Lyndall Fownes Urwick and Luther Halsey Gulick

A discipline is known by its theory and thought that is based on a tradition. A large number of scholars have been enriching public administration, but the contributions of Lyndall Urwick and Luther Gulick has acted as its bedrock. Both of these belong to the rare breed of ‘pracademics’ (both as academician and practitioner) who not only believed what they thought but also practiced it in their public and private lives. They belonged to an era where public administration as a field was struggling for its identity. One’s contribution cannot be studied without counting the other, thus whenever there has been discussion on either of them, work of both have been put under the scanner. The amount of work done by Urwick and Gulick is not only voluminous but has become a school of thought itself. This prompted us to highlight some important aspects which, should be known to the students and practitioners of public administration.

Luther Halsey Gulick (1892-1993)

Major Works:

Luther Gulick belonged to an era where progressive reform was the need of the hour. He was one of the firm believers of a science of administration, applicable both in public and private sectors. This was a continuation of Wilsonian tradition well laid out at the end of the nineteenth century through the article of Woodrow Wilson in the Study of Administration. He was of the view that government plays most important role in a society and administration is the performer through which it is done.

Early Life:

Luther Halsey Gulick was born in Osaka, Japan, on January 17, 1892 to missionary parents. He belonged to family of varied experiences-scholars, doctors, teachers, scientists, authors, missionaries and pastors. This enriched him and had a long lasting impact in the formative years. His early education at Hotchkiss (1904-1910), Lakeville, Connecticut helped him in the
cultivation of literary talent. Later he joined Oberlin College, Ohio where he graduated from political science in 1914. Here he started reading the works of Charles Beard and John Dewey and pursued M.A. in philosophy at the Oberlin Theological Seminary. Consequently, he applied to Columbia University as doctoral candidate with a fellowship in political science and public law. At the same time he came in contact with the New York Bureau of Municipal Research, attending courses at its Training School for Public Service. Gulick specialized in administration and budgeting and, in 1917, worked as secretary of the Joint Special Committee on Finance and Budget Procedure of the Massachusetts Congress. This resulted in the completion and later publication of his PhD work, “Evolution of the Budget in Massachusetts” in 1920.

Career

He started his career in the U.S. army as a captain and staff member of the Statistics Branch of the General Staff. During 1920s, Gulick was appointed director of the Bureau of Municipal Research (later renamed Institute of Public Administration) and continued in that capacity until 1962. Between 1936 and 1937, he served as a member of the President’s Committee on Administrative Management and co-edited the famous, “Papers on the Science of Administration”, to which he contributed two papers. With the coming of the 1940s and the onset of World War II, Gulick went to Washington, serving in a wide array of capacities. He acted as a consultant to both the Treasury Department and the secretary of war. A central concern for him during the war years was postwar plans and operations. In 1950s, he moved back to New York, first to serve as executive director of the Mayor’s Committee on Management Survey of the City of New York and then as its first city administrator. In order to honour his contributions, Gulick was appointed chairman emeritus of the Institute of Public Administration. His long career and life came to an end on January 10, 1993.

Gulick’s Major Thoughts

Gulick belonged to a period when public administration as a field of study was highly influenced by positivism as a way of thinking and producing knowledge. Spicer (1995) argued that many, … early writers in the field of public administration were influenced by rationalism by emphasizing “the powers of reason to order human affairs”. Gulick was a basically a practitioner first then a scholar, who gained knowledge from practical experience. At the same, he did not averse from reformation, concerned with what should be done in a given situation.

Relationship between Politics and Administration

Rejecting the common contention that the two domains can be, or should be, separate and distinct, Gulick argues that such a separation is impractical, impossible and undesirable. Instead, he supported idea of using administrative expertise and competence in matters of public policy. Thus, he was thinking much ahead of his times. Harmon (2006) is of the view that Gulick was one of the first to debunk the dichotomy. According to Gulick, administration involves the determination of major policy; the development and adoption of specific programmes; the
creation of the organization; provision of personnel; authorization of finances; administrative supervision, coordination and control of activities; and the audit and review of results (Gulick, 1951). He applied the term politics in two ways either as a control by rulers for self advancement or control for actions. But, Gulick also understood that it is the motivation of the ruler which is crucial. Though, he was against the separation between politics and administration, but distinguished the roles of politicians, political appointees, administrators, and technicians in determining degrees of political and policy involvement. The role of a politician is to maintain equilibrium in the overall system by monitoring and adjusting the relationship among the experts, bureaucrats, and interest groups. The administrator’s role is to understand and coordinate public policy and to interpret public policy directives to the operating services, but with unquestioned loyalty to the decisions of elected officials (Gulick, 1951).

**The Role of Government and Administration in Society.**

Gulick felt the need to limit the role of market in society due to its unpredictable and cyclical nature of adequacy and inadequacy. But, he did not favoured unilateral governmental acts. He was of the view, “in a pluralistic society, there is no place for an exclusive pursuit by the central government of national goals and programs embracing public and private activities.” (Gulick, 1963). Therefore, the state should not encompass all human activity. Regarding the principle and practice of checks and balance, he argued that there has to be a demarcation between policy panning, execution, adoption and veto. Ideally speaking, the executive shall draw plans, the legislature scrutinizes them and then ask the executive to adopt them. The people participate through the political organization to exercise their general right to control.

While defining the responsibilities of the governments, Gulick focused on the issue of centralization and decentralization. While perusing the federal legislation, he observed that the needs and requirements of the states and local governments were not been given due attention. Similarly, the state and local governments were taking decisions as if there was no federal power. Keeping this in mind he was averse of clear separation of powers. He contended for functional division into local, state and federal responsibilities but should be flexible and subject to change based on continuing planning and cooperation among authorities at each level of government (Gulick, 1947). He favoured delegation of powers for uniform enforcement of policy and protection and promotion of individual rights. In terms of administration there are at least three clear implications to be drawn…. First, we must introduce into government a mechanism of central planning…. The second implication…is the necessity for developing the technique of effective governmental partnership in business…(Gulick, 1933).

**Science and Values in Administration.**

The politics-administration dichotomy emerged as a result of making public administration rational with the application some concepts like efficiency, expertise, the business model, specialization and professionalism. All this called for a science of administration which
culminated in the Scientific Management of Frederick Winslow Taylor. Gulick aspired to the application of scientific methods to administrative matters. In his _Scientific Approach to the Problems of Society and Government_, an address delivered at the midyear commencement of the University of Buffalo, February 22, 1938, Gulick said, “Value finds its place... in the social appraisal and application of the principles deduced. This does not mean that the social scientist will not be led on his quest for trust by his individual interests, but it does mean that the results of his work, if scientifically done, may be used by others who have entirely different values in view. Gulick is also aware of the potential dangers of scientific “experts.” He notes that we are confronted by specialists who know more and more about less and less, that experts may assume that they know better than the people what the people need, and that the experts may assert knowledge and authority in fields in which they have no competence (Fry, Raadschelders, 2008).

The appropriate domain for a science of administration is the investigation of relationships between actions and outcomes. Gulick contends that the only value endemic to the scientific endeavour itself is efficiency, although in application, efficiency must be accommodated to other social and political values (Gulick, 1937).

The science of administration propounded by Gulick called for making it sensitive to social conditions. An administrator must be able to communicate the conditions of effective administration to both the elected and the electors. In public administration, the scientific approach can only be practically possible with kind of leadership developed and the support of the public.

**Administrative Reformation.**

One of the major contributions of Luther Gulick has been in the area of administrative reforms. His strategy was based on defining of functions, division of work, formalization of structure and relationships, professionalism, and rationalization of activities. He asserted that there was a need for a new set of principles. The democratic set up was to be guided by ensuing administrative principles:

1. Related work should be administered as a unit.
2. All agencies should be consolidated into few departments.
3. Each unit of administrative work should be placed under a single, responsible official selected on the basis of proven ability, technical knowledge, and experience.
4. The power of the department head should be commensurate with responsibility.
5. Each head of a large department should have a staff for performance evaluation.
6. Responsibility for each function should be vested in a specific official.
7. The number of elected officials should be reduced.
8. Boards and commissions should not be used for administrative work. They should be limited to quasi-legislative and quasi-judicial functions.
9. All administrative work should be headed up under a single chief executive, who should be directly elected by, and responsible to, the voters or their representatives.
10. The chief executive should have the power to appoint and discharge department heads and to direct their work.

11. The chief executive should have a research staff to report on the work of the departments and search for improved methods of operation. (Gulick, 1937).

Thus, Gulick believed in a strong chief executive overseeing and coordinating the whole gamut of administrative affairs. While addressing the New York State Conference of Mayors and Other City officials at Jamestown, New York (July 7, 1920), Gulick opined the essentials of budgeting in the following:

1. There must be a single executive authority.
2. The city administration must have freedom in planning.
3. The budget must be a complete plan.
4. There must be a modern system of accounting.
5. Salary and supply standards are necessary.
6. The financial calendar must meet the needs of the budget.
7. There must be a legislative ratification of the budget as a unit.
8. The ratified budget must be a controlling instrument.
9. There must be an independent audit of the execution of the budget.

These still hold true as basics of budgeting.

Once an organization is made then similar activities have to grouped, this resulted in the famous conceptualization-bases of organization, better known as four Ps. These are

1. Purpose: the grouping done on the basis of the nature of goods and services provided by a unit, e.g. health, defence, agriculture and the like.
2. Process: the grouping based on the skill and technology used in the completion of a work, e.g. stenography, typing and the like.
3. People: the services rendered to the stakeholders, e.g. Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the tribes.
4. Place: the geographical basis of the goods and services rendered, e.g. headquarters and field relationship based on deconcentration.

The concentration on division of work and grouping of unit tasks in the organization is a bottoms-up perspective. But, this has to occur with top-down view because of necessity of coordination. For this to happen leadership acts as a vital element. In public administration it is located in the chief executive who perform a wide range of functions that are summed up in the acronym, POSDCoRB-Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, and Budgeting. Apart from the structure of authority and the role of the leadership, Gulick called for the application of ‘coordination by ideas’ i.e., accomplishment of task more by persuasion than by coercion and discipline. In his speech made on the subject of “Time and Public administration” before the Academy of Public Administration on November 13, 1980, Gulick
became one of the first administrative analysts to add the concept of time to the short list of resource staff functions. The following excerpts are especially relevant:

Five important aspects of time emerge....The first is time as an input, that is, as a resource used by management, along with manpower, energy, machinery, and other elements, to produce a desired end. The second is time as an output, that is, as a resource saved, and thus created, as by completing a task ahead of schedule or substituting a less time consuming procedure. Third is time as a flow of events, interrelated or in sequence like falling dominoes, provided by design, as an assembly line, or mandated by nature, especially by growth process of living matter. Fourth is time as a gap between two or more significant events or processes. And finally, fifth is timing as a management policy designed as in taking advantages of changes in wind, tide, or economic and political cycles or in varying the starting times of differently tuned processes. …Time must become a central strategic and moral concern in public management for the third century of our Constitution…

Gulick gave on equal emphasis on public personnel administration where his proposed formula was “pick’ em young, tell’ em everything, treat’ em rough, but fairly.”(Gulick,1935). This career system was to cover all non-political position with five categories of civil servants: unskilled, skilled and trade related, clerical, professional and technical, and administrative. Advancement in the career service should be based on merit, good salaries and adequate retirement benefits should be offered to attract and retain qualified employees. Safeguards should be built into the system to protect employees from arbitrary dismissal (Gulick, 1935).

Evaluation.

It is a very difficult exercise to evaluate Gulick whose career spanned for seven decades. He had to adjust and accommodates his ideas as per changing times. This has resulted in some contradictions. Fry and Raadschelders (2008) points out some inconsistencies: Gulick suggest a large role for the state, but asserts that there are limits to the role that the state can and should, play; he supports planning, but says there are limits to the degree to which planning can be effectively performed; he argues for integration, but recognizes that there are limits on the extent to which integration is possible; he supports a career civil service with protection from political interference, but he also wants to strengthen the political chief executive in relationships with executive agencies; he would enlarge the role of the expert, but acknowledges the problem of controlling the expert in a democratic society. The problem lies in determining where the balance should be struck and/or under what conditions a particular course of action should be pursued. Gulick provides no clear guidance on these critical issues. In spite of these contradictions, the contribution of Luther Gulick, could be summarized by the remarks made by Robert B. Denhardt in the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C., on August 28, 1986, “…What Gulick is able to do by combining philosophy and human action, theory and practice, is to make a connection that many others do not between administration or bureaucracy and democracy.”
Questions:

1. Examine the formative years of Gulick.
2. Discuss the scientific approach of Gulick.
3. Analyse the administrative reforms suggested by Gulick.
4. Explain the role of administration in society.

References: