
Bureaucracy In The Education System

Bureaucracy is derived from the Greek word which means 'desk rule'. Max Weber defined bureaucracy as a product of rationalization. In Weber's view industrial revolution and capitalism led society to think rationally, moving away from traditional ideas, values and beliefs. With the shift from small scale to large scale organization, the need for bureaucratization increased in order to achieve efficient economic growth. In contemporary times, bureaucratization is seen in almost every large-scale social system. One of which is Education. Given below are some of the features that will explain how bureaucratization has come into the education system:

1. Develops a formal system: Bureaucratization develops a formal system with specified roles and structure allocated to people. It breaks a bigger unit into smaller units in order to make the functioning of the system efficient and less time consuming. For example, in formal schooling, the structure is divided into different departments like IT, admission, health etc. and similarly each of these departments are allocated specific roles.
2. Leads to specialization: Specialization is one of feature of such a system. The labour is divided into different divisions as per their talent and specialization. For example, music is taught by a music teacher and dance by a dance teacher, who are experts in their field.
3. Hierarchy and Power: It leads to hierarchy within the system and mostly wherever there is hierarchy there is power. When the organizations were small people interacted amongst themselves and decided together. With the shift towards larger and formal organizations some people within the organization frame rules and regulations. These set rules further trickles down to the last employee of the organization. Thus, hierarchy and power play an important role in bureaucracy. "Weber suggests that the form taken by legitimacy and domination is closely connected with the social structure within which power is being exercised." For example, Akshaya Patra, NGO which serves mid-day meal to millions of children in school avoids including eggs, onion and garlic in the food. Even if the children do not like the food it will still be served because Government feels it is hygienic.
4. Well-formed rules: The rules of such a formal system are explicitly mentioned and written down properly. For example there is a proper timing set for the school, each subject has a dedicated time duration etc.
5. Follows a routine: With specific structure, rules and specialization such a system leads to routinization. It is so mechanized that people forget to use their creativity to break such a system. For example, there are still debates on questions like what is education aiming at? In a capitalist society it is mostly seen as a means to secure jobs. Probably that is why the focus of Draft National Education Policy, 2019 is on certain essential

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subjects and skills.

6. Impersonal: Within this structural routine and hierarchy people eventually start feeling alienated. For example, sometimes I wonder about the motivation of a teacher to teach especially when there is so much pressure on teachers to produce 100% result in each classroom, rush to complete full syllabus within a certain period. Thus, leaving no room for the teachers to experiment and make children learn through different approaches. Such a routine makes teachers more dehumanized in their approach and also results in disenchantment.

There is no doubt that bureaucratization of large systems in a complex society is reasonable. As per the state report cards of Elementary Education in India (2015-16) there are 1.4 million schools in India. In order to make so many schools run efficiently it is important lay proper rules and structure for efficiency. That is why the 1986 New National Policy on Education structured the 10+2+3 system, equal access to education and common core in the curricular programme. Further, there are well-written rules set by Right to Education, 2009 for smooth functioning of schools. It tries to create equal system for all by universalising the access to elementary education by laying down uniform guidelines regarding 'teacher-student ratio', comprehensive and continuous evaluation and so on so that every child learns well in the classroom. This makes the teacher responsible and accountable towards their job.

However, considering the above example there are downside of such a system. In 2015-16, there were 7.5% schools with single teachers. In this case it would be difficult to maintain the set rules. Thus, indicating that one size fits all approach might not work well with such stringent rules. Bureaucratization in a complex society where specialization is the core feature will not work well with limited number of teaching staff in a school. The bureaucratic system limits the creative potential of the child and teacher in a classroom. Most teachers lose their motivation because they are assigned to do many other administrative tasks other than teaching. Such a trend makes teachers feel alienated towards their own profession. In my opinion, bureaucratization is important in large system but there can be democratic ways to ensure formal standard without the risk of impersonal alienation. Lack of accessibility and affordability to all with continue to create a hidden hierarchy, power and a dominant culture. Some educationists like Gijubhai Badheka have experimented through Montessori approach where the focus is on every child's self-development. Such experiments have been happening in the education system in smaller groups through alternate schooling as well. Now, educationists need to understand how this system can be applied to all the schools across nation keeping humanity and formality intact.

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