

Bureaucracy: Meaning, Features and Role of Bureaucracy

Article 1c of Bureaucracy!

Bureaucracy or the Civil Service constitutes the permanent and professional part of the executive organ of government. It is usually described as the non-political or politically neutral, permanent, and professionally trained civil service.

It runs the administration of the state according to the policies and laws of the government political executive. Upon the qualities and efficiency of bureaucracy depends the quality and efficiency of the state administration. It, however, works under the leadership and control of the Political Executive.

Bureaucracy: Meaning and Definition:

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The terms bureaucracy, civil service, public servants, public service, civil servants, government service, government servants, officials of government, officials, permanent executive and non-political executive are used to describe all such persons who carry out the day to day administration of the state. The terms Bureaucracy' and 'Civil Service' are popularly used as synonyms.

Narrow and Broad uses of the term Bureaucracy:

In a narrow sense the term Bureaucracy is used to denote those important and higher level public servants who occupy top level positions in the state administration. In the broad sense, it refers to all the permanent employees of the government right from the peons and clerks to the top level officials. Presently, we use the term in its broader dimension.

Definitions:

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- (1) "Bureaucracy means the civil servants, the administrative functionaries who are professionally trained for the public service and who enjoy permanency of tenure, promotion within service-partly by seniority and partly by merit." -Garner
- (2) "In its broad larger sense the term Civil Service is used to describe any personnel system where the employees are classified in a system of administration composed of a hierarchy, sections, divisions, bureaus, departments and the like." -Willoughby
- (3) "Civil Service/Bureaucracy is a professional body of officials permanent, paid and skilled." -Finer

Bureaucracy: Main Features:

1. Permanent Character:

The civil servants hold permanent jobs in government departments. They mostly join their services during their youths and continue to work as government servants till the age of retirement which is usually 58 to 60 years.

2. Hierarchical Organisation:

Bureaucracy is hierarchically organised in several levels. Each official is placed at a particular level of hierarchy and he enjoys the privileges and powers which are available to his co-level officials. He is under his immediate higher level officials and is above his immediately lower level officials. The principle of rule of the higher over the lower governs the inter-relations between various levels of bureaucracy.

3. Non-partisan Character:

The members of the Bureaucracy are not directly involved in politics. They cannot join political parties and participate in political movements. They are not affected by the political changes which keep on coming in the political executive. Whichever party may come to power and make the government, the civil servants remain politically neutral and carry out their assigned departmental roles impartially and faithfully.

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4. Professional, Trained and Expert Class:

The Bureaucracy constitutes the educated and professionally trained class of persons which helps the political executive in carrying out its functions. The members of civil service are recruited through competitive examinations for appearing in which they have to possess some minimum educational qualifications. Before their appointments, they get special trainings. During the course of their service they attend orientation and refresher courses. They have the knowledge, training and expertise necessary for carrying out their administrative work.

5. Fixed Salaries:

Each member of the Bureaucracy receives a fixed salary. Right at the time of appointment he is allotted a scale of pay, which depends upon the nature and level of his job-responsibility. All the civil servants belonging to a particular class of administrative hierarchy are placed in one scale of pay. Each job also entitles them to some allowances.

6. Bound by Rules and Regulations:

The Bureaucracy always works in accordance with 'rules and regulations'. 'Strict obedience to rules', 'Through Proper Channel', 'Decision-making after satisfying the rules', are the principles which always guide, direct and regulate the working of bureaucracy. Each official works only within the sphere prescribed for him by the rules of his department.

7. Class Consciousness:

The Civil Servants are highly class conscious. They jealously work to protect and promote the interests of their class of civil servants. They are called the white-collar class because of their faith in their 'superior status' as government officials.

8. Public Service Spirit as the Ideal:

Modern Bureaucracy identifies itself with public service spirit. It always tries to project itself as the civil servants devoted to the promotion of public welfare through the satisfaction of public needs. They are expected to behave as 'officers' responsible for public welfare, with service as their motto.

9. Bound by a Code of Conduct:

The civil servants have to follow a code of conduct. They have to act in a disciplined way. Their rights, duties and privileges stand clearly defined. The procedure of work is definite and settled. They can be punished for misbehavior, incompetence or negligence or for a violation of their conduct rules. In short, Bureaucracy is characterised by political neutrality, professional competence, permanent/ stable tenure, fixed salaries and strict obedience to rules.

Role of Bureaucracy: Functions:

Bureaucracy or Civil Service plays a key role in running the Public Administration e by performing the following functions:

1. Implementation of Governmental Policies and Laws:

It is the responsibility of the bureaucracy to carry out and implement the policies of the government. Good policies and laws can really serve their objectives only when these are efficiently implemented by the civil servants.

2. Role in Policy-Formulation:

Policy-making is the function of the political executive. However, the Bureaucracy plays an active role in this exercise. Civil Servants supply the data needed by the political executive for formulating the policies. In fact, Civil servants formulate several alternative policies and describe the merits and demerits of each. The Political Executive then selects and adopts one such policy alternative as the governmental policy.

3. Running of Administration:

To run the day to day administration in accordance with the policies, laws, rules, regulations and decisions of the government is also the key responsibility of the Bureaucracy. The political executive simply exercises guiding, controlling and supervising functions.

4. Advisory Function:

One of the important functions of the Bureaucracy is to advise the political executive. The ministers receive all the information and advice regarding the functioning of their respective departments from the civil servants. As amateurs, the ministers have little knowledge about the functions of their departments. They, therefore, depend upon the advice of bureaucracy. As qualified, experienced and expert civil servants working in all government departments, they provide expert and professional advice and information to the ministers.

5. Role in Legislative Work:

The civil servants play an important but indirect role in law-making. They draft the bills which the ministers submit to the legislature for law-making. The ministers provide all the information asked for by the legislature by taking the help of the civil servants.

6. Semi-judicial Work:

The emergence of the system of administrative justice, under which several types of the cases and disputes are decided by the executive, has further been a source of increased semi-judicial work of the bureaucracy. The disputes involving the grant of permits, licences, tax concessions, quotas etc. are now settled by the civil servants.

7. Collection of Taxes and Disbursement of Financial Benefits:

The civil servants play a vitally important role in financial administration. They advise the political executive in respect of all financial planning, tax-structure, tax-administration and the like. They collect taxes and settle disputes involving recovery of taxes. They play a vital role in preparing the budget and taxation proposals. They carry out the function of granting of

legally sanctioned financial benefits, tax reliefs, subsidies and other concessions to the people.

8. Record-Keeping:

The Civil Service has the sole responsibility of keeping systematically all government records. They collect, classify and analyse all data pertaining to all activities of the government. They collect and maintain vital socioeconomic statistics which are used for the formulation of Public policies and plans.

9. Role in Public Relations:

The era of modern welfare state and democratic politics has made it essential for the government to keep close relations with the people of the state. The need for maintaining active and full public relations is a vital necessity of every state. The civil servants play an active role in this sphere.

They are the main agents who establish direct contacts with the people. They serve as a two way link. On the one hand, they communicate all government decisions to the people, and on the other hand, they communicate to the government the needs, interests and views of the people. Thus, Bureaucracy plays a vigorously active and highly important role in the working of the government.

Control over Bureaucracy:

The rise of modern welfare state and increase in its functions has been a source of big increase in the powers and role of Bureaucracy. It has, therefore, given rise to an additional need for exercising control over bureaucracy. An effective control system has become essential both for preventing the civil servants from abusing their powers as well as for ensuring their active and positive role. In fact, every state maintains a system of internal and external control over Bureaucracy.

(A) Internal Control:

It means control applied from within the organisation i.e. by the administrative machinery. The administrative organisation is hierarchical and is divided into wings, divisions, branches and sections. There are present some internal controls in its every section. The tools of control are budgeting, accounting, auditing, reports, inspections, efficiency surveys, personnel control, code of conduct, and discipline and leadership control.

In particular, regular internal inspections, auditing of accounts and evaluation of the performance of each civil servant act as main means of internal control over Bureaucracy. Internal control is necessary for keeping the bureaucracy efficient and productive of desired results.

(B) External Control:

External control is that which flows from outside agencies. These agencies are the people, the legislature, the executive and the judiciary.