

Bureaucracy and Good Governance the Summum Bonum for Accelerating the Tempo of Development: An Overview on Bangladesh

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Abstract: The study attempts to identify the key features of bureaucratic system and the governance and their implications on the process of development. The study also tries to present real picture of government practices in Bangladesh. The study analyses the existing governance system in the developed countries. This research also highlights the good governance agenda and detailed discussions on the key issues of public sector relationship with the good governance. Finally, the study draws some recommendations and concluding remarks in context of Bangladesh.

Key words: Bureaucracy, good governance, development, public sector

INTRODUCTION

A competent and well-motivated bureaucracy is central to good governance. Governance is the key tool for development. The basic problem of Bangladesh is its poor governance. A country of great potential such as Bangladesh could make its administration more effective and proactive by improving governance. The basic problem of a state usually lies with governance and bureaucracy. The Government is responsible for governance. Community participation is necessary for bringing about governance, since governance is missing, resources are being depleted. So public awareness and morality is important to bring about good governance. Bureaucracy and good governance go together as they are very closely associated.

The bureaucracy in Bangladesh is often accused of inefficiency, corruption, nepotism, lack of accountability and assortment of other ailments. It is sometimes portrayed as standing in the way of development rather than encouraging it. The claim is often made that the bureaucratic ills are related to attitudes and mentalities among the bureaucrats. The country's history may have left imprints on the bureaucracy in the form of conflicting norms and cultural tensions that may be difficulty for administrative leaders to handle.

There is no denying fact that bureaucracy in Bangladesh is characterized more by traditional than by modern norms. Public life in today's Bangladesh with

concerns about corruption and the inability of politicians to tackle it effectively. Actions of governments and politicians apart there are general indicators that corruption is a serious issue in the medium term development of the Bangladesh economy. The present study is undertaken to address the above issue and find out the solutions from bureaucratic reform policy and good governance issues of the Government. The assignment is based on secondary data sources although availability of secondary data is scarce. The secondary data has been collected through published articles of various newspapers, books, journals and other relevant write-ups.

Objectives of the study: Governance is a process, institutions and customs through which the function of governing is carried out. Standard of governance is entirely depended on the how well a bureaucratic system functions in a country. Bureaucracy in Bangladesh today is characterized by a series of internal tensions. This paper is an attempt to understand these tensions and their possible development. Moreover, the study is undertaken to find out the patterns of bureaucratic behavior in Bangladesh. Other key objectives of the study are as follows:

- To focus on the relationship between bureaucracy and good governance.
- To find out the problem of bureaucracy and its impact on good governance.

- To determine the key features adopted by government and donor partners in raising awareness of good governance.
- To come up with recommendations to work for governance for the good of the people.

MAX WEBER ON BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy is a sociological concept of government and its institutions as an organizational structure characterized by regularized procedure, division of responsibility, hierarchy and impersonal relationships. In modern usage, bureaucracy often equates with inefficiency, laziness and waste. It is often characterized in the popular imagination as existing solely for itself and only achieving results, which end up in enlarging the size of bureaucracy. A stereotypical red tape bureaucracy would consist many levels of management, which require many signature approvals to make any decision, no matter how trivial.

Max Weber has probably been one of the most influential users of the world in its social science sense. He is well known for his study of bureaucratization of society; many aspect of modern public administration go back to him; a classic, hierarchically organized civil service of the continental type is called Weberian civil service.

Weber described the ideal type bureaucracy in positive terms, considering it to be a more rational and efficient form of organization than the alternatives that preceded it, which he characterized as charismatic domination and traditional domination. According to his terminology, bureaucracy is a part of legal domination. However, he also emphasized that bureaucracy becomes inefficient when a decision must be adapted to an individual case.

According to Weber, the attributes of modern bureaucracy include its impersonality, concentration of the means of administration, a leveling effect on social and economic differences and implementation of a system of authority that is practically indestructible.

Weber's analysis of bureaucracy concerns:

- The historical and administrative reasons for the process of bureaucratization.
- The impact of rule of law upon the functioning of bureaucratic organizations.
- The typical personal orientation and occupational position of bureaucratic officials as a status group
- The most important attributes and consequences of bureaucracy in the modern world.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The legitimacy of government depends on the existence of participatory processes and consent of those who are governed. The accountability of both political and official elements of the government for their actions depend on the availability of information, freedom of media, transparency of decision making and the existence of mechanisms to call individuals and institutions to account

The competence of government is to formulate appropriate policies, make timely decisions, implement them effectively and deliver services. Good governance ensures respect for human rights and the rule of the law to guarantee individual and group rights and security, to provide a framework for economic and social activity and to allow and encourage all individuals to participate.

The attributes of governance may be qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative attributes, among other things, are a pluralistic political system, a liberal economic system, an efficient and honest bureaucracy, an independent judiciary, rule of law, administrative accountability and transparency, a legal framework ensuring human rights and free media. The quantitative elements, on the other and are: less government including a smaller bureaucracy, more government for protecting society from natural and social hazards and wider government for providing better social and economic services. The World Bank approach to good governance is geared to promote economy, efficiency and effectiveness in government operations, while that of the western advanced nations is essentially political, that is, democracy, decentralization and people's participation are basic ingredients of good governance.

FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNANCE IN DEVELOPED COUNTRY

What is generally meant as developed country is, the richness, technology advancement, economic and political power established within the state? This of course, is achieved through performance of various sectors. Based on the information regarding governance status in developed countries, the following 6 areas are found to be major focal point for ensuring good governance:

Civil society: Policy issues are raised in the public for opinion and for making them aware.

Political society: Priority issues are combined into policy by political institutions.

Government: Services to the people are transparent and public servants are accountable for their activities.

Bureaucracy: Transparent administration and full implementation of policies.

Economic society: State-market interactions exist.

Judiciary: Strong independent judicial system.

At the same time, these developed countries adopt 6 principles:

Participation: People are able to sense ownership and involvement in the political process.

Fairness: Rules are applied equally to every one in society.

Decency: Rules are handled without humiliating or harming people.

Accountability: Political actors are perceived as responsible to the public for what they say and do.

Transparency: Rules about openness and clarity are upheld in the public.

Efficiency: Effective use of scarce resources without incurring wastes or delay.

BUREAUCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

Corruption thrives where there is discretion and monopoly, accountability is weak and public servants are poorly paid. These are also the main causes of public corruption in Bangladesh. Bangladesh does have an anti-corruption commission, but it is largely ineffective. The politicians rather than offering solutions, create fresh sets of problems. Bureaucracy on the other hand, lacks openness and transparency. The colonial legacy and the natural conservatism of the civil service have combined to produce an administrative culture that is inappropriate to the needs of a modern economy. The extensive structure of regulatory controls is vague and discretionary, promoting both corruption and rent seeking. The legal system is authoritative and the judiciary is overloaded and deficient. Public servants are not held individually accountable for poor performance or delayed decisions. Government programs are inadequately scrutinized for overall inefficiency, appropriateness or cost effectiveness. Governance is too personalized and decisions get taken only after personal intervention. The inadequacies of GOB

services reflect not only resource constraints, but also deep-seated organizational problems and procedural flaws. They suffer from poor management, a lack of transparency, weak monitoring and accountability and generally operate free from the competitive pressures from the marketplace. Public service in Bangladesh does not consider what the customer wants. Above all, the large majority of government agencies do not appear to have any commitment to or even acknowledgement of, the principle of ultimate responsibility to the taxpayers and the users.

CRITICS OF BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN BANGLADESH

The governmental system that developed between 1972 and 2004 in Bangladesh through trial and error exhibited the effects of political adventurism by a democrat-turned-authoritarian ruler and over-ambitious army generals. This resulted in attempts to develop political institutions around a particular individual, the president, with the support of military, bureaucracy and unprincipled politicians. Consequently, the development of the presidency as a viable democratic and credible institution was jeopardized. Lack of restraints and limitations on the authority of the ruler and concentration of power in one hand made the system an autocratic institution. Members of the parliament, especially those belonging to the ruling party, showed little inclination to use the parliamentary forum to criticize the policies of the government.

State control of the media at the behest of the ruling party served as a deterrent to the expression of public opinion. The extensive nature of media control could be discerned from the fact that even privately owned newspapers with supposedly neutral editorial policies provided extensive coverage for the minutest of details concerning government activities. Opposition political parties were given very limited space and time in state media. The electoral process, in itself, was far from foolproof (Khan, 1986). People's confidence in the electoral process reached its ebb during Ershad's rule.

Originally, the Constitution envisaged an independent judiciary. Attempts to undermine the independence of the judiciary began under the parliamentary democratic system in existence during 1972-1975. There was no provision for any appeal against their judgment (Maniruzzaman, 1982). Accompanying the transformation of the political system in early 1975 was a measure that vested all powers over the judiciary and the magistracy in the president (GOB, 1975). This system continued by retaining authority

for the appointment of judges and controlling the magistracy through M/O Establishment (Alam, 1987).

Over the last few decades the rulers use the bureaucracy to implement their policies and programs (Ahamed, 1980). In Bangladesh, the bureaucracy, to a large extent, conforms to the Weberian model. Decision making patterns and working relationships are dictated by highly formalistic rules and regulations apparently leading to an impersonal style of administration. The civil service is, by and large, based on the concept of a closed career system; although in recent years there have been cases of variations. The early 1980s saw the beginning of large-scale corruption at all levels of society including the public sector. Indeed, rent seeking and corruption gradually became institutionalized with civil servants relying on a variety of corrupt practices provide them with a life style far beyond their actual means (Zafarullah, 1987).

We have noted how the political leadership tried to subdue the bureaucracy. The leadership began to rely more and more on senior civil servants for advice on important issues. Public servants in key positions in the Secretariat and public enterprises replaced political appointees and they began to handle the bulk of the decisions made (Ahamed, 1980). The people of this poverty-stricken nation still languished under an administrative system that had nothing much to offer in the way of dignifying their lives. To infuse dynamism, it became necessary to lubricate the administrative machinery regularly by inducing into it people of merit and ability and above all steering them toward a sense of mission in the performance of their tasks. In the past, some bureaucrats had shown creativity and innovation in administrative performance, but were not always appreciated or recognized by many, especially the political leadership.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Every concerned person has agreed that in Bangladesh huge potential for economic growth and stability. However, a number of factors exist that continue to slow down the country's development. The important factor is the relationship between bureaucracies and good governance.

There is 2 aspects of governance, the first one involved the institutions directly related with governance activities and secondly, the general environment of governance covering law and order, corruption, administrative efficiency and the overall economic management.

The important factor is the relationship between the politicians and the bureaucracy. It is essential that the relationship and rules of business is to be very clearly defined and honored between these two. The bureaucrats should have the courage to put options before the politicians to help make key decisions. The bureaucrats are supposed to help the decision making process, not make decisions of their own. They should not cross their line. On the other hand, the politicians should also encourage freedom for expression by the bureaucrats.

Public accountability is one of the most important tools for good governance. Bureaucrats need to be accountable for their decisions and actions but most resist held accountable. Accountability has to start at the very top where power is held and filters all the way down to the lower rungs.

To cultivate accountability of this kind is not an easy process. It is long drawn out and depend on factors such as education, training reward and punishment overall social and cultural development, financial values taught in the family and so on. Public financial accountability in the country has been unsatisfactory even though it is an essential part of good governance.

Leadership with right objectives is to be effective in ensuring good governance; it should be motivated for the right reasons. The need is for a properly motivated political leadership as well as a bureaucracy. Unless the political leadership is properly motivated the practice of politicization of administration, collusion between civil society and politicians will continue. Personal motivation in political and civil society is very important.

Decentralized governance has been conceived as an instrument in promoting development. Decentralized governance is also assumed to provide more effective and competitive delivery of services at the grass roots. Decentralization is an important way to bring the government closer to the people. If the government is willing to allow local authorities control of the finances and administration of their own personnel. Decentralization is an important element of the process of accountability and transparency. Decentralized governance is considered to be cost effective besides helping mobilization of local resources in the form of labor and material.

The press as media plays an important role in forming public opinion and preempting action. The press in Bangladesh needs to be more professional with more training and better facilities. Transparency and accountability cannot be achieved without an informed public.

In an E-government there is significant opportunity to explore and exercise good governance. The huge

development in the information and communication technology all over the world has largely passed by Bangladesh. An efficient telecommunications sector is essential to the process of exploiting ICT potential for government system.

For positive developments a great deal needs to be done. There is a need to support the broad coalition of civil society groups and organizations operating at the various levels to better realize the anti-corruption objectives. There are urgent needs to encourage and support the processes of political reform that are currently underway in the fields of transparency and freedom of information, civil service and judicial reform and to better regulate the other government bodies. It is important to promote civil action and transparency in the fight against corruption. To tackle corruption effectively there is need for a strong consolidated state characterized by rule-governed behavior. From the present study following key area are identified to making government work better:

- The foremost is the redefinition of the level and nature of participation by the institutions in many of the activities they are currently engaged. An overstretched government cannot be efficient.
- There are the principal-agent relationships, institutional structures and processes that shape the incentives and competitive pressures within the public agencies.
- There is need of enhancing government accountability and responsiveness to the public.
- There are regulations, laws and processes through which government interacts and governs citizens and private sector. Transparency, fairness and automativity of the legal and regulatory institutions and policies have a major bearing on the efficiency of the government.

- There are rules and processes by which government conducts its policy formulation, effective implementation and speedy and transparent decision-making are the hallmarks of an efficient government.
- An efficient and, committed and professional public servant is necessary for economic governance.

The bureaucracy is entrusted with the task of actually ensuring the governmental plans are implemented without having to make concessions to interest groups in the society as well as ensuring the least possible opposition. The bureaucracy is therefore expected to be an elite group composed of talented professionals that are either insulated from pressure group or strong enough to withstand such pressure. The bureaucracy is in charge of execution of all government policies and programs. The cabinet composed of leading persons of political in owner is responsible for policy dictation. Although the cabinet is responsible for all policy decisions they cannot really give shape to the policies without the help and active cooperation of the cooperation of the bureaucrats.

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