

Mintzberg's ideas essay



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Henry Mintzberg, in, 'The Managers Job: Folklore and Fact,' argues that the classic view of what a managers job entails is seriously flawed. Mintzberg examines the reality of a managers work and convincingly backs up his conclusions with a breadth of research into the tasks undertaken by a variety of managers. His argument is a convincing one in many ways, but he does challenge traditional opinions on management, such as Taylor's industrial approach, which have long been respected by many in the field. Thus, Mintzberg's ideas have of course been challenged, and this essay aims to analyse whether Mintzberg does enough to be convincing in his arguments that the managers job is very different from what classical theory suggests.

In, "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact," Mintzberg makes his position on the traditional view of management very clear from the outset- that the reality simply doesn't match up to the description. By giving practical examples of the tasks managers perform that don't fall under the classical categories of planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling- words introduced by French industrialist Henry Fayol in 1916; the logic in his argument is made undeniable, "When a manager is told that a factory has just burned down and then advises the caller to see whether temporary arrangements can be made to supply customers through a foreign subsidiary, is that manager planning, organising, coordinating or controlling?".

Mintzberg's straightforward explanation of the flaws he sees in the classic view of management emphasise the logical sense of his argument-his ideas are easy to understand, and can easily be seen in examples of everyday management jobs. He directly address the problems with understandings of

the field of management, pointing out that the basic question of what managers actually do has not been properly addressed. Again, proof behind his argument is supplied by examples of real world problems that demonstrated problems in the understanding of management roles, for example, "in the turnover of corporate planners who never quite understood what it was the manager wanted." Such obvious, undeniable evidence of the argument Mintzberg makes it easy to understand and agree with his reason and thus is highly convincing to a reader.

Mintzberg's straightforward and coherent style continues throughout his analysis of management, with his argument strengthened by the clear contrasts he draws between the, 'folklore,' beliefs about management and the, 'facts,' he presents as realities in the jobs of real managers. Mintzberg's assertive rejection of traditional beliefs about management is consistently backed up not only by applying his ideas to believable real world situations, but also by factual evidence. Mintzberg's ideas have stemmed from studying how many managers- from presidents to gang leaders, in many different countries- spent their time.

Mintzberg's argument certainly appeals to a reader's logic, but it also goes against many respected theories of management and is dismissive of them, "The evidence on this issue is overwhelming, but not a shred of it supports this statement." Mintzberg opposes traditional views, such as Taylor's scientific theory, which describes management in very definite terms. Taylor's theory, set out in, "The Principles of Scientific Management," articulates a view of management as a job that is very much concerned with planning, organising, co-ordinating and controlling. Taylor argues that such a

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style of management is the ideal way to achieve maximum prosperity for the employer, as well as for each employee. As a theory credited with vastly improving productivity across many industries, considering Taylor's work could be argued to impede how convinced a reader can be by Mintzberg's article.

Taylor was the first to both work in an industry, and then to study how to make it's labour force more productive through efficient management. He decided that the remedy for inefficiency in daily acts could be solved by scientific management, and that, " the best management is a true science, resting upon clearly defined laws, rules and principles," a stark contrast to Mintzberg's ideas. Taylor's work had a huge impact on productivity, which rose fifty fold due to his work. However, it seems that Mintzberg's idea have more application for manager's today, who certainly have to perform interpersonal, informational and decisional roles in addition to planning, organising, coordinating and controlling.