

Revisiting Weber's Theory of Bureaucracy and its Usefulness for Analyzing Organizational Structures and Issues.

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Abstract

Organizations that are designed and operated as if they were machines are commonly referred to as bureaucracies. The development of this idea relating to organizational structure was originated by the German sociologist Max Weber, who observed the parallels between the mechanization of industry and the proliferation of bureaucratic forms of organization. Bureaucratic approaches to organization have proved incredibly popular, partly because of their efficiency in the performance of certain tasks, but also because of their ability to reinforce and sustain particular patterns of power and control. The aim of this paper is thus twofold; first, to provide a greater understanding of Weber's theory of bureaucratic organization and, second critically discuss its usefulness for analyzing organizational structures and issues. Hence, this objective will be achieved by elucidating the origins and the rise of bureaucratic organization and examining key characteristics of Weber's bureaucracy. In this paper, both arguments for and against his proposition will also be critically evaluated in detail, giving the experience of numerous academic scholar, social science researchers, business and public practitioners. Finally, the concluding section then summarizes the arguments and presents the author's personal viewpoint.

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INTRODUCTION

It has widely been perceived that organizations that are designed and operated as if they were machines are commonly referred to as bureaucracies. Keep in mind, however, that most organizations are bureaucratized in some degree, for the mechanistic mode of thought has shaped our most basic conceptions of what organization is all about. When business managers or public administrators think of organizations as machines they tend to manage and design them as machines made up of interlocking parts that each play a clearly defined role in the functioning of the whole. While in certain circumstances a mechanical mode of organization can provide the basis for highly effective operation, but in others it can have many unfortunate consequences. One of the most fundamental problems of organizational study is that the mechanical way of thinking is so ingrained in our everyday conceptions of organization that it is often very difficult to organize in any other way. To become more open to other ways of thinking, it is therefore useful, in this paper, to have a critical discussion on both arguments for and against mechanistic thinking of bureaucratic organizations, giving several points of view from relevant writers and organization theorists.

Conceptually, it becomes critical for us to clearly understand how and when we are engaging in mechanistic thinking, and how so many popular theories and taken-for-granted ideas about organization support this thinking. For one of the major challenges facing many organization theorists and practitioners is to replace this kind of thinking with fresh ideas and approaches, such as those to be explored in later parts of this paper. Thus the image of organizations as machines will be examined and how this style of thought underpins the development of bureaucratic organization will be illustrated in the next sections. Let me now begin by elucidating the story behind the development of our mechanistic thinking of bureaucratic organization.

THE ORIGINS AND THE RISE OF BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATION

The purpose of this section is not to trace the significant periods in the evolution of management thought from its earliest informal days to the present. Rather, the primary objective is to place mechanistic thinking of bureaucratic organizations in the context of its cultural environment and thereby to understand not only what conceptual framework of bureaucratic organizations was and is, but also to explore why it developed as it did. Whether in public or private sectors, organizations are rarely established as ends in themselves. They are instruments created to achieve other ends. This is reflected in the origins of the word “organization”, which derives from the Greek *organon*, meaning a tool or instrument. [Neufeldt and Guralnik, 1994, p.954]. This is simply the main reason why various ideas about tasks, goals, aims, and objectives have become such fundamental organizational concepts. For tools and instruments are mechanical devices invented and developed to aid in performing some kind of goal-oriented activity. For example, this instrumentality is evident in the practices of the earliest traditional organizations of which we are familiar with, such as those that built the great pyramids, empires, churches, and armies. Notwithstanding this, it is with the invention and proliferation of machines, particularly along with the industrial revolution in Europe and North America, that the concepts of organization really became mechanized. For the use of machines, particularly in industry, required that organizations be adapted to the needs of machines.

During the nineteenth century a number of attempts were made to codify and promote the ideas that could lead to the efficient organization and management of work. Thus Adam Smith’s praise of the division of labor was followed in 1801 by Eli Whitney’s public demonstration of mass production, showing how guns could be assembled from piles of interchangeable parts. And in 1832 Charles Babbage, inventor of one of the earliest forms of the mathematical computer, published a treatise advocating

a scientific approach to organization and management and emphasizing the importance of planning and an appropriate division of labor. [Wren, 1994, p.p. 59-74]. Nevertheless, it was not until the early twentieth century that these ideas and developments were synthesized in a comprehensive theory of organization and management. One of the most important contributions to this theory was made by the German sociologist Max Weber, who observed the parallels between the mechanization of industry and the proliferation of bureaucratic forms of organization.

Weber strongly believed that the bureaucratic form routinizes the process of administration exactly as the machine routinizes production. As a sociologist Weber was particularly interested in the social consequences of the proliferation of bureaucracy and was concerned about the effect it would have on the human side of society. He saw that the bureaucratic approach had the potential to routinize and mechanize almost every aspect of human life, eroding the human spirit and capacity for spontaneous action. Furthermore, he recognized that it could have grave political consequences in undermining the potential for more democratic forms of organization. [Weber, 1992, p.p. 81-86]. His writings on bureaucracy are thus pervaded by a great skepticism, of which we will examine in great details in next sections. It seems logical that one cannot simply assess the essence of any theory or model without really attempting to understand its underlying conceptual framework and premise. This is also true for Weber's conceptualization of bureaucracy. Hence, in the following section, an attempt will be made to define Weber's original idea of bureaucracy and the focus of discussion will particularly be on the core characteristics of Weber's bureaucratic model. Let me turn, therefore, to the discussion of Weber's fundamental concepts of bureaucratic organization.

WEBER'S THEORY OF BUREAUCRACY

Throughout the history of management studies, the term "bureaucracy" has been widely used and taught by many academic scholars,

business executives and public practitioners from diverse disciplines. Basically, this would imply that “bureaucracy ” means different things to different people. And of course, the importance and usefulness of the term depends largely upon how the concept is being interpreted and understood by different people from varied backgrounds. Generally speaking, bureaucracy is however perceived as a form of organization that emphasizes precision, speed, clarity, regularity, reliability, and efficiency achieved through the creation of a fixed division of tasks, hierarchical supervision and detailed rules and regulations. But is this really what Max Weber had in mind when he wrote his classical work on “*The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*” in 1947? Perhaps, the answer to the above-mentioned question is not so simple and straightforward.

The original definition of Weber’s bureaucracy is rather complicated and complex as we need to carefully look at its basic characteristics that would illustrate Weber’s ideal type of rational and efficient organization. According to Max Weber, there seems to be a need to establish a rational basis for the organization and management of large-scale undertakings, whether public or private. One of the most critical problems was how any large organization might function more systematically and efficiently. Weber perceived that bureaucracy which meant management by the office or position rather than by a person or patrimonial was the answer. To him, bureaucracy was an ideal organization, not the most desirable, but in fact the pure form of organization. Weber sought to define bureaucracy as one that would be perfectly rational and would provide maximum efficiency of operation [Weber, 1990, p.p. 3-15].

It is important to note here that his model was a hypothetical rather than a factual description of how most organization were structured. Therefore, it is also true that combinations of various organizational arrangements would appear in practice, however, what Weber attempted to describe was one type of ideal organization for the purpose of theoretical analysis. In essence, the bureaucratic construct would serve as a normative

model to ease the transition from small-scale entrepreneurial to large-scale professional management in organizations. Based on Weber's idea, there are three pure types of legitimate authority; rational-legal authority, traditional authority and charismatic authority. Weber argued that traditional and charismatic authority were irrational and less efficient when compared to rational-legal authority. [Pugh, Hickson and Hinings, 1985, p.p. 15-19]. In contrast, legal authority serves to provide the basis for Weber's bureaucratic organization. In talking about the importance of legal authority, Wren [1994, p.196] points out that

"rational-legal must provide the basis for a bureaucracy, since it (1) provided a basis for continuity of administration; (2) was rational, that is, the member occupying the administrative office was chosen on the basis of competence to perform the duties; (3) provided the leader with a legal means for exercising authority; and (4) clearly defined and carefully delimited all authority to the functions necessary to accomplish the organization's task".

Weber saw administrative functions as the exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. The fundamental characteristics of Weber's bureaucracy were summarized as follows : 1) The division of labor and authority and responsibility were clearly defined for each member and were legitimized as official duties. 2) Offices or positions were organized in a hierarchy of authority resulting in a chain of command or the scalar principle. 3) All organizational members were selected on the basis of technical qualifications through formal examinations or by virtue of training or education. 4) Officials were appointed, not elected. (With the exception in some cases of the chief of the whole unit, for example, an elected public official). 5) Administrative officials worked for fixed salaries and were career officials. 6) Administrative officials were not owners of the units they administered. 7) Administrators were subject to strict rules, discipline, and controls regarding the conduct of their official duties. These rules and control were impersonal and uniformly applied in all cases. [Wren, 1994, p.196]. From the above discussion, it should help us better understand Weber's fundamental concepts of bureaucratic organizations and provide us

a good summary of what Weber had in mind when he developed his theory of bureaucracy.

It is important for us to understand that bureaucratic organizations only create partial ways of seeing. For in encouraging us to see and understand the world from one perspective they discourage us from seeing it from others. This is exactly what has happened in the course of developing bureaucratic approaches to organization. For in understanding organization as a rational, technical process, mechanical imagery tends to underplay the human aspects of organization, and to overlook the fact that the tasks facing organizations are often much more complex, uncertain, and difficult than those that can be performed by most machines. Thus, in the following discussion, the strengths and limitations of Weber's bureaucratic organization will be explored and critically evaluated. Let's now deal with the strengths first.

THE ARGUMENTS FOR MAX WEBER

The strengths of Weber's bureaucratic organizations can be stated very simply. For bureaucratic approaches to organization work well only under conditions where machines work well: (1) when there is a straightforward task to perform; (2) when the environment is stable enough to ensure that the products produced will be appropriate ones; (3) when one wishes to produce exactly the same product time and again; (4) when precision is at a premium; and (5) when the human machine parts are complaint and behave as they have been designed to do. [Perrow, 1972, p.p. 40-44].

To elucidate the strength of bureaucracy further, Jaques [1992, p.382] has stressed that

“with 35 years of research have convinced me that managerial hierarchy is the most efficient, the hardest, and in fact the most natural structure ever devised for large organizations. Properly structured, hierarchy can release energy and creativity, rationalize productivity, and actually improve morale.”

He further concluded that what we actually need to deal with severe organizational issues is not a new, flatter organization but an understanding of how managerial hierarchy functions. To be more specific, we need to understand how managerial hierarchy relates to the complexity of work and how we can use it to achieve a more effective deployment of talent and energy. According to Jaques, bureaucracy is the best structure for getting work done in large organizations. In short, what we need is not some new forms of organization, but rather managerial hierarchy that understands its own nature and purpose. [Jaques, 1992, p.p. 382-383]. In addition, one of the most fundamental advantages of managerial hierarchy is that it provides a way of achieving coordination among those sub-units that must work together. The managerial hierarchy is not only a mechanism for directing the activities of individual sub-units but also a means for achieving the coordination required within the function. [Lorsch, 1992, p.p. 322-323].

One of the most outstanding advantages of Weber's bureaucracy is that it helps to bring objectivity to employee selection by reducing nepotism and other forms of favoritism by decision-makers and replacing it with job-competence criteria. In fact, there are numerous positive characteristics of bureaucracy that are highly desirable. As pointed out by Robbins [1990, p. 311] that

"we can single out the attempt to eliminate the use of irrelevant criteria for choosing employees; the use of tenure to protect employees against arbitrary authority, changes in skill demands, and declining ability; the establishment of rules and regulations to increase the likelihood that employees will be treated fairly and to create stability over time; and the creation of a vertical hierarchy to ensure that clear lines of authority exist, that decisions are made, and accountability over decision is maintained".

Although some writer such as Warren Bennis has strongly argued that bureaucracy is already dead and its structure has become obsolete to deal with today's changing environment. Despite the criticism directed at bureaucracy which will be examined in next section, one cannot simply

ignore that bureaucracies are still everywhere. To many people, Weber's formulation of the concept of bureaucracy provided an invaluable tool for the analysis of organizational problems in a society that was making the adjustment to industrialization. What Weber had in mind was to create a rational and efficient form of organization. He never implied that his bureaucratic organization was the universal, eternal form. [Miewald, 1970, p.p.65-69]. For Weber, bureaucracy was just an ideal type of organization and is still very much alive and well as one can see that today's majority of large organizations both in public and private sectors are predominantly bureaucratic in structure, and in many circumstances bureaucracy represents the most efficient way for them to organize.

Some organizations such as those in the fast-food industry (for instance the McDonald's hamburger chain) have had spectacular success using the bureaucratic model, because these conditions are all fulfilled. Surgical wards, aircraft maintenance departments, finance offices, courier firms, and other organizations where precision, safety, and clear accountability are at a premium are also often able to implement bureaucratic approaches successfully, at least in certain aspects of their operations. As it has strongly been argued by Robbins [2003, p444] that

"In spite of some changes, bureaucracy is alive and well in many venues. It continues to be a dominant structural form in manufacturing, service firms, hospitals, schools and colleges, the military, and voluntary associations. Why? Because it's still the most efficient way to organize large-scale activities".

From an economic point of view, it can be argued that bureaucracy which provides the mechanism with which to facilitate the standardization of work structure and processes exist because market fail. Based on microeconomic theory, hierarchies will then become more efficient and replace markets by allocating resources through rules and authority relationships. Under high uncertainty, hierarchies arise because they reduce costs by establishing rules and coordination positions that are not found in

markets. [Robbins, 1990, p.313]. There is no doubt that this distinction between markets and hierarchies could provide an explanation for the existence of bureaucracies. Bureaucratic approaches to organization have proved incredibly popular, partly because of their efficiency in the performance of certain tasks, but also because of their ability to reinforce and sustain particular patterns of power and control. There can be little doubt that the increasing rate of societal flux and change poses many problems for organizations based on bureaucratic designs. Bureaucratic organizations may well in the end prove to be but one specific kind of organization, generated by, yet only imperfectly suited to, the requirements of the mechanical age. Now that we are entering an age with a completely new technological base drawing on microelectronics, new organizational principles are likely to become of increasing importance. In the following discussions, let's now look at the arguments against bureaucratic organizations which might give a glimpse of what may be both possible and appropriate for managing these new times.

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST MAX WEBER

Nevertheless, Weber's bureaucracy is not without its drawbacks. In fact, bureaucratic approaches to organization often have severe limitations. One piece of work that gives rise to the arguments against Weber's theory of Bureaucracy is that by Johansen and Swigart. They believed that the old, stable pyramid shape, with a broad base of line workers, a medium range of middle managers, and a few top executives, had disappeared. For them, what replaces the monolithic organization is what they call "the fishnet organization". Basically, the fishnet is a metaphor they chose to express the form of organization emerging from the current turmoil. They envisaged that hierarchy is giving way to more horizontal structures with complex yet flexible webs of interconnection [Johansen and Swigart, 1996, p.p. 15-16].

Similar to what Johansen and Swigart had in mind when they proposed the fishnet organization, John Kotter argued for flatter structured

organization in which he called “the organization of the future”. He saw that the typical twentieth-century organization has not operated successfully in a rapidly changing environment since the rate of change in the business world is getting faster and faster. Structure, systems, practices and culture need to be carefully looked at and managed so that organization can succeed with incremental change. Interestingly, he has described eight factors as critical to transform the twentieth century organization to the winning enterprise of the twenty-first century. The eight-stage process are 1) establishing a sense of urgency, 2) creating teamwork at the top, 3) developing a vision and a strategy, 4) communicating the change vision, 5) empowering employees for broad-based action, 6) generating excellent short-term performance, 7) consolidating gains and producing more change, 8) fostering an adaptive corporate culture. [Kotter, 1996, p.p. 161-186].

The structures Kotter envisaged and pictured is pretty much similar to an organizational framework that has been proposed by Gifford and Elizabeth Pinchot. They viewed effective organizations as organizations that will rely on systems that develop and express the intelligence, judgment, collaborative abilities, and wide-system responsibility of all their members. In essence, whatever else the successful organization of the future may be, it will be a place where the intelligence of every member is treasured and allowed to bloom. In addition, it will have to be a place that recognizes that diversity is strength. According to the Pinchot, the transformation from bureaucratic to intelligent organizations is a move from relationships of dominance and submission up and down the chain of command to horizontal relationships of peers across a network of voluntary cooperation and market-based exchanges. [Pinchot, 1994, p.p. 61-74]. From this organizational perspective, leadership therefore becomes critical to the success of any organization. To be more precise, smart leaders of the past, with their command-and-control mentality are no longer relevant for the success of the organization. What we do need is the new leaders who can articulate a vision that inspires and empowers everyone within the institution. They will be the people who can encourage every member of the organization to dream a mutually beneficial dream.

Perhaps, it seems logical to argue that the crucial organization task is not to design the most beautiful structure but to capture individual capabilities and motivate the entire organization to respond cooperatively to a complicated and dynamic environment. To conclude this section it seems appropriate to refer to the work of Bartlett and Ghoshal [1993, p.117] which suggests that

“today the most successful companies are those where top executives recognize the need to manage the new environmental and competitive demands by focusing less on the quest for an ideal structure and more on developing the abilities, behavior, and performance of individual managers. Change succeeds only when those assigned to the new transnational and interdependent tasks understand the overall goals and are dedicated to achieving them”.

Similar to what Bartlett and Ghoshal have conceptually demonstrated in their article, Halal argued for an organic network of self-managed internal enterprises that operates more like an intelligent market system. Just like Kotter, the Pinchot, Bartlett and Ghoshal, Halal proposed the entrepreneurial organizations that require organic systems composed of numerous small, self-guiding enterprises that can adapt to their local environment more easily by operating from the bottom up. Based on Halal's and his colleagues' experiences, internal markets have three major principles. They are 1) to transform the hierarchy into internal enterprise units, 2) to create an economic infrastructure to guide decisions, and 3) to provide leadership to foster collaborative synergy. In short, they are complete internal market economies designed to produce continual, rapid structural change, just as external markets do. [Halal, 1996, p.p. 36-42].

In addition, various authors [Merton, 1940; Selznick, 1949; Gouldner, 1954; Thompson, 1961; Halal, 1996] have dealt with the drawbacks and limitations of Weber's theory of bureaucracy at length. In particular they: (1) can create organizational forms that have great difficulty in adapting to changing circumstances; (2) can result in mindless and unquestioning bureaucracy; (3) can have unanticipated and undesirable consequences as

the interests of those working in the organization take precedence over the goals the organization was designed to achieve; and (4) can have dehumanizing effects upon employees, especially those at the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy.

Bureaucratic organizations have great difficulty adapting to changing circumstances because they are designed to achieve predetermined goals; they are not designed for innovation. Unsurprisingly, for machines are usually single-purpose mechanisms designed to transform specific inputs into specific outputs and can engage in different activities only if they are explicitly modified or redesigned to do so.

Changing circumstances call for different kinds of action and response. Flexibility and capacities for creative action therefore become more critical than narrow efficiency. The compartmentalization created by bureaucratic divisions between different hierarchic levels, functions, roles, and people tends to create barriers and stumbling blocks. One of the most famous arguments presented against the bureaucratic organization was made by social psychologist Warren Bennis. In his writings, he described the bureaucratic structure as too mechanical for the needs of modern organizations. For Bennis, the bureaucratic structure has become obsolete because it is designed to deal with stable environments, where as the contemporary need is for a structure that is designed to respond effectively to change. [Bennis, 1966, p.p. 30-35].

For instance, when new problems arise they are often ignored because there are no ready-made response. Or they are approached in a fragmented rather than a holistic way so that they can be tackled through existing organizational policies, procedures, and patterns of expertise. But standardized procedures and channels of communication are often unable to deal effectively with new circumstances, necessitating numerous ad hoc meetings and committees, which, because they have to be planned to fit rather than disrupt the normal mode of operation, are often too slow or too late for dealing with issues. Problems of inaction and lack of coordination hence

become rife. In such circumstances the organization frequently becomes clogged with backlogs of work because normal routine has been disrupted, and complex issues float up the organizational hierarchy as members at each level find in turn that they are unable to solve them.

On the way, information often gets distorted, as people hide errors and the true nature and magnitude of problems for fear of being held responsible for them. Those in command of the organization thus frequently find themselves facing issues that are inappropriately defined, and which they have no real idea of how to approach. They are often forced to delegate them to special task forces or teams of staff experts or consultant who since they are often remote from the concrete problems being experienced, further increase the delay and inadequacy of response. The difficulty of achieving effective response to changing circumstances is often further aggravated by the high degree of specialization in different functional areas within the organization. Interdepartmental communications and coordination are often poor, and people often have a myopic view of what is occurring, there being no overall grasp of the situation facing the enterprise as a whole. Accordingly, the actions encouraged by one element of the organization often entail negative consequences for others, so that one element ends up working against the interests of another.

Another weakness of bureaucratic organization is that of detailed job responsibilities. Defining work responsibilities in a clear-cut manner has the advantage of letting everyone know what is expected of them. But it also lets them know what is not expected of them. In short, detailed job descriptions have this two-edged character, creating many problems when the organization faces changing circumstances that call for initiative and flexibility in response. [Pinchot, 1994, p.p. 29-31]. This institutionalized passivity and dependency can even lead people to make and justify deliberate mistakes on the premise that they're obeying orders. The hierarchical organization of jobs builds on the idea that control must be exercised over the different parts of the organization (to ensure that they are

doing what they are designed to do), rather than being built into the parts themselves. Supervisors and other hierarchical forms of control do not just monitor the performance of workers; they also remove responsibility from workers, because their function really becomes operational only when problems arise.

Bureaucratic organization discourages initiative, encouraging people to obey orders and keep their place rather than to take an interest in, challenge, and question what they are doing. [Pinchot, 1994, p.p. 33-34]. People in a bureaucracy who question the wisdom of conventional practice are viewed more often than not as troublemakers. Therefore apathy often reigns, as people learn to feel powerless about problems which collectively they understand and ultimately have the power to solve.

These difficulties are often linked to another set of problems : the development of sub-goals and sets of interests that undermine the organization's ability to meet its primary objectives. The functional specialization in which elements of the organization's overall mission are broken down and made the responsibility of separate people or departments creates a structure that is supposed to be a system of cooperation but often turns out as a system of competition. The intention of mechanistic-bureaucratic organization is that the parts should contribute to the goals and objectives of the whole. But interpreted from a wider perspective the hierarchical structure is not just a network of jobs and roles, but also a career system in which individuals compete for limited places higher up the hierarchy.

Competition also occurs because resources available to the organization are often limited, so that developments in one area may exclude developments in others. As a consequence, the bureaucratic organization can produce behavior which, while rational for the individuals involved in specific activities may prove irrational for the whole. If the organization is staffed by rational employees who behave in accordance with the formal interests and aims of total organization, fitting in rather than using the

organization for other purposes, then this may not occur. As a matter of fact, humans are human, and the best-laid plans have a habit of turning in ways never intended by their creators. Formal organizations thus often become guided toward the achievement of informal ends, some of which may be quite contrary to the aims underlying the original design.

A final set of problems relates to human consequences. The bureaucratic approach to organization tends to limit rather than mobilize the development of human capacities, molding human beings to fit the requirements of bureaucratic organization rather than building the organization around their strengths and potentials. [Mintzberg, 1993, p.p.176-182]. Both employees and organizations lose from this arrangement. Employees lose opportunities for personal growth, often spending many hours a day on work they neither value nor enjoy, while organizations lose the creative and intelligent contributions that most employees are capable of making, given the right opportunities.

THE CONCLUDING REMARKS

To conclude, there are two basic reasons why I personally choose to explore theory of bureaucracy proposed by Max Weber in this paper. Firstly, the theory represents a good conceptual foundation from which contemporary theories have grown. Secondly, the basic idea of this theory and its terminology in explaining systematic structure has continuously been used by most organization theorists and practitioners. Owing to the theory's intuitive logic and ease of understanding, Weber's theory has then received wide recognition, particularly among public administrators.

Although Weber's theory of bureaucracy has many drawbacks and severe limitations, I personally believe that what Weber attempted to achieve was not perfection, but systematization; this is moving management practices and organizational structure toward more logical ways of operating. To be more precise, Weber argued that bureaucracy should be seen as a blueprint for efficiency, which would emphasize rules rather than

people and competence rather than favoritism. Suffice it to say, as organizations grew in size and complexity, the search for a theory of organizations led to Max Weber and his bureaucratic model which attempted to provide design for coping with large-scale organizations.

However, today's exploding complexity challenges our most basic assumptions about bureaucracy. Weber's bureaucratic organizations are too cumbersome under these dynamic conditions, so more and more people from diverse and different perspectives will attempt to develop new forms of organizations to replace bureaucracy. In today's complex and intelligence-intensive world economy, it is becoming transparent that bureaucratic management is incompatible with high performance. In the near future, bureaucracy will be less talked and studied as it will produce organizations that lack the systems for assembling a collective intelligence to think both globally and locally, both short and long term. Undoubtedly, Weber's bureaucratic model will continue to possess severe negative qualities. But my personal point of view is that although bureaucracy will gain less and less popularity nevertheless bureaucracy is the dominant organizational form in society and has achieved its distinction because it works best with the type of technologies and environments that most organizations have.

Many organization theorists and public practitioners [Merton, 1940; Selznick, 1949; Gouldner, 1954; Thompson, 1961; Bennis, 1966; Pinchot, 1994; Halal, 1996] may have been arguing that bureaucracy is a structural dinosaur yet I personally tend to agree with Robbins [2003] that bureaucracy is alive and well and is still one of the most efficient ways to organize management activities under certain circumstances and environments. Despite the criticisms discussed in earlier part of this paper, Weber's work has become virtually the foundation stone of the discussion of organizational structure and system in a wide range of applied areas of study. Unarguably, his work has been extremely influential and has stimulated a lot of thinking and research. To me, there is no doubt that Weber has demonstrated his ability to contribute theoretical framework in this study and moreover

produced some valuable material for discussions on organizational structures and issues. Weber's theory has significantly contributed both theoretical and empirical evidence in many of today's organizational studies, and more importantly offered practical solutions to current organizational problems currently plaguing business managers and public administrators. To put this in the simplest term, Weber has intelligently demonstrated how organization theory concepts can be applied to provide the solution to current management problems.

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