Weberian Bureaucracy And Malaysian Government

1.0 Introduction

This is a study on the Weberian model of bureaucracy and its relationship with our government, specifically focused on this question: How is Weberian model of bureaucracy imposed in our system of government? What are the strengths and weaknesses?

1.1 Who is Max Weber?

- Full name : Maximilian Karl Emil Weber
- Born : April 21, 1864, Erfurt, Germany
- Died : June 14, 1920, Munich, Germany

Max Weber was German sociologist, philosopher and scientific management theorist. He became famous with his scientific management approach on bureaucracy. In 1882, Max Weber furthered his study in the field of law in Heidelberg University. In 1883, he worked as junior lawyer and lectured in university.

In 1905, Max Weber who was the first to use and describe the term of bureaucracy. There are three types that Max Weber introduce is bureaucratic theory of management, bureaucratic management theory or the Wax Weber's theory. Max weber said and believed bureaucracy was the most efficient way to set an organisations and administrations. Max weber said that bureaucracy is better than traditional structures.

According to Max Weber, bureaucracy is necessary in large organization; by having bureaucracy, tasks can be performed by great number of public servants, the aim is to execute tasks effectively. There are six bureaucratic management principles: task specialisation, hierarchical of authority, formal selection and others.

1.2 What is bureaucracy?

Max Weber defines bureaucracy as "A social mechanism to maximise efficiency in administration ".

Merriam-Webster Dictionary:

- Government characterized by specialization of functions, adherence to fixed rules, and a hierarchy of authority.
- a system of administration marked by officialism, red tape, and proliferation

2.0 Characteristics Of Weberian Bureaucracy

2.1 Three Most Important Attributes in Bureaucracy

Stillman (2010) identified three most important attributes in bureaucracy:

1. Division of labour
2. Hierarchical order
3. Impersonal rules

2.2 Weberian Model of Bureaucracy explained by Noore Alam Siddiquee

Weberian Model of bureaucracy is known for its characteristics. Some brief characteristics:

- A clearly defined division of labour with specialization and training for assigned tasks;
- hierarchy of authority with definite but limited areads of responsibility for superiors and subordinates;
- an explicit set of formal rules designed to ensure uniformity of performance and treatment, displacing emotional and personal decision making;
- the management of office based on written documents and filing system

End quote (partial quote). Public Management and Governance in Malaysia: Trends and transformations; Edited by Noore Alam Siddiquee

2.3 More on Characteristics

Fixed Salary

Based on Weberian model of bureaucracy, he mentions that the public servants are to be given fixed salaries according to their ranks and grades, because the job is a lifetime career and the sole employment for civil servant; later, part of their salaries it will be cut for pension in the future. For example, a public servant who has retired will receive the pension right every month from KWSP but they must retired if the reach 55 years old.

Skilled and Trained Staffs

According to the Weberian model bureaucracy, they can work with government with their experience, performance and task. If they are lacking, government will provide their skills. For example, we can see that the government always send their public servant to the courses. The new employment also assessed on their basic of technical competence, not consideration such as social status and political affiliations. They are appointed and not elected. The promotion also based on their skills, seniority. It can also be recommended from the boss.

Well Structured and Organised Hierarchy of Power

Hierarchy is the way to structure an organization by different levels of authority and a vertical link, or chain of command, between superior and subordinate levels of organization. The higher level will control the lower level. To make it easier, hierarchy is a pyramid. Information will flow vertically in a hierarchical structure. Information flows up through each level until it reaches the top and through down until it reaches the level where the decision will be implemented.

Work Specialization

Work specialization is a term used to describe the extent to which work is divided into smaller units which is complete by single individual. It includes division of labour in which a single person completes repetitively a single step of the complete task. The workers will become experts, but repetitive nature will be bored.

3.0 How Weberian model of bureaucracy is imposed in Malaysian system of government

3.1 Malaysian System of Government

Firstly, the Malaysian system of government is Federalism. Federalism is defined as a system in which sovereignty (supreme power or authority) is divided between a central authority and constituent political units, such as state or provinces. “Constituent” means a component part of something; from this context it means political units like state or province.

3.2 Characteristics of Weberian Bureaucracy in Malaysian Government

Weberian model of bureaucracy is noticeable in Malaysian government, it is noticeable because of the characteristics of Weberian Bureaucracy.

3.2.1 Divisions and Hierarchical Structure

Since some of the characteristics of Weberian Bureaucracy are divisions and hierarchical structure, Malaysian government has both characteristics of bureaucracy. For example: Malaysia has three levels of government consist of namely:

- The Federal level (i.e. Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, & Putrajaya)
- The State level (The 13 states in Malaysia)
- The Local government level (This level is usually placed under the power/authority of the state government)

3.2.2 Specialisation of Tasks

In terms of specialisation of tasks, there are ministers, each minister has his own specific task. Here is the list of ministers in Malaysia:

1. Prime Minister
2. Deputy Prime Minister
3. Ministers in the Prime Minister’s Department
4. Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development
5. Minister of Finance
6. Minister of Economic Affairs
7. Minister of Defence
8. Minister of Home Affairs
9. Minister of International Trade and Industry
10. Minister of Education
11. Minister of Water, Land, and Natural Resources
12. Minister of Territories

13. Minister of Transport
14. Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry
15. Minister of Health
16. Minister of Tourism, Arts, and Culture
17. Minister of Housing and Local Government
18. Minister of Foreign Affairs
19. Minister of Human Resources
20. Minister of Domestic Trade and Consumers Affairs
21. Minister of Entrepreneur Development
22. Minister of Rural Development
23. Minister of Works
24. Minister of Energy, Technology, Science, Climate Change, and Development
25. Minister of Primary Industries
26. Minister of Youth and Sports
27. Minister of Communication and Multimedia

(Sources: Cabinet of Malaysia, 2018)

Minister of Finance manages financial resources in the country, the Minister of Defence manages security of country, Minister of Youth and Sports manages youth affairs and sports of the country.

3.2.3 Multiple Hierarchy

Another example in Malaysia that has to do with multiple hierarchy, is the three branches of the government: Executive, Judiciary and Legislative branches.

3.2.4 Accountability

The Auditor General of Malaysia is to facilitate accountability in the public sector by conducting independent audits on the account of the Federal Government, State Government, and Federal Statutory Bodies as well as the activities of the Ministry/Department/Agency and Companies under the Federal and State Government, this means that the Auditor General of Malaysia is not only the auditor to the Federal Government, but also to the other thirteen states.

Every year, after a completion of the investigation or auditing by the Auditor General office, a report is presented to the Parliament for further action taken, to improve the loopholes in the public sector.

The Auditor-General, YBHG. TAN SRI DR. MADINAH BINTI MOHAMAD can direct any officer to undergo an inquiry and report to her. Her last and most important function is to report her earnings to the Parliament

4.0 Strengths of Weberian Model of Bureaucracy

4.1 Strengths/Advantages

Fixed Salary

Fixed salary will motivate officers to work effectively and efficiently because those officers know that they are getting paid fairly based on their work. This will encourage the officers to work productively. This will motivate them to work at their best because good work performance will be awarded with bonuses and extra allowances. Promoted officer will receive a higher salary grade. Having an officer with their salary is fixed also will ensure they are working according to the deadline. Thus, all work can be completed without any delay. As an example, officers will make sure they done their work on time because everybody in the organisation will increase their productivity to increase their chance to get promoted.

Skill and Trained Staff

Staff training will increase the officer's skill. Having a well-trained officer will provide a more productive work made by them as they have already known about their working scope. The officer will also boost the officer's confidence as they already know their routine. This will ease their career development when they already received a descent training because the has recognised their orientation of work. Favouritism also can be putted aside as selection of worker are based on qualification and skills of the officer. Staff training can save the organisation from any error in work. As an example, a qualified officer can do their work within the time given because they already have the skills and know how to work under pressure.

Well Structured and Organised Hierarchy of Power

An organised hierarchy will create a centred source of power. Knowing the command source will provide a better understanding towards the command given. Any commands given also can be easily received by all bureaucrats and this can prevent any misunderstanding in receiving any task as all commands are given based on their layer on the hierarchy of the organisation and can be dispersed smoothly towards officers of lower level in the hierarchy. Centred power also can smoothen the work progress as tracking and coordinating task progress can be carried out easily. Thus, any work can be done efficiently as every officer in different level of hierarchy in the organisation receives the exact command and can perform their respective task according to their respective command from the decision maker on the top of the organisation.

Specialization of Work and Task

Specialization of work will put officers in the department where they are excelling in it. As an example, a person who is qualified to be an accountant is placed in accounting department to manage the account of the organisation. All officers have their respective qualification and skill. When they are placed in their specified area, the officer work will be more efficient and effective as the productivity level is high. Risk of failing a task also can be reduced because everybody in the organization is working in their main area of skill and adores their work as it is their dream job. Thus, all task can be done properly and will meet every expectation.

4.2 Purpose of Bureaucracy as per Advantage

It is very clear that, the purpose of implementing Weberian bureaucracy, is to fortify accountability of public servants of the country. For example, each minister has his own specifically assigned task, so if a ministry has done wrong, or abused his power, then an assigned authority can investigate the specific minister accountable for his wrongdoing. For

example,

5. Disadvantages/Weaknesses

Bureaucracy breeds boredom and can affect productivity

Tasks can become repetitive, consequently, become boring and so it can impair productivity. Opponents do criticize about repetitive tasks in specialized jobs. They say it bores members of organisation or agency. Bureaucrats may not be able to withstand doing the same work daily. The routine burdens them and may result in low productivity due to absenteeism.

- It can result in inefficiency
- The public servant works on specialized tasks and cannot function outside the sphere of the department he belongs to.
- It produces passive bureaucrats

The strict rules and regulations imposed in bureaucracies restrict the freedom of individual to act on his own because of certain restriction, it is not beneficial according to some.

Red Tape

The Weberian Bureaucracy is notorious for this weakness – Red Tape. Red Tape has seriously affected Malaysia's potential in attracting foreign investors, despite having many other benefits such as a skilled workforce, stable political environment, decent technology facilities and tax incentives. [Modified, source: Ooi Sue Hwei, Malaysian Business, January 1, 2007; retrieved from factsanddetails.com]

Bureaucracy is something that is complained by investors. Besides that, getting work permits for knowledge workers can be tedious. Malaysia must realise that to hesitate in issuing visas to skilled foreign workers can discourage investors.

Complaints include delaying issuance of work permits, immigration issues, a poor delivery system, and policy changes and inconsistencies.

"Malaysia has too much bureaucracy and there is not enough coordination among the authorities", said Chew Seng Kok, a partner at law firm Zaid Ibrahim & Co, once said in a press article. He also said that investors wanting to set up plants in the country had to deal separately with both the federal and state government in the matters of business licensing and land use.

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