Applying true bureaucracy and avoiding false bureaucracy with contingency approach in organizations of Iran

Amir Babak Marjani[1], Nasrin Asgharzadeh[2] and Fateme Tohidy Ardahaey[3]

[1]Faculty member at Central Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
[2]Master in French translation, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.
[3]Department of Cultural Management and Planning, Science and Research Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran.

ABSTRACT

The word "Bureaucracy" has been long applied in Iran, but its definitions and implications have been discussed in different forms. Most of its definitions are affected by individuals' opinions and ideas and not by its real meaning. The importance is that unlike the current conception, bureaucracy in its real meaning is led to success although its improper use leads to poor performance of bureaucracy. In this article a scientific definition of bureaucracy is explained and its formation process in Iran is studied. Finally a solution is considered in order to optimum performance of bureaucracy in Iran. It seems that achieving the correct definition and adequate understanding of nature of bureaucracy are the best ways for planning and implementing a successful management with bureaucratic approach. Furthermore for coordinating bureaucracy with inside and outside environmental condition of the organization, this management method requires contingency and strategic approaches in order to apply it usefully and effectively in organizations with appropriate structures.

Introduction

A bureaucracy is the system, processes, procedures, channels and culture organizations create and maintain to justify and sustain inefficiencies to ensure that product and service delivery is delayed or broken down with the ultimate goal of frustrating customers, staff and suppliers and thereby creating a nonresponsive entity that will maintain strong power relationships but eventually destroy any value created in the past (Meyer, 2007). One of the world classical management methods is bureaucracy. Management experts also emphasize its effective performance. Due to improper and excessive implementation of the method, it is not mentioned properly in developing countries. Bureaucracies are found at two levels, internally within an organization, but also enforced at industry or governmental level by means of legislation and regulations. Over-regulation and over-control occurs when there is no or little leeway to be flexible, entrepreneurial and innovative. In essence, bureaucracy prevents you from executing your own business strategy that was initially based on the principles of efficiency, excellence and effectiveness. Jack Welch (2001, 2005), the greatest CEO of the previous century, aptly refers to these inefficiencies as the "evils of bureaucracy." The function has also been failed in some developing countries because of the legal action and under the influence of pre-approved strategies. The failure of this system in Iran leads it to some titles such as administrative corruption, paper work and bribery. Although the approach was not appropriate, bureaucracy can be effective and efficient in many cases.

Formation process of bureaucracy conception

The incidence of bureaucracy conception goes back to centuries before inventing its word. Looking at the great human civilizations such as Iran's, Chinese' and Egypt's ancient civilization reveals that running such governments was impossible without using large administrative organizations. This is especially true of China and its features and symptoms are more prominent. It had lots of similarities from dimensions and various aspects with current bureaucracies (such as definition and writing the duties of all the governmental staff from janitors to president) (Zalli, 1995).

Bureaucracy was first used in 1745 in a text by V.De. Gournay. He added the word "Bureau" with the meaning of office to the Greek word "Cracy" with the meaning of governing in order to conclude the meaning of governing administrative from it. At first this word was only used for governmental official positions however it was developed and applied for large organizations (Khani, 1999).

It first had negative significant. In fact it was considered as an uncontrollable power which wants to swallow all the society. "Balzac" who spread the word bureaucracy in his book "Clerks", called it "a monstrous power" which is "in the hands of dwarves" (Ashouri, 1991).

John Stuart Mill in his book *Principles of Political Economy* disagreed with focusing all skills and experience on large companies' management and also with focusing all powers on organized activities in the society in a dominant bureaucracy. He considered it as an anti-democratic and anti-representative and freedom government. In his book *Considerations on Representative Government* he wrote "daily occurrence" is a disease which corrupts and ruins a bureaucratic government (Camneca, 2001).

Harold Laski in his Encyclopedia of *the Social Sciences* defines bureaucracy as follows:

It refers to a government that its supervisors assault the freedom of ordinary citizens…features of these regimes: they like conducting government monotonously, delaying in decision making, refusing the new experience and scarifying the

flexibility in front of rules. In the worst case, the members of bureaucracy might change to a hereditary reduction so they manipulate the government to their advantage. A German scholar, Max Weber, studied the most famous research on sociology, structure and mechanism of bureaucracy. As a father of bureaucracy, he signifies precisely between ancient and modern bureaucracy. In the ancient one, a hereditary ruler like a father wants respect and loyalty in his large family. The power does not distinguish personal and official domain. It deals with political issues like personal one.

In Weber's view point the ideal bureaucracy is impersonal, intellectual and rule-bound which is regulated by provisions and regulations. The office is separated from clerks' residency in the same way that bureaucracy wants dutifulness and faithfulness from bureaucrat not only toward a certain person but also toward the aims of company and regulations (Camenca,2001).

There are also some other points of views from different theorists on bureaucracy. Assuming that bureaucracy is merely a symptom of a more serious disease – namely socialism – the Misesian perspective is an analysis of the economic, political, and psychological consequences of the incentives and constraints that bureaucrats face. Niskanen's analysis focuses on the characteristics of the political environment in which bureaucrats act. Applying the Public Choice theory to the study of bureaucratic behavior, Niskanen shows that bureaucrats have a strong incentive to try to maximize the bureau's budget (Simandan, 2009).

Hereditary bureaucracies are intrinsically inconsistent and illogical. Thus they instantly changed to "feudality" and administrators abused and stole from taxes or emblements (Camenca, 2001).

Bureaucracy and Modern Official Arrangement in Iran:

Modern knowledge about governance and administration has its origins in ancient civilization, particularly that of the Persian Empire. By conquering the entire known world of antiquity in a single generation, the Persians changed the world's political and administrative history for ever and established themselves as masters of empires, bureaucracy, government and public administration (Farazmand, 2000). In order to understand official arrangement in Iran before 14th centenary Hejira, that's enough to have a glance at the book of Ebrahim Teymouri, *ignorance era.* He has written about "official vileness and corruption" of Qajar dynasty in his book as follows:

In Qajar dynasty the officialdom, titles and commandments were traded. In this business the seller was king and the buyer could be any cruel rich person. In the other word, the governorship of somewhere was auctioned and anyone who guaranteed paying more was appointed for governing that region. Therefore this ruler was the dictator of the region so he exacted properties of poor peasants. If a peasant complained to the center, the ruler needed to pay extra money to the "government's treasury". Ruler could clean any scandals and sins with giving presents or money to government. Qajar rulers specially Naseredin Shah were afraid of "rules". In this regard "Lord Crozon" wrote: the king can do anything in action and his word is like a rule. (Mohebali, 2001). In the other word there was no systematic government in Qajar dynasty and nobody answered the peasants.

Naseredin Shah liberated writing petition in order to have "generosity towards his peasants". Shopkeepers of Kashan wrote a petition to king: "we were under governing of some cruel rules for years; apparently you are going to change them. Thanks for caring." King answered: "it is not your business. Appointing the rulers is not peasants' job." (Nasiri, 2003).

One more time Semnani people who were annoyed of Mirzaali's invasion wrote to king: "for God sake do not appoint him and give the authority to Muhmmadkhan or Esmailkhan. Secondly save us from this cruel tribe. However according to King's order, peasants did not have the right to complain about rulers. Surprisingly, when even the people from Mazandaran wrote about their satisfaction from their ruler, Abasgholikhan, the king wrote:" it's not your business." (Adamiat and Nategh, 2000).

Fathalishah insisted that he is "aegis of Allah"! In one of his command he mentioned that he is proud of being a king who has authority over people and its God willing. According to Weber's opinion, it is necessary to have special conditions and principles for an ideal bureaucratic organization which were not prepared in Iran in that time and even today in Iran. The conditions are as follows:

1. Employing specialist staff based on merit principle and technical competence.

Achieving the ideal point in this field needs national and inclusive resolution. Thus inefficiencies are recognized and overcome with commitment on its continuous application and review. Studying on current situation shows that the commitment and resolution have not been formed during that period so far.

2. Observing the principles of formal relations in administrative processes.

In bureaucratic organization, it is expected that all assigned duties are done officially and non-personally with complete impartiality. As in this theory organizational rules and criteria have emerged from logic and reason, each employee is required to do its own organizational duties completely and without involvement of personal and private considerations.

During more than 80 years after new administrative structures in Iran there have not been any desirable official relations in implementing rules and regulations. The informal relations have usually priority to formal ones.

3. Doing activities in accordance with the administrative bureaucratic.

It is necessary to devolve the authority based on duties and responsibilities of each post. Having the authorities on following members is one of the bureaucratic principles in establishing administrative hierarchy. While in different levels of bureaucracy some people have little responsibility against their great power.

4. Max Weber believes that everyone in a bureaucratic organization should have a job. Undoubtedly, all these years this belief has been neglected.

5. Employee selection is completely in the hands of superiors. Appointment of employees in different organizational units is not permitted without informing direct supervision.

Mentioned features made the officials to follow published rules and procedures. That's why authority has legitimacy and it is not arbitrary. More than any other factors, this point led Weber to say "the bureaucratic organization can get the highest degree of efficiency" it is used as the most rational known tool to have necessary control on people in the organization.

Mentioned information shows that there were not necessary principles and conditions for establishing Max Weber's Bureaucracy that Etzioni interpreted it as representative

bureaucracy in Iran. That is why any of the administrative system was not efficient.

Is bureaucracy a poor tool function?

Bureaucracy with its technical concept or as a social phenomenon was first founded by Max Weber. He concentrated his most attention on the effect of bureaucratic organizations in political structure of the society. He considered the reason of organization and exercising of power way (Taleghani, 2001).

He defines the power as a possible impose of human will on behaviors of others. The power is not considered as a general term but as a special power called domination or hegemony. Weber's opinion of power is a power in which a ruler, a head or a person who imposes his will on other, knows the power his own right and believes that obeying orders is the duty of obedient and subordinate. The word is derived from Latin root. In 18th century the word was used by one of French politicians. One hundred years later the word entered German language and gradually became common in English too. Bureaucracy was called monstrous power which dwarf community runs it, by French novelist "Balzac" in his book "*Government clerks*". "Gaetano Mosca" Italian socialist called the modern government a bureaucratic government which is governed by minority. "Carl Marx" knows it a factor for "alienating" human groups in modern society. The most basic review of bureaucracy was done by German socialist "Max Weber". He knows bureaucracy as a "Rational Organization of Work" in modern life. He interpreted bureaucracy features as follows:

1. Existing of salary earner administration.
2. Determining of role and duty for each clerk.
3. Appointing of a person in power and the importance of power.
4. Maintaining of organized documents and records.

In fact bureaucracy has a complicated and wide structure which is rationalism centered and an exact, modern and organized tool. It crystallizes the power of state and government in the area of administrative and even political, economic and cultural planning organization. Bureaucracy is the same monster that Balzac mentions it and German scholar "Herbert Marcus" believes that the power of modern bureaucracy destroys individual right and freedom in humanitarianism. Bureaucracy is a wide and powerful organization which rules on individuals. Due to its organizational and structural nature, it regularizes the people makes them as different parts in a machine. The intellect which rules the bureaucracy in the organization is the modern instrumental one so it has a rough spiritual based on machinery order. In this structure people lose their human identity step by step so they become a machine, an object or a tool (Taleghani, 2001).

In most people's viewpoint bureaucracy is an unnecessary paper work and should be conducted to obtain information and services. However bureaucracy refers to big organization with official administrations and its goal is to design an organized structure for effective implementation of public policy.

The most important features of ideal bureaucracy of Weber are as follows:

1. excellent technical work
2. structure of power based on hierarchy
3. formed principles and rules in behavior (having authority in provisions and regulations and non-personal administration)
4. separation of administration from its property or production.
5. employing based on ability and technical knowledge of people.

6. keeping and recording the decisions, procedures and administrative regulations.

Weber believes that the completely bureaucratic organizations have technically the most efficiency so that it is the most known tool for controlling people. Gaudino and Mission were two scholars who did lots of research on the bureaucratic organization of the United States and concluded as follows:

1. bureaucracy leads developing democracy in the society.
2. administrators should not be involved in policies and should just perform the rules of policy makers (Geyvarian, 2000).

Conclusion

Despite all comments about bureaucracy, it seems that bureaucracy is positive per se. all three approaches can be expressed in bureaucracy:

False bureaucracy: in this bureaucracy provisions and regulations impose from outside organization. Subordinates and elites do not believe it and try not to obey the provisions and regulations with some conspirators.

Representative bureaucracy: this kind of bureaucracy is Max Weber's ideal and so subordinates and elites have consensus on law enforcement.

Punitive bureaucracy: in this bureaucracy one of the groups of subordinates or elites sets the provisions and regulations to their own benefits and imposes them on another group.

Thus, if bureaucracy of Weber is implemented, it will be useful. The interrelation of three common approaches of bureaucracy is shown in figure 1.
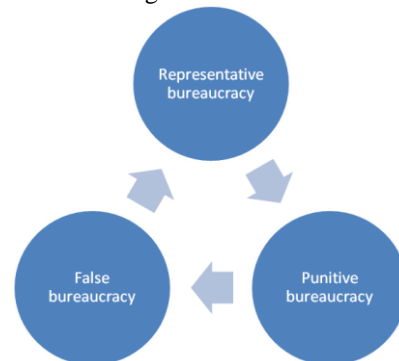

Figure 1: The interrelation of three common approaches of bureaucracy

Two factors are essential in the successful implementation of any bureaucracy:

First: the main reason of inefficiency of bureaucracy in developing countries especially in Iran is in its implementation. Due to lack of its inadequate understanding and insufficient perception of bureaucracy, its implementation was always associated with defects and it was also the reverse. Therefore the best way is to reach a sufficient recognition of bureaucracy and then plan for its implementation.

Second: implementation of bureaucracy should not be done without contemplation and with a non-normative modeling. Implementation of contingency approach and coordination of bureaucracy with conditions, facilities and resources can lead effectiveness and productivity and destroy negative approach of bureaucracy.

References

Adamiat, F. and Nategh, H. (1977). *Social, Political and Economic Thought in Non-Published Works in Ghajar Era*, Agah Publication, Tehran, Iran.

Ashouri, D. *Political Encyclopedia*. Second Edition. Morvarid Publication, Tehran, Iran.

Camenka, Y. *Bureaucracy ,*Translated by Khosro Sabri, Shirazeh Publication, Tehran, Iran. 2002.

Farazmand, A. (2000). Persian Legacies of Bureaucracy and Public Administration, Public Administration and Public Policy, Vol. 1.

Geyvarian, H. (2000). *Bureaucracy in Iran,* Baztabe Andishe Journal, 2002.

KHani, A. (1999). *New Reflection about Bureaucracy and its absence, Political and Economic information,* Vol. 162- 161.

Meyer M. (2007). Bureaucracy, Management Today.

Mohebali, D. (1999). *False and Punitive Bureaucracy in Official System of Iran,* Conference of Administrative and Development System.

Nasiri, H. (2003). "*Bureaucracy in Iran",* Management monthly Journal, Vol. 10.

Simandan, R. (2009). Thinking about Bureaucracy: Mises versus Niskanen, The Romanian Economic Journal, Year XII, no. 34.

Taleghani (2001), *Classical Management,* Moein Publication.

Welch, J. & Byrne, J.A. (2001). *Jack: What I've learned leading a great company and great people.* London: Headline

Welch, J. & Welch, S. (2005). *Winning.* London: Harper Collins.

Zali, M. (1995). *Critical Thinking on the Death of Bureaucracy,* Official Quarterly Journal, Vol. 10, 11.