Introduction

Authority is a major principle of organization. The first part of module will cover general introduction and meaning of authority. The second part incorporates the views of prominent scholars about authority. The third part describes the general concept of power and distinction between power and authority. The forth part explores the reasons for declining authority of state and related concept of responsibility.

Key Words: Legitimacy, Coercion, Utilitarian, Organization structure, Sovereignty

Text

Authority occupies a prominent place in the discussion on organizational structure. Administrators or executives do not perform all the functions himself under his charge. He simply gets the work done by others. Administrators need certain right for getting the things done. This right is technically called authority. It is power to command others to do something or refrain from doing certain things which the possessor of authority thinks appropriate to achieve the purpose of organization. Therefore, it is facility or resource at the disposal of administrators for getting things done. Without authority, the administrator cannot perform the function nor can he be held accountable for the performance of functions under his charge.

Meaning of Authority:

Authority is at the base of formal organizations. It is a linking pin between superior and subordinate. It formally creates the superior – subordinate relationships to perform and coordinate the organizational functions. The Oxford Dictionary defines authority as the “Power to give orders and make others Obey; moral or legal supremacy; the right to command etc. it has been defined as:

Henry Fayol: “Authority is the right to give orders and power to exact obedience.”

Mooney: Authority is “The supreme coordinating Power”.

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Koontz and O’ Donnel state, “Authority is the key to the management job. Since management must work through people to get things done, management theory is necessarily concerned with a complex of superior-subordinate relationship and is, therefore, founded on the concept of authority.”

Allen: “Authority is the sum of the powers and rights entrusted to make possible the performance of work delegated.”

Chester Barnard: “Authority is the character of a communication in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor to or ‘member’ of the organization as governing the action he contributes.”

Authority in an organization means power to make decisions, communicating the decisions to the subordinates, supervising their performance to ensure that they are working to achieve the desired objective, guiding, directing and correcting their behavior if they deviate from the desired path. The persons making such decisions in turn are also subject to the authority of their superiors. The pattern of authority in an organization is known as authority structure. In the words of Katz and Kahn: “The supervisors are to instruct, communicate requirement for change, correct any deviations from required performance; in short they are to influence. In turn, they are to accede to the influence of their own supervisors, and so on to the top of the hierarchy. The resulting set of role relationships constitutes the authority structure…………” Thus, the superior influences the behavior of subordinates by using his authority. How far this authority is accepted and obeyed depends on the capacity and Judgment of superior and subordinates. The superior has to create such an environment where subordinates voluntarily accept his authority. In the absence of such acceptance the superior loses much of his authority.

**VIEWS OF PROMINENT SCHOLARS ABOUT AUTHORITY**

**Max Weber:** Max Weber (1864-1920) a German Sociologist made a pioneering contribution to social sciences and is known for formulation of three ideal type of legitimate authority.1 He believed that exercise of authority was a universal phenomenon that characterized the social relationships. His thought on authority need to be studied in the context of his theory of domination. Domination refers to power relationship between rulers and ruled. In any kind of established authority, there exists a number of beliefs that legitimize the exercise of authority
among the ruler and ruled. Weber identified three type of legitimation, each according to a particular type of domination to justify the exercise of authority. These are Traditional Authority, Charismatic Authority and Legal Rational Authority.

1. **Traditional Authority**: The traditional authority derives its legitimacy from the sanctity of tradition and belief in the appropriateness of traditional way of doing things. The leader under such an authority system exercise authority by virtue of status he has inherited. The ruler is obeyed because traditions so demand. The administrator may also exercise arbitrary authority. However, all his actions are legitimized in the name of traditions and customs. This type of authority is vested in person and not in office.

2. **Charismatic Authority**: Charismatic authority is based on the personal qualities of a leader. The leader is believed to possess Christma and endowed with superhuman and supernatural qualities. Among the holder of chrisma are a prophet, a messiah or political leader. His follower under such a authority system accept his authority so long as they believe in his chrisma. Consistent failure of chrisma may lead to deposition of leader.

3. **Legal- Rational Authority**: This authority system is legal because authority is exercised by means of rules and regulations. The ruled in such a authority system accept the authority of a ruler because they believe in the rightness of law. Authority in such a system is based in the office, and not in person. Obedience under it is owed to legally established impersonal order. The administrative staff in a legal rational authority system is bureaucracy which according to Weber is most efficient form of organization.

**VIEWS OF M.P. FOLLET ON AUTHORITY**

M.P. Follet attacked the traditional theory of authority. She criticized the order giving both in method and substance. She believed that a manager’s Job was not merely giving orders; but he should also learn to manipulate the workers so that they may accept orders without questioning. To achieve this purpose, she suggested depersonalizing the order by a joint study of situation in order to find the law of situation. Both the manager and managed should follow that law. She said that authority stems from the task being performed from the situation and believed in functional unity. She opined that orders do not emerge from the superiors but they arise out of situation and both the superior and subordinate contribute to this situation. Moving ahead of
classical thinkers, she asserted that authority belongs to the person having the largest knowledge of situation and who understands its total significance. Thus according to her authority belongs to the job and stays with the job.

**VIEWS OF CHESTER BARNARD ON AUTHORITY**

Barnard disagrees with the traditional concept of authority and introduces ‘acceptance’ as the basis of his theory of authority. He defines the authority as “the character of an order in a formal organization by virtue of which it is accepted by a contributor or member of organization governing or determining what he does or is not to do so as the organization is concerned.” Thus according to Barnard authority is a matter of acceptance of superior role of supervisor by the subordinate. Effectiveness of authority depend on acceptance by the subordinate and his willingness to comply with it. Barnard held that authority was exercised through communication and communication will be accepted authoritative if it fulfills four essential conditions, Viz.,

1. Intelligibility
2. Consistency with the purpose of organization
3. Compatibility with personal interests
4. Physical and mental ability to comply

Thus acceptance of authority by the subordinates depends on fulfillment of these four conditions. In addition to it, the acceptance of authority is facilitated by the “Zone of indifference” of persons working in the organization. For each individual, there is a certain area within which he accepts authority willingly. Experienced and imaginative executives determines this area and gives only those orders which are easily obeyed. If he give orders that cannot or will not be obeyed he is sure lose his authority. Acknowledging the authority of competency, he said that people working in organization will grant much greater authority outside the usual zone of indifference to those who have ability, knowledge and understanding.

**SIMON’S VIEW OF AUTHORITY**

According to Simon, authority means the power to make decisions to guide the actions of other. “It is a relationship between two individuals, one superior and the other, subordinate.” Simon extended the Barnard’s concept of authority by devising ‘a Zone of acceptance’. He posited four basis motivations of subordinates to accept the will of a superior. These are: rewards
and sanctions, legitimacy, social approval and the subordinates confidence in the superior’s ability. For him, of all these motivations, those of reward and sanctions are the most interesting. He believed that authority does not always flow from top to bottom but it is a two ways process both up and down. He said the subordinates have twice the power of reward and sanctions than superior.

**AMITAI ETZIONI’S VIEW OF AUTHORITY**

Amitai Etzioni said that authority is key variable in organizational behavior. He contends virtually all characteristics of organization are determined by kind of authority used in organization. He suggests three categories of authority.

1. **Coercive Authority:** This authority depends on fear of punishment. Its method of control is physical punishment such as solitary confinement, infliction of pain etc. For example, a prison uses coercive power.

2. **Normative Authority:** When the base of authority is persuasion, it is called normative authority. Its method of control is symbolic such as appeals to patriotism. For example political party uses identify or normative power.

3. **Utilitarian Authority:** Remuneration or material reward is the base of utilitarian authority. Its method of control is material such as salary, time off and special or choice work assignments. Business Corporation uses utilitarian authority.

**TYPES OF AUTHORITY**

There are three types of authority in most of organizations.

1. **Line Authority:** In line authority, a superior exercise direct control on his subordinates. Superior – subordinate relationship are arranged in a hierarchical system. Authority is fixed at different levels of hierarchy. Line authority is responsible to achieve the primary or main purpose of organization.

2. **Staff Authority:** The nature of staff authority is advisory. Staff officer act as the think tank of any organization. They are repository of information and ideas only. Staff Officer provide information, conduct research, coordinates the different programmes and advise the line superior. It is up to line officer to accept or reject his advice.
3. **Functional Authority**: Functional Authority provides a larger role to staff specialist by appointing them in top position for the entire enterprise and conferring on them power of command in their functional area. This is done to maintain the quality and uniformity of functions throughout the organization. Functional authority remains confined to functional guidance of different departments.

**CONCEPT OF POWER AND DISTINCTION BETWEEN POWER AND AUTHORITY**

According to encyclopedia of governance, “Within human governance, power refers to the ability of a given individual, corporate body, political organization or political system to further interests shape behavior and inform strategies for action.

Power has been defined as the ability to get things done despite the will and resistance of others. Max Weber defined Power “as the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance.” M.P. Follet defines power as “the ability to make things happen, to be a causal agent, to initiate change.” Chester Barnard defined power in terms of informal authority while the modern sociologist defines authority as ‘legitimate power’. Thus it can be concluded that power is personal strength or skill of a person to get the things done. Power does not have the legal base. It inheres in the person and not in office. The distinction between authority and power is as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authority</th>
<th>Power</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Authority is the legitimate right of a superior to command the behavior of subordinates and seek their compliance willingly.</td>
<td>1. Power is the ability of a person to influence the behavior of another person to do certain things.</td>
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<td>2. It inheres in the office, with the change of incumbent officer, his authority also changes.</td>
<td>2. It is vested in individual, his power remains the same despite the change in official position.</td>
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<td>3. Authority is legitimate. It is based on law.</td>
<td>3. Power is based on strength, force, threat of punishment. It lacks legitimacy.</td>
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<td>4. It serves as a base of formal organization.</td>
<td>4. It serves as a base of informal organization.</td>
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<td>5. Authority is mostly well defined, formal</td>
<td>5. Power is informal, undefined and infinite.</td>
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and finite.

6. The defining characteristics of authority is legitimacy.

6. The defining characteristics of power is threat force and coercion.

SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

Authority is soul of administration in public life. It helps the administrator to make decisions, defending the policies, programmes and actions of government officials, clarifying the objectives and goals of government and to obtain the feedback about the performance of different administrative officials and agencies. The sources of authority in administrative agencies are:

Law: Constitution is ultimate source of authority. All the organs of government derive their authority from the constitution. Administrative officials also get the authority from statutory rules and regulations, Judicial interpretations and precedents. Legislative enactments and official rules and regulations also describe the authority of different officials and the right to command and obedience in the organization.

Tradition: Tradition play a significant role in administration as a source of authority. Law alone does not confer the authority on officials. Organization develop certain precedents, norms and habit patterns during the course of their working over a period of time. These precedents, norms and habits are developed by socializing the participants in the norm, practices and work environment of organization. Consequently the members of organization give due importance and recognition to values, traditions and codes of their profession.

Delegation: The administrative officials also get authority by means of delegation. The higher official confers the authority on his subordinate official through delegation to achieve the specific purpose of organization. For example, the municipal commissioner, in Municipal Corporation is statutorily authorized to prepare the annual budget. He can entrust this work to account officer by delegating him necessary authority. However, account officer is responsible equally to complete the work assigned to him. This measure is considered appropriate developing a sense of responsibility and confidence among subordinate the employees and preparing them for future responsible positions.
Thus law, tradition and delegation play a significant role to grant authority to the administrative officials. Authority is accepted when it is perceived that its source is genuine and that it has been used in public interest. Relevant constitutional, statutory, judicial and administrative rules and regulations are quoted to support the directive and orders issued by competent authority. Effectiveness of authority depends on its acceptance by the concerned official in particular and society in general.

**LIMITS TO AUTHORITY**

Authority is limited like all other social institutions. Constitutional, legislative, executive, and judicial control and exercised to check the misuse and abuse of authority. These controls are discussed below:

1. **Legislative Control:** Parliament and State legislature exercise control on policy and finance of administration. The political head of every department/ministry is a minister who is responsible to the legislature for omission and commission of acts of official working under him. Legislature has many devices like question hour, zero hour, call attention motion, adjournment and voting on demand for grants to influence and control the authority of administration.

2. **Judiciary:** The main purpose of judicial control is to ensure the legality of actions of administrative personnel. Court can intervene to protect the citizen from misconduct and abuse of authority of government officials. The administrator in a department/ministry can be sued in a court for lapses and unlawful actions. Thus court limit the authority of administration by ensuring that it has been used lawfully, judiciously and in a proper manner.

3. **Press and Media:** Media is considered as the fourth pillar of government. Both electronic and print media play a significant role to expose the abuse of authority and transgression of rights by the public functionaries. Investigative journalism has highlighted many scams and scandal involving public officials. Media has emerged has a powerful mechanism to hold the bureaucracy responsible for dereliction of duty and misuse of authority.

4. **Civil Society:** Civil Society has emerged as a potent weapon against abuse of authority by public functionaries. Peoples’ movement like demands for transparency in public life, civil society movement for strengthening institutional and legal machinery to check violence against women and children, farmers movement against forcible land acquisition, consumer movement
for quality services have a great potential to exercise a check on the arbitrariness of government functionaries and also these movements act as significant means of people’s participation in administration.

5. Lokayukta: The institutions of Lokayukta have been established in some state to investigate the complaints of citizens against government officials. The states like Karnataka having powerful institution of Lokayukta with independent investigation agency have been able to exercise an effective check on the abuse or misuse of authority by public official for illegitimate purpose.

Thus, there are many limitations to the concept of authority. Neither any government official can act in arbitrary manner nor can he make any decision not authorized by law. There are internal and external control mechanism to ensure that authority have been used judiciously and due procedure have been followed while exercise it.

DECLINING AUTHORITY OF STATE

Current literature on governance reveals that the authority of state is declining. It means three things, firstly that states may be less able to rely on authority as a key method of exercising social control. This may be due to individual crisis of legitimacy or the process of globalization or broad cultural changes that have undermined the normative foundations of authority based on hierarchical relationships. To overcome the loss of authority, states are increasingly governing in networks with voluntary and private bodies as a means of increasing legitimacy secondly, decreasing state authority also means that scope for exercise of authority is narrowing. It means redefinition of many areas where earlier government used exercise the direct control, for example in India government no longer enjoys monopoly of operations in broadcasting, telecommunication, insurance etc. There are many companies and corporations who operate in these areas. The states rather than exercising direct control on these bodies can only influence their working through policy and regulation. Thirdly new forms of governance have emerged in response to economic, political and normative changes. The loss of authority of state happened mainly because of upward transfer of state authority to super national level (global governance, WTO, World Bank, IMF), downward to sub national level (for example states in India) or outward to private realm. (The role of private sector).
The above discussion shows that the authority is declining but to what extent the state authority has declined and what will be its consequences or will the states be able to regain the loss of authority is still a subject of debate and discussion among the scholars and practitioners of public administration.

**RESPONSIBILITY**

From the previous discussion on authority, it is obvious that authority is essential part of governance to facilitate the administrator to achieve the prescribed goals. However, officials may be tempted to misuse authority without corresponding responsibility. Therefore, the current concern in public administration is to focus upon identification of political, moral and legal principles upon which individual and collective responsibility and rights should be based. Responsibility means answerability for one’s actions and performance to his superior. It is obligation to perform the assigned duties. George R. Terry defines responsibility as an obligation of an individual to carry out the assigned activities to the best of one’s ability. Barnard has defined responsibility as the power of a particular private code of moral to control the conduct of the individual in the presence of strong contrary desires and impulses. He further says that responsibility is not determined by a single code, but by a complex set of many codes moral, legal, technical, professional etc. Thus an administrator or employee is not only legally responsible in the traditional sense of the terms but also for moral, technical and professional aspects of job. In nutshell it implies acceptance of obligation by subordinate for the discharge of duties and functions entrusted to him by his superior. Responsibility of an official is required for not only holding him accountable for performance and achieving the prescribed goals but it also serves a check on the misuse or abuse of authority. Responsibility in the administrative system is of five types:

- Organizational
- Legal
- Professional
- Political
- Moral
Organizational: organizational responsibility is the basic structural feature of Weber’s model of bureaucracy. The employees in such organization are arranged in superior subordinate relationship. The subordinate is accountable to his superior for fulfillment of assigned duties and functions.

Legal: Administration have to act and carry out their official duties and responsibilities in a legal manner by following appropriate procedure, rules and regulations. They have to respect the established legislative and judicial process. They are liable to be held accountable for not following legal system.

Professional: The role of specialists have increased in administration owing to increase in technical natures of its functions. Consequently, specialists like doctors, engineers, legal experts, statisticians, economists, auditors and accountants play a significant role in administration. These professions have developed a code of conduct and norms of ethical behavior, which all the members of organizations should follow for healthy development of their profession and in the larger public interest. Recently, civil servant have also developed professional norms. These norms and code of behavior are enforced by individual conscience of administrative officials rather than any legal mechanism.

Political: In a democratic system the superiority of politicians in making polices, setting priorities and allocating resources is well established. As minister, they are the political head of ministry/department and accountable to the chief executive and legislature for the policy implementation, error of judgment and conduct and performance of official working under him.

Moral: Moral responsibly is the soul of public administration. They are nowhere written in laws and office manuals but in modern context, they are more important than legal or institutional responsibility. Legislature, judiciary, media and civil society are persistently demanding to enforce moral responsibility in the management of public affairs. Recognizing the growing importance of moral values in view of increasing instance of corruption and malpractice, many training institutes have included moral values as part of their training module.
AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Authority and responsibility go hand in hand. Classical theorist emphasized the significance of equating authority with responsibility.9 Henry Fayol for instance stressed that authority should be commensurate with responsibility. If someone is assigned responsibility, he should be given equal authority for utilization of resources like authority to incur necessary expenditure, recruit personnel and to exercise the necessary control the subordinate official to fulfill the responsibility entrusted to him. Authority if not accompanied by responsibility is likely to be misused and the whole purpose of organization may be defeated. George R. Terry says “Authority without responsibility lacks an ultimate purpose or justification for existing, and likewise, responsibility without authority to carry out the assigned duties has a hallow ring.” Thus no one can fulfill the responsibility without commensurate authority but while the superior officer can delegate responsibility, he cannot delegate responsibility. He can only take the assistance of subordinate official the assigned duties to fulfill but ultimately responsibility lies with him. Also while the authority flow downward through the process of delegation and decentralization, responsibility on the other hand flow upward. Authority is a long lasting process than responsibility. Responsibility may be over after the completion of a specific task but authority may continue even beyond it. Thus, authority and responsibility are complementary and supplementary to each other.

Summing up: Authority is a major principle of organization. It is essential not only for achieving the prescribed goals but also to hold the official accountable for their conduct and performance. Power is the ability of a person to influence the behavior of another person to do certain things. Power is based on strength, force, threat of punishment. It lacks legitimacy. Officials may be tempted to misuse authority without corresponding responsibility. Therefore, authority is commensurate with responsibility.