Bureaucracy

The term **bureaucracy** (/bjʊəˈrɒkrəsi/) refers to a body of non-elected governing officials as well as to an administrative policy-making group.[1] Historically, a bureaucracy was a government administration managed by departments staffed with non-elected officials.[2] Today, bureaucracy is the administrative system governing any large institution, whether publicly owned or privately owned.[3][4] The public administration in many jurisdictions and sub-jurisdictions exemplifies bureaucracy, but so does any centralized hierarchical structure of an institution, e.g. hospitals, academic entities, business firms, professional societies, social clubs, etc.

There are two key dilemmas in bureaucracy. The first dilemma revolves around whether bureaucrats should be autonomous or directly accountable to their political masters.[5] The second dilemma revolves around bureaucrats' behavior strictly following the law or whether they have leeway to determine appropriate solutions for varied circumstances.[5]

Various commentators have argued for the necessity of bureaucracies in modern society. The German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) argued that bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized and that systematic processes and organized hierarchies are necessary to maintain order, to maximize efficiency, and to eliminate favoritism. On the other hand, Weber also saw unfettered bureaucracy as a threat to individual freedom, with the potential of trapping individuals in an impersonal "iron cage" of rule-based, rational control.[6][7]

Etymology and usage

History

Theories

See also

References

Further reading

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