

THE ROMANIAN BUREAUCRATIC SYSTEM OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

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In this paper I would like to present a few links between bureaucracy and economy. First of all the bureaucracy is always a cost to society, but this cost may be accepted insofar as it makes social order possible, and maintains it by enforcing the rule of law. On the other hand the bureaucrats are having a lot of access to much public information, but they are not always transmitting the information further to the citizens. Unfortunately they are the only ones who can transmit this information's and in this case we can talk about the monopole over the public information's. Also, in this paper I would like to present the problems that a businessman can have to invest in Romania because of the suffocating bureaucracy and the approvals that is obligated to get from the public administrations.

Key words: bureaucracy, opportunity cost, corruption, artificial jobs

Introduction

The origin of the term bureaucracy can be traced to eighteenth-century French literature (Albrow 1970). The early usage referred to an official workplace (bureau) in which individual activities was routinely determined by explicit rules and regulations. As modern systems of management, supervision, and control, bureaucracies are designed to rationally coordinate the duties and responsibilities of officials and employees of organizations. The delineation of official duties and responsibilities, by means of formal rules and programs of activity (March and Simon 1958), is intended to displace and constrain the otherwise private, idiosyncratic, and uniquely personal interests and actions of individuals. Bureaucratic systems of administration are designed to ensure that the activities of individuals rationally contribute to the goals and interests of the organizations within which they work.

If the word “bureaucracy” appeared in the 18th century, it doesn't mean that bureaucratic systems and bureaucracy appeared in the same time. It is known that bureaucracy was present long time ago in the ancient Babylon, Egypt, Greece and The Roman Empire.

In ordinary usage, “bureaucracy” refers to a complex, specialized organization (especially a governmental organization) composed of non-elected, highly trained professional administrators and clerks hired on a full-time basis to perform administrative services and tasks. Bureaucratic organizations are broken up into specialized departments or ministries, to each of which is assigned responsibility for pursuing a limited number of the government's many official goals and policies — those falling within a single relatively narrow functional domain. The departments or ministries are subdivided into divisions that are each assigned even more specialized responsibilities for accomplishing various portions or aspects of the department's overall tasks and these divisions are in turn composed of multiple agencies or bureaus with even more minutely specialized functions (and their own subdivisions). Bureaucratic organizations always rely heavily on the principle of hierarchy and rank, which requires a clear, unambiguous chain of command through which “higher” officials supervise the “lower” officials, who of course supervise their own subordinate administrators within the various subdivisions and sub-subdivisions of the organization.

In the literature dealing with bureaucracy we can often meet a continual shift between two points of view. The first point of view defines bureaucracy mainly as a tool, or a mechanism created for the successful and efficient implementation of a certain goal or goals. Bureaucracy is seen as an epitome of rationality and of efficient implementation of goals and provision of services.

The second point of view sees bureaucracy mainly as an instrument of power, of exercising control over people and over different spheres of life, and of continuous expansion of such power either in the interests of the bureaucracy itself or in the interests of some masters. This point of view tends mainly to stress the process of bureaucratization, the extension of the power of a bureaucratic organization over many areas beyond its initial purpose, the growing internal formalization within the bureaucracy, the regimentation of these areas by the bureaucracy, and in general a strong emphasis by the bureaucracy on the extension of its power.

In Marx's theory, bureaucracy rarely creates new wealth by itself, but rather controls, co-ordinates and governs the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. The bureaucracy as a social stratum derives its income from the appropriation of part of the social surplus product of human labor. Wealth is appropriated by the bureaucracy by law through fees, taxes, levies, tributes, licensing etc.

Bureaucracy is therefore always a cost to society, but this cost may be accepted insofar as it makes social order possible, and maintains it by enforcing the rule of law. Nevertheless there are constant conflicts about this cost, because it has the big effect on the distribution of incomes; all producers will try to get the maximum return from what they produce, and minimize administrative costs. Typically, in epochs of strong economic growth, bureaucracies proliferate; when economic growth declines, a fight breaks out to cut back bureaucratic costs.

Whether or not a bureaucracy as a social stratum can become a genuine ruling class depends greatly on the prevailing property relations and the mode of production of wealth. In capitalist society, the state typically lacks an independent economic base, finances many activities on credit, and is heavily dependent on levying taxes as a source of income. Therefore, its power is limited by the costs which private owners of the productive assets will tolerate. If, however, the state owns the means of production itself, defended by military power, the state bureaucracy can become much more powerful, and act as a ruling class or power elite, because it controls directly the sources of new wealth, and manages or distributes the social product.

Bureaucracies emerge to mediate conflicts of interest on the basis of laws, but if those conflicts of interest disappear (because resources are allocated directly in a fair way), bureaucracies would also be redundant.

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 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. A bureaucratic official must exercise his judgment and his skills, but his duty is to place these at the service of a higher authority; ultimately he is responsible only for the impartial execution of assigned tasks and must sacrifice his personal judgment if it runs counter to his official duties.

Because bureaucrats have more information than elected officials about what they are doing and what they should be doing, bureaucrats might have the ability to implement policies or regulations that go against the public interest. Because bureaucrats have so much information they have a huge advantage to us all: "the power of information". If we wish to believe that we live in a democracy, then it must be true that appointed bureaucrats cannot act contrary to the interests of elected officials.

The Romanian bureaucratic system

The Romanian bureaucratic system is a legacy of the communist regime and mostly the effects of bureaucracy can be seen in the public administrations where most of the employers (bureaucrats) work there from the period of the communist regime. But also there is a typical system which can be found in all the Balkan's countries, mostly the behavior of the bureaucrats from the public administration and the corruption from this system.

For example nowadays is becoming more and more difficult to open a business in Romania or try to invest in one. Therefore, a businessman must sacrifice most of his time and energy to get all the necessary approvals for opening the firm and must also enter in contact with the not so willing persons behind the desks.

The businessman starts his “journey” with lots of trust and hope for the future, but after passing through almost all the public administrations to get the approvals necessary for the function of the firm he gets overwhelmed due to the Romanian bureaucratic system. This bureaucratic system is driving away many foreign investors. Unfortunately not only the time that is losing by going to an public administration to another for getting the approvals makes the businessman to renounce but the time that is waiting for an response from them is very long. In this time he can try to do something else because his not losing only time but money as well or he can invest his time and money in another country.

In this case we ask ourselves how many gave up starting a business because of the bureaucracy and how many are willing to sacrifice their time and nerves running to obtain the approvals, stamps, signatures, not to mention the waiting in front of desks.

That’s why the bureaucratic system can easily encourage corruption; many people who really want to start a business have to make this trade compromise that they are willing to give something to the bureaucrats instead of losing weeks or even months waiting for the approvals.

A solution to these problems would be opening more headquarters of these administrations, eventually all in one building so, people will not be forced to run from one place to another, or trying to solve the problem by offering an authorization to one administration which incorporates all the others, very difficult to achieve. Another solution can be the use of the Internet where the businessman’s can complete a form and sending it via Internet to the public administrations for obtaining the approvals. In this case they don’t have to go all the way there and they can resolve a problem that could take them a few hours or even a day in a few minutes.

An effect generated by the bureaucracy is the opportunity cost because businessmen’s have to go to many public administrations in order to start a business and lose a lot of time as well as for common citizens. Time that they chose or sometime are force to lose by waiting in front of the bureaucrats desks’ instead to do something else. I can mention that the citizen sits for hours waiting to pay his taxes to the state, or to get some information, and we can say that the citizen have nothing to lose by sitting in line and waiting to get his turn, but the reality is quite different. This information offered by bureaucrats has its cost that is lost time and the things one can do in that time. Maybe in that time the person could produce something useful for other people or for himself.

Therefore, in the happiest case I can say that bureaucracy and information cost time but we can also mention the loss by choosing to lose this time. What could they lose? That depends on each individual. Some could lose a few hours to relax; others could lose money, or the opportunity to open a new business.

Bureaucracy and corruption

Unfortunately the most obvious problem is that bureaucracy encourages corruption especially because of this complicated way of solving simple problems that become complicated when dealing with bureaucrats. Since most of us don’t have any time to lose we arrive to certain compromise that is to offer a “small attention” to bureaucrats, to get the necessary information in the shortest time or to solve a certain problem as soon as possible.

The problem is that bureaucrats got used to the idea that they have a certain power, artificially created and for offering free information or services they ask something in return. Usually it is enough to offer some flowers, coffee, but of course it depends on the nature of the problem we must solve. If the problem gets bigger then the “gift” we have to offer to the bureaucrats must be bigger, must have a big value. It came to the point in which you have to give something in order to be taken into consideration or addressed nicely.

Bureaucrats have an important influence although they are merely public clerks. From where or why they possess such power is very simple to realize. First of all due to the information they possess and give with difficulty although it is their obligation to do so (the monopoly over public information), and second of all it depends on their good will how much time you must wait until they will help you solve your problem. When you wait in line in front of a desk you see that some people are served before you either they are friends or relatives of the clerks (being privileged) either they came with “gifts”.

What bothers the most is that the employees do not even care that the others waiting in line see this improper conduct. We can refer even to nepotism in the case of bureaucracy because solving certain problems depends on being someone’s relative who works in the system. Knowing someone who works

“behind the desk” (bureaucrats) is an advantage that puts you on a privileged position. Mostly this is a frequent practice in the bureaucratic system.

A solution can be the assembling of video cameras in all the areas where bureaucrats are working. Another solution can be a security system at the entrance in public administrations where the bureaucrats have to declare all the goods that they have in possession when they start the working day and all the goods they have at the end of the working day. In present in Romanians public administrations there is a security system that is trying to put an end to corruption, mostly by not allowing the persons to enter in bureaucrats offices with “gifts”.

The creation of the artificial jobs

The bureaucratic system from our country (Romania) still creates a lot of artificial jobs. Those jobs are created to offer something to work to certain persons or not to fire others in the same position. A job is created or a task is divided between two employees (two employees with one responsibility) for both of them to have a job.

In this case we can discuss about a suffocating bureaucracy. We can imagine someone who must get certain documents being forced to wait in line in front of three or four desks or offices for stamps, deposit and petitions. In one place petitions apply, in another they are approved and somewhere else they take signatures and stamps but it is possible to wait in two places for the last two. In a way those who work in that system are helped but the state must pay their salaries, which implies further costs for the institution. People who get in contact with this system have their loss by being forced to run from one place to another. This can imply certain costs for the citizens (for them this cost implicates the lost of time in front of the offices). The solution for this problem is very simple: the reduction of the employees that are having that job only because they have to work somewhere only because the government wants to reduce the unemployment.

The public administrations image influenced by the bureaucrats behavior

Because most of the bureaucrats in Romania think that they have a lot of power in front of everybody they have a bad behavior when they get in touch with the citizens. Most of the bureaucrats are in the bureaucratic system since the communist regime and there behavior is an effect of that regime as well as an effect of the bureaucratic system. That’s why in many cases the way they are dealing the problems can reflect into the image of the organization in which they work.

For example people are not treated with respect; mostly they are neglected, offended and looked down at by the clerks. The citizen loses time not only on his way to the public administration but in the public administration for different reasons:

- The clerk is very slow and doesn’t pay interest in his work;
- He speaks on the phone but not related to his job;
- He takes lunch break and gets nervous if he is interrupted;
- He is away solving personal matters in the working hours;
- Only one desk is functional from the two or three existing.

As an effect of bureaucracy we can mention the citizen’s health put at stake because of this particular moving from place to place and waiting for hours to solve his problems. The lack of trust citizen’s show to different public administration systems is due to the suffocating bureaucracy. And because of the behavior of the clerks (bureaucrats) the public administration can lose most of their clients or all of them and they can get inefficient from the economic point of view.

Conclusions

The bureaucracy from the public administration can affect their image and in this case these administrations can have an economic disadvantage in front of other administrations. With a reduce bureaucracy the public administrations and the private administrations can have a bigger productivity and the economy of our country can develop better in the future. All in all the bureaucracy from a country can act like a barrier in the economic development if it is not stopped in time or at least if it is not reduced. That’s why the people who are working in public administrations must have all the new equipment and

technology in their domain of activity and a better communication system between them and the citizens (their clients). For example they can have an Internet page where you can find all the information's you need in the shortest time and also you can use their Internet page for paying some taxes and incomes.

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