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PREVIEW

GOVERNMENT AND THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL EQUALITY - A
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SELECTED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

VOLUME I

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

THE EVOLUTION OF EGALITARIAN PUBLIC POLICY IN THE DEVELOPING AREAS - A THEORETICAL MODEL:

The end of the Second World War witnessed the attainment of sovereign status by a large number of non-Western countries which had been under colonial rule for varying lengths of time. With the attainment of independence, political elites of the new States assumed major responsibilities for determining the direction and scope of social change. The association of these countries with the West had resulted in some basic changes in the social, economic and political structures. But these changes affected only small segments of their total populations. Some of the potentially helpful conditions left to them as a legacy of colonial rule were a relatively well organized bureaucratic structure in government and business and fairly well developed physical infrastructures (roads, railway systems, power generating plants and so forth). Most important of all, the period of the struggle for independence had instilled radical economic, social and political ideologies in the minds of the new elites.

Most of these countries began to undertake the task of nation building under conditions of enormous financial and manpower constraints. These problems assumed special importance in the face of the great desire to bring about major structural changes in the economy which involved not only a quest for modernizing the peasant sector but also

embarking upon programs of industrialization. Structural change was considered to be a matter of great urgency because the system they inherited based on the export of raw materials was no longer suitable for more rapid economic development and nation building. Colonial economic policy had placed great emphasis on the export of raw materials often to the detriment of manufacturing capacity of the colonial territories. One of the consequences of such policy was that the vast majority of the population was left out of the mainstreams of modern economic activity with far reaching implications for the standard of living and economic productivity of this majority.

The magnitude of the problem to be dealt with was such that in the opinions of most of the new leaders it required nothing less than the direct intervention of the State in the management of the economy. The leaders sought to accomplish this task through comprehensive development plans touching upon most aspects of economic and social life.

In most of these countries the idea of economic planning was not new. During the last phase of the colonial era and particularly in the immediate post-war period, most colonial authorities had launched development plans which emphasized the encouragement of greater foreign investment and the development of indigenous manpower. But the difference between this kind of planning and the one advocated by the nationalist leaders is that in the latter, economic and social objectives are to receive equal attention. The need to do justice to

both provided the main rationale for greater State intervention in economic and social life. The populist ideologies that many of the new leaders espoused would not permit market forces to determine the course of economic change. If these forces were allowed free reign the weak would be overpowered by the strong.

Another factor that made State intervention a necessity was the weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie. With the absence of this important developmental variable, even if the leaders wanted the private sector to play a significant role they would have to depend on foreign entrepreneurs which, given the prevailing nationalistic sentiment, would be objectionable. In fact, inherent in the commitment to planning was the desire to develop domestic private entrepreneurial capacity. This is evident from the continuing attempts by governments in the new States to indigenize not only the government but also professional and technical occupations in business and industry.

The management of economic and social change through centralized planning requires not only financial resources but also an adequate supply of trained manpower which at the time of independence was in short supply. This problem could be solved temporarily by importing foreign personnel through bilateral and multilateral arrangements. But it was clear to them that the final answer to the problem rested on developing their own capacities to produce this important factor of production. To that end they embarked upon extensive programs of education at all levels. Since in most of

these countries considerable progress had already been made in primary education through the combined efforts of Christian Missionaries and the colonial authorities, the initial emphasis during the early independence era was on post-primary and post-secondary education because these were two areas of education which were so far neglected. At the same time the new leaders could not put aside concerns about primary education without abrogating their populist commitments. The goal of universal primary education was espoused with heroic zeal and with the assistance of organizations like the UNESCO African and Asian Ministers of Education made plans to reach the goal of universal primary education before the end of the century.

Since the goal of State intervention in the management of social change is to increase economic and social opportunities for the ordinary citizen, another important aspect of planned endeavor is to deal with the problem of disease. During colonial times both government and private entrepreneurs who controlled extractive industries and large scale agricultural estates provided medical care facilities for that segment of the population directly involved in the modern economic sector, i.e. the urban population. In addition to institutional medical services the State, during the colonial era, undertook extensive campaigns to control and if possible eradicate the major communicable diseases. Even in this respect success was more visible in urban rather than in rural areas for it was the urban areas where such facilities as

sewage and safe water supply systems were provided. Hence at the time of independence, as it is even now, the gap in standard of living between the urban and the rural populations was immense. Populist egalitarianism, the ideology of many of the new leaders, therefore made it imperative for the new political elites to attempt to narrow this gap by planning for extensive preventive and remedial health programs to reach the rural population.

With the attainment of independence, popular aspiration for improved economic and social opportunities increased considerably and this found its concrete expression in an unprecedented rate of population shift from the country to the city. This process is still continuing and putting considerable pressure not only on urban resources but also on individuals. Away from kith and kin the new migrant is overwhelmed with the constant struggle for survival without the traditional social support. From the standpoint of the political system the emergence of an alienated lumpen proletariat easily manipulable by potential and actual political dissidents could be a cause of political and social instability. Then, probably, as an attempt to counter this potential danger, governments sought to establish social welfare agencies such as urban community centers providing people from the lower strata of the urban society with opportunities for recreation and cultural enrichment; special institutions to care for the needy and the physically disabled; institutions dealing with problems of social deviance; government agencies to help those who are in search of employ-

ment, etc. Social welfare programs in rural areas took the form of community development programs which sought to inspire members of rural communities to help national development by first lifting themselves by their own bootstraps. It is doubtful that any of the countries have yet come to a point where they could engage in large scale public assistance programs such as one finds in the economically advanced societies.

Most of these programs are not provided directly by the State, however. A large number of them are supported by voluntary philanthropic societies, with the result that the contribution of the State to such programs is so small that it is not even itemized separately in public finance reports. The dominant component of human resources development programs is therefore, education followed in order of priority by health and medical care programs.

Statement of the Problem, Theoretical Background and Review of the Literature:

The simultaneous pursuit of economic and social goals gives government intervention in many developing countries a social justice flavor. But in spite of this egalitarian overtone actual reduction in social inequality in terms of more equitable distribution of income is not likely to come very soon. This is mainly because the structure of the economy, the level of economic surplus, the occupational distribution of the labor force, and in some cases the traditional economic basis of political power are not conducive

to equitable distribution of income. It could, therefore, be argued that the pursuit of modernization through centralized planning is an attempt to find a shortcut to equality by simultaneously taking measures to increase the material base and to change the manner by which wealth is distributed by changing the process of status attainment. The latter is done by changing the criteria of recruitment to social, economic and political positions from social origin to criteria based on mundane achievement. Even if the motives behind government efforts to expand education, health and other related services could be viewed as mainly utilitarian, i.e. the improvement of economic productivity, the possibility remains that they will have salutary consequences for social equality via their effects on the structure of the economy and the occupational distribution of the labor force. Therefore, we hypothesize that the amount of resources governments in the economically less developed countries are willing to allocate to human resources development programs, represent the degree of their commitment to the promotion of social equality. However, a general inspection of data on government expenditure on health, education and related social services illustrates the point that there are cross-national differences in the amount of resources governments allocate to such programs relative to others. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to analyze this cross-national variance.