

Flexism as a remedy to bureaucratic red-tapism

Dr. M. Azizur Rahman

FLEXISM is a new theory of political economy. The characteristics of Flexism is to provide flexibility and diversity in utilisation of socio-economic and political resource variables as efficiently as possible by having a relatively more favourable combination between them. In order to have an optimum socio-economic outcome, the theory of political economy of Flexism advocates the following: Flexible and favourable combination of variable and fixed economic resource, labour and non-labour factors or human or non-human factors and the diversified relation between endogenous and exogenous socio-economic resource variable. Exogenous variables will include the mix of capitalism, socialism, communism and the component of the other related theory of political economy. Once again, the objective of the Flexism theory is to achieve the highest possible economic outcome in terms of the maximum possible total social benefit and the maximum standard of people's life and living.

Officials in both private and public sector who have been holding some social power through their working place are called bureaucrats. Traditionally Government officials from top-to-bottom or senior-to-junior level are defined as bureaucrat. All bureaucrats are not equal in power. Bureaucrats are given duties and responsibility of different levels according to their administrative hierarchy from top-to-bottom. All bureaucrats are liable to report their performance to their immediate supervisor. It means that they are obliged to their immediate and ultimate supervisor. Broadly speaking, they are also obliged to the society for their performance. However, differences between individual bureaucrat and their attitude about their performance and obligation to the society make a great deal of difference, confusion, complication and the controversy about the role of bureaucracy and its contribution.

Importance of bureaucracy cannot be over emphasised. A state can be defined to exist with some important social ingredients including population, land, sovereignty and government. Without government we cannot have a state. Without bureaucracy government cannot run the state. Government is not the owner of the State. Government is the agent of the state to oversee the state, its security, people and the security of the people's life and living through administrative mechanism, police force and through the strength of law and order and the judiciary system. Bureaucratic officials are responsible to disseminate the administrative rules and regulation of administrative literature and their application with a view to achieving the smooth functioning of the government. In other words, bureaucrats are also the member of the policy implementing agency. Bureaucrats also function as the intermediary between general people and the politically elected individual. If the individual bureaucrats are honest

and sincere, people do not need to see them or bureaucrats do not need to invite or deal with the people directly. A direct contact between bureaucrats and people can serve as a source of corruption through a give-and-take policy, which is called bureaucratic corruption. Bureaucratic corruption goes against the interest of the people or the society as a whole, or it serves as a constraint to economic development.

Normally, the Member of Parliament (MP) in a democratic country is the law maker. However, the law making professional inputs are prepared and drafted by the group of bureaucrats in the relevant Ministry and reviewed by the Ministry of Law etc simultaneously. These draft bills of laws and regulation are placed in the Parliament for collecting "YES" vote from MP's. If two-third votes are casted in favour of "YES", or "YES" vote, the proposed bill gets passed and the relevant law is ultimately made. It is worthwhile to note that bureaucrats have the good idea about rules and regulation and the law in particular. But bureaucrats do not have the practical idea, training and experience about the development activity including business, investment, entrepreneurship and their source of finance and risk of investment

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Bureaucratic problem can also work as a major constraint or bottle-neck to the efficient allocation of resource and the socio-economic development. Every solution to the probable problem is not possible to mention before-hand in the document of rules and regulations. This is called the grey area of the document on rules and regulations. The grey part of the document creates a lot of confusion, the possible solution of which requires a subjective judgment by the bureaucratic individual. Some bureaucrats may take the opportunity of this grey area or the confused clause of document on rules and regulations. The bureaucrat with negative attitude will mis-interpret the grey part of the rules and regulations or will mis-use it for his/her own benefit without caring the others or the national welfare. Rigidity or inflexibility, or too much formality, egoism, non-cooperative attitude, delay process, corruption, seed-money and speed-money corruption, keeps and bribes, nepotism etc are among the various instruments, which the bureaucrats with negative attitude may use to obtain their personal gain or

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at home and in foreign countries including import and export and the related others. However, bureaucrats draft all kinds of laws, administrative rules and regulation without having any practical knowledge about the relevant field of business in particular. This process creates a bunch of bureaucratic problem in all countries including the developing one and in Bangladesh.

Bureaucrats are the administrative officials, who are responsible for the implementation of socio-economic and development policy. They are assumed to be qualified, smart and intelligent individual. The positive, honest and sincere attitude of bureaucrats are very helpful to furnish the administrative responsibility of Government smoothly which will, in turn, help grow the country and its development at a relatively fast rate. Dedicated bureaucrats are also helpful to decrease the distance between common people and the Government. In other words, honest and sincere bureaucrats can help minimise the length of bureaucratic process or eliminate the environment of red-tapism, nepotism and corruption. Therefore, a country

interest. Human beings are not assumed to be politically neutral or nonpolitical. They might support some politics inherently. Sometimes it is not surprising that some bureaucrats got the job and promotion with a political favour. A few of these kind of bureaucrats can make the business issue and the related file political to favour somebody in politics who has helped him to get the job. By politicising, bureaucrats try to gain a support for their own political party. Or they can do help more to those people who belong to the politics of their own support.

Modern bureaucracy includes the flexibility, diversity or a compromise between the problem and prospect according to the political economic theory of Flexism. The Flexism always advocates an efficient compromise between the rules and regulations and its application on the principle that the specific bureaucratic action should be more beneficial or less or zero harmful to the society. In case of any confusion about the rules and regulations and their application in a particular case, the bureaucrat in position will provide a subjective or impartial judgment with a view to

increasing the total social benefit. This is the modern version of bureaucracy as may be defined in the political theory of Flexism. As in Flexism a mere growth of the economy is not accepted as a balanced one. Economic growth in all sectors and the Human Development Index (HDI) increasing the standard of life and living in all strata of human life and in an equitable fashion is desirable for the development purpose. A flexible and diverse application of bureaucratic rules and regulations will help resolve the social problem, improve the total social benefit and the social development etc. If the bureaucrats are efficient and smart enough, they can be very helpful in the efficient allocation of resource and providing an equitable distribution of income. Therefore, the bureaucrats with positive attitude will be contributory, conducive and productive in socio-economic development. Shortly speaking, smart and fair bureaucracy will be positively associated with the development.

About how to improve the bureaucracy, the political economic Theory of Flexism suggests the following: Fair selection for the official position both in public and private sector, non-nepotism, the individual of broad mind as may be found through a psychological test, good family background, patriotic attitude and morality including culture and religious obligation etc all are very important factors and characteristics to be considered in the selection process. Placement and promotion of bureaucratic individuals must be fair. Professional training and its evaluation and continuation of performance evaluation process from time to time is mandatory. The selected Government officials of all levels must be motivated or inspired by appreciating that they are the national leaders of today, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. It may be noted that in most developing countries, the given wage of Government officials are significantly less than market wage. It is not surprising if the bureaucrats and their family members get frustrated with relatively low wage and poor financial ability. The problem of relatively low wage for the bureaucratic position is of obvious one in most of the developing countries. In Flexism it is suggested that the remuneration including wage and salaries and the fringe or retirement benefit of Government officials or bureaucrats should be raised so as to make it close to the market wage to maintain the life and living of the bureaucrats and their family with a comparable standard. Their accountability to the Government or the society should be furnished on a regular basis through an effective and scientific mechanism. Once again, strict law and order and impartial judiciary system are very important in addition to the cultural improvement and improvement of the individual or family morality.

(Prof. Dr. M. Azizur Rahman is Vice-Chancellor, Uttara University)