

Bureaucracy and its impact in Algerian Organisation and other developing countries

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Summary :

The review of a large body of literature concerning work organisation in many less industrialized countries is influenced not only by factors such as work environment, type of technology, socio-economic, political systems or management behaviour as stated by most Western studies but also by other factors that play a great role in organisation in this countries. Among these factors, the type of bureaucracy, power and authority which we think that is the most prominent factors influencing work efficiency. Thus the focus of this study will be on the concept of bureaucracy in Algerian organisation and other developing countries.

Before examining the advantage and disadvantages of the concept of bureaucracy and its relation to organisation, efficiency we may first identify its definition and meaning.

ملخص:

إن مراجعة كثير من الدراسات التي تناولت المؤسسات التنظيمية في الجزائر والدول النامية الأخرى متأثرة ليس بعوامل مثل بيئة العمل أو سلوك المشرفين، أو عوامل التكنولوجيا، أو عوامل اقتصادية، أو نظام سياسي كما تزعم ذلك الدول الغربية. لكن هناك عوامل أخرى أكثر أهمية من العوامل المذكورة مثل: البيروقراطية وسلطة القرار إن الهدف من هذه الدراسة ينصب حول أثر هذه العوامل على المؤسسة التنظيمية. والنتيجة التي توصلنا إليها من خلال هذا البحث هو أن هناك فروقا كبيرة وفجوة شاسعة بين التطور الاقتصادي والتنظيمي في الدول المتطورة والنامية في مدى فهم كل طرف لنجاح أهداف التنمية. وعدم فهم هذا المفهوم له علاقة بمجموعة من العوامل مثل نقص الخبرة، النظام السياسي غير المستقر، العامل الثقافي، وكذا الفروق في القيم إلى جانب عدم استقلالية المؤسسات التنظيمية في القطاع العام في الدول النامية سياسيا واجتماعيا واقتصاديا.

Generally the concept of bureaucracy differs from one society to another. In theory, it means getting the work done efficiently as it is structured by the organisation. It also means stability and continuity. In same time Weber (1947) conceived of bureaucracy as a social mechanism that maximizes efficiency, or a form of social organisation with specific characteristics. Eisenstadt (1960) indicates that bureaucracy can be defined either as a tool or a mechanism created for the successful and efficient implementation of a certain goals.

Although a large number of studies in Western countries have approached the role of bureaucracy in the function of the organisation, very few of them have tackled it from organisation point of view. Experts in work organisation in Western countries ignore the bureaucracy factor as a concept that may affect progress of organisational efficiency: firstly because most of their organisations are not dependent on direct political and social pressure and intervention; secondly, they have established a strong trade union, which works against inefficient bureaucrats. The existence of trade unions leads to a balance of power in the organisation. By contrast, in developing countries organisations are completely controlled by the states, both politically and economically. They also lack qualified unions which can challenge the bureaucrats and the state. For these and other social and cultural reasons, the problem of bureaucracy represents a serious issue in the function of the organisation in developing countries. When we talk about bureaucracy, we refer to management and staff who represent the bureaucrats who have the power and authority to manage and control. Thirdly, the political system in Western countries is more stable whereas in developing countries, it is not. In the latter, for example, for political reasons the director of a firm can be easily hired and fired. The lack of stability of managing directors in organisations may have a great effect on organisational effectiveness. In fact, changing a director may lead to the changing of experienced staff who are familiar with the work environment and its function.

In developing countries, the concept of bureaucracy is associated with inefficiency and slowness of the process. For the Algerian society, "bureaucracy" is a general term covering all the negative manifestations of the public and administrative system. People use the term "bureaucracy" to express and/or to show their anger, when they do not get some thing done on time or efficiently. It also refers to an unjust behaviour as well as inequality in the distribution of responsibility according to the qualification and competence of the people involved. Achoui (1983) indicated that bureaucracy problems such as blocking and distorting communication are common problems within the Algerian centralized systems or organisation.

It can also be used as an instrument of power to control both managers and workers attitudes and their behaviour in organisations. A bureaucratic organisation is usually created by and for a certain elite to deal with political, economic and technical problems which the organisation faces. Eisenstadt (1960) states that a bureaucratic organization is created when the holders of political or economical power are faced with problems that arise

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because of the influence of external or internal factors. The purpose of bureaucracy is to mobilize adequate resources, either material such as improving conditions of work, maintenance, reducing hazards, increasing production and cutting costs, or human, such as improving workers' qualifications by giving them further training and making them more aware of the working conditions.

Furthermore, Weber(1947) believes that bureaucratic organisations are the dominant institutions of industrial society. A bureaucrat, according to Weber, is concerned with the business of administration, controlling management and co-ordinating different services. The designing and redesigning the organisation aims at meeting the social and technical optimisation in terms of political, economic and psychological needs. Weber's view of bureaucracy can be explained in the context of his general theory of social action. He relates human action to three important factors namely:

First, emotional action which is dominated by the psychological situation and how people react to it and how the bureaucrats respond to reaction of people.

Second, traditional action, is related to habits, because, things have always been done that way. People have no real awareness of why they behave the way they behave. So, their action is influenced or oriented by the way they have been trained and taught to behave. This two types of action can be found in many traditional societies such as in developing countries, where the lack of knowledge and a low general level of education are considered as problems challenging the achievement of what Weber calls rationalization.

Third type of action is called rational action, which is based on a clear awareness and knowledge of goals. It is the act of managers who wish to increase productivity, motivate their subordinates, improve the production, and make the working place more pleasant and safe. Rational action, according to Weber, is based on a clear analysis which allows planning to achieve certain objectives. Weber believes that the rationalization approach had become the dominant one, especially in developed countries, because it responds to the needs of both management and workers. Rational action provides both of them with the freedom to participate in the decisions that affect them and their work. In contrast, Michels' (1964) argues that bureaucracy or what Weber calls "rationalization theory" had become " the sworn enemy of individual liberty, and of all bold initiative in matters of internal policy"(P. 290). He further argued that the rational action theory was

just a strategy used by leadership or some elite to secure positions at the expense of others. Once they are established or promoted to the top of the bureaucratic pyramid, their first concern is the maintenance of their own power only.

Blau (1963) has also emphasises the role of informal structure. He argued that no system of official rules and supervision can anticipate all the problems which might arise in an organisation. Efficiency can only be maximised by the development of informal norms, based on the workers' participation in decision making that benefit the organisation and workers as well. In my view, this is a very supportive argument, especially in developing countries, where the trade union are undermined, suppressed and unrecognized. The bureaucrat's purpose is to retain privilege and status through his position, ignoring the objectives of the organization which should be based on a collective interest and share of power. Weber also indicated that the generalisation of rational action was considered as a process of rationalisation. Bureaucracy, according to Weber (1947) must serve as a prime example of this process. He also refers to bureaucracy as a system of control. It is the function of a bureaucrat and his managers to control the workers and the way the work is performed. In order for their control to be powerful and effective it must be enforced by rules. This is what makes the difference between organisations which are based on a rational structure and those which are irrational. For instance, traditional organizations have different structures and different rules from the modern, ones which are described as rational. To understand the organisation which is more bureaucratic from the one which less bureaucratic, Hall (1964) proposes six dimensions:

1-More bureaucratic organisation emphasises the division of labour according to specialisation, which in turn is based on qualification, training and experiences

2-When bureaucracy is very structured in its hierarchy of authority, every member knows exactly what he is supposed to do and how to do it and to whom he has to refer to in case of personal difficulties.

3-System of rules covering the rights and duties of positional incumbents should be regarded by both management and workers.

4-Accordingly, the system of procedures for dealing with the working situation is well designed, clearly defined and controlled to avoid workers conflict and feeling of dissatisfaction both internally and externally.

5-In addition, impersonality of interpersonal relationships is respected and applied as it is implemented by the rules of the organisation.

6-Finally promotion and selection for employment is based on technical competence and personal achievement rather than on other criteria which have some influence on work performance or lead to a conflict between workers and management over selection or promotion that may be based on favouritism and kinship.

Can these dimensions be applied to Third World countries? In theory, most of these criteria exist, because most of the rules and management "know-how" in developing countries are either imported with technology from developed countries or inherited from colonial rule. In practice, however, no one of these dimensions seems to be applied. The linkage between theory and practice is related to a lack of experience, and is difficult to apply in a work that does not adapt to the local culture, values and attitudes. Most difficulties are caused by bureaucrats and the elite who take the power by force or is given power through political ties. Managers and staff in the less developing countries do not owe their positions to the fact that they are more qualified than others, but to the fact that they are given positions through family or political ties. (Nillis, 1976, 1980, Naggandi, 1975, Iboko, 1976; Damachi, 1978). Very few managers are offered posts for their knowledge and competence. Since the majority of managers and civil servants gain their positions through others, they therefore follow the same path in the recruitment and selection of both their staff and subordinates, in order to protect their privileges. These phenomena affect the quality of selection, placement, and promotion, and create conflict between those who are unqualified but backed up by the people holding the power and those qualified workers but with no personal ties with management. The problem then is that qualified or professional employees representing the minority, as compared with those with no qualification but supported by management, have little say in the running of the organisation. This kind of problem in many less developed countries enterprises may in the long run lead to poor safety performance, decrease production and contribute to high amounts of waste

and sabotage. These major problems are due to inefficient bureaucracy. Evidence from theory and the pilot study showed that power in Algerian enterprises depends on people you know. The more people you know, the greater power and more security you have in the position you already hold, without any regard to competence or achievement measures. In other words, the Algerian bureaucrats do not believe in collective participation as a way of efficiency. They believe more in individualism and selfishness. They consider participation as a threat to their existence and regard it as a challenge to their weaknesses or existence. This might be a reason of the failure of socialist management systems in Algeria which I have explained in chapter two.

Although the participation of subordinates at all levels in the decision-making process may lead to good results and increase the flow of information, managers and bureaucrats still consider this as a threat to their power. Damachi (1978) indicated that the delegation of authority or power in the developing countries enterprises, is very limited and is rather more centralized, because of bureaucratic mistrust in those who are not related to them by ties of kinship or ethnicity. According to him, managers in these countries rely heavily on inscriptive practices in personnel selection. They give preference to their relatives. They do not however, regard their inscriptive behaviours as paternalistic, nepotism or corrupted, but as a means of achieving security and stability in their jobs on the expanse of the organisation and the people involved in that organisation. He argued that their methods do not allow for adequate management and manpower planning, because it is always difficult to restrict employment only to relatives who may not have the necessary skills, and this will not encourage innovation. It also limits the opportunity for challenge for good achievement and it may reduce the workers' motivation and increase sabotage among those experiencing high stress.

With regard to the problem of bureaucracy and its relation to the efficiency of organisation in Algeria, Nellis (1980) indicates that: "Algerian bureaucracy maintains its standing as one of the most difficult to deal with and one of the least productive in terms of output"(P410). He argued that the problem of efficient bureaucracy is recognized as a critical constraint to the government's development objectives. Further evidence to show how the problem of bureaucracy affect the efficiency of organisation in general and safety in particular is frequently given by the president of the state in his speeches to the nation. In one occasion he said

"bureaucracy is the grand enemy of the Algerian socialist revolution . It contributes to high stress and the most frustrating among the public. It encourages corruption and nepotism. It affects the relationship between management and workers by dividing them into groups rather than keeping them together as one group, belonging to one community and sharing the same objectives" (Boumedenne, 1976) The bureaucrats in Algerian public enterprises are encouraged to behave in one way or the other because they have been given too much power and also no one controls their behaviour.

POWER AND AUTHORITY

If the objective of bureaucracy is to maximize work efficiency in terms of production, safety, maintenance, and apply the rules in a rational way as has been described by Weber (1947), Eisenstadt (1960) and Grimaladi and Simonds (1989), there is a need for some form of power to achieve its objectives. In this respect the concept of power and authority may serve as a safeguard and an instrument to enforce bureaucracy. Bureaucrats apply rules and gives orders, but their orders should be backed up and supported by some source of power in order to be effective. In other words, to have their rules applied and their orders respected by the individuals, they must have both power and authority. Sometimes, they are in the position of authority, but they do not have the power or vice versa. This depends largely on his personality, freedom to act, qualification, power to delegate, group influences, and/or political support.

Weber (1947) distinguishes between power and authority. He argued that power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be able to carry out his/or her wishes over and against the other within that relationship. By contrast authority is a particular case of the exercise of power in which the orders are supposed to be respected and applied as they are dictated by bureaucrats in an organisation or a government without any modification. Similarly Torrington and et al (1985) indicate that power is the ability to influence others to do things they would not have done, while authority is the position of legitimate power. In this respect, power can not exist on its own, but as part of a relationship.

"Power is used in this study not only to refer to power of person "A" over person "B" in order to have "B" perform some task, something he/she would not have done, but is also extended to include organisational power supported

and sustained by a hierarchy of authority, a system of division of labour and an ideological framework.

The impact of organisational power is studied here within two apparently contradictory ideological framework. The first framework concerns the Algerian experience with "socialist management" since independence in 1962. The second framework is the socio-technical system utilized as an organisational model in Western countries where historical, cultural and political developments in these countries are entirely different from those of Algeria. The concept of power is in fact, neglected in psychological studies because it was never considered in the literature to be a psychological problem requiring study but it was rather an administrative and political tool.

To illustrate this further, we may see that the three concepts of bureaucracy, power and authority in some organisations are interrelated but in a democratic organisations you have power and authority but not bureaucracy. This has been explained by Torrington et al (1985) who stated that efficient bureaucracy has an equal distribution of power and authority in its structure. The distribution of power makes everyone feel that he is responsible at least for the task he carries out. Therefore, he can cooperate with others because his task is very dependent on other tasks. The distribution of power may attain positive results and collective objectives when it is not in the hand of a bureaucrat or managerial elite. In other words, the decentralisation of power may lead to more cooperation and support from the rest of the members. Grimaladi and Simonds (1989) indicated that the hierarchical arrangements of power and authority enable managers to selectively apply managerial persuasion and permit accountability for the group's performance. This will be a reflection of the managers' ability to deliver what is wanted. Thus managers become the drive to fulfilling group objectives. In this respect Pugh (1985) argued that a large centralisation of power and authority at a very specific level, such as top management, may lead to a greater degree of social distance between the levels in an organisations. Social distance reflects the degree to which managers regard their supervisors or subordinates as superior or inferiors and not as colleagues. This type of attitude and behaviour is the more popular in most developing countries such as Algeria where the bureaucrat does not know how to behave and deal with staff, let alone subordinates. Bennoune (1988) argued that centralisation of power at higher levels in most Algerian enterprises leads to workers' alienation, lack of communication and mistrust of those who hold the power, which on the whole

may result in a negative effect on production and increase carelessness among workers. Similarly Achoui (1983) indicated that:

"the centralisation of organisational power in Algerian enterprises has created tension and antagonism between workers and management. This antagonism is mainly a result of bureaucratic red tape practised by many top managers in the enterprises. The processes of making any decisions takes a long time, for various documents are to be prepared and set though the hierarchy of authority to the top. Usually this processes takes several months or years before any decisions is reached"(p.47).

Moreover, Blau (1965) showed that individuals or groups who worked under more authoritative supervision were, on the whole, less productive, less satisfied and more frustrated than those supervised in a relatively democratic fashion. Similarly, Weber (1978) explained that the problem of power and authority could be in contradiction with their objectives when they change from a rational form into a traditional one. He indicates that power and authority based on modern rational-types usually exist when most of the officials such as directors and staff are appointed by the government. Although their selection is based on qualification and personal competence the problem arises when they start their duty. They do not apply the rational type of authority but they rather apply the traditional one which is delegated by kinship or political ties. This behaviour may consequently cause conflict and lead to contradictions between modernization which is based on rationalisation, and traditional models which are irrational. Weber's approach to the rationalisation-type has been criticized by some authors like Michels (1964) and Blau (1963) who think that the rationalisation approach cannot be applied for many reasons such as its ignorance of human values and other psychological factors by concentrating too much on impersonal factors.

Furthermore, it has been argued by Shaw (1986) that when people are assigned to certain positions, which allow them the authority to give some orders and receive criticism for their poor performance or action, they will always be challenged by those who give them power and by those to whom the power will be exercised. This explains clearly that the intermediary is the one who has more pressure on him and the one who is responsible for the failure of the order he/she gave. Having the power and authority, makes them feel secure, protected by the law, respected by the subordinates and they should be responsible for their actions. The exercise of power and the respect

of the employees to the rules and to the people holding the power, increases the morale of the power holder and motivates him to carry out his responsibilities. This in turn increases their awareness and concern about safety and encourages them to innovate or seek change.

Shaw (1986) argued that to understand how is the organisation policy functioning we must identify and understand the nature of the power and influence the people who run it have over their employees. When we know how much power the people have over others, we also know mean how much controls because knowledge of the power and authority are the means by which the people of an organisation are linked to its purpose. Kotton (1977) believed that successful management use the power they develop in their relationships, along with persuasion, to influence people to whom they are dependent, to behave in a certain ways that make it possible for the managers to get jobs done efficiently and effectively. Moreover Shaw (1986) has argued that:

" sometimes ".....People come to realise that their effectiveness is limited not by knowledge of their own technical field, but by organisational and political factors in the settings in which they operate"(P.8).

Shaw's point of view is more likely to be the case in most of the developing countries whereas the individual's effectiveness and promotion depend very much on impersonal factors rather than their personal performance or qualification. These attitudes and behaviour have a great affect on the effectiveness and morale of those who are not related by ties or kinship especially when the discrimination is high among whose who benefit from this kind of behaviour.

It can be argued that having power and authority may not be enough to control the work situation if the power is not companied by the cooperation of top management and workers. The cooperation of management and workers should be based on their expectation and their belief that the change will lead to positive results and will benefit all the people who participated in the procedures. If their expectations and their belief are high the level of cooperation will be effective. If their level of expectations and their belief are low the level of cooperation will be less effective. It can also argued that if the managers have given the power and authority to control and enforce the rules but workers cooperation is low the managers will have bigger frustrations.

This suggests that having power may help to influence people's attitudes and behaviour but it can not necessarily lead to positive results as the managers be expected. To manage people and deal with organisational problems at work the managers need not only power but also an awareness and understanding of employees problems which rise either from their work or their social environment. Damachi (1978) and Bennoune (1988) argued that one of the stressful problems which influences the delegation of authority and power in developing countries is the limitation and centralisation of power and authority in one particular level as a result of bureaucratic mistrust in those who are not related to them by ties or kinship. For this reasons they use their relatives or whose related to them as safety guard to control the movement and the action of those who are not related to them in order to protect themselves.

Weber (1978) states that there are two main dangers in the control of the organisation if it is left in the hands of inadequate bureaucratic leadership. Firstly, in cases of crises, bureaucratic leadership proved to be ineffective, because he had been trained to follow orders and conduct routine operations. So, it could be very difficult to make policy decisions and take the initiative in responding to crises. Secondly, it largely depends on information either supplied by professionals or consultants and the measures taken depend on their advice or information supplied from outside the organisation such as a ministry or state representatives. This is typical example in Algeria. The leadership, very often, end up being directed by outside orientation which may work against the wishes of managers as leaders of enterprise.

To solve the conflict between the bureaucrats, who have the power and authority, and the professionals who have the skill and experiences a new approach may be emergent. research in this area showed that at least in theory, there is incompatibility between the behaviour of professionals and bureaucrats in Algerian enterprises. The professionals actions may stem from an individual judgment based on specialist knowledge. In this case they make decisions according to expertise and knowledge about work situations which could cause a big disaster if an immediate decision is not taken to prevent damage to material or personnel. In contrast the bureaucrats' action stem from rules which, in most cases, do not respond quickly to the reality of the organisation. Etzioni (1964) indicates that the employment of professionals in an organisation may result in a role conflict. They may experience conflicts in their role as employees and as professionals. As employees, they must

follow the rules as directed to them by bureaucrats, and as professionals they must follow their professional judgment which might result in their disregarding official regulations and disobeying higher authority. For instance, in case of safety matters, the professionals believed that they are the first one to blame for accidents and bad conditions of work as experts.

The present review suggests that the challenging of bureaucracy from a traditional mode into a modern one in less developing countries is intimately connected with the development of productive forces. The increasing level of skill and education among supervisors and subordinates could be a good instrument to reduce the pressure introduced by inefficient bureaucrats, because increasing workers' awareness could be understood as a threat to bureaucrats and could force them to behave in the right way according to rules and regulations. The reasons why bureaucrats in developing countries differ from those in developed nations may be related to the following factors: Firstly, there is no pressure or serious control imposed on bureaucrats in developing countries to apply regulations as they are structured. Secondly, there is a lack of sufficient number of professionals with enough knowledge and experience about regulations of work. Thirdly, a traditional mode of bureaucracy is more dominant and supported by the majority of the public as a result of their lack of education and awareness of the rules. Lastly, the absence of workers representative or trade unions gives a high opportunity to the bureaucrats in Algeria and other developing countries to work for their personal advantage.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The investigation has concerned with management problems in organisation and its relation to work. The focus was on four important issues that we assumed to have direct effect on the function of the organisation and work at large. These issues are: the type of management, bureaucracy, power and authority, and the relationship between these elements and work environment. From the review of the literature dealing with these issues, we concluded that there is a big difference between the economic development of the developed countries and developing countries in understanding their objectives. The miss-understanding of such concepts are related to a number of factors such as lack of experience; political systems, such as state intervention, centralisation of power at one level; interpersonal relations and

cultural and differences in values and overall the lack of autonomy of the public enterprises both politically or economic in most of developing countries. These and other socio-economic factors appeared to have a great influences on management in organisation.

It has been argued in this paper that sixty percent of management failure in many developing countries with similar socio-political and economic systems, is related to poor cultural adaptability, lack of experience. Also, nearly forty percent of the failure is related to incompatibility to control the technical matters such as technology, maintenance and repairs.

From the discussion we can also conclude that the concept of bureaucracy has two different meanings. In Western countries bureaucracy means discipline, effectiveness, justice, respect to the rules as set by the organisation or institutions while the opposite may be shown to be true in most the developing countries. Bureaucracy in developing countries means slowing the process, inefficiency, injustice and inequality. So the different types of bureaucracy have been discussed and their influences on work have been reported. It appeared from the discussion of this paper that the developing countries are still dealing with what Weber call an emotional and traditional type of bureaucracy instead of the rational one or at least they attempt to apply the rational but in theory, not in practice. However, they apply the traditional one because of the influence of the factors such as workers and management attitudes, culture, values and socio-political systems of those countries.

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