



Sociology of Work: The Concept of "The Worker's Effort" in Wilhelm Baldamus' Work - A Response to the Term "Efficiency" in Business Administration

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Abstract: *The concept of the worker's "effort expended", as analyzed by Wilhelm Baldamus, constitutes a crucial dimension of the sociology of work that contrasts with the term "efficiency" in business administration. The employee's effort does not depend only on economic factors or formal employment contracts, but mainly on informal, social and cultural relations, known as the "tacit employment contract". These implicit relations shape the meaning of work and influence the degree of effort exerted, varying according to position in the hierarchy, sector of work and seniority in the organization.*

Keywords: *Effort, Tacit Employment Contract, Baldamus, Efficiency, Sociology of Work, Informal Employment Relations, Public Sector, Public Electricity Company, Business Administration, Work Identity, Social Control.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Import

In an organization, the relationships that the employee develops with the nature of the work, the environment and others play a decisive role in the conduct of the production process, as they largely define the way in which the employee understands himself at work. The way in which an employee understands himself at work can highlight why and to what extent he performs and consents to the final project that he is called to complete every day. However, the reasons for doing so are not always obvious. And they are not obvious because they are not defined exclusively by the formal part of an employment relationship (hours, duties, remuneration), but are much more constituted by a large set of informal factors which is here called the "tacit employment contract" (Watson 2005: 146-150). Investigating the terms of this informal contract is, especially today, a necessity, as since labor relations present such intense deregulation and insecurity, it is necessary to reexamine the social paradox of why someone works, consents to labor control, and performs at their job.

In the theories of administration and human resource management of applied economics and management, the cost of an employee, that is, the size of his value and contribution to the work, is defined and judged by his efficiency. However, the term "efficiency", with its wide use and acceptance in the sphere of business administration, although it can attribute the efficiency of an employee, nevertheless does not explain it (Baldamus 1961:3). The inability to justify the efficiency of an employee lies primarily in the fact that the term "efficiency" itself stems purely from the empirical dimension of the administration of organizations and thus acquires a priori utilitarian value in the language of management. In other words, theoretical assumptions about work performance come from applied approaches in which an uncritical common sense prevails: a worker is or is not productive (Baldamus 1961:5). The other reason why the causes of productivity are not examined is due to the dominant perception that the worker is an "economic being", whose all relations at work are carried out in the light of "multiple choices and opportunities" and ultimately fit into the dispute between employers and workers over the claim to remuneration (Baldamus 1961:5). However, the efficiency of an employee, that is, "the effort he puts into his work" according to Baldamus (1961:5), does not lie exclusively in the economic relationship he has with the organization in which he works, as this approach does not explain the subjective parts, such as expectations or perceptions, that characterize the meaning that someone attributes to his work. On the contrary, the degree of effort that an employee

puts in seems to depend more on a series of implicit/non-institutional elements ("noncontractual elements") that can determine the meaning and nature of work (Durkheim 1984: 306-307) and which could be defined as the "informal part" of relations at work (Baldamus 1961:6). And as the informal part of a social relationship - such as work - always precedes and determines its institutionalized part (Baldamus 1961:7, Durkheim 2000:65-77, Berger 1985:48), the attempt at such an approach seems necessary for a more correct understanding of work as a phenomenon, especially today with the complexity that accompanies it in its new forms.

1.2. Complexity at Work Today Seems to Mainly Concern

a) in the determination of the identity of the employee in services, that is, in the fact that the employee in the metafordian environment ceases to be determined exclusively from top to bottom, but in addition, his identity, social and work, is the result of his relationships both with the employer and colleagues, as well as with the customer / consumer / user of the services that he offers. (Du Gay 1996: 5)

b) in the implicit forms of control and consent that are created before and after entering the workforce, that is, in the perceptions that dominate the social and class environment (family, school, university) about work, but also in those that are formed within the workplace (based on specialty, duties, position in the hierarchy, degree of expertise, degree of participation in decision-making, seniority, etc.)

c) the particular (local, economic, national) traditions that govern each organization and influence both its possible forms of management and the ways of self-understanding of employees (Bendix 2001: 1-13).

All three groups of factors that make up the new forms of employment are composed of elements that are mostly non-institutionalized, implicit, subjective and ultimately more cultural, a fact that demonstrates once again the necessity to examine today the tacit employment contract, which as a term can include the informal parts of work and therefore has the possibility of studying them. In this sense, in fact, the investigation of the terms that constitute tacit employment contracts can also constitute a sociological tool for understanding the standards, values and traditions that more broadly dominate a society and that consequently influence work itself.

2. WORKING CASES

According to the literature and the theoretical reflection that preceded it, the basic logic that governs the article is that every institutionalized social contract is accompanied by an implicit network of relationships, expectations, perceptions and understanding, which precedes and largely determines the official terms. Such a contract is also concluded in work. The informal part of work is a stronger factor in shaping the degree of effort exerted by the worker than the specified part, since, as research in industrial sociology has shown, livelihood reasons cannot, by themselves, explain the stay of a worker in a profession (Brown : 1984). In other words, financial rewards may be important for every worker, however, there are stronger reasons for which someone understands and defines their profession as interesting and important. The possibility of advancing one's career in the future, intrinsic job satisfaction, the social prestige of a given job, the ability to control other people through one's work, or even the opportunity to realize one's personal values through one's employment, are non-economic factors that give meaning to a job (Watson 2005: 147).

Therefore, the indicative work cases that will lead to the research of this study essentially concern the investigation of the formation and change of the conditions that constitute the non-institutionalized part of work. That is, which parameters construct and differentiate the respective tacit employment contracts. Having as the unit of analysis of the tacit employment contract the effort made, we will attempt to monitor the reasons for which it changes. In addition, the aim is to examine the extent to which the tacit employment contract is or is not part of the official labor control by the employer and the supervisors, with ways and conditions of implementation, however, non-institutional / bureaucratic.

Hypothesis 1: An employee's effort varies based on their position in the hierarchy

Employees who are in higher/managerial positions in the organizational structure of the company or who practice "highly skilled professions" ¹tend to perform their work duties with greater willingness

¹However, it is worth noting that in the literature there are also opposing theories that argue that certified expert work is increasingly degraded, as the increasing fragmentation of tasks associated with an increasing fragmentation of labor, places "experts" increasingly under administrative control, and therefore the latter should

and to voluntarily comply with the requirements of the organization, thus enjoying a relationship of high trust with their superiors. The reasons for this willingness to exert their work effort are usually found in the acquisition of social and occupational prestige, the opportunities for personal development/career and the ability to control/power over other people that their position confers, and not only in the relatively high levels of remuneration they may receive (Watson 2005: 149). On the other hand, those who are in lower positions in the organizational stratification and are usually employed in less specialized work or manual, or even in non-manual office work characterized, however, by a routine of everyday life and tasks, operate with a more conventional commitment to the organization. In addition to their low financial earnings, the reasons that explain why their effort is probably characterized by a habitually "typical" willingness, are mainly found in the fact that their position at work does not ensure prestige or prestige, nor opportunities for professional or social advancement (Watson 2005: 149). On the other hand, this type of willingness may be characterized as small in comparison to the great willingness of managers, however, it is still willingness and even has its own characteristics, which can be distinguished based on the sector of the organization or seniority, as we will see in the next two case studies.

Hypothesis 2: An employee's effort varies based on the sector of the organization to which the work they perform belongs

There are significant differences between service and manufacturing work. These differences are found in the tasks and type of work (clerical/manual work), in the control of the work (levels of autonomy/close & direct control), and in the degree of appreciation and prestige of the work (white collar/dirty jobs) (Watson 2005: 217-223). As a result, differences are also found in the implicit employment contracts that are concluded and in particular in the type of effort that is exerted. The effort made in the service sector may lie in the indication of interest in work through: a) the prestige and power attributed to the profession by contact with the users/clients of the services offered, b) the expectation of employees that they retain opportunities for advancement (since they work in an office and not in a factory), c) the prestige given to them by their more frequent contact with management and employers (than that of production workers) or d) the perception that their work in the service sector is the "mirror" of the company "to the outside", and therefore they understand themselves as the most important regulator/mediator of the organization's image towards society. On the other hand, the effort made by workers in the production sector may be due to: a) intrinsic work relationships, that is, mutual respect for the effort and labor of colleagues with a "common fate" (where no one works in "clean" work and in the comforts of the office, no one comes into contact with the company's customers and no one has frequent contact with management), b) a logic of defending their work, showing that these jobs "may not have prestige, but it is not easy for others to do them", c) as a reaction to harsh labor control and an implicit pursuit of reward and recognition of their hard work by superiors and employers, or d) an idea of the public benefit of what they offer to society, which is difficult to see and recognize.

Hypothesis 3: An employee's effort varies based on seniority or recency of entry into the organization

When an employee crosses the threshold of an organization for the first time, he begins to perform his duties with enthusiasm and willingness. Whether out of gratitude that someone accepted him in this job, or to prove that he is worthy of being there, or even out of simple enthusiasm for his new object, his effort is characterized by a special will. This will gradually begins to lose its intensity. Either because the employee has mastered his work environment and knows when he can relax and when he must work, or because the "older" he becomes, the more easily he acquires the ability to transfer responsibilities to new recruits, or because he has lost credibility and respect towards his superiors and the employer, or because his work has simply acquired routine characteristics - his effort has lost its former glory. However, the passage of time also results in the identification of the employee with the organization. This quality, paradoxically, leads to the possibility that the will and effort of old employees can be rekindled in cases of major crisis or external challenge to the company, where new

be treated in a research like traditional wage workers (Watson 2005: 218). This tendency of "proletarianization" underlined by several authors (Braverman 1974, Oppenheimer 1973 etc.), is posed as an additional sub-hypothesis of work, which remains to be established by the research.

recruits have not acquired the required “service ethic” (Watson 2005: 260) identity to respond with zeal.

Hypothesis 4: The "informal" part of work is understood by business management as part of the "formal" control of the employee's effort at work

Since the time when Max Weber conceived the ideal of bureaucracy, we know that there is no organization that operates with sufficient rationality, due to the human factor on which it is based. Especially in industry, the following paradox is observed: “the means used by the leaders of the organization who have control in order to achieve whatever goals they have chosen - or have been asked to pursue - do not necessarily facilitate the effective achievement of these goals, since the “means” also include human beings, who have their own goals that may not be in harmony with the goals of the leaders” (Watson 2005: 261). This very paradox explains the development of the theory and application of industrial relations, the establishment of motivation and incentive issues at work, the construction of personnel and public relations departments within organizations, the separation into management control and quality control and, in general, the establishment of human resource management theories (Watson 2005: 206). Therefore, the informal and non-economic parameters that compose the image and efficiency of an employee appear to be taken seriously by management and are part of the institutionalized control of work in an organization.

3. CONCLUSION

The concept of the worker's "effort expended", as developed by Wilhelm Baldamus, highlights a crucial sociological dimension of work, which cannot be adequately captured through the technocratic terms of “efficiency” used by Business Administration. The effort made by an employee is not static nor is it determined exclusively by contractual, economic or institutional terms. On the contrary, it is a product of constantly evolving informal relationships, meanings and social expectations – elements that constitute the so-called “tacit employment contract”.

The investigation of this informal but essential dimension of work is more relevant today than ever, as the deregulation of employment relations and increasing insecurity require a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that motivate or disempower the worker. The three main hypotheses of the study demonstrate that the effort expended is influenced by:

- (a) the position in the hierarchy, (b) the sector within the organization where the work is performed, and (c) the seniority or new entry status of the worker.

In all cases, the complexity of the non-institutionalized, cultural and social parameters that are integrated into everyday work life and add depth to the meaning of work is highlighted. Ultimately, the analysis of “effort” as a conceptual tool, rather than a quantitative measure, allows for the repositioning of work as a social phenomenon. The tacit contract is not simply a tacit complement to the formal contract; it is the fundamental fabric that determines the quality of the employment relationship and the degree of active participation of the employee. In this light, every organization – public or private – must recognize the cultural and social aspects of work if it wishes to understand and substantially enhance the participation and contribution of its people.

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Citation: Aris Asproulis. "Sociology of Work: The Concept of "The Worker's Effort" in Wilhelm Baldamus' Work - A Response to the Term "Efficiency" in Business Administration" *International Journal of Research in Sociology and Anthropology (IJRSA)*, vol 10, no. 1, 2025, pp 29-33. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20431/2454-8677.1001004>.

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