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In transitional periods how does bureaucracy work steadily?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explain the issues and variables that influence the bureaucracy's role and work in the transitional period, which is known with its complexity, uncertainty, instability, ambiguity and asymmetry. This paper highlights the transition from theoretical perspective, giving examples from the Polish experience in transition.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper describes the changing roles of public bureaucracies in transitional periods by highlighting their ecology with the transitional period and analyzing the determinants of bureaucracy's role and functions in terms of participation in policy-making policies, providing consultations to executives and elected officials, working as a mediator in communication and acting as an active participant in the development process giving examples from Poland. Finally, it highlights the way the bureaucracy manages its functions and the internal and external variables that constitute various levels affecting this role in the transition.

Findings – Bureaucracy is supposed to function naturally and stably in an unstable environment (transition) as its success in doing these functions and helping the new regime to exceed the transition and achieve its goals depends on many variables (bureaucracy capabilities and skills, history, power, experience, the nature of politics and bureaucratic functions, political support, policy environment, knowledge, cohesion, etc.). Most of these variables were demonstrative in the case of Poland.

Originality/value – This paper will be useful for scholars and policymakers interested in public administration role in the time of transition, especially countries that recently have been experiencing the transition.

Keywords Transitional periods, Bureaucracy, Poland, Public administration, Functions of bureaucrats, Role's determinants, Influencing factors

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Bureaucracy is the implementing agency of the state policy. Its parts and units aim to serve the objectives of the state, and it works as an intermediary between the government and society. Bureaucrats exist in governmental ministries, institutions, departments units and agencies in both central and local levels. Moreover, bureaucracy is an organization that follows specific rules and procedures committed by employees performing assigned tasks. Their high-level routine tasks are based on specialization, high professionalism and legal rules (Meier and Krause, 2003, pp. 1-3; Jreisat, 2002, pp. 27-37).

According to Gabriel Almond's theory, structural functionalism, bureaucracy is one of political system sub-structures, which, in turn, performs several functions to achieve the



objectives of the system by participating in three functions: first, the functions of transformation, namely, the functions of collecting, formulating demands and categorizing them to help the regime developing its policies; second, the functions of extraction, namely, communication, rules making and implementing related to the three authorities to guarantee having good channels with the community; and third, the functions of maintaining order and adaptation, namely, the function of socialization and the nature of recruitment and rehabilitation of political actors so that the bureaucrats could participate in development process. Therefore, bureaucracy functions through participating in the policy-making process, implementing them, providing advice to the elected members and acting as intermediary in contact with the society and taking part in development process (Jreisat, 2002, pp. 27-37).

The bureaucracy functions as previously referred to as a political system sub-structure and through the stability of its status quo and objectives. However, the case of system fall or failure requires the replacement of the old system with a new one for any reason. A new phase named the “transitional phase” or “transition” begins as there is a change of system policies and goals. Transitional periods are defined as a period of time or periods of change and transformation from one system or situation to another, with multiple dimensions that are difficult to separate or distinguish from one another. Therefore, any country undergoing any political, social or economic transformations is in transition. For example, transformation takes place from a one-party system to a multi-party system, from national to regional sovereignty, from closed to open economy, from population decline to population explosion, from an authoritarian to a democratic regime, etc. (UNDP Seminar, 2005, p. 3).

Each transitional period has objectives that differ from case to case. Economic transition occurs in Eastern European countries and some are political as in some Latin American countries. New governments face many obstacles and challenges to achieve the transitional period goals. Among these challenges, the transitional period is characterized by uncertainty, instability, complex and multi-dimensionality. Its stages are asymmetrical, and it is not finite (Schmitter, 2012, pp. 2-4).

During a transitional period, the new regime faces a range of challenges. Some relate to the former regime, and others relate to the complexity of the transitional context. The bureaucracy is considered one of those exceptional structures that do not fall with the regime. Public officials perpetuate the legacy of the former regime, and it is often impossible to depose or replace under the new constitution without specific terms. Therefore, the bureaucrats affect the achievement of the new regime’s objectives through its different parts and units. Additionally, they are tasked with assisting this regime in determining the means of transformation, forming new policies and goals and performing their role to implement them (Liebert and Condrey, 2013, pp. 35-56).

The bureaucrats are mainly responsible for implementing public policies as they are the information source for government. Their crucial role intertwines with other structures in pushing or impeding the process of transformation or transition. In contrast with the status in stable regime where the bureaucracy operates according to clearly defined goals and policies, declaration of the transitional period toughens the bureaucratic mission because they do not have certain policies. Consequently, the bureaucrats and organizing institutions have the responsibility of taking measures, implementation and contributing to the continuity of government operations. They try to work out the problems and challenges resulting from the temporary absence of the new regime. They must utilize policies and objectives among the massive information, capabilities and experience they possess. Accordingly, bureaucracy could play a key role for a period of time in the transition that

may be prolonged or shortened. Thus, the new regime could crystallize its own policies, objectives and the road map for the transformation. (Jenei and Witte, 2000, pp. 33-66).

Poland was one of the first Eastern European countries to break the socialist rule in 1989. Separation was ignited by economic challenges, political conflicts of the governmental institutions, the deteriorated standards of living, the varied development returns between different regions and the widening gap between government and citizens. Moreover, division was highlighted by the failure of the United Workers Party, the ruling party at the time, and the president Jaruzelski to face the public and elite protests about the deteriorating national economy. The declining GDP was starkly compared with that of other countries in the continent. In this context, there was an agreement among the political parties on the construction of a new constitution, elections and regime. Therefore, they formed a committee to write the new constitution announced after a popular referendum in May 1997. Making the constitution and holding new elections represented the first step chosen by the new regime. This step overcame challenges of the political scene characterized by entanglement and complexity, dominated by political divisions and mess (Brzeziński *et al.*, 2013, pp. 2-8).

Furthermore, factors such as the high levels of corruption, low confidence in governmental institutions, and weak participation percentage in the electoral process have doubled the complexities of the transitional period. In this context, some dilemmas related to the policy-making process in transition were highlighted. Questions to consider include: What were the priorities of the new regime for the agenda setting? Who were the main actors or participants in making the decisions? Was the political consensus considered as a necessity? How would the bureaucrats capabilities and willingness affect the required information supply about policy/decision-making and implementation process as well (Petrova, 2012, pp. 133-135)?

There were many internal and external variables affecting the policy-making process in the transitional period in Poland. Internal factors related to the Polish context were political conflict between the new and old elite, the Catholic Church's role, economic instability, inflation, lack of coordination between governmental and non-governmental institutions, institutional weakness, weak bureaucracy, absence of political neutrality and adopting e-government and the high corruption rates. As for the external variables, globalization came first. The urgent need to meet the necessary economic and political requirements needed to join regional entities, such as the European Union or NATO, added momentum to the policy-making process (Wesolowski, 1997, pp. 228-232).

The role of bureaucracy in transition can be highlighted through the following issues.

2. The ecology of transitional periods

The uncertain "transitional" environment imposes internal and external challenges on the bureaucracy itself as it is the legacy of the former regime to the new one. Thus, there are some workers in the highest levels of government who have no moral commitments to the new regime because they were appointed by the former and they are loyal to it. In addition, dilemmas related to the human resources management, financial affairs and budgets, high levels of corruption, incomplete or inappropriate legislative framework to implement existing laws and regulations and weak accountability mechanisms within governmental institutions have made the transition's environment more turbulent (Wolf, 1999, pp. 1-3).

Moreover, some problems arose related to the salaries of public and private employees in similar jobs. They negatively affected the competitive advantage in the public institutions as university graduates drove qualified employees to seek jobs only in the private sector. The governmental institutions' weak competitive advantage, low budgets for training accompanied with weak capabilities have led to increased rates of corruption. This was the

response from the bureaucrats to achieve the balance and improve their living conditions. Furthermore, administrative corruption is evident in citizens' daily interactions with bureaucrats. It is found in all governmental levels in a context where civil service is usually undeveloped, centralized, irresponsible and riddled with bureaucratic implementation of laws (Wolf, 1999, pp. 1-3).

Concerning the classical dilemma between the bureaucracy and democracy, bureaucracy used to represent real problems for organizations that rely on freedom of individuals, expression and commitment, such as universities. The bureaucrats also have many organizational culture challenges. For example, the lack of innovation and creativity, refusing adaptation to improvements and resisting changes come usually on the top of the challenges list. Although skills and expertise are essential, the organizations need more variety and flexibility in transitional period. The bureaucrats used to confront accountability by selective reporting to avoid punishment and increase incentives (control of data or information) so that they could maintain their jobs regardless of the efficiency and quality of the services. Therefore, the bureaucrats do not only face new phenomena related to the transition, but also, they are supposed to participate in them (Frank, 1966, pp. 725-730). For example:

- The new bills and laws regulating the freedom of information and dissemination of values of transparency;
- The local administration reform (decentralization, delegation of functions and powers, providing services such as education, the increasing role played by local units and restructuring or inventing governmental programs);
- The balance of policy-making and administrative laws that operate through legislative and executive authority; and
- The diversity of accountability types/organizations (individual, institutional, formal and informal where new informal forces are following up and monitoring their work, such as civil society organizations, citizens and virtual groups on social media) (Epstein *et al.*, 2005, pp. 1-7).

3. The determinants of bureaucracy's role

The transition process varies from one country to another and there are some determinants contributes to these differences: the political history, economic and institutional status and cultural heritage and social values. In addition, the relationship between governments and bureaucrats is among the main determinants highlighted by studies to understand the role of bureaucracy in transition. For example, some studies considered variables as the educational levels of bureaucrats, their technical skills, expertise, interactions with citizens and their support to the confidence in governmental institutions to be crucial in understanding the relationship. The more the bureaucrats reach higher levels in these variables, the more they be able to participate not only in achieving the objectives of the new regime but also in policy-making process. Furthermore, factors as the values and political beliefs of the bureaucratic elite and top managers could affect the relationship between bureaucracy and government. This influence could be positive or negative depending on whether the bureaucrats' interests and values correspond to the new regime and can they maintain their position and gains within it or not (Hyden *et al.*, 2003, pp. 1-5).

Consequently, the closer the margins of objectives and interests between the new regime and bureaucrats, the more probable the bureaucrats would positively participate and

involve in policy-making process. In addition, the more the relationship between political officials and higher levels of bureaucracy is better, the more positive it will affect the success of policies toward reform or change.

On the other hand, there could be conflict or contradiction between the objectives and interests of bureaucrats and new regime pioneers because of:

- the political loyalties of some high-level bureaucrats to the old regime;
- the bureaucratic refusal or denial to the necessity of change or reform; and
- the new regime adoption to strict accountability and punishment systems without considering the problems of transition (instability, complexity and rapid change in leadership).

Therefore, the bureaucrats may refrain from providing the decision-makers with the required information to make policies, and even more, they may impede their implementation. They also can affect these policies evaluation by negatively influence the regime image and confidence in front of the masses (Ishay, 2013, pp. 373-383).

As the regime changes, regardless of the reason for this transformation, new policymakers need to know how to:

- use the bureaucracy to achieve their goals and to overcome the transitional periods;
- recognize and implement the changes in the associated organizational structure, including employment and civil service policies; and
- understand the influence of “affecting variables” in the bureaucrats participation in achieving new regime’ objectives, for example: the bureaucratic capabilities, skills, managerial expertise, impartiality, responsiveness to self-learning, the degree of flexibility and adaptation, organizational structure type, employment systems, the effectiveness of accountability institutions, rates of corruption and political loyalties and others. (Jenei and Witte, 2000, pp. 45-49, Schneider and Schmitter, 2004, pp. 59-63).

In this context, the bureaucrats need to develop their capabilities to adapt with the new regime’s institutions and policies. The features of the bureaucracy, such as specialization, identification of works and ability to control them, contribute to increasing the efficiency and quality goods and services production. The more the bureaucratic capacities are, the greater the influence on the elite (more effective participation in policy-making). The bureaucrats can also use their knowledge and ability to access information and control their submission to enhance their role and achieve the required objectives if they in line with their goals. On the other hand, the bureaucrats may isolate and protect themselves by laws and strictly follow the rules to evade from their responsibility acting as a group not individually, therefore their resistance to change is always significant (Jenei and Witte, 2000, pp. 45-49, Schneider and Schmitter, 2004, pp. 59-63).

For example, many variables constitute the ecology of transitional period and the determinants of the bureaucracy role in Poland:

- The transition to a market economy requires the replacement of pre-1989 governmental institutions and practices with new institutions that differ in terms of objectives, structures, organization, staff behaviors and capacities. The new governments and institutions had to play an important role in rebuilding the administrative apparatus, its credibility, and engagement of new actors such as local governments and private sector in policy-making process (Rice, 1992, p. 117).

- The effects of the closure policies of many agencies that used to enjoy considerable public support had created a functional vacuum and caused economic turmoil. Thus, many civil servants lost their jobs and other employees were threatened with losing their income. Those employees use their power and political and administrative channels they have with the society to keep their jobs and fight against the closure of these governmental institutions (Blanchard, 1994, pp. 1169-1172, Rice, 1992, pp.119-120).
- The bureaucracy tried to prolong the transition time and the use of old laws or legislations during the new regime by providing incomplete information, deliberately delaying its provision and highlighting the challenges and changes the regime face that were economic, social and political, which were too much to be quickly absorbed (Kulesza, 1993, p. 33).
- The transition process coincided with the changing role of the government in the society and its transformation to serve the interests of citizens. Although the daily interactions between the public and the government were carried out through the administrative apparatus or bureaucracy, the problems of these interactions were reflected in general policies. Furthermore, these interactions affected interest and pressure groups efforts to protect the consumer in light of the increasing role of the private sector. Therefore, the governments tried to decrease the probable problems of those interactions by taking several steps (O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 5-9, Rice, 1992, p.120).
- Senior officials and members of the former regime must be replaced with new employees, most of whom belong to the "Solidarity Movement" in the so-called Purge policies.
- Communication channels must be developed among citizens, local governments and the central government. Thus, governments need to open channels with them responding to their demands, which guarantee the government' accountability.
- Rehabilitation of the civil service and making it accountable to citizens in addition to the parliamentary councils (Regulska, 1997, pp. 643-645, Rice, 1992, pp. 120-121) must be carried out.
- There were many bureaucratic trials to postpone any real reforms related directly or indirectly to their job; therefore, they exported various issues and problems to decision-makers' agenda, except the administrative reform claiming it is not an urgent or pressing issue. For example, bureaucrats attracted the policymakers' attention to the significance of economic reforms and the governmental budget restructure toward reallocating the expenditures and revenues between the central and local government. Moreover, bureaucrats stressed these reforms as dilemmas, especially due to the financial responsibility of the government with regard to increasing expenditures and at the same time comply with the law that set a limit for obtaining loans not exceeding (3: 5) of the GDP (Sutch *et al.*, 2003, p. 7, Szczerbiak, 2015, pp. 10-12).
- The lack of information doubled the complexity of policy-making as the new and the expert policymakers could not sometimes name institutions that provide them with accurate and complete information on any issue and they did not have access to all information sources. Moreover, the absence of good organizational structure, the lack of clear responsibilities regarding bureaucratic functions and the weak coordination among institutions got more complicated if the employee who collects

this information at the official level is not loyal to the new regime. Thus, it seems to be more difficult if there is a need for a coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors regards policy-making process. If new governments insist on achieving the transitional periods' goals, they will need first to get the bureaucrats involved, cooperate with them, motivate and trust them so that they can get all the required information (Berenson, 2010, pp. 578-582, Rice, 1992, pp. 120-121).

- The complex and multi-dimensional nature of administrative reform issue (legislation, procedures, principles, techniques, etc.) delayed the reform progress as it usually takes more time from the bureaucrats to adapt these changes while performing their normal functions in the service of citizens and regime' objectives. Moreover, the interdependence of policies as implement certain reform policies could not be possible without making prerequisite policies. For example, governments could not implement decentralization policies without passing a new law for local governments. Therefore, it is usually too complicated for the new regime to determine the best policies to begin with and the way to achieve sustainability in public administration reform policies (Pawłowska, 2004, pp. 167-170, Bynander, Chmielewski and Simons, 2008, pp. 47-50).
- The political patronage and partial loyalty have affected the governmental policies regards appointing, dismissing and promoting new staff or employees without any administrative criteria. Moreover, the incentives or restrictions set by successive governments to gain bureaucrats support and make them achieve the regime's objectives were political (Matthes, 2016, pp. 293-295, Bynander et al., 2008, pp. 47-50).
- Time pressure was one of the key factors influencing the transition process in Poland. For example, the government forced to approve the new regional division act just because it took more than 2 years in negotiations. There was a general tendency by various polish governments to start the reform by the most difficult part in it and that took much time as these programs were usually linked to their electoral programs (Heywood and Sahling, 2013, pp. 191-195).

Due to the significance of previous factors, they helped the bureaucracy in terms of postponing policies that run counter to their interests or participating in policy-making that is directly related to reform their work systems so that they could maintain their power and interests.

4. The functions of bureaucracy in the transition

The bureaucracy usually carries out specific functions:(implementing governmental policies and laws, providing consultations and advice to the executive and elected officials, acting as intermediate in communication with the community, participating actively in the development process) through the normal or stable circumstances within any country, Therefore, it is crucial to know the changes in these functions that go along with the transitional period:

4.1 In terms of implementing governmental policies and laws

The bureaucracy's – as part of the executive branch – main responsibility is implementing government policies as policy-making is one of the executive branch' functions. However, in the case of transition, the new regime basically has no policies yet, the bureaucrats supply the new officials with the data and information they need to make their own policies. The

significant experience of bureaucracy in a comparison with the new officials may contribute directly to adoption of certain policies at the expense of others, as the bureaucrats can somehow control the policy' preferences or priorities by using information they have "showing or hiding" them according to their interest (Asabi, 2007, pp. 6-21, Lajwail, 2012, pp. 12-24).

The bureaucrats also highly contribute to making regulations and laws in the beginning of transition until the necessary measures are taken to hold parliamentary elections and form a new parliament. The bureaucracy submits bills, proposals and drafts to the ministers who usually consult with them, especially if there is any ambiguity or lack of information. The bureaucracy notably affects the positive or negative image of the new regime in front of the public by their daily interactions with them, so they can show the differences between the former regime and the new one regards serving the public interests. Consequently, it contributes to increasing the public support to the new regime only if its interests were to do so (Asabi, 2007, pp. 6-21).

4.1.1 Privatization policies in Poland as an example. The privatization programs and policies adopted by the new governments were among the main economic changes followed the fall of socialism and represented a basis for the transition. In this context, the government initially did not provide adequate incentives for the bureaucrats to encourage them to be more receptive to these policies. Privatization policies were not desirable for employees not only because of the reduction or downsizing of the administrative apparatus, but also for its negative impacts on their power. For example, between August 1990 and December 31, the government privatized 909 out of 8,857 state-owned enterprises as part of a general trend of rapid and successful privatization. Thus, this step aroused the employees' anger and dissatisfaction in all governmental institutions and that increased the economic and political challenges the governments faced with the bureaucrats and society as well. Moreover, the absence of legal framework for privatization programs at the beginning, and the lack of agreement among various trade unions about implementing these programs complicated these challenges. Hence, it ended with dissatisfaction of all actors, including the reformists themselves, about these privatization programs and new procedures and steps were negotiated to work out these problems (Jacobsen, 2010, pp. 57-60).

For the bureaucracy, it announced that it did not reject the privatization programs as an idea, but it was not clear for them why the government in making these policies denied or ignored their vision and interests as a crucial stakeholder. Despite the fact that these programs directly affected their work, especially as a large number of employees have lost their jobs, the government was not keen enough on promoting these policies and their economic feasibility to bureaucrats or citizens. Therefore, implementation challenges were attributed to the lack of consultation and participation of the bureaucrats as a major actor in formulating privatization programs. Hence, the government had been forced to review its policies finding the suitable alternatives to solve these problems and taking the bureaucratic views into account. One of the alternatives was to adopt other types of privatization except the direct or full selling to state' enterprises, such as privatization of the administration only, while retaining state ownership, in what is known as "management or lease contracts". Another solution was the partial sale of organization's shares, and ownership transfer to the organization' employees, subscribing the privatized organization shares to the stock exchange (Poznański, 1996, pp. 216-217, Berenson, 2010, pp. 578-605).

The bureaucrats reacted positively to these changes by using their unions or syndicates under various governments to develop channels of communication with policymakers on those amendments to promote their economic interests and emphasize their identity. The bureaucracy in Poland was aware of their role in preserving the state' assets at the collective

and individual level as they believed that their primary mission was to protect the public assets. The negotiations between the bureaucrats and governments resulted in providing incentives to them to ensure that they supported the governmental privatization policies. For example, they were given a discount on the price of selling shares, given discretion to choose the best form of privatization for their institutions. Consequently, these incentives made workers interested in making and implementing privatization policies after periods of avoidance, their participation in policy-making process became assured by the government (Lipton *et al.*, 1990, pp. 293-295, Rapacki, 1995, pp. 57–58).

4.2 In terms of providing consultations to the executives and the elected officials

The bureaucrats possess knowledge and information because of their position and experience in the work field. In addition to, their tendency to adopt the “confidentiality” approach using what they called “administrative secrets or “official secrets” which is closely linked to them. Hence, one of the most important functions of the bureaucracy is to use these information and secrets to provide consultations or advice to the executive branch and the elected officials (Lajwail, 2012, pp. 12-24).

In transition, specifically, the new regime usually relies heavily on the bureaucracy because its officials or new ministers have short experience. Moreover, there is a high tendency to recruit employees that belong to the bureaucratic institution due to their highly awareness and recognition of the nature of the work and information. Therefore the bureaucrats want to support those officials (their colleagues) in their new high positions as they know well about its nature and privacy by cooperating and providing advice, proposals, and suggestions to them. Moreover, the bureaucrats who work in legislative institutions provide technical and logistical support to the new deputies, most of whom, if not all of them, participate for the first time in parliament in this transitional period. The new deputies usually need advice and consultations on their new job and bureaucrats who have accumulated experience from former regime and parliaments would be the best provider (Daham, 2008, pp. 2-3).

One of the challenges facing the new regime led by the Solidarity Movement in Poland was its modernity and weak political experience. As already noted, the movement firstly reached the “Sejm”, in 1981, a few years before the transition. Then it had low expertise in managing the governmental affairs and how to make policies and plans to achieve the regime’ objectives and get the public satisfaction, which was not achieved by the former regime that is why it lost its legitimacy and political support. For example, the new regime after transition in Poland faced a fundamental problem related to the increase in inflation rates. Thus, bureaucracy was able to help the government in designing better policies to overcome inflation problems and gain the public support for these policies through:

- promoting reform policies through good implementation;
- making formal and informal contacts;
- participating in regional or international conferences to exchange views on policy issues; and
- emulating ideas or methods about appropriate and inexpensive technology.

The bureaucracy’s advisory function was not only related to policy-making and implementation but also related to the evaluation (reform and adjustment) of these policies or program. Many factors such as political actors’ experience, new issues raised by transition and the need to intensive training on news issues made this evaluation mission for

bureaucrats a necessity (Pawłowska, 2004, pp. 167-170, Regulska, 1997, pp. 643-645, O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 1-6).

One of the most important areas that bureaucracy can advise the policymakers about is anything related to localities, because of:

- their geographical location being close to the citizens;
- their direct interactions and communications with them;
- their well knowledge of their needs and priorities, that may vary from one district to another; and
- their ability to decrease the pressures exerted by their local communities.

For example, bureaucrats played a crucial role in formulating the administrative reform and new Polish territorial division policies as they effectively participated in negotiations and discussions preceded local Administration Act declaration. Despite the fact that these negotiations among various actors lasted for long months, the bureaucratic experience dominated all the time in formal and informal preparations and different drafts of the act before passing the law (Pawłowska, 2004, pp. 167-170, Regulska, 1997, pp. 643-645, O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 1-6).

The bureaucracy's consultations at this time were directed to Council of Ministers and its committees, which designed the various drafts of the law and even provided advice to the President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and accordingly changed his situation about some articles in the law more than once. Thus, Kwaśniewski realized that he should modify his draft and increase the number of the Voivodships (Biggest local unit) from 12 to 16 as he realized that cities would fight to maintain their status. In essence, these consultations were merely a vision or suggestion by the bureaucracy, but in fact they were a constant pressure on the government to achieve certain goals. The bureaucrats also assisted the Sejm and Senate through its consultations through reports and information to solve problems facing the society. The hearing sessions for various committees on some specialized policy issues by high level of bureaucrats in ministries and agencies to clarify some technical issues to the deputies so that they could suggest bills and control over governmental actions and policies (Gabrielian, 1999, pp.39-40, Majcherkiewicz and Gadowska, 2005, pp.1-2, Pawłowska, 2004, pp. 167-170).

4.3 In terms of working as a mediator in communication (channel) between the government and the community

Bureaucracy acts as the main agent in establishing direct contact or communication of the government with citizens or "face to face/daily interactions and transactions. In the transition, it continues to perform this function and it seems to be very important for the new regime as one of its objectives is to gain citizens support and this wo not happen without bureaucracy giving a good image about the regime. In addition, the bureaucracy can "if they want" simply pass the governmental policies or decisions to the citizens in way that achieve the objectives of the regime and its policies through this phase. However, various cases have shown that many problems would face the new regime with the bureaucracy in this regard; for example, slow information transfer, complexity of communications, the large number of offices and overlapping and duplication of staff positions and power. Furthermore, the transitional period confusion, instability make the communication process more complicated (Meier and Krause, 2003, pp. 1-8).

The role of bureaucracy is also highlighted in the periodical reports that used to present to the policymakers about their needs, interests and citizens' opinion. Therefore, these

reports reflected in the government's decisions to adopt some policies and delay or discard others. Simply, the bureaucracy helps the new regime to identify the priorities and helps them to carry out the policies by giving them the opportunity to feed the regime with various proposals on issues of community debate at this critical stage (Lajwail, 2012, pp. 12-24).

The role of state witnessed many changes since the new regime handed over the power and the new constitution was declared in 1997. The government aimed firstly to provide services to the citizens and improve its image in front of them. The governments needed to have good communication and interactions with the public and they could not do so without the bureaucrats who are responsible for the daily interactions with the public. Thus, the bureaucrats who used to service the former regime's interests have to be rehabilitated and get trained to achieve the new regime objectives. In Poland, the training courses developed by the public administration schools and institutes could not quickly make a difference regarding the managerial and organizational procedures then, the daily interactions were not much better than before as it needed much more efforts. Thus, the governments took steps to introduce institutional framework to guarantee developing its communication channels with citizens. For example, they replace the higher level of bureaucrats with new leaders to change the culture and introduce accountability tools on the bureaucracy actions with the citizens to protect them from any random measures (Pawlowska, 2004, pp. 167-170, O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 68-70).

The bureaucracy in the Polish case helped the government in achieving its objectives and reforming policies by efficient implementation and being a crucial reason of its success. Thus, bureaucrats can gain the citizens' support and satisfaction on the governmental policies and also they can be the reason for the government to lose its credibility and gain the citizens' hostility and their hatred to regime. Bureaucracy helps in supporting the decentralization policies and new regional division in Poland by their good practices in the various Voivodeships and making the local citizens as their first priority. On the other hand, they raised the public anger toward the economic reform policies (Market economy, privatization programs) at the beginning by highlighting the numbers of employees forced to lose their jobs and the increase of unemployment rates, inflation, decrease in the real income and the currency purchasing power. Thus, the government amended these policies involving the bureaucrats and citizens' visions in modifying them. Moreover, the bureaucrats support the political candidates in their elections in gaining the voters trust. For example, bureaucracy helped Krzaklewski, the leader of the Union of Solidarity Workers in Poland's parliamentary elections in 1997, therefore, he promised them if he gained the elections to appoint 4,000 of them to hold high positions in the state's public administration. Although he knew he could not remove the appointees from the former government, he gave that promise as bureaucratic support was essential to gain elections (O'Dwyer, 2006, pp. 70-71, Mach and Jackson, 2006, pp. 472-478).

4.4 In terms of being an active participant in the development process

The bureaucracy plays a role in achieving development goals by pushing or impeding the implementation of its plans especially that the goal of transition is usually to achieve political development coupled with economic and social ones. Transitional periods, such as development, cannot be overcome or their objectives cannot be achieved in light of poorly functioning bureaucracy or with complex and rigid working methods. In addition, the problems of weak training systems, lack of clear and specific plans to develop human capabilities, excessive formal and formalism, resistance to change and administrative corruption make it impossible for the government to meet the citizens' needs or even provide

them with goods or services. It also becomes clear that the bureaucracy is relatively stronger than the political parties and civil society organizations in the newly transformed countries, where their influence and power are growing under unstable political and social systems. Although there have been accusations of bureaucracy for many years that they are impeding the process of development, some studies highlighted its role to achieve it and transition objectives as well ([Evans and Rauch, 1999](#), pp. 748-765).

Despite the fact that the new regime in Poland did not directly name “development” as one of its main objectives they need to achieve, it was the embedded or undeclared objective that various government exerted efforts to achieve. Thus, government aimed to improve the citizen’s standards of living, and they used all available resources and capabilities they had to achieve a distinct progress in development indicators. For example, the GDP increased from 204,000 in 1990 to 466,000 in 2000 (Atlas method). Achieving development was not an easy task due to political instability associated with the transitional period, in light of the multiplicity of political actors, and absence of political neutrality, with its implications on bureaucracy’ politicization and high corruption rates in the Polish bureaucracy ([World Bank Development Indicators, 2017](#); [OECD, 2011](#), pp. 6-8).

Fighting corruption in the administrative apparatus through strict accountability methods and the positive responsiveness from bureaucrats to these governmental trials were sometimes the main reasons behind the drop in these rates to average level in government of Buzek, and these increased again during the governments of Miller, Belka, Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński. In addition, the government develops various legislations as Civil Service Act in 1998 and its amendments in 2001 and 2006 with two main reasons: to control corruption and to guarantee political neutrality. A survey conducted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development in countries in transition showed that Poland suffers from high rates of corruption and bribery. Thus, corruption and politicized bureaucrats may slow down the progress in achieving development and transition objectives toward consolidation ([Heywood and Sahling, 2013](#), pp. 197–200).

4.4.1 How does the bureaucracy function and what are the influencing variables? The objectives of the new regime during the transitional period are somehow ambiguous, incomplete and difficult to agree upon, in spite of achieving stability and a relatively better standard of living than the former are together more of a concern for this new regime. This regime often tries to separate itself from its predecessors and in this context, the regime works to amend the legal and constitutional frameworks regulating the state. It also works to amend the organizational structures to put the right personnel in the right place. The aim of these changes is to improve the quality of services provided to the public. Consequently, the new regime heavily relies on bureaucracy because of its expertise, skills and knowledge and information that are necessary to complete the reform process ([Tachmeh, 2012](#), p. 7, pp. 17-19).

Moreover, in transition, the role of the bureaucracy is highlighted in two directions: the first is to influence the process of transition through the conduct of the governmental activities in that period so that the new regime could formulate its objectives and policies. The second is the effect of bureaucracy on the new policies through what it offers to the policymakers of information and data on the different issues and challenges they face, which the decision-makers use to make and agree up on the regime’ policies. Later, the bureaucracy implements these policies relying on its expertise and capabilities. On the other hand, the new regime also attempts to influence the bureaucracy by providing incentives for it to implement its policies and objectives (the transitional phase objectives), which in turn are affected by the characteristics, the determinants, the ecology and the challenges of

bureaucracy as shown in the graph (Munck and Leff, 1997, pp. 343-362, and Epstein *et al.*, 2005, pp. 16-33, Jenei and Witte. 2000, pp. 38-50) (Figure 1).

Moreover, bureaucracy’ responsiveness to the changes related to the transition depends on some variables that could be summarized in these questions: whether the bureaucracy’ objectives were compatible with the former regime objectives and interests, or that regime used to exercise its power and authority to turn it into a tool to achieve the regime objectives and control over the state? Was the bureaucracy apolitical and neutral? Or was it asked to participate in the political process and the elections by getting appointed through the ruling party elites at the high-level position? (Frank, 1966, pp. 728-735).

Therefore, the bureaucracy is assumed to play the following roles within the transition:

- maintaining international commitments and treaties;
- rethinking the work methods, system and structures;
- adjusting to new plans and changes introduced by the new regime;
- providing training programs to employees on new work systems;
- improving networks and communication between departments; and
- adding new departments and deleting others based on their functions as each department has its own functions, in addition to the daily/face to face interaction with the citizens (Liebert and Condrey, 2013, pp. 78-89, Grand, 2014, pp. 135-148).

Furthermore, the new civil service system in the new constitution or legal frameworks (recruitment, promotion, compensation, training, constrains, etc.) can affect the way the bureaucracy functions and their participation in the political context. For example,

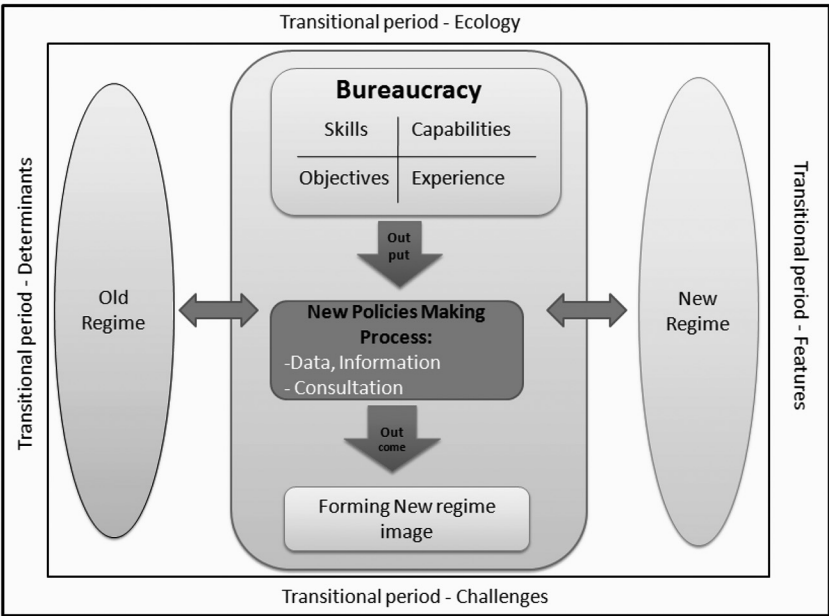


Figure 1.
The ecology of
transitional periods

Source: The researcher

bureaucracy may affect the performance of legislative branch or political parties through the information and reports it provides to them, its readiness of coordination with other governmental and non-governmental actors. Therefore, the more the new regime knew about bureaucracy philosophy and working methods, the more it would be able to crystallize changes and carry bureaucrats to implement various reforms. For example, administrative re-organization, employment policies, change in bureaucratic functions and establishment of new departments may reflect the reform policies of the new regime, and implementation of these new projects could not be achieved without getting bureaucrats involved even it ends up with downsizing them (Oprea and Pompiliu, 2010, pp. 132-147).

There is a range of capabilities, skills and experience required for the bureaucrats to guarantee they could perform their functions and responsibilities. The capabilities and managerial skills become more important as the employees go higher in the administrative structure. Moreover, the human element is the driving force of the institution's effectiveness and efficiency as the more qualified are the employees, the more success the organization would achieve. Therefore, some studies are concerned with how to reach the potential of individuals and achieve the highest rates of performance and find that the best way to do so is to respond to their different economic and social orientations and aspirations. Also, to meet their needs and desires within the place where they work and belong is very useful to the organizational goals (Haruț a, and Radu, 2010, pp. 62-70).

Bureaucracy undermines the ability of the regime to achieve its objectives as it has weak capabilities or loyalties that do not encourage the new regime's mandate. In such a situation, bureaucrats would have difficulty in implementing policies efficiently even if political leaders have the experience to understand which policies will yield the desired returns. On the contrary, the higher capabilities the bureaucrats have, the more the politicians will empower them to act freely, especially if their interests and belongings are with the new regime. Moreover, it should be clear that the lack of information and weak capabilities are two different problems that one could not confuse. If senior bureaucrats have information and experience, it would not be enough to efficiently and effectively do their functions in case that the bureaucratic capabilities are weak (Huber and McCarty, 2004, pp. 481-488).

In general, the weakness of capabilities does not only affect the quality of public services provided by the bureaucracy in light of inefficiency but also affects the policy-making process and bureaucratic compliance with legislation. Therefore, politicians sometimes tend more to rely on efficient bureaucrats – although they prefer a weak bureaucracy that it is easily politicized – who usually have their own preferences and priorities. There are major factors affecting the main competencies such as the merit system, salary, promotion and training programs. The public institutions are asymmetrical, hence, some organizations in certain ministries pay relatively better salaries, or give their employees prestigious status, or have very special social connections among bureaucrats working there. Consequently, these organizations are very attractive to job seekers in the public sector (Oprea and Pompiliu, 2010, pp. 132-147).

Moreover, the capacities of the bureaucrats are linked to their personal preferences that based on their family background, experience and citizenship. Downes pointed out five types of incentives for the public servant: influence, income, suitability, social status and security. Literature has classified the bureaucrats into several types: climbers who are motivated by social status and influence. Conservatives who are driven by the security issues, fanatic bureaucrats who have a loyalty to certain ideology, and preachers or advocates who are keen on a set of policies that correspond to their personal interests (Haruț a and Radu, 2010, pp. 62-70). Consequently, the bureaucracy follows some basic administrative values when it is linked to policy-making, such as representation,

effectiveness, efficiency, transparency and justice. Administrative discretion may contribute to a neutral and fair decision-making process when used cautiously by bureaucrats. Referring to the axis of principles experience, hierarchy and freedom of actions are derived from bureaucratic influence as an anti-hierarchical principle. (Riggs, 2009, pp. 90-92).

In his book *Patterns of Industrial Bureaucracy*, Golender noted that different institutions can produce different types of bureaucracy depending on a certain degree of skills. Generally, he highlighted three bureaucratic criteria linked to the capacity of the bureaucrats to carry out its functions: the duration of work, which is strongly linked to long-term commitment and extensive experience; the bureaucratic functions, which require administrative capabilities, but their interest is in maintaining their positions; and income, which may be the motivation for them to use their offices for political reasons. The income is the second variable that pushes the bureaucracy to carry out their political and administrative functions. In the third world, the bureaucracy uses bribery and corruption to increase their legal income – unlike the case in developed countries – so they are oriented by protecting and promoting their interests to seize power (Haruṭ a and Radu, 2010, pp. 62-70).

Finally, the third variable highlighted by Riggs was bureaucracy’ reliability/dependency, unlike traditional bureaucracies, the contemporary one is highly reliable due to the increasing tasks and function with the high expectations of citizens in context of manufacturing and technological complexity of societies. In this concern, the bureaucratic organizations are divided into a team and agencies that carry out the various functions. The values of bureaucracy are part of society’ values and influenced by them, thus reflecting its culture (Riggs, 2009, pp. 90-92, Haruṭ a and Radu, 2010, pp. 62-70).

There are many factors that can affect the bureaucracy because of the society that Kenneth J. Meier and John Bohte have discussed in their book about bureaucracy and policy-making as it highlighted in the following graph (Figure 2)

Factors such as culture, history, economy and technology affect the life cycle of the organization in terms of its existence, termination or integration. All inputs are able to influence the development of bureaucracy. According to Kenneth Meier and John Bohte (2007), the most important level is the third level because it determines whether the

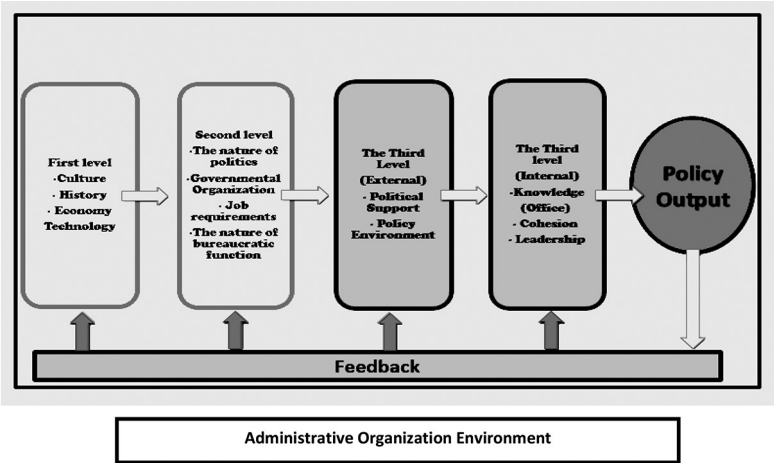


Figure 2.
Administrative
organization
environment

Sources: Meierand Bohte, 2007, pp. 43-44, Haruṭ a, and Radu, 2010, p. 69

bureaucracy has or does not have the power of politics. The bureaucracy gains its political support from both the citizens and government officials who have activities that are largely related to the bureaucratic procedures and tasks. The policy environment can be explained by policy functions that can be distributive or organizational. Internal factors refer to the knowledge of bureaucracy in the sense of information, experience and harmony, and commitment to the public constitutes its attitude toward its institutions and objectives. (Haruț a and Radu, 2010, p. 69, Meier and Bohte, 2007, pp. 43-44).

Finally, leadership and its ability to manage the organization efficiently can affect the capabilities of bureaucrats to do their functions and role in the society. The leaders can manage efficiently and effectively when they have good exercise of the basic functions of their administrative organization, good preparations for policies and decision-making and make the provision of goods and services as their main concern (Meier and Bohte, 2007, pp. 15-25).

5. Conclusion

The basic arguments of this paper are that bureaucracies can play a very important role in the transition. They conduct governmental activities, essential programs, operations and commitments as usual until the new regime develops its own theme. Moreover, bureaucracy as shown in the Polish context may help new decision-makers to develop their own plans, policies and objectives by providing them with consultations and information. In addition, it may go further through being responsible for taking measures and carrying on these new policies. On the other hand, bureaucracy if got neglected in the policy-making process, especially in transition, they would impede and slow down the transition. Therefore, the bureaucracy is supposed to function naturally in unstable environment (transition) as its success functioning helps the new regime to achieve its objective and exceeds the transition. Of course, it depends on many variables: bureaucracy capabilities and skills, history/power, experience, objectives, economy, the nature of politics and bureaucratic functions, political support, policy environment, knowledge and cohesion, etc.

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