

ROLE OF TECHNOCRATS IN NATION DEVELOPMENT

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By:

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INTRODUCTION

In the elected forms of governments, leaders are elected, with the underlying assumption that the leadership will be responsible to the governed, by translating pre-election pledges into concrete policies that enhance the general welfare of society. However, the elected leaders rely on experts to formulate and implement the relevant policies. Such technocrats therefore exercise authority and power by virtue of their competence in specific fields. Thus the technocrat exercises influence on the political leader, who in turn takes credit for the benefits that accrue to society.

ROLE OF TECHNOCRATS

The role of technocrats is primarily to make structural changes and implement reforms that politicians can't or won't. Typically, a crisis of immense magnitude triggers a realization among many business, institutional and even political leaders that non-politicians are needed to bring immediately needed changes to governance and resolve issues that threaten the integrity and sustainability of the nation. Technocrats don't focus on ideological strategies but rather on practical, effective ways to deal with a variety of monetary, fiscal, economic and infrastructure issues.

Technocrats are individuals with specialized training, who approach societal problems from the vantage point of appropriate knowledge and experience. They seek solutions to problems in science and technology broadly conceived.

Technocrats are primarily driven by their cognitive "problem-solution mindsets", and only in part by particular occupational group interests. The activities of technocrat's and the increasing success of their ideas are thought to be a crucial factor behind the modern spread of technology and the largely ideological concept of the "Information Society".

Technocrats may be distinguished from "econocrats" and "bureaucrats" whose problem-solution mindsets differ from those of the technocrats. There is a tendency to think of technocrats as individuals who, because they are concerned with public policy, work out of the government bureaucracy. Technocrat can, and usually do, work in a great variety of sectors of a society – government, private business, education, communications, industry, infrastructure etc.

TECHNOCRACY

In counter distinction to the traditional economic, political or philosophic approaches, the term technocracy was originally used to designate the application of the scientific method to solve social problems.

The concept of technocracy can be defined as "rule by skill". Technocracy is a platonic meritocracy of the skilled. This to some, rightly or otherwise, implies that technocrats are anti democratic. But the fact remains, that the elected governments can be effectively driven only by the work and influence of technocrats. One must bear in mind that the knowledge attributed to

technocrats need not necessarily relate only to hard sciences, as is usually assumed. The need for a technocracy within the overall parameters of a democracy stands on the fundamental premise that democracy is ruled by the people, who might not always be able to grasp the complexities of a modern world, which in turn calls for experts to address intricate issues facing a nation.

A technocracy describes a situation or society in which those who govern justify themselves by appeal to expertise in scientific forms of knowledge. In contradistinction to democracy, technocracy is a system in which decision makers are selected on the basis of the knowledge they demonstrate, rather than how much political capital they hold or how popular they are. One can easily characterize some forms of technocracy as *elitism*, whereby the "most qualified" and the administrative elite tend to be the same. Overall, a technocracy relies more on expertise and leadership skills selected through bureaucratic processes rather than democratic elections.

Technocracy irreducibly displays the following features:

- Laws and regulations are designed to pay attention to performance and efficiency, not individuals.
- Laws are enforced by designing a system such that it is impossible to break them.
- The various 'branches of the government work together and share knowledge to maximize the performance of each branch in as equal a way as is feasible'.
- Only experts occupy positions where crucial decisions are to be made in the bureaucracy, so that, for a few instances, the economy is regulated by economists; Social policy is designed by political scientists; the health care system is run by medical professionals.

The above framework may seem authoritarian, but the principles of a technocracy should be anticipatory - designed as a form of *in-built problem-solving*, in which action is based on the psychology of conditioning, rather than on the intrusive whims of personality. Such an approach to handling complex issues allows for a reasonable division of roles as follows:

- Experts provide understanding of the dynamics, facts and stakes involved.
- Citizens provide the values, every-day issues, and common sense suggestions.
- Consequently, experts prepare policy recommendations.

Broadly speaking, then, a technocracy is governance by those who have reached the pinnacle of their fields of specialization. Thus a technocracy should infuse a logistical approach to societal challenges.

The term *technocracy* derives from the Greek words "*tekhne*" meaning *skill* and *kratos* meaning *power*, as in government, or rule.

The technocrat is the person who is chiefly concerned with the application of the stock of modern, transnational knowledge to developing societies. Such a person is concerned with the application of problem solving analytical skills to the perplexing questions of development. In addition to the implementation of change, an equally important contribution is often the creation of an awareness among his countrymen of the potential directions of change. The technocrat usually combines a knowledge of these skills with a sense of professionalism and craftsmanship. His role is different from that of the scholar whose interest in the process of

modernization will often omit questions of implementation, and range much further than questions of policy.

In the conceptual development of a technocracy, the expert is an indispensable administrative staff in a political system.

The background of technocrats are as varied as the skills they are interested in using. Many are trained in one of the social sciences, economics or political science – or in public administration. But a good number comes from other disciplines as well – e.g., engineering, law, statistics and accounting.

DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Most of developing countries still struggle with the tripartite problems that are aptly captured by the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (**MDG**): Eradication of poverty, provision of adequate health care, and universal provision of education. These problems can be given a solution based perspective if and only if, they are well conceived in a technocratic system embedded in a value-driven democracy. Out of this, a country can address ways and means of investing in roads, power, water, sanitation, health care and education by identifying the basic needs of the populace, computing the cost of meeting them, and identifying ways of financing the relevant services. The amount of public resources wasted points to the lack of expert management of public affairs.

For national development process, the long standing tradition has been for a nation to almost totally depend on the creativity and vision of the elected politicians. This attitude has brought us thus far, but as we now continue our walk into the zones of this 21st century, politicians' visions for national development will need to be complemented by the creative and productive ideas and visions of technocrats to quicken the pace of national development.

The need for technocratic governance is highest when political governance is least successful at effectively addressing significant fundamental issues. Technocrats may not represent the ideals of democracy but they do represent the alternative to what happens when politics is antithetical to governance.

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Governments the world-over place great emphasis on the role of technocrats within their public services, giving them responsibility for, and opportunity to devise plans and projects for the development of their respective nations. The plethora of expertise available with private and public sector ought to be more fully harnessed in a more meaningful manner, to make national development the task of every capable person in this society.

Of course, there is all rationality in this approach to national development. Consider the fact of the extent of professionalism and diversity of expertise in the public services of nations. From medical doctors, attorneys, economists, political scientists, dentists, accountants, educators, engineers, you name them, there're there, within the public service. In fact, the pool of diverse expertise available within the public service forms a reservoir of human resource which, if effectively tapped and distributed among the various branches of our developmental tree, could bear bountiful abundance in achievements of developmental goals.

Politicians, worldwide, know much too well, their dependence on the expertise of the technocrats – for the technocrats make the mare fly, in terms of the practical applicability of theoretical knowledge to real-world problems. Sensing this situation, technocrats, being content to follow the dictates of the ruler-leader, may sit quietly awaiting orders, rather than engage

themselves in the creative and productive design of projects for national development. It is this under-utilization of their full capabilities by public servants that is harmful to development.

Imagine an economist sitting daily at his desk, patiently awaiting projects for implementation from politicians, rather than sitting devising projects to be presented to politicians for implementation. Of course, a situation in which both the visionary capabilities of the politicians, and the expertise of the technocrats, simultaneously at work devising development projects, add more mortar to the building of a nation. Rather than merely only politicians left to the task of creating projects for development. When it comes to national development, the technocrats' role is as vital as that of the politicians' role. Technocrats must become fully aware of this reality, and act upon it. Technocrats must awaken themselves to their responsibility to the nation, to become more actively intellectually workful, ever conceiving new projects to present to the political directorate for consideration for implementation. Obviously, that's why they are paid hefty salaries, to produce intellectual labour, that translates into practical projects, for the development of the nation.

As technocrats within the public service begin to produce an avalanche of development projects for presentation to various ministers, the burden of national development will more lightly be borne, and therefore effectually accomplished. Politicians will most certainly find it more possible for them to accomplish their task of national development. Left all to themselves, to create all the projects for national development, politicians with little expertise will languish the country in underdevelopment. But with the active awareness and increased creativity and productivity of public service technocrats, like booster engines to a vehicle, the country will speed into development at a faster pace.

Before this attitudinal reform could be effected, there must be innovation within the atmosphere of the country – both among politicians and professionals. On the parts of politicians, they must come to realization of two important facts: (1) That their capacity for visualizing has comradeship among the professionals. (2) And that they should nurture that comradeship with professionals at all levels of public service, to promote original thinking and creativity among public servants, in the best public interest. They must open avenues and invent procedures that could make it possible for every professional in the public service to find it easy and comfortable to submit ideas for the solution of developmental problems, for the benefit of this nation. But the technocrats, always need a society that recognizes merit.

TECHNOCRATS IN PRIVATE SECTOR

Technocrats play an important role in the rise of modern business as well. Modern business is a bureaucratization of family enterprises in which techniques of scientific management gradually come to predominate in decision making. The engineers of this transition are the technocrats of the private sector.

The technocrats in the private sector are bringing change to their communities in terms of new physical process adapted in production, marketing, education, infrastructure, etc. But more important, they are bringing institutional change in the form of modern corporate organization which allows separation of ownership and management functions.

Technocrats working in the private sector were able to erect an industrial infrastructure along modern corporate / bureaucratic lines which is now a permanent feature of economies. This is a major achievement which opens up potentially new directions for development.

These new managers are increasingly foreign-trained and exhibit an approach to their work characterized more by professionalism and craftsmanship as opposed to simple acquisitive motivation. In doing this they are supplying an indispensable ingredient to the process of modernization.

While in the past technocrats had little in the way of a political base, they are now frequently emerging as leaders among the youth and the educated. Thus, while in the past they had little potential for influencing the shape of political events, their potential impact on political development in the future can be expected to increase substantially.

WAY FORWARD

If the aim is to create a future most desired by the people, effective leadership must move from conscious belief based decision making to value-based decision making. The fundamental question to be asked in this regard is, "when a decision is being taken, is it aligned with the values represented by the government and the democratic aspirations of the people?" If the decision were to be rational but not in concurrence with such values, it would not be consistent with the objective of growth and development.

The technocrat is the man or woman equipped with specialized knowledge - conceptual tools, with which to look at the bigger picture, something that often bypasses the politician. On the one hand, the technocrat sees no interest but values, performance and goals. He/she is a behind-the-scenes yet powerful assistant. On the other hand, the politician thrives on playing to the gallery, tendering to be a populist even in technical issues.

The manner in which the politician relates to the technocrat in the course of turning the election pledges into policies and programs for development, is a matter that interests a number of political theorists. In a democratic system, the political leader is elected to office partly because of the election pledges he makes. Once in office, the politician has a challenge of transforming the pledges into action. A politician's mandate is not based on knowledge, skills or performances. In essence, an election brings on board both experts and non-experts. The challenge is that a politician is evaluated by the electorate on the basis of how well he/she translates his/her pledges into action. The flipside is a thorough examination of what role specialized knowledge ought to play in leadership, given that the society is so complex that solutions to its problems require multiple threads of expertise.

A democracy allows the political leader to experiment even without a basis for that experiment. The important thing is that the political leader will be judged favourably or otherwise at the end of the elective term. On the other hand, technocrats operate on the basis of knowledge and skills.

Conclusion

Today the future of development lies in the shift from democracy in the conventional sense to technocracy, where the role of the expert is recognized and appreciated.

Whereas the claims of theoretical democracy are appealing and humane, ignoring the role of the technocrat in charting the path of development presents a problem – the lack of vital knowledge for designing sound development blueprints, and the knowhow for implementing them.

For national development process, the long standing tradition has been for the nation to almost totally depend on the creativity and vision of the elected politicians. This attitude has brought us thus far, but as we now continue our walk into the zones of this 21st century, politicians' visions for national development will need to be complemented by the creative and productive ideas and visions of technocrats to quicken the pace of national development.

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workful, ever conceiving new projects to present to the political directorate for consideration for implementation.

Because of the growing organizational complexity of the society, during the transition from industrial to post industrial society, there is need for both corporate and state planning by the technocrat. This in essence means that the politician has to seek the assistance of the technocrat in realizing societal goals.

Technocracy aims for is not the assimilation of democratic institutions, but rather the total transformation of constitutionalism, entailing the introduction of knowledge-based means of assessing the desired development needs, aligning them to available resources, and mainstreaming these in a future value oriented thinking and policy decision making. The technocrat seeks to inform, assess and integrate the infrastructure in a merit-based management system. This is the future for development.

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