

# **IDEAL-TYPE BUREAUCRACY (MAX WEBER)**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The term “*bureaucracy*” has not come with the article of max weber because this word had been seen in 1745 for the first time, but must be clear about the fact that- Max Weber’s name is synonymous with bureaucracy and he enjoys a unique place in the galaxy of social scientists who have attempted to explain the concept of bureaucracy.

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.

## **MAX WEBER ON BUREAUCRACY; IDEAL TYPE BUREAUCRACY**

Max Weber called his formulation of bureaucracy – ideal type bureaucracy. Here, ‘Ideal’ signify that his formulation of bureaucracy is the finest which cannot be applied to its fullest, therefore many called his formulation a ‘utopia’. He formulated ideal type bureaucracy after analysing the Roman Empire – from its rise to the fall.

According to Max Weber, bureaucracy is an administrative body of appointed officials. He excluded elected one from the preview of bureaucracy. Therefore, Mohit Bhattacharya rightly writes, “in Weberian formulation, bureaucracy is not to be confused with the civil service.”

To understand Max Weber’s ideal type of bureaucracy one must understand ‘Theory of Authority’ first.

## **THEORY OF AUTHORITY**

### **❖ AUTHORITY, POWER AND CONTROL**

To Max Weber, authority, power and control were different to each other.

To him, if one succeeds in imposing his will in a social relationship, despite resistance then only it can be said that the person has ‘power’.

And if this exercise of power becomes controlled then it is termed as ‘authoritarian power of command’.

To Weber, ‘authority’ was identical with the ‘authoritarian power of command’.

### **❖ FIVE COMPONENTS OF AUTHORITY:**

According To Weber, these are five essential components of authority:

1. Ruler- individual or group
2. Ruled
3. Will of the rulers to influence the conduct of the ruled and an expression of that will or command
4. Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of the *objective degree of command*;
5. Evidence of that influence in term of the *subjective acceptance* with which the ruled obey the command.

According to Weber, domination or exercise of authority is called ‘*administration*’. While other says, administration is service or performance of duty.

*“An authority exists as long as it is accepted as legitimate by the ruled.”*

### ❖ THREE TYPE OF LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

Weber identified three types of legitimate authority:-

- A. Traditional authority
- B. Charismatic authority
- C. Legal authority

#### A. TRADITIONAL AUTHORITY

Authority derived its legitimacy from the acceptance of ‘traditional norms and customs’.

#### B. CHARISMATIC AUTHORITY

This is based on the magical power or heroism or other extraordinary gift or qualities of the leader exercising power. He may be a prophet, a hero or a demagogue.

Weber define ‘**charisma**’ as the quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is treated different from ordinary person as blessed with supernatural, superhuman or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. Those who believe in his extraordinary abilities obey his commands.

#### C. LEGAL AUTHORITY

Legal authority refers to judicious application of laws, and in accordance with rational principles valid for all members in the organization.

Weber believed that all the three types of authority sustained legitimate as long as the ‘ruled’ accept them. The authority ceases to carry legitimacy – when the rulers do *illegal things, ignore the tradition and lose charisma*.

Of the three types of authority, Weber preferred the legal type of authority because it inherent rationality. He says ‘legal authority’ is suitable for the modern governments.

Weber designed his ‘**ideal type of bureaucracy**’ keeping the ‘*legal-rationality*’ in mind.

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.

His model of bureaucracy is also known as ‘*Weberian Model of Bureaucracy*’.

Weber never defined bureaucracy; he only described its characteristics. To him, *bureaucracy is “an administrative body of appointed officials”*.

### **MODEL OF BUREAUCRACY: CHARACTERISTICS OF ‘IDEAL TYPE OF BUREAUCRACY’ OR ‘WEBERIAN BUREAUCRACY’**

- I. RREGULARITY:** - official business is conducted on a regular basis.
- II. ORGANISED:** - official business are organised.
- III. BASED ON RULES:** - functions of an administrative agency is based on the written documents of rules. Rules mainly deals in :-
  - a. Delimiting the powers and functions of each officials in terms of impersonal criteria.
  - b. Clarifying the responsibility and duty of officials.
  - c. Listing the limitations and the conditions of the officials under which their legitimacy is maintained.

Officials are bound by rules and these rules regulate the office conduct. Rules become more important at times than the goal of the organization leading to 'red tapism'.

- IV. IMPERSONAL ORDER:** - officials remained unattached and are only concerned with their job without becoming personally involved.
- V. HIERARCHY:** - Offices are organized hierarchically. Higher officials or offices supervise while lower offices and officials have right of appeal.
- VI. CANNOT OWN THE OFFICIAL RESOURCES:** - officials do not own the resources necessary for rendering the duties, but they accountable for use of official resources. Official business and private affairs, official revenue and private incomes are strictly separated.
- VII. CAN'T APPROPRIATE OFFICES:** - officials cannot use offices as private property which can be sold and inherited.
- VIII. CONDUCTED ON WRITTEN DOCUMENTS:** - Administration is conducted on the basis of written documents "the files".
- IX. MONOCRATIC TYPE:** - Certain functions performed by bureaucracy cannot be performed by others.

**Weber also illustrated the characteristics of the officials.**

- X. PERSONALLY FREE:** - Officials are personally free (and not a servant to anybody personally).
- XI. APPOINTED ON CONTRACT BASIS:** - Officials are appointed to an official position on the basis of a contract.
- XII. APPOINTED ON BASIS OF QUALIFICATION:** - official are appointed on his technical (administrative) qualification.
- XIII. WORK ON BASIS OF IMPERSONAL RULES:** - Officials exercises the authority delegated to him in accordance with impersonal rules.
- XIV. LOYALTY IS FAITHFUL EXECUTION OF HIS DUTIES:** - Officials' loyalty is expressed through faithful execution of his duties.
- XV. FULL-TIME OCCUPATION:** - official administrative work is his full-time occupation.
- XVI. REGULAR SALARY:** - official work is rewarded by a regular salary and by prospects of regular advancement in lifetime career.

**Max weber views that bureaucracy keeps on increasing its power.**

According to him, the following factors are responsible for the rise of bureaucracy:

1. Creation of money economy
2. Emergence of capitalist economy
3. Growth of democratic institutions

4. Emergence of complex administrative problems.
5. Development of modern means of communication
6. Growth of rationalism
7. Growth of population

So to control the over-towering power position of bureaucracy, he has also suggested ways to curb bureaucracy from becoming a giant and arbitrary power. Those are:-

- 1) **COLLEGIALITY**- That is, involvement of more than one person in decision making. Its disadvantages are that at times it is misused and speed of decision and responsibility are held back.
- 2) **SEPARATION OF POWERS**- that is, division of responsibility for the same function among more than one body.

Like at first the CAG had responsibility of both accounting and auditing that made him a monopoly and transparency as well as efficiency was subverted. Thus, accounting was given to another body and now CAG only performs auditing function. Thus, both the bodies keep a check on each other and the government collectively.

- 3) **AMATEUR ADMINISTRATION**- that is administration by unpaid persons.
- 4) **DIRECT DEMOCRACY**- that is, placing the bureaucrats under supervision and guidance of an assembly to ensure their accountability to the people.
- 5) **REPRESENTATION**- That is, control through elected representative bodies (assemblies or parliaments)

## **CRITIQUE OF WEBER'S MODEL OF BUREAUCRACY**

Many renowned scholars critique bureaucracy in totality by calling it - bungling, arbitrary, wasteful, rigidity and mechanical, inhuman and soulless and despotic.

1. **IT IS A MACHINE THEORY:** Gouldner, a scholar who tested Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy over many decades found internal contradictions that reflected tensions between claims of expertise and obedience based on discipline and called Weber's theory as a machine theory.

2. **NOT SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES:** Presthus also pointed out the Weberian model as a product of alien culture which is fairly inadequate for imposition in developing societies. Weberian bureaucracy was suited for developed nations as there was more uniformity and less welfare work.

3. **MUCH FOCUS ON RULES, LESS ON CUSTOMERS:** Weber's over emphasis on rules and precision seems to be self defeating as the officials will be caught up in these only and not be bothered about their customers that is the people.

4. **CONFLICTS AMONG OFFICIALS:** Talcott Parsons state that there will always be conflict with subordination and hierarchy as the person issuing orders might not have the professional skill for the job of juniors that he is supervising and this will give rise to conflicts thus rigidity should be replaced with flexibility art times to solve this.

5. **UNDERMINE THE BEHAVIOUR OF OFFICIALS IN ADMINISTRATION:** Weber's bureaucratic model is said to be lacking the consideration that people running administration come from different backgrounds and have different cultures and might not view every action and decision the same

way as a robot as compared to others.

**6. BUREAUCRACY IS ARM OF STATE:** Karl Marx considered bureaucracy as an arm and agent of the state and the ruling class or bourgeois and was exploitative in its nature. However, he could not suggest any reforms or alternative to a bureaucratic structure and could not get rid of it either.

Thus, Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy does stand strong till today with timely reforms as it is yet to find a successor or a more viable alternative.

## CRITICISMS OF “BUREAUCRACY”

- 1. UNRESPONSIVE TO POPULAR DEMAND AND DESIRES.**
- 2. RED TAPE OR OVER FORMALISM** - Officials only following rules all the time and so files take longer to travel from desk to desk.
- 3. BUREAUCRACY IS SELF-PERPETUATING** - Increase of staff but no increase in work thus leading to tax payer paying more money for nothing.
- 4. SELF-AGGRANDISEMENT**- Ministers are responsible in a democracy for their bureaucracy's functioning in their ministry.
- 5. DEPARTMENTALISM OR EMPIRE BUILDING**- Bureaucracy encourages the evil work of govt into a number of isolated and self-dependent sections each pursuing its own needs without any adequate correlation with the rest.
- 6. BUREAUCRACY LOVES TRADITION AND STANDS FOR CONSERVATISM**- Develops a negative psychology that breeds non-transparency and stoppage to information.

## RELEVANCE OF WEBER'S BUREAUCRACY

Weberian bureaucracy is still relevant because of following reasons:-

### **1. RELIGIOUSLY FOLLOWED BY GOVERNMENT:**

In spite of many criticisms, both public as well as private organizations follow Weberian bureaucracy religiously. For instances:

- selection of officers based on merit
- utility of written documents,
- Hierarchies.

**2. FOUND EVERYWHERE:** Bureaucracy has succeeded in the test of time and place. It can be found everywhere, whether it is socialist or capitalist.

**3. WELFARE STATE CAN'T BOYCOTT BUREAUCRACY:** welfare state cannot boycott Weberian bureaucracy because some of the functions of the welfare state and development programmes cannot be completed without bureaucracy and people look to bureaucracy for their day-to-day requirements.

**4. CAN BE REFORMED IF TIME DEMANDS:** Max Weber studied the various factors and the condition that contributed to the growth of bureaucracy in ancient as well as modern times, i.e the development of modern large scale organisations and technology and the capitalist system. His theory has helped develop a structure of bureaucracy and also infuse professionalism into it in modern times.

**5. OPERATE WITH GREATER EFFICIENCY:** Weberian bureaucracy is more capable of operating with greater efficiency and rationality if timely reformed from time to time as per the time and situation demands to make it more relevant to the present day.