Chapter 4
Understanding Bureaucracy

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ABSTRACT

Policy development and implementation is not only an attribute of a political administration, but also of its bureaucracy. The natures of, and connection between, a political administration and its bureaucracy is important if one is interested in creating a comparative measure of that efficacy across administrations or political systems. A traditional blueprint model of a bureaucracy comes from Weber, seen to be a servicing body for the implementation of political policy decisions resulting from a process of governance. An alternative model arises from the fictional works of Kafka, which is underpinned by a firm conceptual basis of a bureaucracy that confronts that of Weber. This paper explores the nature of bureaucracies, representing them as complex and dynamic. Agency theory will be used to model bureaucracies, and comparisons will be made between the Weber and Kafka conceptualisation. The outcome suggests that any attempts to measure comparative efficacy across political systems or administrations may well lead to failure due to the distinctions in the nature of the bureaucracies that they maintain.

INTRODUCTION

A bureaucracy can be seen as a social subsystem of administrative structure that functions within a given frame of reference, and that has a set of regulations in place to control (rationalise, facilitate implementation and professionalise) activities to deliver services on behalf of some policy directive delivered through Corporate or State governance. In this chapter this definition will be deduced from the literature, and its consequences considered in the light of two perspectives of the nature of a bureaucracy, Weber (1947) and Kafka (1922).

Bureaucracies service the needs of political systems operating with some form of legitimate governance, i.e. where the acts of governance conform to the principles of accepted law. An *ideal* for such bureaucracies is usually seen in the light of Weber's (1947) conceptualisation: a purely rational organisation that operates in a way that has some connection with the positivist idea of an efficient machine.

However, pragmatic questions have been raised (Blau & Scott, 1962; Grigoriou, 2013; Ivanko, 2013; Jørgensen, 2012) about the validity of the rational bureaucracy model, since bureaucracies are run by individuals who have their own perspectives, orientations and their culture or way of doing things.

Whatever the nature of a political regime and its processes of governance, there is normally an administrative bureaucracy there to serve it. Having connected the words administration and bureaucracy, it is useful to distinguish between them. For Livioara (2010) an administration is usually associated with an institution that has a social system that fulfils its tasks. The institution is normally defined as a stable valued recurring pattern of behaviour operating under some sort of political governance. In contrast a bureaucracy is a social subsystem of administrative activity that functions within a given frame of reference. The functionaries that populate a bureaucratic system and help to formulate and then implement policies for governing processes do so according to a strategic brief. However, might their perspectives cloud that brief? If there are commonalities among the personalities that create bureaucratic norms, does a bureaucracy therefore maintain its own culture that is distinct from that of a given political regime? If so, how if at all does this impact on the "effectiveness" or the "efficiency" of the implementation of political policy decisions delivered by governance?

To respond to such questions, one must be clear about not only what a bureaucracy is, but also its very nature. The State bureaucratic arena involves the formulation and implementation of policy. The regulation and delivery of services and governance through bureaucracy is an important determinant for social and economic development (Hyden, Court & Mease, 2003). For Grigoriou (2013, p.1, citing Dimock, 1959), bureaucracy can also be seen as "the administrative structure and set of regulations in place to control (rationalise, render effective and professionalise) activities, usually in sufficiently large organizations and State government." It should be noted that by the term "render effective" is meant "to facilitate implementation," rather than referring to any form of effectiveness in activities, which unlike efficiency is not part of Weber's conceptualisation. Grigoriou notes that there is a degree of efficiency that is in part a function of the environment in which the bureaucracy operates. It may also be seen to be a function of its own internal conceptual capability to help develop and implement policy. However, this latter statement makes an assumption that a bureaucracy may vary away from the pure rationality idealised for it by Weber, implying that functionaries have cognitive and emotional capacities that vary with context and may create divergence from some pure rationality, a notion that will be revisited.

A political bureaucracy is intended (for Weber) to serve policy making functions. However, it is conceptually unimportant if these are for the governance of a State or a Corporation, since both have regulations that apply to their respective memberships. As such organisational bureaucracy is explained by Fayol (1918, p.6, cited by Livioara, 2010), who says:

There is no doctrine of private business administration and a separate one for the State affairs: the administrative doctrine is universal. The principles and general rules that apply to business are useful to the State administration and vice versa.

This begs the question of how the natures of the State and Corporation may be related. Adapting a definition by Grigoriou (2013), the nature of the State is politically and institutionally organised body of people inhabiting a defined geographical entity with an organised legitimate government, which may also be referred to as a governing executive. It is an outgrowth of society with its origin coming intrinsically from society, and is the result of a contract between the stakeholders of that geographical entity and the executive established to serve and develop their interests and ensure their liberty. The

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