

In that bureaucracy is
based, not on



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In 1966, Bennis pronounced the imminent death of the bureaucracy. Since then, critics have continued to suggest that bureaucracy is inherently unethical, outdated and irrelevant (DuGay 2000, p. 1). However, the fact that it has been the leading form of organization for over a century (cite) suggests otherwise. This essay critically analyses bureaucracy, considering how and why it has been so central to organizational analysis for such a long time. Firstly, it considers Weber, rationality and provides a critique of bureaucracy. Secondly, it assesses the strengths and dysfunctions of post-bureaucracy; considering whether it is an improvement on bureaucracy. Then finally, it analyses critical approaches to bureaucracy, in order to analyse whether there is a realistic alternative....

Bureaucracy is a model of organizations that is founded on rules, hierarchy, impersonality and division of labour (find a cite). It has an “up-focussed” mission; the purpose being to serve shareholders (Weber?). Weber (year) explains that bureaucracy is based, not on ‘charismatic’ or ‘traditional’ leadership (the authority of particular individuals or established institutions).

It is, instead, based on rational-legal authority; a set of rules that are developed for rational reasons. Weber distinguished between instrumental and substantive rationality (CITE). Actions that are instrumentally rational are in the pursuit of specific goals.

The action justifies and generates the outcome. Whereas actions that are substantively rational are themselves rational, regardless of the efficiency of the action itself. For example, _____. Weber explained that bureaucracy

is characterized by a strong emphasis on instrumental rationality. Weber's 'idealtyp' of bureaucracy refers to a highly efficient form of organization.

He suggested that bureaucracy was the most technically efficient and rational form of organization. As a result of its efficiency, bureaucracy also had the advantage of producing cheap outputs which could be easily calculated. From this perspective, it may be argued that bureaucracy is not as bad as critics suggest. Bureaucratic organizations are often described as 'machines' (cite). They have distinct parts that are designed to perform specific tasks, which work together as a unified whole. This makes them predictable, standard and efficient (cite). However, by equating the organization to a machine, employees are reduced to 'cogs' within that machine (cite). This causes three problems.

Firstly is the problem of motivation (cite). Employees follow rules and have little autonomy and discretion. As a result, employees are unlikely to feel interested in, or motivated to perform their work. As such, the quality of their work is likely to suffer. Therefore, although bureaucracies appear to be efficient, they may result in the production of inferior products.

EXAMPLE Secondly, bureaucracy is criticised for focussing not on the customer, but on the producer (cite). Employees that follow lots of rules, and are poorly motivated are unlikely to care much about customer service but simply follow rules blindly.

Rules cannot be altered or broken to satisfy the needs of individual customers, no matter how important it may be to that customer. Employees who break the rules could be punished. For example (NHS).

This producer-focus... this can also lead to a situation where no decision is made until it is passed up to the competent 'authority', which makes decisions unnecessarily long and complicated for the customer (cite). A much greater problem with the inflexibility of bureaucracy is its inability to facilitate innovation and change (cite). If everybody carries out their work according to the rules, nothing will change or progress. For some organizations, this is not a problem (E. g.) producing large quantities of standard products the specifications of which do not vary for long periods of time, perhaps several years.

However, these circumstances do not apply to most organizations. In industries where adaptation to market condition is vital for survival, 'bureaucratic inertia' (cite) will result in organizations stagnating and failing to compete efficiently. Merton (1940) introduced the idea of goal displacement. This occurs when a marginal objective becomes the main focus and the primary objective becomes less important. Merton suggested that people in bureaucracies become so preoccupied with following the rules that they lose focus of the goal those rules were in place to achieve. They care more about 'doing things right' than 'doing the right things', which Drucker (year) explains may be efficient, but is not effective. It creates unnecessary 'red tape' (cite).

For example, if _____. Goal displacement has been identified in divisionalised bureaucratic organizations. Selznick (1949) explained that employees identify more closely with the aims of their divisions than the aims of the organization. As a result, they focus on satisfying the needs of their team at the expense of the needs of the organization.

Thus, bureaucracy inadvertently becomes bad for the overall performance of the organization. However, Selznick's criticism does not apply to every bureaucratic organization, so should be considered with caution. Bureaucracy may be more efficient than other ways of organizing, even if, in particular cases, it is less than optimal. Blau's (1955) concept for 'work-to-rule' is a form of industrial action.

He explains that in bureaucratic organizations, workers can disrupt the efficiency of bureaucracy by strictly adhering to all rules in the workplace. He used the example of a US law enforcement agency; explaining that it was better for the organization if employees ignored rules such as not working unpaid overtime and reporting attempts of bribery. Finishing at the time stated in employment contracts and refusing to bend the rules creates inconveniences for the organization. Hence, bureaucracy may not be the most efficient way of organizing. But it does not follow that, left to themselves, they would have adopted the most efficient way of working. They may have adopted an even less efficient approach than that enshrined in the rules. If so, a post-bureaucratic way of working would be less efficient at all times, not just in times of industrial action.

It may also be argued that the problem here is not to be with bureaucracy, but with unhappy employees. If the organization could satisfy employees whilst still maintaining some elements of bureaucracy, it may become an efficient, positive working environment. The concept of a 'mock bureaucracy' was first introduced by Gouldner (1954). He explained that in some bureaucratic organizations, in practice, rules are ignored. For example, managers and employees working in an office may decide to

stop implementing rules about the clothing that employees are expected to wear to work, and go to work in more casual clothes, if they deem suits to be inconvenient.

These criticisms of bureaucracy have been around for a very long time. It has long been suggested that the stable business environment within which bureaucracy made sense no longer exists, and that more collaborative organizational relations rendered the rigid rules of bureaucracy obsolete. However, these claims have also long been criticised. Although bureaucracy is not ideal for all organizations, it can provide **** include?