysis of data collected from 169 officials drawn from state governments as well as the central government. The author has developed an instrument to measure the development-related bureaucratic behaviour of officials and has identified six orientations on the basis of factor analysis. These are Participatory Orientation, Performance Justification, Complacency, Coaching Dependence Orientation, Association Orientation and Feedback Orientation. Even though the variance explained by the independent variables is low (16 - 33%) the attempt to explain variations in these orientations in terms of personality & background factors, perceived quality of work life and socio political outlook is indeed admirable. It is here that the author goes far beyond reporting perceptions as has been done in Chapter - 3. Some of the findings which are very significant are :

- 1) The greater the sense of satisfaction at work higher was the sense of political efficacy. Work alienated officers showed higher political alienation as indicated by a greater sense of political powerlessness and normlessness.
- 2) Supervisory behaviour and practises at work is the most significant predictor of subordinate's orientation to participation. Informal and friendly relationship rather than formalized hierarchical and official administrative behaviour was conducive to promoting a forward looking and participative outlook among junior level officials in government organizations.
- 3) Middle level officials posted in the field harboured a strong sense of dissatisfaction with their working conditions while officials posted at secretariat and away from the field felt much more satisfied in this respect.
- 4) Satisfactory working conditions followed by job satisfaction and satisfactory supervisory behaviour greatly enhance perceived influence at work.

These findings raise a number of questions, for the HRD professional involved in government. The value of the book would have been considerably enhanced if the author had made suggestions for ways and means by which work commitment and involvement of officers in the civil services could be improved.

The author has clearly communicated the message that a bureaucracy which does not take a clear stand on social issues will design an administrative system that will lead to frustration of basic political goals, lack of public confidence and decline in effective functioning of the democratic process. Organizational and administrative structures designed for developmental tasks can only be effective if the implementation of programmes are pursued with vigour by a committed bureaucracy. While this message comes through loud and clear, it is also difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author has overstated his case. The author has scrupulously avoided making any analysis of the political system and the contribution of politicians to the present state of poor development in the country. The analysis of India's developmental performance is to that extent biased and incomplete.

Overall this book is a welcome addition to the literature in the Organizational Behaviour Area. Particularly so, since much of the literature on behavioural orientations of bureaucrats is based on impressions and personal experiences. The writing style however is a bit heavy and is likely to put off a reader who is not inclined to go behind the statistical tables and figures which are all over. The author deserves to be congratulated for a solid contribution to the OB area.

REFERENCE :

Sharma, B.R. 1986 **Motivation Crisis in Indian Management- A Case of Existential Sickness** (New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration).

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