

Bureaucratic Theory by Max Weber – A Review Study

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Abstract – Government. It is viewed as 'heart' of present day civilisation, additionally as 'spine of states' hardware. Max Weber, a German Sociologist, in his examination of Bureaucracy, had made Bureaucracy most imperative piece of the investigation of Western Political Science. In this paper, an endeavor is made to depict the significance of Bureaucracy, 'a chain of importance of specialized specialists in Administration.' Max Weber firmly considered the inseparable connection between - Society and State. He comprehended the certainty of Bureaucracy in present day society in current state. He composed on hypothesis of Bureaucracy. Power, Authority and authenticity. Weber likewise established the advanced sociological investigation of Bureaucracy. Weber proposed models of Bureaucracy and principal principles of Bureaucracy.

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INTRODUCTION

The term or word bureaucracy has two parts-one is bureau which means an office transacting particular business or a government department. Cracy denotes a particular form of government. Hence bureaucracy implies a system of government in which most of the decisions are taken by state officials rather than by elected representatives. So bureaucracy is a form of government run or managed by some officers.

Many people think that bureaucracy is derived from French word bureaucratic which had wide circulation in the French administration in the nineteenth century. But before nineteenth century the French system of government was not acquainted with bureaucratic but only bureau which meant covered writing desk.

Subsequently the term gained wide circulation and use in several parts of Western Europe especially Britain. Again, several states and administrative systems have accepted it and used it for the management of their public administration keeping the original meaning more or less intact. Several languages have translated the English term. For example, in Bengali, bureaucracy denotes "amlatantra".

Even in other Indian languages this term is used. It means the rule or administration of state or government employees. In older times the bureaucrats or government employees were termed as employees of king or rajkarmachari. It is because in old times there was no existence of elected governments. Sovereign power was vested in the hands of kings and they chose

few persons to run their administration. That is why they were called rajkarmachari. Subsequently the kingship and the system of selecting government officials underwent sea changes and one of such change is bureaucracy.

The term bureaucracy is very often used in pejorative sense. Bureaucrats' inordinate love for law and to do everything according to law and unsympathetic attitude to people's needs and problems. All have made it the centre of public criticism. Any decision or action going against people's interest is termed bureaucratic. Non- accountability of bureaucracy to general public, its hierarchical structure and non-detachment from public have made it a centre of criticism. Therefore, pejorative connotation about it is regarded by many an important feature.

Many social and political scientists have explained the concept of Bureaucracy. Max Weber's idea of state was that 'a state is a compulsory association which successfully claims a monopoly of legitimate use of force within a given territory.' State alone possesses power, authority & legitimacy. Weber concluded that it is the legitimate authority of state to exercise power over its people.

Administration / Bureaucracy exercises its authority i.e. power of command. Max Weber's idea of Bureaucracy is based upon his notion of 'rational legal authority.' Bureaucracy, therefore, should have certain definite organisational structures, principles & characteristics.

BUREAUCRATIC THEORY

At the end of the 19th century, it was German sociologist Max Weber who was the first to use and describe the term bureaucracy. This is also known as the **Bureaucratic Theory of management** or the **Max Weber theory**.

He believed bureaucracy was the most efficient way to set up an organisation, administration and organizations. Max Weber believed it was a better than traditional structures.

In a bureaucracy, everyone is treated equal and the division of labour is clearly described for each employee.

BUREAUCRACY DEFINITION

Bureaucracy definition: *“Bureaucracy is an organisational structure that is characterised by many rules, standardised processes, procedures and requirements, number of desks, meticulous division of labour and responsibility, clear hierarchies and professional, almost impersonal interactions between employees”.*

According to the Bureaucratic Theory of Max Weber, such a structure was indispensable in large organizations in structurally performing all tasks by a great number of employees.

In addition, in a bureaucracy, selection and promotion only occur on the basis of technical qualifications.

LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

According to the Bureaucratic Theory of Max Weber, three types of power can be found in organizations; traditional power, charismatic power and legal power.

He refers in his Bureaucratic Theory to the latter as a bureaucracy. All aspects of a democracy are organised on the basis of rules and laws, making the principle of established jurisdiction prevail.

The following three elements support bureaucratic management:

1. All regular activities within a bureaucracy can be regarded as official duties;
2. Management has the authority to impose rules;
3. Rules can easily be respected on the basis of established methods.

MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

According to the Bureaucratic Theory of Max Weber, bureaucracy is the basis for the systematic formation of

any organisation and is designed to ensure efficiency and economic effectiveness.

It is an ideal model for management and its administration to bring an organisation's power structure into focus.

With these observations, he lays down the basic principles of bureaucracy and emphasises the division of labour, hierarchy, rules and impersonal relationship.

Below is a more detailed explanation of the 6 management principles of a bureaucracy:

1. Task specialization

Tasks are divided into simple, routine categories on the basis of competencies and functional specializations. Every employee is responsible for what he/she does best and knows exactly what is expected of him/her.

By dividing work on the basis of specialization, the organisation directly benefits. Each department has specific powers. As a result, there is a delineation of tasks and managers can approach their employees more easily when they do not stick to their tasks.

Every employee knows exactly what is expected of him/ her and what his/ her powers are within the organisation. Every employee has a specific place within the organisation and is expected to solely focus on his/ her area of expertise.

Going beyond your responsibilities and taking on tasks of colleagues is not permitted within a bureaucracy.

2. Hierarchical authority

Managers are organised into hierarchical layers, where each layer of management is responsible for its staff and overall performance.

In a bureaucracy, there are many hierarchical positions. This is essentially the trademark and foundation of a bureaucracy.

Hierarchy is a system in which different positions are related in order of precedence and in which the highest rung on the ladder has the greatest power.

The bottom layers are always subject to supervision and control of higher layers.

This hierarchy reflects lines of communication and the degree of delegation and clearly lays out how powers and responsibilities are divided.

3. Formal selection

All employees are selected on the basis of technical skills and competences, which have been acquired through training, education and experience.

One of the basic principles is that employees are paid for their services and that level of their salary is dependent on their position.

Their contract terms are determined by organisational rules and requirements and the employee has no ownership interest in the company.

4. Rules and requirements

Formal rules and requirements are required to ensure uniformity, so that employees know exactly what is expected of them.

In this sense, the rules and requirements can be considered predictable.

All administrative processes are defined in the official rules. By enforcing strict rules, the organisation can more easily achieve uniformity and all employee efforts can be better coordinated.

The rules and requirements are more or less stable and always formalised in so-called official reports.

Should new rules and requirements be introduced, then senior management or directors are responsible for this.

5. Impersonal

Regulations and clear requirements create distant and impersonal relationships between employees, with the additional advantage of preventing nepotism or involvement from outsiders or politics.

These impersonal relationships are a prominent feature of bureaucracies. Interpersonal relationships are solely characterised by a system of public law and rules and requirements.

Official views are free from any personal involvement, emotions and feelings. Decisions are solely made on the basis of rational factors, rather than personal factors.

6. Career orientation

Employees are selected on the basis of their expertise.

This helps in the deployment of the right people in the right positions and thereby optimally utilising human capital.

In a bureaucracy, it is possible to build a career on the basis of experience and expertise. As a result, it offers lifetime employment.

The rigid division of labour also allows employees to specialise themselves further, so that they may become experts in their own field and significantly improve their performance.

BENEFITS

Generally speaking, the term bureaucracy has a negative connotation and is often linked to government agencies and large organisations. Nevertheless, the great benefit of a bureaucracy is that large organisations with many hierarchical layers can become structured and work effectively. It is precisely the established rules and procedures that allows for high efficiency and consistent execution of work by all employees.

All this makes it easier for management to maintain control and make adjustments when necessary. Bureaucracy is especially inevitable in organisations where legislation plays an important role in delivering a consistent output.

DISADVANTAGES

Bureaucracy is characterised by a large amount of red tape, paperwork, many desks, certain office culture and slow communication due to its many hierarchical layers. This is the system's biggest disadvantage. It is also unfortunate that employees remain fairly distanced from each other and the organisation, making them less loyal.

Bureaucracy is also extremely dependent on regulatory and policy compliance. This restricts employees to come up with innovative ideas, making them feel like just a number instead of an individual. Later research (the human relations theory) demonstrated that employees appreciate attention and want to have a voice in decision making.

PROBLEMS

Because employees have no opportunity to voice their opinion or influence decision making, a bureaucracy may demotivate employees in the long run.

Moreover, over the course of time, employees may start to get annoyed at the various rules and requirements, with the risk that they may start boycotting and/ or abusing these rules and standing up to the established order. It is therefore very important that bureaucratic organisations properly inform employees well in advance about their approach to work and requires them to accept this.

Only employees who agree to this approach are suitable to work within a bureaucratic organisation.

Main Functions of Bureaucracy in Public Administration?

The theory of bureaucracy is attributed to the German sociologist Max Weber. His theory described the modern organizational structure, defined by salaried workers in hierarchical structures carrying out specialized and differentiated tasks. His model of bureaucracy is considered the most accurate prediction to come from the social sciences. While Marx's socialist revolution never materialized, and neither Keynes nor Friedman predicted economic systems that led to prosperity, Weber was undoubtedly correct that the bureaucracy would be the defining institution of the modern age.

We live our lives in bureaucracies. We are born in a bureaucratic hospital, and go on to attend bureaucratic schools. We then find employment in bureaucracies, consume products created and sold by bureaucracies, and are governed by bureaucracies.

The bureaucratic model is the original paradigm of public administration. Early public administrators, who popularized the field in the early twentieth century, sought to deliver better government through the power of bureaucracy. Coupled with authoritarian management practices borrowed from industry, known as Taylorism or scientific management, public administrators believed that well run public bureaucracies could deliver efficient and effective public services. Key to this perspective was the idea that bureaucracies could achieve political neutrality; the founding paradigm of public administration was known as the politics-administration dichotomy, which separated the legislative and policy making functions of government from the politically neutral execution of policy by public bureaucracies.

Over time the key paradigms of public administration evolved from the bureaucratic model. Frank analysis revealed that public bureaucracies are not politically neutral, but contribute to the political and policy-making process. Other insights revealed that authoritarian management styles are sometimes ineffective and inefficient, and theorists began advocating for a humanizing of workplace human resource policies. Insights from economics contributed to the understanding of rational decision-making processes within bureaucracies, and formalized our understandings of public opinion and organizational behavior.

Modern public administration recognizes the centrality of bureaucratic structures to modern day public sector organizations. Those who examine the role of modern bureaucracies are often focused on deriving insights into effective management practices. This field of inquiry is known as public management, and is often closely aligned with organizational behavior research in other

fields. These theorists generally test hypotheses about various management practices with formal statistical and econometric models. This formal analysis of bureaucracy is highly influential in modern schools of public administration.

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