

The organization of a business

[Business](#), [Organization](#)



Taken from the oxford dictionary, 'Rationalisation is the organization of a business according to scientific principles of management in order to increase efficiency'. 'Bureaucracy is a system of Government by departments which are managed by state officials, not by elected representatives'. These were the basic definitions of these terms; however they have a much broader meaning and are very significant in the study of work which will be discussed in this essay.

Karl Marx is a key figure in the theory of rationalisation. One form of rationalisation which he believed in is the capitalist mode of production which is where division of labour and change is forced on people. He also believed that human beings are not able to exercise essential characteristics due to rationalisation cutting down workers into smaller chunks which also leads to the alienation of humans. The 'McDonaldisation of society' is a key theory that develops the concept of rationalisation. This theory was founded by G. Ritzer. This theory has four main aspects:

Calculability: Involves an emphasis on things that can be calculated, counted and quantified. Efficiency: This is the process of choosing the optimum means to a given end. Predictability: McDonaldization emphasises such things as discipline, order, systemization, formation, routine, consistency, and methodical operation. Control: the great source of uncertainty and unpredictability in a rationalising system are people. Ritzer's theory was based on the McDonalds enterprise and how it rapidly grew into a commercialised organisation striving to be the most efficient and popular organisation in its sector. His theory made clear the rationalisation process

that was taking place in his time and it also influenced other major sociologists and their theories.

A key concept in rationalisation is theory of 'scientific management' which was founded by Fredric Taylor. In traditional organisations ordinary shop floor workers get on with the work they are told to do. There is no need for them to take their own initiative as management make all decisions. Also workers cannot be left to do the work as this will lead to systematic soldiering which is where the workers work slower together so that management do not realise the workers full potential.

Taylor's principles were designed to reduce inefficiency between workers and managers. He believed that workers are only motivated by one thing, money. Even though that this is one of the main factors that people work it is not the only factor. There has been much research carried out to show that money is not the most important factor to motivate workers. Taylor's view is a very positive concept but it also has many negative factors. His view is very mechanistic as it removes all initiative and de-motivating as it leads to boredom.

Rationalisation was the fundamental theory to Max Weber's thinking, a nineteenth century sociologist. A more complex definition of Rationalisation is; 'A trend in social change whereby traditional or magical criteria of action are replaced by technical calculative or scientific criteria'. The rationalisation process is the practical application of knowledge to achieve a desired end. It leads to efficiency, co-ordination, and control over both the physical and the

social environment. It is the guiding principle behind bureaucracy, the increasing division of labour and mechanisation.

There is a particular case of rationalisation, which is applied to human social organisation. This is known as Bureaucracy; a formal organisation marked by a clear hierarchy of authority, the existence of written rules of procedure, staffed by full-time salaried officials, and striving for the efficient attainment of organisational goals. This basically means that bureaucracy is a rational co-ordination of tasks carried out within an organisation. Bureaucracies are organised according to rational principles for example offices are ranked in a hierarchical order. This form of organisation has become the dominant feature we see in modern workplaces today.

In order to understand more about Weber's views about rationalisation and bureaucracy he developed three different types of authority, which can exist in organisations. The first of these is Traditional. An example of this is the Monarchy. Where there has always been a monarchy so you don't challenge the rules etc because it has always been that way so no need to question it. It is just accepted that this is what happens. The second authority is Charismatic. This is where a particular individual uses the strength of their personality to influence others and gain authority.

The third and most relevant to Weber's theory is that of Rational Authority. This is where rules are simplified and modernised in a way that creates a more efficient organisation. It is central to development, and is about forgetting tradition and updating. Key features of Weber's Model. Taking all of these ideas into account Weber created the Office Model of

bureaucracy. Max Weber outlined the key characteristics of a bureaucracy to be: 1. Specification of jobs with detailed rights, obligations, responsibilities, scope of authority - job specification and written rule of conduct.

2. System of supervision and subordination - hierarchy of command.

Everyone knows whom they are responsible for and to. 3. extensive use of written documents - a flow of information through the hierarchy 4. training in job requirements and skills 5. efficiency - the whole process should be as simple and as efficient as is possible in order to secure the smooth running of the organisation 6. promotion - of an employee based on their achievements over time This allows us to link both rationalisation and bureaucracy, as Weber felt the terms were inseparable.

These can link through ideas such as (1) functional specialisation (2) clear lines of hierarchical authority (3) expert training of managers (4) Decision-making based on rules and tactics developed to guarantee consistent and effective pursuit of organisational goals. The term rationalisation also links with Weber's Office Model. The main aim of rationalisation is to make organisations carry out tasks as efficiently, simply and profitably as possible, and Weber saw his model as a way of being able to achieve this. We think that Weber's model is more idealistic than realistic, because it is not perfect. Human beings cannot be rationalised down to 'cogs' on a machine. There must be room for the fact that we can think for ourselves and that there is human error. We are not automated like machines, we can do what we want, make our own decisions etc.

So far, only the definitions of the terms bureaucracy and rationalisation have been discussed, however, their significance in the study of work has not yet been mentioned. So why is bureaucracy significant in the study of work?

Bureaucracy is a very authoritarian view which follows the hierarchical principle which is the vertical division of authority and accountability. This allows for a clear utility of command making communication in the organisation much clearer. This makes decision making easier and the organisation more efficient. Rationalisation is also a process whose main purpose is to create a more efficient working environment which is why it is significant in the study of work.