

HSST POLITICAL SCIENCE

Part IV: Theories and concepts of Public Administration

Module V- Bureaucracy: Meaning and Attributes

- A- CONTRIBUTION OF MARX WEBER
- B- MODELS OF BUREAUCRACY
- C- CHALLENGES OF BUREAUCRACY

ORIGIN OF THE TERM BUREAUCRACY

- Term bureaucracy is derived from the Latin term 'bureau'
- Bureau means a writing table or desk. In French 'Latin' term "Bure" or Bureau means a cloth used on tables of public authorities.
- Later 'bureau' began to be ' used for the office room where table is kept. Thus by 18th century the term began to be used to refer to a place where officials work.
- During 18th and 19th centuries, the term was used consistently. It meant power of officials in Public Administration. It' was also referred ' to the authority or power which the government departments claim to them.
- The term bureaucracy was first coined by a French economist, Vincent de Gournay in 1965.

MEANING OF BUREAUCRACY

- The term 'bureaucracy' is being used with different meanings to signify different things.
- After the term bureaucracy was coined by Vincent de Gournay, it has attracted attention from a number of scholars from different disciplines.
- It has its admirers as well as opponents.
- Max Weber, the Sociologist had almost "internalised" this concept;' whereas writers like Warren Bennis condemned the behavioural aspects of bureaucracy and even predicted 'its demise.
- It was Max Weber, a German sociologist, who gave it a respectable and positive implication.
- Bureaucracy, in its simplest form, can be seen as "officials in power" or "a class of officials" or "bureaucrats exercising their power to carry on their constitutional duties

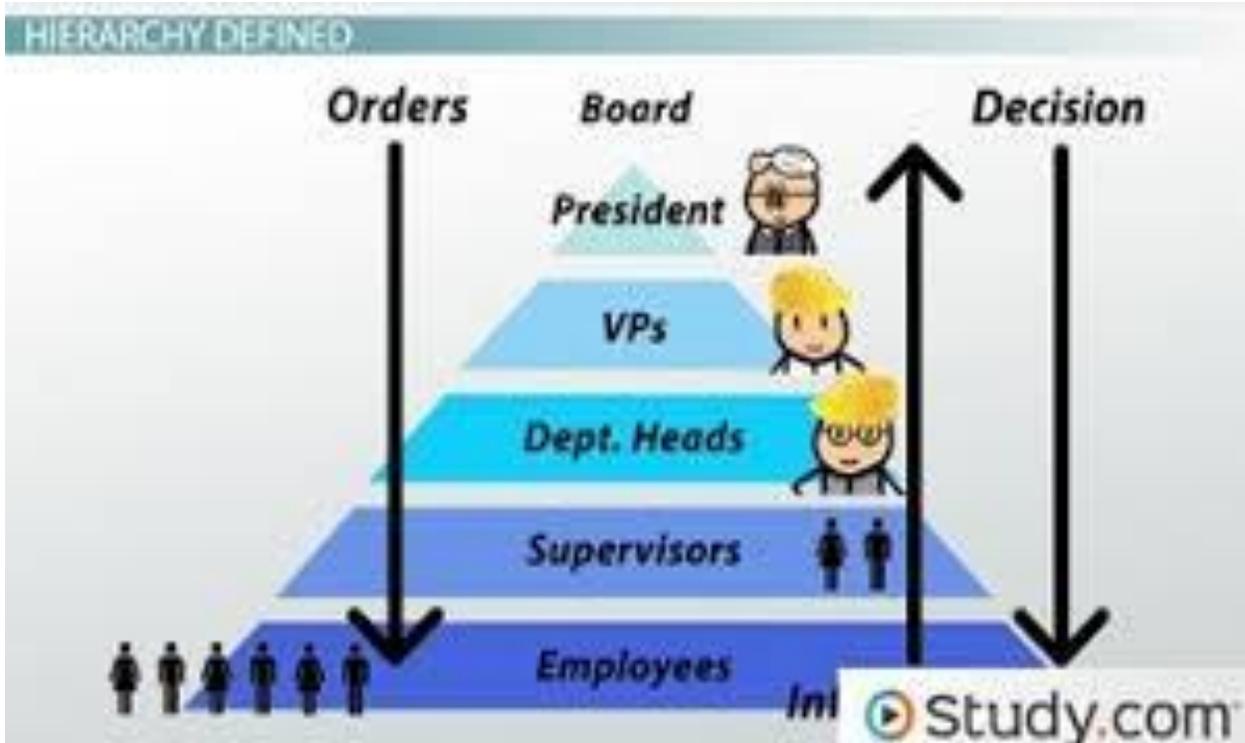
and obligations ".The need, to use as an equivalent to the term "officials" or "administrators".

- **Stillman** defines bureaucracy as “the structure and personnel of organizations, rooted in law, that collectively function as the core system of U.S. government and that both determines and carries out public policies using a high degree of specialized expertise.”
- **Prof. Laski's** “Bureaucracy is a system, the control of which is so completely in the hands of officials that their power jeopardizes the liberties of ordinary citizens.”
- **J. S. Mill** in his work “**Considerations on Representative Government (1861)**” used the term bureaucracy to denote the **professional governors of the government in a society or ruling class of officials.**
- **Hegel**, in his concept of the **idealist state** gave the theory of bureaucracy. However, but he developed it in the **larger interest in examining the nature of the state.**
- The state for Hegel, is the last development in a series of rational, social orders; the other two being the family and the civil society.
- The Philosophy of **Right** (1821), he raised the concept of bureaucracy to abstract heights – **a transcending entity, a mind above individual minds. He defined it as a state formalism of civil society.**

FEATURES OF BUREAUCRACY

1. Hierarchy

- Bureaucracy is hierarchical.
- It is based on rank.
- Each rank or position is subordinate to some and superior to some other.
- The bottom to the top, generally, makes for a pyramidal structure with the lower ranks concentrated at the bottom and the higher ranks at the top.



- **Chain of Command:** This feature is intimately linked with the one above. In any hierarchical body, there is a chain of command flowing from the top to the bottom. Normally, the command chain is not broken.

2. Permanence

Persons appointed will continue in service till the age of retirement

3. Qualification

Employee are recruited and appointed on the basis of educational qualification

4. Political Neutrality

Bureaucrats are liable to implement the policies of whichever party comes to power.

5. Professionalism

Every government employee must be skilled in their work

MODELS OF BUREAUCRACY

There are three models of bureaucracy.

- ✓ The weberian Model
- ✓ The Acquisitive model
- ✓ The Monopolistic Model

The weberian Model

- It is a classic model of bureaucracy
- It was developed by Marx Weber
- Increasing complexity of life would simultaneously increase the demands of citizens for government services
- His critical study of the bureaucratization of society was one of the most enduring parts of this work.
- It was Weber who began the study of bureaucracy and whose works led to the popularization of this term.
- Agencies are political
- Governed by formal procedure
- Specialized bureaucrats
- Eliminate order and efficiency

The Acquisitive model

- Acquisitive Model is the idea that top levels of bureaucrats will always try to expand, at least to avoid any reductions in the size of their budgets.
- Developed as an alternate model to bureaucracy as a necessary but also positive human development
- Naturally competitive and power-hungry
- Competition from other bureaucracies so they will work to enhance the status of their own bureaucracy to the detriment of others
- Bureaucracy will attempt to control large share of budget
- The bureaucracy will eventually grow far beyond what is necessary and create bureaucratic waste.

The Monopolistic Model

- Absence of competition
- Lack motivation to be efficient

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- Criticized for waste, poor service, and a low level of client responsiveness
- Problem of government could be easily solved if certain functions are privatized to reduce this prevailing incompetence
- It is very applicable to modern bureaucracies.

MAX WEBER: ELEMENTS OF BUREAUCRACY

- **Impersonal Order:** Weber emphasized that the official should perform their duties in an impersonal manner. The subordinates should follow both in the issuance of command and their obedience impersonal order. According to Merton, “authority, the power of control which derives from an acknowledged status, inheres in the office, not in the particular person who performs the official role”.
- **Rules:** Rules are the basis for the functioning of the legal-rational authority. Officials are bound by the rules. The rules regulate the conduct of an office. The irrational application requires specialized training. In this regard Merton felt that adherence to rules originally conceived as a means, becomes an end in itself. Rules become more important than the goals of the organization.
- **Sphere of Competence:** it involves a sphere of obligation to perform functions, which have been marked off as a part of a systematic division of labor. It also implies provision of the incumbent with the necessary authority to carry out the functions.
- **Hierarchy:** According to Weber every office and every official is a part of a hierarchy. Under this system the lower office functions under the control of higher office. He attaches greater importance to the principle of hierarchy in the organization of office.
- **Separation of Personal and Public Ends:** Weber pleads for separation of officials from their ownership of the means of administration. Officials cannot use his office position for personal ends. The office property is separated from personal property; at the same time the official is accountable for the use of office property.
- **Written Documents:** Written documents are the heart of Weber and bureaucracy. All administrative acts, decisions and rules are recorded in writing. These documents make the administration accountable to the people and provide a ready reference for future action.
- **Monocratic Type:** it means certain functions performed by bureaucracy cannot be performed by any other organization. They monopolies certain functions and only the authorized official can perform that function, makes them monocratic in nature.

TYPES OF BUREAUCRACY

- At different points of time in history the bureaucracy has taken different shapes and forms based upon the socio-political influences

- Bureaucracy is categorised into four types by **Morstein, Marx**.
 - **Guardian Bureaucracy,**
 - **Caste Bureaucracy,**
 - **Patronage Bureaucracy, and**
 - **Merit Bureaucracy**

1. **Guardian Bureaucracy**

- Plato's guardians have the capacity to personify in their actions, the essence of public interest.
- They were considered the custodians of justice and welfare of the community.
- These guardians were selected on the basis of their education.
- Such' bureaucracy existed in China before 960 A.D. and in Russia between 640-1740 A.D.
- They were selected on the basis, of their scholastic achievements and trained in right conduct according to classics.

2. **Caste Bureaucracy,**

- This bureaucracy is the result of class connections of those-in power.
- In this, recruitment is made only from one class.
- This means persons belonging to higher classes or castes are only drawn to the civil services.
- For example, in ancient 'India, only Brahmins and Kshatriyas could become higher officials.
- In England, for example, aristocratic classes were preferred to the civil service positions.

3. **Patronage Bureaucracy**

- This type of bureaucracy is also called spoils system.
- Patronage in this is seen as a means of political control.
- Under this system, the patronages of the ministers or the elected functionaries are nominated to the civil service.
- The public jobs are distributed as personal or political favours to their supporters.
- In Britain, before 19th century, the system sewed the aristocracy to gain entirely into the civil services.
- But the system of patronage bureaucracy was condemned for its lack of competence, for its careless discipline, its concealed greediness, its irregular ways, and for its absence of spirit of service.

4. Merit Bureaucracy

- Merit bureaucracy is a response to the maladies of other types of bureaucracies which we have discussed earlier.
- In this bureaucracy recruitment is based on qualification and is governed by objective, standards.
- In modern times merit bureaucracy puts strong emphasis on political control over the administrative system which was not the case in, other forms of bureaucracy.
- This, bureaucracy has distinguished advantage over others due to its sense of rationality in administrative behaviour.

MAX WEBER



- Max Weber, a German scientist, defines bureaucracy as a highly structured, formalized, and also an impersonal organization.
- He also instituted the belief that an organization must have a defined **hierarchical structure and clear rules, regulations, and lines of authority which govern it.**
- His major works:
 - ✓ **The Theory of Economics and Social Organization**
 - ✓ **General Economics History**
 - ✓ **Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism**

MAX WEBER THEORY OF BUREAUCRACY

- The invention of word bureaucracy belongs to **Vincent de Gourney**, a French economist
- It rapidly became a standard and accepted term in the conventions of political discourse.
- By the end of 19th century the term was widely held to have been of German origin. **J.S. Mill**, an eminent political scientist included bureaucracy in his series of analysis. **Karl Marx** also discussed about bureaucracy at certain places.
- According to Marx, bureaucracy like a state itself is an instrument by which the dominant class exercise its domination over the other social classes.
- **Hegel** conceived the governing bureaucracy of public administration as a bridge between the state and the civil society.
- The above discussion shows that there existed a bureaucracy much earlier to Weberian writings and also there were attempts to understand the bureaucracy by different writings.
- But the Weber is considered to be the first person to attempt at **the systematic understanding of the bureaucracy**.

MAX WEBER ON AUTHORITY

- Max Weber's concept of bureaucracy is closely related to his ideas on **legitimacy of authority**.
- Weber differentiated authority, power and control
- Authority means the **authoritarian power of command**.
- exercise of power becomes acceptable if it is justified or legitimised
- Authority is state of reality where a person willingly complies with legitimate commands or orders because he considers that a person by virtue of his position could issue orders to him.
- The authority exists as long as it is accepted as legitimate by the ruled.
- Thus, an administrator or organisation can rule only when it has legitimacy.

Types of Authority

- Weber believed that authority could be exercised as long as it is legitimate he divided the authority into three types based on sources of legitimacy for each authority.
- Weber classified authority into three types based on its claim to legitimacy. They are:
 - ✓ Traditional authority,
 - ✓ Charismatic authority
 - ✓ legal-rational authority

Traditional authority

- In this kind of authority a command is obeyed because of the belief in age-old customs, traditions, conventions and beliefs.
- Traditional authority is based on the belief that what is customary is right.
- It is exemplified by the rule of kings in olden days
- Only persons of a ' certain high caste should be appointed to high positions, this principle was accepted as just. In other words, the merit of an individual was given less importance than the caste to which he belonged.
- In traditional authority new rules are not enacted, they are “found”. The only documents in the administration of law are the “documents of tradition”.
- Under the traditional authority a person enjoy authority by virtue of their inherited status
- The system retains legitimacy as long as the customs and traditions are respected in the organisation.

Charismatic authority

- The term charisma (gift of grace) is taken from the vocabulary of early Christianity. Here it is applied supernatural, super human or extraordinary qualities of a leader.
- Among the holders of charisma is the sorcerer, the prophet or the warrior of chieftain, mahatma, or gurus.
- In this type of authority obedience was justified because the person giving order had some sacred or outstanding character.
- The leader exercises authority based on his personal qualities rather than formal stipulations or prescribed norms.

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- The only basis of legitimacy is personal charisma. He can exercise his authority, so long as it is proved, that is so long as it receives recognition and is able to satisfy the followers.
- Under this authority the leader selects his disciples or followers as his officials based on their personal devotion to him rather than their special qualifications or status.

Legal-rational authority

- Law is another name for a rational principle. Hence legal domination is based upon belief in the desirability of rational principles.
- The application of reason leads to efficiency. Obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order
- Manifestations of legal authority are found in organisations where rules are applied judicially and in accordance with ascertainable principles valid for all members in the organisation.
- The members who exercise power under this authority are the superiors and are appointed or elected by legal procedures to maintain the legal orders.
- Weber considers the legal authority as the most rational form of authority. Of all the three types of authority Weber considers the legal authority, not only the most rational authority, but also the most efficient form of authority. He considers bureaucracy as legal-rational type of authority.

Max Weber- Bureaucratic For six major principles

- **A formal hierarchical structure:** In a bureaucratic organization, each level controls the level below it. Also, the level above it controls it. A formal hierarchy is the basis of central planning and centralized decision-making.
- **Rules-based Management:** The organization uses rules to exert control. Therefore, the lower levels seamlessly execute the decisions made at higher levels.
- **Functional Specialty organization:** Specialists do the work. Also, the organization divides employees into units based on the type of work they do or the skills they possess.
- **Up-focused or In-focused Mission:** If the mission of the organization is to serve the stockholders, board, or any other agency that empowered it, then it is up-focused. On the other hand, if the mission is to serve the organization itself and those within it (like generating profits, etc.), then it is in-focused.
- **Impersonal:** Bureaucratic organizations treat all employees equally. They also treat all customers equally and do not allow individual differences to influence them.
- **Employment-based on Technical Qualifications:** Selection as well as the promotion of employees is based on technical qualifications and skills.

MAX WEBER: LIMITS ON BUREAUCRACY

- Weber while emphasising on the necessity of bureaucracy was aware of the fact that, the bureaucracy has inherent tendency of accumulation of power. The sources of this power could be seen in the special knowledge, which the official poses.
- In order to prevent the bureaucracy from acquiring powers Weber suggested certain mechanism
- These mechanisms fall in to five major categories.
- The categories are: collegiality, separation of powers, direct democracy, and representation.

Collegiality

- In a monocratic bureaucracy, Weber meant that at each stage of the official hierarchy one person and one person only, had the responsibility for taking a decision.
- This makes the bureaucracy more powerful.
- To prevent this Weber suggested the principle of collegiality involving others in the decision making process.
- Weber considered that collegiality would always have an important role to play in limiting bureaucracy.

Separation of powers

- Separation of powers meant dividing responsibility and functions between two or more bodies.
- For any decision to emerge a compromise between them had to be reached.
- This will avoid monopoly of decision by a single body or person. Weber regarded such a system as inherently unstable.

Direct Democracy

- To limit the power of bureaucracy Weber suggested direct democracy, where the officials were guided by and answerable to an assembly. Short term of office, permanent possibility of recall was designed to serve the purpose of direct democracy. But this system is possible only in small organisations and in local governments.
- But it has disadvantages in terms of speed of decision and attribution of responsibility.

Representation

- Another method of limiting bureaucracy is sharing of authority of bureaucracy with the elected representatives of the people. With this method it is possible to control the power of the bureaucracy.

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- **Why is a Bureaucratic Organization criticized?**
- **The rules are inflexible and rigid.** Informal groups do not receive any importance. In current times, informal groups play a huge role in most business organizations.
- Typically, **bureaucracy involves a lot of paperwork which leads to a waste of time, money, and also effort.**
- The rules and formalities lead to an unnecessary **delay in the decision-making process.**
- While Government organizations can benefit from a bureaucratic structure, business organization need quick decision-making and flexibility in procedures. Therefore, it is not suitable for the latter.
- While the technical qualifications of the employee are an important aspect of his promotion, a bureaucratic organization does not consider the employee's commitment and dedication.
- There is limited **scope for Human Resource management.**
- **Coordinating and communicating is difficult.**

MAX WEBER'S BUREAUCRACY: RELEVANCE

- In spite of criticism from the several scholars, the ideas of Weber on bureaucracy continue to be relevant to understand the present administrative system.
- So far we have not been able to evolve an alternative model to Weber's bureaucracy. Weber is right in saying that when we are accustomed to the bureaucracy we cannot think of any other alternative. It is highly useful for managing large-scale organisations.
- His ideas on selection of officials based on qualifications, utility of written documents in administration, hierarchy etc., can be seen in any administration of the present day.
- The bureaucracy proposed by Weber is superior to all other forms of organisations in achieving the prescribed
- The people who talk about the de-bureaucratization of the society have not been able to find a viable alternative to the bureaucracy.

CHALLENGES OF BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucratic Pathologies:

- ❖ **Articulating Public Interest:** it is no longer a definition of political leaders, but it has to an outcome of people's dialogue and participation.
- ❖ **Nepotism:** Nepotism in bureaucracy is often a problem. The managers sitting on top may favor their own people and help them rise quicker than more deserving individuals.
- ❖ **Red tape:** Bureaucracy, by its very character, follows a certain set of rules and regulations. This imparts a lack of flexibility and can often lead to inefficiency.
- ❖ **Unresponsiveness:** Bureaucracy is not usually responsive to the needs of the people .it consider itself as the self-appointed guardian and interpreter of public interest.
- ❖ **Imperialism** refers to the tendency of agencies to grow without regard to the benefits their programs confer or the costs they entail. Because government agencies seek vague goals

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and have vague mandates from Congress, it is not surprising that they often take the broadest possible view of their powers. If they do not, interest groups and judges may prod them into doing so.

- ❖ **Bureaucratic corruption:** Corruption in the higher rungs of bureaucracy can be very disastrous to the economy.
- ❖ **Compartmentalization:** As the jobs are divided across categories, it restricts the opportunities for collaboration and people performing tasks in other categories.
- ❖ **Decision-making:** Decision-making in bureaucracy is based on a certain set of rules and regulations. This rigidity often leads to opting for programmed decisions while newer avenues are not explored.

