

# Bureaucratic style of management

[Business](#), [Management](#)



Management has been studied by a lot of theorists who then learning from their own experiences came out with different theories and styles of management, explaining how to manage. The classical school has proven to be one of the most influential of all the schools. (Brooks 2009).

Due to the success of the bureaucratic and scientific management style of managing, this essay will look into the bureaucratic style of management and then the scientific style of management and show that although these theories were developed during the turn of the twentieth century, they are still present in organisations today and are still very relevant to this day and age. Fredrick W Taylor, who came out with the scientific management theory, believed that all organisation irrespective of their production, size or location need management and managers (Brunnson, 2008).

He focuses his attention on the lower levels of the hierarchy, which are the individuals in the work force. Pearson (1947) explains how Taylor defined the art of management as knowing exactly what you want your men to do and achieving that in the cheapest, best way possible. Considering my job as a call centre representative, for six months, two years ago back home in India, and looking at Taylor's principles on how to achieve maximum efficiency, I can with the help of my experiences explain the presence of his principles still in organisations today.

Taylor (1911) in his scientific management theory explains his 4 basic principles, on how to manage. Firstly the manager needs to know what to do and how to do it in order to achieve maximum efficiency. The manager then needs to recruit his employees and train them so as to achieve greater

results in the quickest time. He also explains on how the manager will need to keep his employees in check, and reward them with benefits for good performance. Also the manager needs to divide the workresponsibilityamongst the workforce and take some responsibility himself.

Looking at Taylor's principles as given to us by him, and considering my job in India the similarities are surprising. I was recruited after a round of two interviews, one a telephoneinterviewand the other a personal interview with the manager. My skills weren't even looked upon other than the fact that I could speak English. I was then hired and put through training for six weeks. We were trained on how to talk to customers and what kind of answers to give to what questions. All of us were given a script with possible answers to every possible question we could have been faced with.

Post the training we were put in the field to make calls to the customers. I was always kept in check like the other employees by the manager, our calls were over heard by him and we were every week given a target to sell ' n' number of products and if we crossed the target by a certain extent we would get a paid day off. This whole process of recruiting, training, being told what exactly to do, performance related benefits is so similar to Taylor's principles that the style of management is obviously still returning results and is still relevant in certain industries.

Taylor's principles have been criticised, as Grey (2009) puts it, that following Taylor's principles does not help in the professional growth of the employees and leads to further deskilling. I agree to the criticism and also left my job for

the same reason, as I was learning nothing. But what needs to be understood is my peers in the job, quite enjoyed the pay and the work environment, as they possessed no proper skills other than speaking mediocre English but were being paid well than any other place and holding conversations in English wasn't a problem as everything went according to the script that was given to them.

So maybe Taylor's principles are criticised for a reason but there are still people out there, in maybe the less fortunate economies of the world who need to earn money but possess no skills and factories like Henry Ford's are their only option as they get on the job training and get paid well, and prove efficient to the employer. Another theorist well known for his work in the same field sided with the principles of management as he saw its rise inevitable and termed the style of management Bureaucratic.

This theorist saw the future of organisations and their method of functioning well before it prevailed. Max Webber came out with his theory on management emphasising on the importance of Authority and how it binds society and also laid importance on Accountability and Control (Brooks, 2009). Many organisations followed the bureaucratic style of management for a long time, especially during the industrial revolution, as it was one of the most successful management styles then.

The first world countries who faced their time of industrial revolution and moved on to the informational one, find the bureaucratic way of functioning old fashioned, due to all the technological advances. But the Bureaucratic way of functioning proved excellent during the industrial revolution, which

thus brought them to the informational one (Toffler, 1984). Considering the economic differences in the world and how there are still countries who are dealing with industrial revolution, they will certainly adopt the bureaucratic way of functioning knowing the success it brought to the first world countries.

So saying the theory is out of date, is not right as its relevance still prevails in many parts of the globe. The aim therefore is to measure the use of bureaucratic functions in organisations today and discuss its importance even at this date. Organisations today say, the post bureaucratic way of management is the new form of organisations to prove effective and efficient. The Post bureaucratic way as explained by Grey (2009) suggests trusting your employees, empowerment, and personal treatment towards employees and shared responsibility while completing a task.

The management style does seem more favourable for the employees of the organisations, but considering the stiff competition, the rivalry, and the sheer size of organisations today does it seem effective. As Grey (2009) explains, problems such as loss of control over employees, the risk of a wrong decision by the employee towards the organisation and also the post bureaucratic style marks an increase in insecurity and anxiety amongst the employees who like to be told what to do when doing a task as no one wants to go wrong considering the employment situation in the world, no one wants to lose a job or even cause a threat to it in anyway.

A good way to know, the number of people who are still a part of a bureaucratic style organisation is to study statistics of people working for

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Banks, Hospitals, Army, etc as these jobs are the ones from organisations that follow a strict hierarchical structure and have control over their employees. Looking at the current job markets, Banks employ more than 2000000 employees (Bankspider. com) who thus are now a part of the bureaucratic style of management, knowing how banks have a strong hierarchical structure.

NHS the medical industry of the UK alone employs over a million employees (NHS. com), thus making them work in a bureaucratic style organisation. The Army, Factories for various products all employ people and also follow a bureaucratic style of management, since efficient production is their aim. So considering our organisations today a large quantity of organisations still follow the bureaucratic style and thus so do their employees. Although over the years strict authority over employees in many industries has eroded, they are left to do their tasks, but authority still does prevail in times of decision making as each decision made affects the whole organisation considering the competition in today's world, and the risk of being brought down at anytime. Organisations today with their large sizes and the competition they face have to keep every action in check and have to be efficient. Efficiency meaning they attain maximum profits by spending the least. This is where the labour process explained by Grey (2009) comes in, explaining how bureaucracy still does prevail.

With the technological advances the labour market that is employed is the least skilled, are paid low wages and the managers are in total control of the employees in turn effectively proving efficient for the organisations. Today in

the 21st century organisations do need to be innovative and creative to achieve greater profits and attract larger market segments, this although now even in bureaucratic organisations is allowed. Looking at one of the biggest examples in the market, Apple.

Although the employers do have their authority, employees are allowed to be innovative in their designs, functionality, Aesthetics, technology etc but the designs still are put up for approval by the managers, who finally then take it to the owner Steve Jobs who then passes every product Apple makes. So there is authority, there is a hierarchical structure, but the authority is not as strong and the hierarchical structure is small and convenient. So a bureaucratic style does exist even in one of the most innovative companies who have transformed the IT industry.

Thus understanding the two styles of management and studying their relevance in today's day and age and comparing them to the jobs of today makes it clear that although organisations have progressed in terms of product development, size and competition they still, to an extent follow the theories of the classical school. Scientific management may not be present in organisations in the exact mentioned style but the basics of Taylor's principles are still followed to achieve better and efficient results.

It also needs to be accepted that organisations where a large number of identical, standard operations are needed or have a rigid chain of command will have a bureaucratic style of management as little training or initiative is required since people just follow orders. Some organisations might have a different style of management but the number of people still part of

bureaucratic style organisations is large, thus showing the presence of the bureaucratic style of management still in the 21st century.

Hence Grey (2009) states bureaucracy offers not an optimum solution to each case it deals with but an optimum average solution, hence it maybe in particular cases not as optimum but overall it is more efficient. Also classifying these theories as out of date and fashion is wrong as management theories don't go out of date, but are improved upon by new theorists who develop a style improving on the previous ones.

## **References**

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