

BUREAUCRACY AND FORMAL ORGANIZATION

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Introduction

As human being we live in an organized world. Organizations of one form or another are necessary part of our society and solve many important needs. Organization is a dominant component of contemporary society. They surround us; we are born in them and usually die in them. Our life space in before is filled with them, they are just about impossible to escape. All organization has some function to perform and some incentive for their existence and for their operations. The goals of an organization determine the nature of its outputs and the series of activities through which the outputs are achieved.

Despite the differences among various organizations, there are some common factors in any organization, people, objectives, structure and management. It is the interaction of people in order to achieve objective which form the basis of an organisation. Some form of structure is needed by which people's interactions and efforts are coordinated. Some process of management is required by which the activities of the organization and the efforts of its members are directed and controlled towards the pursuit of this objectives. There are two types of organizations which are informal and formal organizations

Informal Organization

Within the formal structure, an informal organization will always be present. The informal organization arises from the interaction of people working in the organization, their psychological need and social needs, and the development of groups with their own relationships and norms of behaviour, irrespective of those defines within the formal structure (Ogunsiji, 2001).

- The informal organization is flexible and loosely structured.
- Relationship may be left undefined
- Membership is spontaneous and with varying degrees of involvement.

Group relationships and norms of behaviour exist outside the official structure and the informal organization may, therefore, be in conflict with the aim of the formal organization.

Functions of Informal Organization

The informal organization can serve a number of important functions:

- It provides satisfaction of members' social needs, and a sense of personal identity and belonging
- It provide for additional channels of communication- for example, through the 'grapevine' information of important to particular members is communicated quickly.
- It provides a means of motivation- for examples through status, social interaction, variety in routine or tedious jobs, and informal methods of work.
- It provides a means of highlighting deficiencies or weaknesses in the formal organization- for example, area of duties or responsibility not covered in job descriptions or outdated systems and procedures. The informal organization may also be used when formal methods would take too long, or not be appropriate, to deal with an unusual or unforeseen situation.

The informal organization therefore has an important influence on the morale, motivation, job satisfaction and performance of staff greater opportunity to use their initiatives and creativity in both personal and organizational development. Covert and informal activities may also have economic consequences in terms of added values and/or costs that escape ordinary accounting procedures.

Formal Organization

Formal organizations constitute one of the most important elements which make up the social web of modern societies (Ogunsiji, 2001). Most citizens of modern societies are born in hospitals, educated in schools, works in one organization or the other and to the degree that they participate in religious and political activities; these too, frequently take place in formal or complex organization (Etzioni 1969). In short members of modern society obtain a large part of their materials, social and cultural satisfactions from these large-scale organizations. It is, therefore, important to understand the basic concern of formal organizations, if one is to understand the modern man and the society in which he lives. According to Giddens (1997) organization is a large association of people run on impersonal lines, setup to achieve specific objectives. Etzioni (1969) sees an organization as a social unit which is predominantly oriented to the attainment of specific goals. These definitions present an organization as a group of people that come together to achieve specific goals.

It does not include a group of people that come together without a particular purpose, organizations, therefore, offer from social units such as the family, friendship groups and the community, because they are designed to realize clearly defined goals (Haralambos and Heald, 1995). Persons (1947) see an organization as the grouping together of individuals to accomplish goals that they cannot achieve alone. Thus, an organization involves more than

one individual and the individuals involved act in a coordinated manner towards the achievement of clearly specified objectives.

A formal rationally organized social structure involves clearly defined patterns of activity in which ideally, a series of actions are functionally related to the purpose of the organization. In such an organization, there is an integration of a series of offices of hierarchical status in which exist a number of obligations and privileges closely defined by limited and specific rules. Each of these offices contains an area of imputed competence and responsibility. Authority, the power of control which derives from an acknowledged status, inheres in the office and not in the particular person who performs the official role. Official action ordinarily occurs within the frame work of pre-existing rules of the organization.

The system of prescribed relations between the various offices involves a considerable degree of formality and clearly defined social distance between the occupants of these positions. The formal relations within an organizational structure arise automatically from the pattern of respective responsibilities that has been created, if the pattern of responsibilities are correctly designed and defined (Breach, 1965).

The work of Max Weber is usually taken as the starting point in the sociology of organizations. He considers the ideal type of formal organization to be bureaucracy and modern studies of bureaucracy date from Weber (March and Herbert, 1967). The term bureaucracy was created from the French word bureau, meaning desk or office, and Greek Kratos, meaning rule or political power (Wikipedia, 2013). Bureaucracies date back to ancient societies across globe. In imperial china for instance bureaucracy was headed by a chief counsellor (note 2003).

Within the bureaucracy, the positions were held to determine who held positions. The upper levels of the system held higher grades, and the officials wore distinctive clothing. The Confucian classics codified a set of values held by the officials (McKnight, 1983). Richard (2011) state that in modern times bureaucracy is a government administrative unit that carries out the decisions of the legislature or democratically-elected representation of a state.

Weberian bureaucracy has its origin in the works by Max Weber, a German Sociologist, political economist, and administrative scholar who contributed to the study of bureaucracy and administrative discourses and literature during the late 1800s and early 1900s (Richard and Ola, 2005). Weber believed that a particular form of organization bureaucracy – is becomes the distinctive characteristics of modern industrial society. His major interest in the study of organizations, amongst others, includes the identification of characteristics of an entity he called “bureaucracy” and the discovery of the consequences of bureaucratic organizations for the achievement of bureaucratic goals.

To Max Weber, bureaucracy is an organization with a hierarchy of paid, full-time officials who form a chain of command. A bureaucracy is concerned with the business of administration with controlling managing and co-ordinating a complex series of tasks. Weber's view of bureaucracy is presented in the context of his general theory of social action. He argued that all human action, the meanings and motives which lie behind it must be appreciated.

Weber identified various types of action which are distinguished by the meanings on which they are based. The first type is the affective or emotional action which stems from an individual's emotional state at a particular time. This action produces a form of legitimacy which provides a particular motive for obedience, a motive based on emotion. This type of legitimate control is charismatic authority. In a system of control based on charismatic authority, obedience derives from the devotion felt by subordinates to what they see as the exceptional qualities of their leader. Charismatic leaders are able to sway and control their followers by direct emotional appeals which excite devotion and strong loyalties. Organizational structures which derive from charismatic authority are fluid and ill-defined. The second type of social action is the traditional action which is based on established custom. An individual acts in a certain way because of ingrained habits because things have always been done that way. This action produces a type of legitimacy which sees custom as the drive for obedience.

Traditional authority is the legitimate control in this type of action. Traditional authority rests on a belief in the rightness of established customs and traditions. Those in authority command obedience on the basis of their traditional status which is usually inherited.

Their subordinates are directed by feelings of loyalty and obligation to long established positions of power. The organizational structure which derives from traditional authority takes two main forms. The first is a household of personal retainers which include relatives, favourites and servants who are dependent, for support on the head of the household. Secondly, is a system of vassals such as feudal lords who swear an oath of loyalty to the king and hold land on this basis. The duties of household retainers and vassals are defined by custom but may be changed according to the inclination of the particular ruler.

The third type of action is the rational action which in comparison with the other type mentioned above involves a clear awareness of a goal. It also involves a systematic assessment of the various means of attaining a goal and the selection of the most appropriate means.

Rational action, according to Max Weber is "the methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of means". The

particular motive for obedience in rational action is rationality. The type of legitimate control produced here is the legal-rational authority. Rational-legal authority differs sharply from its charismatic and traditional counterparts. Legitimacy and control stem neither from the perceived personal qualities of the leader and the devotion they excite nor from commitment to traditional wisdom and the authority which resides in traditional status. Rational – legal authority is based on the acceptance of a set of impersonal rules. Those who possess authority are able to issue commands and have them obeyed because others accept the legal framework which supports their authority. The organizational structure produced by rational legal authority is the bureaucracy which Weber defined as “a hierarchical organization designed rationally to co-ordinate the work of many individuals in the pursuit of large-scale administrative tasks and organizational goals”.

Characteristics of Bureaucratic Organization

The first characteristic is that the regular activities required for the purposes of the organization are distributed in a fixed way as official duties. Each administrative official has a clearly defined area of responsibility. Complex tasks are broken down into manageable parts with each official specializing in a particular area (Ogunsiji, 2001). There is a clear-cut division of integrated activities which are regarded as duties inherent in the office. Secondly, the organization of offices follows the principle of hierarchy.

This principle of office hierarchy and of levels of graded authority means a firmly ordered system of super and subordination in which there is a control and supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones. A chain of command and responsibility is established in which every official is accountable to his immediate superior both for the conduct of his own official duties and those of everybody below him.

Thirdly, the operations of bureaucracy are governed by a consistent system of abstract rules and the application of these rules to particular cases. These rules clearly define the limits of the authority held by various officials in the hierarchy. Obedience to superiors derives from a belief in the correctness of the rules. The rules also lay down fixed procedures for the performance of each task. They impose strict discipline and control leaving little room for personal initiative or discretion.

Fourthly, the ideal official performs his duties in a spirit of formalistic impersonality. The activities of the bureaucrat are governed by the rules, not by personal considerations; such as his feelings towards colleagues or clients. His actions are therefore rational rather than affective. Activities are conducted according to calculable rules and without regard for persons.

Fifthly, officials are appointed on the basis of technical knowledge and expertise. To Weber, bureaucratic administration means fundamentally, the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. To him, this is the feature of it which makes it specifically rational. Thus officials are selected in terms of the contribution their particular knowledge and skills can make to the realization of organizational goal. Once appointed, the official is a full time paid employee and his occupation constitutes a career. Promotion is based on seniority or achievement or a combination of both.

Sixthly, bureaucratic administration involves a strict separation of private and official income. The official does not own any part of the organization for which he work, neither can be use his position for private gain.

Seventhly, activities are conducted with the use of written documents. These documents are kept in files and are preserved in their original or draft form. This allows for proper record keeping. Files can be consulted when some information is needed irrespective of whether there is a change in the official in-charge.

Finally, bureaucratic offices involve the expectation of life-long tenure, in the absence of disturbing factors which may decrease the size of the organization.

Advantage of Bureaucracy

Bureaucracy has been most preferred when compared with organizations based on charismatic and traditional authority because of its technical efficiency with a premium placed on precision, speed expert control and optimal returns on input. It is also preferred because the structure is one which approaches the complete elimination of personalized relationship and non-rational considerations (like hostility, anxiety, effectual involvement etc.).Bureaucracy is an administration which almost completely avoids public discussion of its techniques, although there may occur public discussion of its policies. This secrecy is held to be necessary to keep valuable information from private economic competitors or from foreign and politically hostile group. Finally, it allows proper record-keeping, irrespective of whether the official leaves the office.

Disadvantage of Bureaucracy

The strict control of officials restricted to specialized tasks, limits human freedom. Secondly, the uniform and rational procedures of bureaucratic practice largely prevent spontaneity, creativity and individual initiative.Thirdly, it does not accommodate change that may be brought about by crisis.

Fourthly, it has also been accused of “trained incapability” (Ogunsiji, 2001). This refers to that situation in which one’s abilities function as inadequate. Actions base upon training and skills which have been successfully applied in the past may result in

inappropriate responses under changed conditions. An inadequate flexibility in the application of skills will, in a change situation, result in maladjustment.

Fifthly, it exerts constant pressure upon the official to be methodical, prudent and disciplined. This can best achieve its aim if the ideal patterns are buttressed by strong sentiments which entail devotion to one's duties. Sixthly, this methodical performance of routine activities may lead to boredom. Seventhly, the long process involved in decision-making delays the job to be done.

The Unofficial practices which, in the words of Peter Blau (1963), are regarded as an established part of the structure of all organizations, are not put into consideration in the discussion on bureaucracy.

Finally, while recognizing bureaucracy as the most efficient form of organization, and even indispensable for the modern state, Weber also saw it as a threat to individual freedoms, and the ongoing bureaucratization as leading to a "polar night of icy darkness", in which increasing rationalization of human life traps individuals in the aforementioned "iron cage" of bureaucratic, rule-based, rational control (Ritzer 2004).

The university: a typical example of a formal or bureaucratic organisation.

Having considered what we mean by formal organisation, an ideal type of which we call bureaucracy in general is the "university". The university is an autonomous public institution established with the sole purpose of providing higher education in the humanities; sciences and technology are encouraging the advancement of learning in all the major spheres of human endeavour. The distinctive character of the quality of training in the Nigeria University for example, is the adoption of an innovative programme of compulsory credit earning courses on modern agriculture and rural life and Nigeria life and culture for all students in their first two (2) years of training.

The university consists of the "council" and "senate". The council is the governing authority while all academic matters are vested in the senate. The formal head of the university is the "chancellor" who attends the university only on special occasions, the most important of which is the convocation ceremony for the conferral of degrees. The "pro-chancellor" is the chairman of the council. The "vice-chancellor" is the chief academic and executive officer of the university, while the "registrar" is the chief administrative officer who is responsible to the vice-chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the institution. The "bursar" is the chief finance officer of the university. The university "librarian" has responsibility for the organisation, development and administration of library services throughout the university.

The main objectives of the university are;

- To provide facilities for learning and to give instruction and training in such branches of knowledge as the university may desire to foster and in doing so, to enable students to obtain the advantages of a liberal education.
- To promotes, by research and other means, the advancement of knowledge and its practical application of social, political, cultural, economic, scientific and technological problems.
- To stimulates, particularly through teaching and research, interest in an appreciation of African culture and heritage.
- To serve as a custodian, promoter, propagator of the social and cultural heritage.
- To stimulates and sustain interests in agriculture.
- To undertake any other activities appropriate to a university; and such other things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.
- To serve as a major instrument for the application of the policy of the government on higher education.

The university has clearly defined goals and well stated objectives. There is also hierarchical arrangement of offices.

These principles of office hierarchy and levels of graded authority mean a firmly ordered system of super and sub-ordination in there is a control and supervision of the lower offices by the higher one's a chain of command and responsibility is established whereby every official is accountable to his immediate superior both for the conduct of his own officials duties and those of everybody below him.

There is a chancellor of the university who's the head of the university and in relation to the university, takes precedents before all other members therefore and when he is present, he is to preside at all meetings of convocation. There is also the office of the pro-chancellor of the university who in relation to the university take precedent before all other members of the university except the chancellor and except the vice-chancellor when so reacting. The pro-chancellor when he is present and the chancellor is not, will be the chairman of all meetings of the council.

There is the vice-chancellor of the university who is the principal academic and executive officer of the university and ex-officio chairman of senate and shall in the absent of the chancellor confer degrees and other academics titles and distinctions of the university. There is also a deputy vice-chancellor of the university who is to assist the vice-chancellor in the discharge of his function as prescribed above and shall subject to the status in the absent of the vice-chancellor exercise and perform such of the functions of the vice-chancellor as the vice-chancellor and if the vice-chancellor should be incapacitated, the council may delegate

to him. There is a registrar, a bursar and a university librarian. All the principal officers of the university have a clear cut understanding of their responsibility and there is a well-defined delegation of authority. The registrar is a full time officer and he is the chief administrative officer of the university and his responsible to the vice-chancellor for the day-to-day administration of the university. The librarian is a full time officer who is responsible to the vice-chancellor for the administration of the university library and the coordination of library services in the university. The bursar is a full time officer and his responsible to the vice-chancellor for the day0-to-day administration and control of the financial affairs of the university.

There are rules regulating the appointment of these officers and even the employment of the staffs in the university. There are also regulations guiding the admission of student into the university. The minimum academic qualification of a lecturer of undergraduate is the master degree while the minimum academic qualification for a lecturer for the post-graduate student is the doctorate degree, the non-academic staffs are also employed based on their technical skill, the minimum requirement for the admission into university is 5 O'Level credits in related subjects to the course of choice recruitment, appointment, and admission is done in a formal manner. There are also rules guiding discipline and punishment of staffs and students in terms of misconducts.

There are also regulations and procedures for promotion of staffs in the university. Promotion is purely done in a spirit of formalistic impersonality without hatred or person. Finally, the university involves the expectation of life long tenure; there is a record office which keeps all the record and document of the university. This then perpetuate the activities of the university to the extent that university displace all the characteristics that have been mentioned, it is a formal, rational and bureaucratic organisation.

Summary

In the work place, there must be a stable, defined set of general rules for the employees that they must abide by all times (Weber, 1968).

This commitment yields jurisprudence and business management. In turn this will instil a hardworking and confident frame of mind throughout the workforce. Each of these values is pertinent to the success of a bureaucratic business. Every individual Weberian characteristic yields a different aspect that builds the foundation of a strong bureaucracy.

Max Weber specifically discusses the value of imperial positions, rule governed decision making ,professionalism, chain of command, defined responsibilities, and bounded authority because he believes that these are the predominant qualities that an office or workplace must possess in order to have stability, power, order, and success. If one value is

missing from the equation, then the bureaucracy will fail. Each aspect of Weberian Bureaucracy is a vital building block to the foundation of creating a flourishing business.

Conclusion

Society is organized to get its job done. “It does so through formal organizations and bureaucracies. The same system that can be frustrating and impersonal is also the one on which we rely for our personal welfare and to fulfil our daily needs. The society of today however not the society of yesterday is, nor will it be the society of tomorrow. The rationalization of society refers to a transformation in people’s thinking and behaviour over the past 150 years, shifting the focus from personal relationships to efficiency and results. Karl Marx attributed this transformation to capitalism while Max Weber who disagreed with Marx related it to protestant theology. As a result of rationality, formal organizations, secondary groups designed to achieve specific objectives have become a central feature of contemporary society. With industrialization, secondary groups have become common. Today, their existence is taken for granted.

They become a part of our lives at birth and seem to get more and more complex as we move through the life course. The larger the formal organization, the more likely it will turn into a bureaucracy. Although bureaucracies are the most efficient forms of social organization, they can also be dysfunctional. Dysfunctions of bureaucracies include red tape, lack of communication between units and alienation.

Examples of these dysfunctions include an overly rigid interpretation of rules and the failure of members of the same organization to communicate among one another. According to Max Weber (1968), the impersonality of bureaucracies tends to produce workers who feel detached from the organization and each other. According to Karl Marx (1978), workers experience alienation when they lose control over their work and are cut off from the finished product of their labour.

One reason bureaucracies endure and are so resilient is because they tend to take on a life of their own through a process called goal displacements. Once a bureaucracy has achieved its original goals, it adopts new goals in order to perpetuate its existence. In Nigeria, personal achievement is central; workers are hired on the basis of what they can contribute to the organization that hires them. To counter the negative side of bureaucracies, many corporations have begun taking steps to better humanize work settings. This includes the establishment of work teams, corporate day care, employee stock ownership plans, and the quality circles.

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