**BUREAUCRACY THEORY**

Bureaucracy is a term defined in many ways. The term was derived from bureau‘connoting a government department or sub-division of a department, where bureaucrat denote official working and guided by a prescribed stringent rules and regulations. Bureaucracy can therefore best be described as a special kind of organizational design guided by rigid laid down rules and regulation to accomplish large scale administrative work through a systematic means of coordinating large number of employees in an organization. In Weberian formulation, bureaucracy is not to be confused with the civil services. It refers to the sociological concept of rationalization of collective activities. The bureaucratic form according to Weber is the most efficient organizational form for large scale, complex administration that has been developed in the modern world so far. Bureaucracy compares to other forms of organizations as does the machine with non-mechanical modes of production.

**The Origin of Bureaucracy**

“Bureaucracy" was first coined by Vincent de Gourney, a French economist in 1745. He stated, "We have an illness in France which bids fair to play havoc with us; this illness is called Bureaumania." In French the word bureau' means a desk.

The term bureaucracy," in the words of F.M. Marx, "which was first used in the French form 'bureaucratic' by a French Minister of commerce in the eighteenth century to refer to the government in operation, spread to Germany in the nineteenth century as Burokratic' and has since found its way into English and many other languages. Thomas Carlyle described the spread of the term as 'the continental nuisance'.

The classical writings on bureaucracy came from Karl Marx, Max Weber, Robert Michels and Gaetano Mosca. However, the systematic study of bureaucracy began with Max Weber, the German sociologist. As stated by Mohit Bhattacharya, "the concept of bureaucracy does not occupy a central position in Marx‘s thought. According to Marx, bureaucracy like the state itself is an instrument by which the dominant class exercises its domination over other social classes. According to this logic, the interests of bureaucracy are closely linked to those of the dominant class and the state."

Robert Michels, in his book Political Parties propounded the concept of Iron Law of Oligarchy. According to this concept large organisations have a tendency to develop a bureaucratic structure (Oligarchic system). In other words, it states that in big organisations power is concentrated in the hands of a few (oligarchs). This phenomenon rules out the possibility of internal democracy in large scale organisations due to elite domination.

Gaetano Mosca in his book The Ruling Class classified the political systems into two categories, that is, feudal and bureaucratic. He said that the bureaucracy is basic to the governance of big empires. However, it is Max Weber who holds a unique position in the galaxy of administrative-political thinkers who made an attempt to explain the concept of bureaucracy. In fact, the first scientific treatment of bureaucracy came from his writings. Thus, his name became synonymous with bureaucracy. As rightly observed by S.R. Maheswari, "The credit for systematic formulation of the bureaucratic theory goes to Max Weber (1864- 1920), for he founded the modern sociological study of bureaucracy, freed the term from derogatory connotations, and emphasized that the indispensability of bureaucracy for the rational attainment of the goals of an organisation."

**Max Weber and Bureaucracy**

Max Weber called his formulation of bureaucracy as 'ideal type'. The ideal type is a mental map (or mental construct). In its conceptual purity this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. Thus it is a 'Utopia (imagined state)'.

As analysed by Mohit Bhattacharya, "In Weberian formulation, bureaucracy is not to be confused with the civil service. It refers to the sociological concept of rationalisation of collective activities." Weber's conceptual framework of bureaucracy cannot be understood properly without understanding his typology of authority systems.

**Theory of Authority**

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," while, authority as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons." Thus, compared to power, authority is characterised by legitimacy, that is, voluntary obedience of the command by the subordinates. In other words, legitimacy turns power into authority. According to Weber, authority is synonymous to 'authoritarian power of command' and he called it 'domination'. He stated that, "all administration means domination." (i.e. administration means exercise of authority).

Reinhard Bendix in his book, Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait, summarised the components of authority as identified by Weber. They are:

(i) An individual or a body of individuals who rule

(ii) An individual or a body of individuals who are ruled

(iii) The will of the rulers to influence the conduct of the ruled and an expression of that will or command

(iv) Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of the objective degree of command

(v) Direct or indirect evidence of that influence in terms of the subjective acceptance with which the ruled obey the command

As noted by Ramesh K. Arora, "Weber classified authority on the basis of its claim to legitimacy, since on this would depend largely the type of obedience, the kind of administrative staff suitable to it, and the ways of exercising authority**.** His three pure types of legitimate authority are based respectively on his three bases of legitimacy". They are:

***1.Charismatic Authority***: The term 'charisma' literally means the gift of grace. According to Weber, this authority rests "on devotion to specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual and of the normative patterns or orders revealed or ordained by him." Thus the ruler under this system, possesses the superhuman and supernatural qualities and is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him and his revelation.

The administrative staff under the charismatic authority system consists of followers who are given positions on the basis of their charismatic qualities and their personal devotion to the leader.

A significant feature of the charismatic authority system is that it is unstable, that is, it breaks down when the leader dies or when the charismatic qualities of the leader declines. However, Weber suggested the routinisation (institutionalisation) of the charismatic authority either in the authoritarian or democratic direction.

The inherent problem of this type of authority is the non permanent nature of it. The authority fades away by the time the person dies. Thus the authority lies in the person, not in a system. It is out of his innate personal qualities, he was born with it. This prompted Weber to look for a more lasting authority.

***2.Traditional Authority****:* According to Weber, this authority rests "on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them." The extent of authority under this system is determined

by the custom and precedent. In other words, **the obedience under this system is owed to the ruler who occupies the traditionally sanctioned position of authority and who is (within its sphere) bound by tradition. The obligation of obedience is a matter of personal loyalty within the area of accustomed obligations.**

The administrative staff under the traditional authority system is either patrimonial(**power flows from the leader**) or feudal. In case of the former system, the administrative apparatus consists of personal retainers, servants and relatives of the ruler and they owe traditional loyalty to him. While in case of the latter, the administrative apparatus consists of the feudal lords who interpose between the people and the ruler and owe personal loyalty to the ruler.

**The problem of this type of authority is not that of permanency or continuity but that of merit. Web noted that when the incumbent dies, he may not be succeeded by the best qualified person within the traditional ruling family. Since the authority is derived from hereditary or succession, a list of potential successors are identified before the incumbent dies**. The topmost person on the list may not be as good as somebody in the number 4 or 5 position. This problem of merit then prompted Weber to look for a more lasting and efficient authority.

***3.Legal-Rational Authority***: According to Weber, **this authority rests "on a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands."**

Thus obedience under this system is owed to the legally established impersonal order which is rational in ; character. "It extends to persons exercising the authority of office under it, only by virtue of the formal ^legality of their commands and only within the scope of authority of the office."

This system is called 'rational' because, in it the means are expressly designed to achieve certain specific ends. **It is 'legal' because authority is exercised by means of a system of rules and procedures.**

According to Max Weber, the legal rational authority depends on the four related beliefs.

i. A legal code can be established which can claim obedience from members of the organisation.

ii. Administration looks after the interests of the organisation within the limits of law which is a system of abstract rules and are applied to particular cases,

iii. The man exercising authority also obeys this impersonal order.

iv. Finally, obedience is not to the person who holds authority but to the impersonal order which has appointed him to that position.

**The authority is considered legal because it operates based on laid down principles, and it is rational because the principles are derived from scientific reasoning**. The administrative staff under the legal-rational authority system consists of the bureaucracy. In other words, **bureaucracy forms the kernel of the administrative system under the legal-rational authority system**. According to Weber, only the head of the bureaucratic organisation occupies his position by virtue of appropriation, by election or having been designated for succession (by merit). The whole administrative staff under the supreme authority (head of the organisation) then consists of appointed individual officials.

**Characteristics of Bureaucracy**

The ideal type of legal rational bureaucracy designed by Max Weber (in his book The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation which was translated by Talcott Parsons and A.M. Henderson in 1947) has the following characteristics:

i. The bureaucrats are subject to authority only in official capacities and they are personally free.

ii. They are organised in a clearly defined hierarchy of offices, that is, each lower office is under the control and supervision of a higher one.

iii. Each office has a clearly defined sphere of competence in the legal sense. A specified sphere of competence involves:

a. A sphere of obligations to perform functions which has been marked off.

b. The provision of the incumbent with the necessary authority to carry out these functions.

c. That the necessary means of compulsion are clearly defined and their use is subject to definite conditions.

iv. The office is filled by a free contractual relationship. Thus, in principle, there is free selection.

v. The officials are selected on the basis of technical qualification. This is tested by examination or guaranteed by diplomas certifying technical training or both. They are appointed, not elected,

vi. The officials are remunerated by fixed salaries and usually have the right to pensions. The official is always free to resign and his appointment can also be terminated by the employing authority under certain circumstances. The salary scale is primarily graded according to his rank in the hierarchy; but in addition to this criterion, the responsibility of the position and the requirements of the incumbent's social status may be taken into account.

vii. The office is treated as the sole (or at least the primary) occupation of the incumbent.

viii. It constitutes a career with system of promotion according to seniority or achievement, or both. Promotion is dependent on the judgment of superiors.

ix. The official works is entirely separated from the means of administration and without appropriation of his position.

x. He is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office.

Mohit Bhattacharya deduced a set of structural properties and another set of behavioural characteristic of bureaucracy from the Weberian formulation. The former includes

a. division of work,

b. hierarchy

c. system of rules, and

d. role specificity,

While the latter includes:

a. rationality,

b. impersonality.

c. rule-orientation, and

d. neutrality.

**Causes of Bureaucracy**

The following factors and characteristics gave rise to bureaucratic process to modern organization.

i. **Size:** Bureaucratic characteristics exist largely in large institutions and complex organization, whose size has grown so big, where the whole activities become complex and cumbersome. It is a laid down facts that, there is a direct relationship between the size of an organization and its bureaucratic tendencies. The bigger and larger the size of an establishment, the more close its tendency towards departmentation, division of work, rigidity and impartiality which are necessary and essential features of bureaucracy.

ii. **Complexity:** - The complexity of modern state and the numerous services it has to render to the people called for an expert administration that can handle these diverse services simultaneously. Therefore, the public administration should make use of bureaucratic principle for effective running and maximum utilization of resources.

iii. **Environmental Changes:** The world‘s dynamics and the ever growing changing in needs calls for the use of bureaucratic process so that efficiency can be fully realized in modern organization.

iv. **Technology:** - Modern science and technology can influence an organization to employ and established the bureaucratic procedures. The need for effective means of realization of goals propagated by modern science and the introduction of machines and computers, calls for the establishment of calculative precision i.e. rationality which is an essential element of bureaucracy. So modern public administration should employ the bureaucratic principle in order to meet the challenges of modern science and technological advancement.

v. **Strategy:** Better skills in managing the organizational objectives ways to the establishment of bureaucratic procedure to organization. So bureaucracy can evolve from the organizational plans and the need to accomplish the organizational objectives.

**Merits and Demerits of Bureaucracy**

**Merits:**

**1. Simplification of Work:** The work of a complex nature can be simplified through division of labor or division of work into small units, component or department.

**2. Specialization:** The division of work also encourages specialization in an organization. Employees acquires skills and specialized on a task they repeat day-in-day out within the organization.

**3. Effective Means of Goals Realization:** Through the structures and process of bureaucracy, the goal; of the organization could be easily realize.

**4. Encourages an Increase in Objectivity:** Impartial rigid rules and regulations foster objectiveness in most organization.

**Demerits:**

**1. Arbitrary Rules:-**Impartial applications of rigid rules may be to the detriment of some employees within an organization. Some of the laid down rules may be too much stringent to the employee of an organization.

**2. No Room for Personal Growth:-** Use of official authority strictly does not allow personal growth of individual employee in an organization.

**3. Slowness to Adopt New Technology:** Stringent rigid rules make it difficult to change and sometime take long period to adopt new policies, thereby making it slow to adopt new technology.

**4. Poor Communication:** As communication has to follow the hierarchical structures, it takes time to reach its final destination in an organization.

**Critics of Weber**

Weber's bureaucratic model was criticised by subsequent social scientists on various grounds as follows:

i. It was characterised as "machine theory" due to its over concern with the formal structure of the organisation to the neglect of human dimension.

ii. It was described as a "closed system model" as it did not take into account in detail the interaction between organisation and its environment.

iii. It cannot function in an unstable environment (i.e. in changing environmental conditions).

iv. It is suitable for routine and repetitive jobs but not for jobs involving creativity and innovation.