System Approach to Defining the Notion of Administration in the Terminological Basis of the Public Administration Science

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Abstract. *The article reviews and puts to critical analysis a large number of simultaneously existing and competing definitions of the notion 'administration'. It has been shown that the existing definitions in many cases do not meet the requirements of modern science either by content or by formal characteristics. It is mentioned that such a state can threaten the strictness and non-ambiguity of the obtained research results. In this article a generalizing definition of administration process as a mechanism for increasing system efficiency is given by a regular method based on the system approach. It has been shown that this definition is necessary and sufficient, and it has a powerful productive potential in terms of subsequent creation and concordance of the terminology system of the public administration science.*

Keywords: *administration, definition, axiomatic.*

Raktažodžiai: *administravimas, definicija, aksiomatika.*

Introduction

Beyond all doubt, the central notion of the public administration science is that of 'administration'. One can hardly imagine laying a scientific paradigm foundation without having a clear definition, which makes a search for the generic definition that could show the ontology of that notion as an indispensable and urgent task.

An important problem, which exists in the public administration science, explicitly or implicitly, is that of a variety of definitions of 'administration'. This, in turn, cannot but lead to a certain "blurring" of the definition, and the very subject of the science, which is based on the concept. Thus, the task of the present paper is working-out of a definition of the term 'administration' according to the modern principles of the system approach.

The analysis of lots of scientific works and teaching materials on public administration leads us to the conclusion that, despite the importance of this notion, in many cases the definition is not provided at all, or is given indirectly, through a

functional purpose or field of application. For example, only one of the three best known Ukrainian reference-books on public service [3; 4; 8], contains a direct definition of 'administration': "From a scientific point of view, administration is a directed coordination and organization of an object of administration. It is a sphere of human activity which originated as a result of labour division to help people influence technological, economic and social processes for attaining certain goals. Administration is a process, which provides necessary targeted transformation of energy, substances and information, maintains working capacity and fail-safe operation of an object by means of collecting and processing information about the object's condition and environment, and decision-making on the impact to be exerted on the object, and their use" [3, p. 390].

In Ukrainian publications, the most thorough generalizations on the issue can be found in the works by N. Nizhnyk [9], G. Odintsova [10], V. Bakumenko [4], and others. The main conclusion of the research conducted is that due to "multi-dimensional nature" of such a complex social phenomenon as administration, there exists a whole range of definitions for it in specialized scientific and educational literature. Moreover, it is emphasized that "they are not contradictory as their diversity is accounted for by different perspectives from which administration is considered by different authors, generalization of the existing versions of the definition of administration being done by prevailing approaches - aspects" [10]. But is this a true generalization? Perhaps we should speak not about generalization, but rather classification - a process that precedes generalization. What exactly is generalized - the notion of 'administration' or its applications (technical, social, public, targeted, anti-crisis, networking, situational, functional etc.)?

Thus, despite the variety of definitions of administration, paradoxically enough the laws of logic suggest the absence of any definition. Not mentioning the fact that the definitions are not in agreement, which clearly demonstrates the lack of a universally recognized point of view about this issue, we have to admit that actually they are not definitions at all. The purpose of a definition is to set the exact limits of a given concept to differentiate it from all other notions by its content and volume. Thus, the main task of this article is to develop a definition of the term "administration" in accordance with the modern principles of the system approach.

Characteristics of the definition of the term of 'administration'

All the words, in some respect, are related to being, but the closest thing to it is a category of essence. Other categories - quality, quantity, relation, space, time, action, suffering, state, having - relate to being through the category of essence. Essence is a single entity, which is independent, while state and relation are changeable and depend on time, space, relations with other essences etc. It is the essence, which can be expressed as a concept and is the subject of academic knowledge, i. e. science. Speaking of essence, we mean the essence of things that is why one has to understand what their existence is. If there is a thing, there must be

a concept of it. Therefore, no thing can exist without a concept, or else the thing would remain impenetrable. Essence answers the question: "What is a thing?" By revealing the essence of a thing, we give it a definition, i. e. form its concept.

A definition (in Latin *definitio)* is a logical operation that reveals the essence of a notion. The definition of a notion - a term - is a word or a word combination that has a definite meaning and is used in science. A definition solves two problems. First of all, it distinguishes and differentiates an object from all others; secondly, it reveals the essence of the defined objects, indicates their main features, the ones they cannot exist without, and on which all other features largely depend. The specific forms, in which the definition operation is performed, are extremely diverse. First of all, there are explicit and implicit definitions. The former has the form of the equality of two names, while the latter does not have it. The first group of definitions includes the most common generic definition also called 'classical', the second group includes contextual, ostensible, axiomatic and other definitions. The discrepancy between real and nominal definitions is essential. The first one is a description of the defined items that can be either true or false. The second is a prescription (norm), which dictates what meaning should be given to a notion that does not have a true meaning. As regards definitions, a principle of "not arguing about definitions" or "not arguing about words" is sometimes applied. However, the idea that it is unreasonable or even pointless to argue about definitions does not seem correct. It disagrees with a general idea of definitions and their purpose in our life, to say nothing of scientific research. This opinion also contradicts the obvious fact that debate about definitions is a common practice. There is a warning that the dispute about real definitions and the dispute about nominal definitions are fundamentally different. The real definition is a description of a set of objects, and the checking of its correctness is done by comparing it with an object. The disputes about real definitions usually deal with the truthfulness of descriptive statements. The nominal definition does not describe a thing, but rather requires implementing it. Thus, a dispute here is not about the truthfulness of a description, but about the expediency, appropriateness etc. of the requirement. The researcher introducing a new word does not describe anything, but requires - from himself or from others - to name objects by their specific names. However, the dispute is possible and relevant here. Black can be called white, and white can be called black, however, this change is irrelevant as nobody benefits from it. What is even worse - the inevitable confusion in case of renaming causes harm.

There are several types of definitions: ostensible, genetic and contextual, through relation to the opposite meaning, comparative, descriptive, generic, and others.

Each of the definition types has certain advantages and disadvantages, as well as the scope of its application. In order to find a considered solution to the task, a system of the most common definition types should be analyzed focusing, in the first place, on conditions of their use and a threat of logical errors that might occur.

The problem of definition of 'administration' is rather complicated. Thus, from the scientific point of view, this definition can be neither axiomatic nor nominal. It

should not be implicit or ostensible either. As this concept is fundamental, it can hardly be considered as a classic one - whether generic or genetic. The application of an operational definition due to universality of a defined notion will inevitably lead to endless multiplying of definitions. Thus, it can be concluded that the desired definition should be explicit and real. In addition, it must be scientific, i. e. necessary and sufficient, commensurate, clear and productive, and should not contain circular references to itself.

The Table presents a list of the most common definitions of the term of 'administration'. 'Administration' is regarded here as a generalizing word for a cluster of synonymous terms such as 'management', 'direction', 'leadership', 'government', 'rule', 'regime', 'command', 'control', etc.

Table: **Definitions of the term of 'administration'**

Definitions of 'administration'	**Sign**[*]	**Reference**
A decision-making process, organization of production, control over people	O, C	[11]
A function of a special body in an organization, which supervises the line of activity of all the elements of that organization, keeps within allowable limits the digression from the set goals by both the organization as a whole, and its parts	O, S	
A science that is a system of ordered knowledge in the form of concepts, theories, principles, methods and forms of governance	C	[5]
An art i. e. the ability to effectively apply data of the science of management in a particular situation	C, I	
A function is a targeted information impact on people and economic objects with the aim of directing their actions and get the desired results	O, S	
A process is a set of management actions which ensure the attaining of the set goals by transforming the input resources into the output product	C, O	
An apparatus is a complex of structures and people ensuring the use and coordination of all the resources of social systems to attain their goals	C, R	
An activity of the state or other entities of the state (public) power carried out outside the boundaries of legislature and judicial power	I, R	[7, p. 6]
Attaining by an organization of its objectives with the most optimal use of resources	O, C	[6]
The development of people and not the direction of things.(Lawrence A Appley)	I	Cited by the source [1]
The process by which a cooperative group directs action towards common goals.(Joseph Massie)	S, I, O	

A distinct process consisting of planning, organising, actuating and controlling performed to determine and accomplish the objectives by the use of people and resources.(George R Terry)	I	Cited by the source [1]
The task of planning, coordinating, motivating and controlling the efforts of others towards a specific objective.(James L Lundy)	I	
To manage is to forecast and to plan, to organise, to command, to co-ordinate and to control. (Henry Fayol)	I, C	
A multi-purpose organ that manages a business and manages managers and manages worker and work.(Peter F Drucker)	C	
The force, which leads, guides and directs an organisation in the accomplishment of a pre-determined object. (J. N. Schulze)	S, R	
The creation and maintenance of an internal environment in an enterprise where individuals working together in groups can perform efficiently and effectively towards the attainment of group goals (Koontz and O'Donnel)	I	
The process and agency which directs and guides the operations of an organisation in realising of established aims.(Ordway Tead)	I, C	
The function of an enterprise which concerns itself with the direction and control of the various activities to attain the business objectives. (William Spriegel)	S, I	
It consists of getting things done through others. Manager is one who accomplishes the objectives by directing the efforts of others. (S. George)	S, I, C	
The force that integrates men and physical plant into an effective operating unit. (Keith and Gubellini)	S, I	
The job of management is to make cooperative endeavour to function properly. A manager is one who gets things done by working with people and other resources. (Newman, Summer and Warren)	I, C	
The art of securing maximum results with a minimum of effort so as to secure maximum results with a minimum of effort so as to secure maximum prosperity and happiness for both employer and employee and give the public the best possible service. (John F M)	I, S	
It achieves a social objective with the best use of human and material energy and time and with satisfaction for the participants and the public. (Mary Cushing Niles)	I, O	
The complex implementation of influences on the object, that are chosen from the variety of possible impacts based on the program	I O	[13, p. 260]
Administration of information about behaviour of the object and external environment condition, directed at the maintenance, functioning improvement or development of the object for given goal achievement	I, C	

The mean of goal achievement, that allows to make a system more flexible and improve the effectiveness of its work	S	
The process of planning, organization, coordination, motivation and control, that is necessary for formulation and achievement of organizational goals	I,O	
The real operational (that is, goal-setting, organizational and controlling) influence of the subject of any type of power (authority) on the social phenomena, relations and processes, awareness, behaviour and human activity, in consequence of that something is preserving, changing, developing	S, R	[2, p. 7]
The social conditioned phenomenon that is produced by regularities and interrelations of formation and development of society, indispensable attribute of any human collective (cooperative) activity	S, I	[2, p. 16]
The result of human awareness and will, it can be appeared in the way that people aspire to	S, I	[2, p. 18]
The practical, organizing and controlling state influence on the public (social) activities for its improvement, preservation and reformation, based on its imperious power	I, C, R	[2, p 28-29]
The influence, that proceeds from general demands and national interests, that is provided both in material-financial and administrative-political relations	I, O	
The combination of science, proficiency (talent) and experience	S, I, O	

* The letters in the column "Signs" stand for determinative characteristics of the definitions: S - the requirement of sufficiency is not met, I - an implicit definition, O - an ostensible definition, C - definition with circular references, R - substitution or matching of the notions of administration and rule.

If we reject metaphorical definitions of the type *administration is the science and the art* [12], and those with the signs of circular references, we can see from the Table that: 1) administration is an act or a process; 2) administration is associated with its subject's impact on an object; 3) administration is directed towards attaining a goal. Other key words frequently used in definitions are: 'goal-oriented', 'conscious', 'organization', and 'coordination'.

The analysis of the presented definitions of administration also shows that most of them are built on the principles of the situational approach or, as they say, ad hoc - a researcher (author) selects or slightly adjusts the existing definitions to the needs of his or her study, and this situation cannot but cause concern.

Further generalization enabled us to reduce an array of the most common definitions of 'administration' notion to the following three:

1. The professional work (function) of a manager (administrative body) that lies in organizing activities in accordance with the objective laws, which is necessary to achieve an organization's objectives through planning, organizing, motivating and controlling.

2. A goal-oriented impact of an administration subject on an administration object with the aim of achieving the planned objectives.
3. A set of an operator's actions aimed at supporting or improving the functioning of an object of administration relevant to a specific goal.

Each of the above-mentioned definitions can and should be questioned. The main objection to the first definition is that it is a vivid example of the so-called "detached" and at the same time circular definition: *administration is what an administrator is engaged in.* The second definition demonstrates primarily stylistic imperfection caused by a triple repetition of the word 'goal'. Furthermore, it contains a thoroughly disguised circular reference too.

'Direction' and 'administration' are integral parts of the concept of a goal, since one cannot direct anything to nowhere: you can only target something towards a goal. The second and the third definitions are based on the undefined notion of a 'goal'. Feeling this, the authors try to specify the concept of a 'goal' by using such words as 'concrete', 'set', 'of organization' and others. It should be mentioned that 'goal' is one of the central concepts in the theory of systems. Moreover, it is the goal that is crucial for the composition and structure of a system, i. e. a system of administration derives from administration goals. A change of goals will automatically change "a set of operator's actions ", i. e. they will not be defined till preliminary determination of goal.

Almost all of the definitions found are essentially ostensible and descriptive. Thus, they in principle do not reveal the inner essence of the concepts. If we try to determine the effectiveness of administration by using the second definition, we can conclude that the one with a stronger impact on the object of administration is the best manager. Actually, using this definition, can we find an answer to the question: is anyone who exerts influence (commands) a manager?

Unfortunately, we were not able to find a general (generic) definition of administration, which could be transformed into a concrete one by adding specifying adjectives, in accordance with the following principle:

'Term' (definition) = F (x, y, z),   (1)

where x, y, z are a certain set of well-known concepts.

F (x, y, z) is a language function that structures the set of concepts (x, y, z) and joins them together, creating a necessary definition. Then a complex term (species term) will take the form of:

'Term' + 'specification' = F (x, y, z, 'specification'),   (2)

where F (x, y, z) is the same function as in (1), accurate within the requirements of linguistic norms.

Solving the problem

Thus, there is an urgent need for creating a general definition of 'administration' based on the system approach and the requirements to generic definitions. By the system approach, we mean the one which takes into account that the whole

(a system) does not always equal to the sum of its components. This discrepancy arises due to availability of a structure and links between different elements of a system, which help attain the aim of its existence. The system approach makes it possible to investigate the causes and conditions for new qualities or features emerging while a system is being created. We need a definition that would describe general features of phenomena and would enable in case of necessity to specify or clarify them.

Before starting a search for a general definition of 'administration', it is necessary to answer the following questions: 1) is administration an immanent phenomenon pertaining to complex social systems, or is it a concomitant phenomenon that can arise at a certain stage of social development? 2) can a complex system exist without any control?

The answer to these questions will enable us to make the following preliminary statement:

- administration is a social phenomenon, that does not exist beyond the society; administration in the technological processes is also the result of social activity;
- a social system can exist without administration for some time, for example, when an old system of administration is destroyed, and a new one has not been created yet (in case of a sudden loss of a leader, etc.);

Let us define the goal of administration as improving the quality (operating efficiency) of social or any other system. By the signs of increased efficiency, we understand both preservation of the system (maximum increase) and its development, which can be displayed in the form of quantitative or qualitative increase of the system status.

However, an ardent desire or the strongest impact may not be enough to increase the system effectiveness. The increase of system effectiveness can be obtained only by solving the problems that arise within the system, as well as between the system and its environment. Such universal solution of problems can be the use of the necessary mechanisms. Consequently, it should be emphasized that the administrator's work, in the most common case, is the efforts directing to solve collisions (conflicts) that exist in the way of achieving goals, and the administration is a process of solving collisions (mechanism) that is able to increase the efficiency of system operating in the way of achieving goals.

Conclusion

1. Nowadays, in the science of public administration there exists an unreasonably great amount of definitions for the concept of 'administration' which hinders creation of a terminological system - an integral part of the scientific paradigm, and there is a need to harmonize all of the definitions and terms as the first step towards formation of a scientific paradigm.

2. As a result of the conducted research, based on the system approach, a necessary and sufficient definition of the notion of 'administration' was obtained. It

has been shown, that this definition has a powerful productive potential and can become a foundation for further improvement and coordination of the terminological system for the science of public administration.

3. Thus, on the basis of the system approach, a laconic and at the same time generic definition of administration as a mechanism for increasing system efficiency **(**improving system effectiveness**)** is obtained. The analysis has shown that this definition is also sufficient, since it covers the essential features of the phenomenon. Moreover, the definition demonstrates effective performance in terms of further development and harmonization of the terminology system of the science of public administration. For example, it is natural to define social (public) administration as a mechanism for improving efficiency of a social system**.** Then social (in a narrower sense - public) administration is a mechanism for improving efficiency of any association of people - from a study group or a cooperative society to a local community, a state or supranational formations. Productivity of the given definition of 'administration' can also be illustrated by an exhaustive definition of a set of administration functions. Those are the functions of safeguarding and goal-setting, organization and coordination, concentration and redistribution, due to which functioning of an administration system is provided.

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Sisteminis požiūris administravimo sąvokai apibrėžti viešojo administravimo mokslo terminologijos bazėje

Anotacija

Straipsnyje apžvelgiama ir kritiškai analizuojama daug dabartinių ir konkuruojančių sąvokos „administravimas" apibrėžimų. Pateikta, kad dabartiniai apibrėžimai daugeliu atvejų neatitinka turinio arba formaliųjų charakteristikų šiuolaikinių reikalavimų. Akcentuojama, kad tai daro pavojingą įtaką skelbiamų tyrimo rezultatų tikslumui ir apibrėžtumui. Remiantis sisteminiu požiūriu, pateikiamas apibendrintas sąvokos „administravimas" apibrėžimas, nurodant, kad ši sąvoka turėtų būti vartojama valdymo sistemos efektyvumui apibūdinti. Akcentuojama, kad toks apibrėžimas yra būtinas ir potencialus, kuriant ir derinant viešojo administravimo terminologijos sistemą.

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