

Bureaucracy and max weber

Government



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1. 0 Introduction
According to Stephen P. Robbins and Mary Coulter in their book titled Management, bureaucracy can be defined as a form of organisation characterised by division of labour, a clearly defined hierarchy, detailed rules and regulations, and impersonal relationship. Bureaucracy usually gives a negative meaning in life.

When it comes to bureaucracy, automatically people would imagine things like red-tape, filled form with too many information and too detail, small problems become complicated because of the rule to be abided and others. Even though we normally equalize bureaucracy with inefficiency, but the truth is, it represents efficiency because the advantages are more than disadvantages. Bureaucracy also can be regarded as an effective way created in order to move to a big organization. The bigger and complicated a formal organization, the greater requirement needed to control and synchronize every member’s activities.

The necessities can be fulfilled by bureaucracy, which is an authority structure operated under a rules and procedures. Max Weber defines organization as a social mechanism that maximizes efficiency and effectiveness in administration. 2. 0 Characteristics of Bureaucracy by Max Weber Weber's focus on the trend of rationalization led him to concern himself with the operation and expansion of large-scale enterprises in both the public and private sectors of modern societies Bureaucracy can be considered to be a particular case of rationalization, or rationalization

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applied to human organization. Bureaucratic coordination of human action, Weber believed, is the distinctive mark of modern social structures. In order to study these organizations, both historically and in contemporary society, Weber developed the characteristics of an ideal-type bureaucracy:

2. 0. 1 Written Rules of Conduct According to Weber, all decisions, rules and actions taken by the organization are formulated and recorded in writing. Written documents ensure that there is continuity of the organization's policies and procedures. (Cutajar, 2010) Weber stressed that rational bureaucracies must be managed in accordance with carefully developed rules and principles that can be learned and applied and that transactions and decisions must be recorded so that rules can be reviewed. Only with such rules and principles can the activities of hundreds of managers at different levels in the organization be predicted and coordinated. If we cannot predict what others will do, then we cannot count on them.

2. 0. 2 Hierarchy of Authority Hierarchical authority is required in bureaucracies so that highly trained experts can be properly used as managers. (Borgatti, 2002) The type of authority laid down by Weber rests on the belief of in the legality of formal rules and hierarchies, and in the right of those elevated in the hierarchy to possess authority and issue command. Authority is given to the officials based on their skills, position and authority placed formally in each position. For instance, an officer graduated from universities is respected more than the officer with no qualification from universities.

2. 0. 3 Hierarchical Structure According to Weber, bureaucracies are goal-oriented organizations designed according to rational principles in order to efficiently attain

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their goals. Offices are ranked in a hierarchical order, with information flowing up the chain of command, directives flowing down. It was self-evident that coordinating the divisions of large organizations requires clear lines of authority organized in a hierarchy. That means there are clear levels of graded authority.

All employees in the organization must know who their boss is, and each person should always respect the chain of command; that is, people should give orders only to their own subordinates and receive orders only through their own immediate superior. In this way, the people at the top can be sure that directives arrive where they are meant to go and know where responsibilities lie.

2. 0. 4 Division of Labour

Division of labour or in other word, specialization of division, means each office has a defined sphere of competence.

The tasks of the organization are divided into distinct functions given to separate offices. These functions are clearly specified so that the staff know exactly what is expected of them. Job-holders are given the authority necessary to carry out their roles. Weber's idea of functional specialization applies both to persons within an organization and to relations between larger units or divisions of the organization. Stephen P. Borgatti in his article titled bureaucracy give an example of division of labour by Swift & Co.

In his article, within a Swift packing plant, work was broken down into many special tasks, and employees were assigned to one or a few such tasks, including the tasks involved in coordinating the work of others. So, Swift was separated into a number of divisions, each specializing in one of the tasks in

the elaborate process of bringing meat from the ranch to the consumer.

Weber argued that such specialization is essential to a rational bureaucracy and that the specific boundaries separating one functional division from another must be fixed by explicit rules, regulations, and procedures.

Borgatti, 2002) 2. 0. 5 Impersonality of Relationship Impersonality means no hatred or passion with equality of treatment for all clients of the organization.

It means, there must be no individual objectives are allowed. All people must follow the organization objectives. In other word, staff members are free of any external responsibilities and constraints so that they are able to attend to their duties in a fair and objective way. For example, work is separated from residence in order to separate personal duty and objective of the organization.

2. 0. Lifelong Career Commitment Weber stressed that employment in the organization should be seen as a career for officials. An official is a full-time employee, and anticipate a lifelong career. After an introduction period, the employee is given tenure, which protects the employee from arbitrary dismissal. The organization should create a better working scheme such as clear promotion route and good remuneration scheme. Max Weber viewed these bureaucratic elements as solutions to problems or defects within earlier and more traditional administrative systems.

Likewise, he viewed these elements as parts of a total system, which, combined and instituted effectively, would increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative structure.

3. 0 Critics toward Max Weber Theories of Bureaucracy There are various critics from public administration philosophers toward bureaucracy theory generated by max Weber. 3. 0. 1

Rigid Rules and Uncreative Weber lined out that the characteristics of his theory on bureaucracy is on hierarchical authority structure. However, the consequences that the organization has to bear is the lost of ability to generate new ideas.

There are problems among lower officers due to hierarchical structure. It is because, in hierarchy, order is given by upper officer to the lower officer. The lower officer accepts the instruction without an opportunity to give their own opinion or ideas. So, there were no generation of new ideas and no any check and balance happen. A good organization should involve employees in decision making. 3. 0. 2 Slow Decision Making Process Because of Weber's theory stressed on hierarchical authority, the decision making process become ineffective. It slows down the process.

The decision is all coming from the top management. So, it takes too long for the information to reach the employees. 3. 0. 3 Exploitation of Position and Power Weber's theory of bureaucracy could lead to exploitation. His suggestion on the use of written rule of conduct can bring problems. A. W Gouldner (1954) noticed that the ' govern according to rules' culture in organization caused the consequences of members following the minimum possible rules in order to get by. So, in bureaucratic organization, employees who know to twist the rules would gradually or evidently be more powerful.

In consequence, power will have a tendency to shift from a nominal leader of the organization, who did not know how to play by the rules, to employee who really did. 3. 0. 4 Work is not Challenging In bureaucratic theory suggested by Weber, a promotion system is not encouraged. He prefers to

use a system based on seniority or qualification in department exams. It means, all the promotions are based on the period he has worked on the organization or the answers on the exam paper. Therefore, there is no earnestness in work because the promotion system is not based on efficiency.

The duties also are the same everyday and can create boredom among the officers. 3. 0. 5 Nonresponsive The theories suggested by Weber did not reflect to changes. Reflection is in the term of attitude and speed of changes or adjustments with the changes. For example, when people deal with government agencies or department, bureaucracy cannot help to accelerate the process, meanwhile increase the burden they have to take. The people have to pass through many processes before their problems can be settled.

4. The Advantages of Max Weber Theories of Bureaucracy Weber's bureaucracy is based on logic and rationality which are supported by trained and qualified specialists. The element of a bureaucracy offers a stable and hierarchical model for an organization. 4. 0. 1 Prevent Misuse of Power Max Weber theories of bureaucracy prevent the misuse of power. It stressed the impersonality of relationship where the officers must distinguish the duties from personal matters. Often happen in organization where officers use the facilities of the office for personal works.

For example, an executive officer used to call his driver to fetch his daughter from school. This action cannot be legalised by the theory. This action shows how the officer used the facilities of the office for personal works. So, by applying the Max Weber theories, an officer can distinguish between the duties and personal matters. 4. 0. 2 Decision is rationalised Bureaucracy

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practises rational concept is where every decision is based on the objectives and criteria set by the public. Decision being made is not bias as it free from personal matters.

It contributes in democracy through technical ability, not because of heritage offamilyrelation in order to obtain certain position. 4. 0. 3 Clear and Written Records The characteristics of Max Weber bureaucracy lined up the need of written rules of conduct. It also stressed the documentation of any decision made. The advantage of this action is that it can be referred easily and any problems arise can be settled without rebuttal when there is a set of rules of conduct. 4. 0. 4 Specialization of Works

Bureaucracy enables officers to know in depth on their tasks as the task is divided among them. The specialization also can decrease the burden of duties of the officer and can gradually increase their productivity. Besides that, it is easier for the management to choose among its officers whom are really capable to perform certain tasks. 4. 0. 5 Increase Efficiency and Effectiveness According to Weber, bureaucracies are goal-oriented organizations designed according to rational principles in order to efficiently attain their goals.

Offices are ranked in a hierarchical order, with information flowing up the chain of command, directives flowing down. Operations of the organizations are characterized by impersonal rules that explicitly state duties, responsibilities, standardized procedures and conduct of office holders. Offices are highly specialized. Appointments to these offices are made according to specialized qualifications rather than ascribed criteria. All of

these ideal characteristics have one goal, to promote the efficient attainment of the organization's goals. 5. 0 Conclusion

Some have seriously misinterpreted Weber and have claimed that he liked bureaucracy, that he believed that bureaucracy was an "ideal" organization. Others have pronounced Weber "wrong" because bureaucracies do not live up to his list of "ideals." Others have even claimed that Weber "invented" bureaucratic organization. But Weber described bureaucracy as an "ideal type" in order to more accurately describe their growth in power and scope in the modern world. The bureaucratic coordination of the action of large numbers of people has become the dominant structural feature of modern societies.

It is only through this organizational device that large-scale planning and coordination, both for the modern state and the modern economy, become possible. The consequences of the growth in the power and scope of these organizations is vital to understanding our world. Bibliography Borgatti, S. P. (2002, April 02). analytictech. com. Retrieved March 10, 2011, from Bureaucracy: <http://www.analytictech.com/mb021/bureau.htm> Cutajar, M. (2010, July 29). Max Weber Bureaucracy Theory. Retrieved March 10, 2011, from suite101. com: <http://www.suite101.com/content/max-weber-bureaucracy-theory-a267433>