Enhancing and organisation's productivity through elimination of bureaucratic bot...

Proposed Research Title:

ENHANCING AN ORGANISATION'S PRODUCTIVITY THROUGH THE ELIMINATION OF BUREAUCRATIC BOTTLENECKS HINDERING ITS SERVICE DELIVERY AND PROFIT OBJECTIVES.

STATEMENT OF TOPIC/ DEFINITION OF THE SUBJECT:

In today's globalised world, most large and multifaceted business organisations have often been observed as having hierarchical structures that align towards bureaucratic ways of doing things or performing organisational tasks. These structures either mitigate or enhance an organisation's productivity depending on how it plays out, but in most known cases, it was discovered by researchers to have slowed down the implementation of the core goals of a business organization. But despite the enormous research that has been conducted in this area, there does not seem to be any consensus on whether bureaucracies in organisations increases or reduces an organisation's productivity.

According to Julien Freund (1996) in Serpa (2019), Bureaucracy is simply defined as the layman's example of a legally recognised system of domination. One of the core principles on which the concept of bureaucracy is built upon is referred to as the hierarchy of functions, which states that the organisational structure is mainly built upon management roles and subordinate functions which makes it most likely to establish a strong influential impression from the lower instance to the higher instance thus exhibiting a system which is monocratic and highly centralised (Freund, 1996).

In Kene et. al.(2015), bureaucracy as a theory has been known to have been practised way back in the medieval times, and it originates from the word " bureau" which was known as a workplace. Max Weber, a foremost sociologist and generally referred to as the father of bureaucracy in his book, described bureaucracy as the management of governmental functions through the utilization of departments and units by selected groups of officials who follow a very rigid routine (Weber, 1947). Summarily, Bureaucracy is referred to as the officially acceptable medium in which an organization's rules and procedures are embodied (Kene et. al 2015). This study therefore investigates how an organisation's productivity can be enhanced through the reduction of bureaucratic practices.

AIM OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH/ RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary aim of this research is to identify and analyse the nature of bureaucracy in complex Australian business organisations, with a view to determine the scope of impediment orchestrated by bureaucratic bottlenecks towards the achievement of an organisation's objectives. It is also an aim of this research, that methods of reducing bureaucratic bottleneck in business organisations would be suggested so as to pave a way for them to increase their productivity.

Secondly, the Questions which this research work intends to answer include:

1)   What factors account for the strong presence of bureaucracy in complex business organisations?

2)   How can Bureaucracy be eliminated or drastically reduced within the administrative systems of complex business organisations?

3)   Does Bureaucracy actually impact negatively or positively on productivity levels of business organizations?

4)   How does Bureaucracy affect innovation and creativity among the employees of a business organization?

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Bureaucracy according to the Max Weberian school of thought is often referred to as a kind of organisation that is linked to the advent of the contemporary civilisation. His work encompasses most areas connected with economics, politics and religion; and thus provides us with a synopsis on how the western capitalist culture evolved. His work according to Almasiri (2011) sufficiently provides a detailed analysis of the structures of authority, and provides us with a distinctive approach on how to effectively examine the bureaucratic structure of authority as regards its interconnection with the wider peripheral environment.

According to Almasiri (2011), Bureaucracy is often referred to as a formal and hierarchical type of organisation which is often dominated by the impersonal implementation of rules and regulations, in which authorities and responsibilities are strictly allocated to employees, with their career progressions explicitly stated; this system has often been referred to by Max Weber as a highly productive type of organisation which is often utilised by private sector enterprises with profit maximisation as their main goal

(Almasiri, 2011). But contradictorily, a review of contemporary literature as perceived by modern day theorists like Bauman (1989) often refers to the Weberian bureaucratic model as a system of organisation that encourages degradation and corruption. Further perceptions of the model can also be captured in Matheson (2007), which gave its insight concerning the theory as a system being practised in an organisation that promotes hostility through the implementation of very strict policies and lack of flexibility in adhering to formal guidelines (Matheson, 2007).

Furthermore, most literatures which enumerate more about the critique views of the Weberian bureaucratic draw their focus mainly towards the effect of bureaucratic systems on creativity and innovation. According to Almasiri (2011), this is so because creativity is very critical to the functionalities of most knowledge based organisations as these organisations are involved in activities that seek to stimulate intellectualism, learning and development of professional and technical skills which would enhance the productivity of such organisations.

This study seeks to lay credence to the opinion that complex business organisations which propagate the practice of a bureaucratic system of operation will have major challenges promoting a culture of innovation, creativity and a fast turnaround system of getting tasks implemented. This view is propagated based on Reed (2005), which likened the Weberian picture of bureaucracy to an " iron cage" which seeks to influence the behaviour, tasks and actions of employees by forcing their behaviours to adapt to prescribe policies and rules. This act of control and conformity to certain activities, rules and guidelines consequently, tends to compromise

the ability of the employees to unleash their entrepreneurial spirits and grow their innovative skills (Kanter, 1992). Furthermore, according to Kanter, (1989) and MacDonald (1995), bureaucracy and creativity don't ever seem to stand on the same page due to the predisposition of bureaucracy to encourage knowledge based on standardization and likelihood which hinders creativity, innovation and challenging traditional ways of thinking in business organisations (Daymon. 2000)

In Weber (1947), his work on the bureaucratic theory emphasises the position of organisations as components of the intricate and ever changing political and economic dynamics obtainable in a social environment. His investigation and works on contemporary capitalism emphasises that there is a significant linkage between the business organisation and the society's broader structure. According to Weber (1947), the linkage in which these 2 spectrums are established, are demonstrated through the medium in which the bureaucratic practices in organisations in consonance with the broader environment are examined, which consequently promotes a multi-stream investigation at all forms of organisational streams.

Bureaucratic restrictions in business organisations

In most modern day business organisations with a complex and sizeable structure, bureaucratic restrictions are very common in all spheres of their operations due to very rigid administrative and participatory frameworks. According to Kosar (2007), these complex organisations came into existence based on the template of government administered corporations which laid a high emphasis on rigidity and non-responsiveness to service delivery

requirements, thus eliminating the presence of any kind of development based philosophy. But despite the avalanche of negative criticism that has trailed the bureaucratic system of governance in complex organisations, there are still some positive gains arising from the implementation of bureaucratic systems in business organisations according to Hannaway (2008), which includes establishment of organized processes, sufficient paperwork, unhampered tracking and monitoring of performance indices, and total authority on all holdings.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH:

This research would undertake to provide an in-depth detail into one of the most pronounced concept grappling most large and complex business organisations, thereby making a quality contribution to future research. It is a generally stated opinion that for creativity and innovation to be established in a business organisation or any workplace, the concept of autonomy must be allowed to thrive in such environments. This then forms one of the significance of this research as detailed explorations would be undertaken to give more credence to the aforementioned opinion as well as also expose instances where bureaucracy has failed to allow creativity and innovation to thrive.

This research would also provide more inputs to the business literature by exploring more theories concerned with the effects of bureaucracy in business organisations Finally, this research would also attempt to establish a definite scope and interpretation on the benefits and disadvantages of bureaucracy in business organisations; and I intend to achieve this by doing

a detailed analysis of the general principles on which the theory was initially established, and why it needs to be reduced to the barest minimum in order to facilitate improved productivity in today's modern day business organisations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

To achieve my objective for this research thesis, I propose to:

- Analyse the historical development, evolution and application of Max Weber's bureaucratic theory.
- Compare the concept of Weber's school of thought with other concepts of bureaucratic theories that were established.
- Examine in detail the nature of impediment associated with bureaucratic form of administration as regards organizational performance.
- Determine whether bureaucratic form of control and administration has served the purpose for which it was adopted in large complex organisations using Australian Optus network as case study.
- Examine ways in which bureaucratic systems of control in business organisations can be reduced to the barest minimum or managed.

Due to my previous experience in conducting research as a result of my past academic experience in research, I will make do with cross-sectional kind of surveys using the instruments of interviews and questionnaires to derive my data. This method will enable me to derive efficient data from the population based on their principles, inspirations, ideas and actions, which would thus form a strong baseline for making sound decisions. This research will utilise

the cross-sectional kind of survey to evaluate the impacts of bureaucracy on Optus Networks, Sydney which serves as my current place of employment; based on the adoption of purposive sampling technique, with a target population focused on the Optus Network Sydney Campus employees.

Generally, I will adopt a historical and comparative approach to achieve my objective in this research. In the first stage of this research, I will undertake a historical analysis and evolution of bureaucracy theory through detailed analysis of the works of Max Weber. In other to appreciate the concept of bureaucracy, it is important to show in detail the historical development of bureaucracy as applicable in large business organisations with a brief review of its application in government agencies. This can help to answer questions surrounding the degree of impediment associated with the bureaucratic form of administration as regards organizational performance. I will identify and analyse the different theories or type of bureaucracies and how they align or differ from the main Weberian bureaucratic school of thought.

In the second stage of this research, I will aim to compare the concept of bureaucracy as against the concept of innovation and autonomy, in order to analyse in detail how much benefits have been derived from the adoption of bureaucracy in large business organisations, and how they would have been more productive if they had dominated their operations with the concept of autonomy and innovation. The purpose of the comparative analysis is to establish the distinct features of both concepts and provide convincing reasons on why bureaucracy as a way of administration in business organisations should be eliminated or minimised to the barest minimum. It will also seek to help researchers in a bid to determine the scope of further

investigation of the bureaucratic framework. It will answer questions on whether impediments to innovation and autonomy include all conceivable areas of bureaucracy that may affect the performance of the business organisation's operations and if not what areas of bureaucracy serves as impediments to growth and innovation; as well as what approach to effective administrative structure the organisation needs to conceive and develop.

In the third stage of my research I will do a holistic analysis of how much positive impacts have been derived from bureaucratic form of administration in business organisations using the Optus Network as a study. Here I intend to also discuss in detail certain areas of my job responsibilities which have benefited or have been enhanced by the presence of bureaucratic system of administration in Optus networks. The final stage of my research is aimed at establishing the need to decentralise all systems of centralised control and administration in all business organisations with efficient service delivery and profitability as their core objectives. My research strategy will therefore involve an analysis of key literatures on bureaucratic theories, organisational innovation and autonomy.

PREPARATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

I developed interest in this research field in the course of my employment as a PMO Projects Administrator in Optus Networks, Sydney. There I realized that in other to function optimally and perform my job responsibilities efficiently, I needed to understand and develop full interest in the complex nature of the organisation due to a very significant presence of bureaucratic system of governance and politicking in it. While undertaking this role, I

completed a short research which attempted to harmonize the meaning of the word " bureaucracy" as envisaged in the relevant literatures bothering on types of bureaucracy being functional in business organisations. However, the success of my research was limited because I realized that attempting to harmonize the meaning of bureaucracy as envisaged in the relevant literatures without determining its differences or similarities would be futile. I figured that an in depth analysis of these concepts would help throw a light on their scope and limits thereby helping the researchers and organisations when determining whether to eliminate its practice or to adopt the bureaucracy types that would not significantly impede on innovation and autonomy.

My research agenda is shaped by in-depth exposure to the realities of trying to be creative, innovative and efficient in a system grappling with the chains of a bureaucratic system, which I experienced as a project administrator at various levels of the company's operating system. I am committed to a research approach that employs multiple methodologies, is interdisciplinary in nature, and is relevant to current organisational issues. The substantive policy areas for my research agenda are leadership in public organizations, youth leadership development, non-profit capacity building, ethics and accountability, economic and workforce development systems.

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