

Are the classical
functions put forward
in 1949 still valid?



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Academics for years have been pondering the effectiveness of classical approaches to newer conceptualizations within management functions. Are the classical functions put forward by Henri Fayol in 1949 still valid and true today? , or are the theories put forward by other academics such as Mintzberg more valid? , or would the scientific type management concepts be more fitting?. To answer such questions this report examines two Journal journals, “ Are the classical management functions useful in describing managerial work? ” (Journal 1) and “ Some effects of Fayolism” (Journal 2).

By analyzing the different arguments put forward, I aim to conclude which theory is more appropriate to management study today. In journal 1, Carroll and Gillen examine newer conceptualizations of a manager’s job, and compare its findings to that of Fayol’s classical approach. The basis of this evaluation is to determine which approach is more useful in determining the role of management for the purpose of management education. Journal 2 draws on Fayol’s theory of a set of activities that are common to all organizations, to prove the developed management functions.

It then evaluates and compares’ this notion with that of Fredrick Taylor with reference to management fashions to determine which theory is more accurate and relevant to managerial conceptualization today. Journal 1 merits Fayol’s theory, in referring to the significance it has had in studying management. In examining 21 books published from 1983 to 1986, he found that all books mentioned Fayol’s functions to some degree. Fayol’s four classical management functions (POLC): Planning, Organizing, Leading & Controlling, have been adopted as the foundation for management study for a long time.

Upon evaluating Fayol's theory, empirical studies expanded Fayol's functions to eight functions, now known as the PRINCESS factors (planning, representing, investigating, negotiating, coordinating, evaluating, supervising and staffing). In support of Fayol's claims, such functions apply to 'all' forms of management. The author refers to a number of studies and experiments to show that time invested in the classical functions have brought positive results in areas such as organization performance, unit performance, managerial mobility and higher production records.

Upon the empirical studies, there is sufficient evidence to merit the classical approach in its functions being used by managers. However Mintzberg did not agree with Fayol's theory. Mintzberg felt that "Fayol's fifty year description of managerial work is no longer of use to us" (Mintzberg, 1971 pp 39). Mintzberg proposed a different model consisting of ten work roles; interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader and liaison), informational roles (monitor or nerve center, disseminator and spokesman) and decision-making (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator and negotiator).

However this model came under scrutiny by competing theorists. The author used many examples and refers to experiments done by other academics to criticize Mintzberg's theory. McCall and Segrist (1980) limited the number of roles Mintzberg claimed, on the basis that certain roles overlapped each other and could not be called separate. Lau, Newman and Broedling (1980) limited the model to four factors (leadership and supervision, information gathering and dissemination, technical problem solving, and executive decision making) upon the findings of their experiment.

The flaws within the Mintzberg Model rose due to the 'observable physical' approach taken. The journal stresses the importance of analyzing 'neurophysiological activities', as measuring physical managerial activities alone does not provide a comprehensive understanding of the managerial role, as it is rather a prominent 'mental' role. Non classical conceptualizations of managerial work (Mintzberg, Stewart etc.) help define the nature of managerial work.

However Fayol's classical approach best conceptualizes management functions and a manager's job, so it is the best source to be used for educational purposes. Journal 2 addresses two perspectives of management to evaluate the concepts of management fashion and its management recommendations. There is a logical supposition that organizations must strive to be unique in their business operations to have a fair chance of success, within competition. However the idea of management states presumes resemblance in all businesses, which calls for the profession of 'managers' to exist (Brunsson, 2008 pp33).

This journal also recognizes the merit of Fayol's theory in molding Management conceptualization. Furthermore recognizes the success of management recommendations listed by other theorists such as Mintzberg and Kotter, who refer to Fayol's functions to a respected degree. However the journal does not recognize any relationship between Fayol's functions and organizational performance. Brunsson refers to Fredrick Taylor's 'bottom-up' view to address this issue. Discussing managements recommendations in terms of fashions imply; "dissatisfaction ith the existing recommendations, and ambition to improve these recommendations, a

<https://assignbuster.com/are-the-classical-functions-put-forward-in-1949-still-valid/>

sentiment that efforts at improvement, at least some of them fail, and some management recommendations should not be seen to belong to any management fashion. " (Brunsson, 2008 pp33) The journal promotes general management as a system of defining and classifying in order to improve organizational decision making. However empirical studies of managers shows an ' mish-mash' of those activities, implying Fayol's theory of management has taken precedence of importance over the reality of management activities.

This evidence has raised a new idea, that Fayol's approach is no longer valid and " management order varies depending on the situation of a manager, and the position and personality of the manager" (Brunsson, 2008 pp42). If Fayol's approach was scrutinized and his notion of general management was questioned, then Taylor's scientific management concept may have prevailed and taken precedence. Both journals express the relevance and importance of Fayol's classical approach to the development of Management study to date. However journal 1 implies that Fayol's classical approach is more useful than other conceptualizing theories put forward.

Journal 2 implies that the Fredrick Taylor's scientific management principles are a more suitable and effective notion to define Management over the classical approach. In my opinion, Fayol's classical approach holds the most credibility in studying management. I believe the depth to understanding managerial concepts has no boundaries, due to the complexity of its study. As a result many theorists have attempted to understand this subject, and have criticized each other's work, which proves there are no set guidelines to follow, it is rather subjective to its audience.

However in my opinion Fayol's four functions, cover the basis of activities involved to perform managerial duties. This statement is supported by the fact that it is a widely accepted approach and is used in all management textbooks. Fayol's theory helps identify the functions clearly and distinctly. Managers are faced with decision making processes that have high impact on organizations. They are put into that role in the competitive industry, due to their understanding of managerial roles, so they can perform to their level best, and benefit the organization.

Therefore as Fayol stated, it is important for managers to undergo training. Other theories put forward such as Mintzberg's model, Kotter and Taylor's scientific management approach, help us understand certain management functions in depth. I do not agree with some elements in Taylor's scientific approach as to the difference in managerial work to Fayol's theory which consists of a system of order. I believe that even in the 'mish mash' of overall managerial activities, there is a system of order and a logical process followed for each activity performed.

However it is clear, that these theories are a product of evaluation on the initial Fayol's classical theory. Therefore I believe Fayol's classical approach still holds precedent, for purpose of managerial study and educational purposes. ? Reference list Brunsson, K. H, (2008), Some Effects of Fayolism, *Int. Studies of Mgt. & Org.* , 38, (1), 30-47 Carroll, S. J & Gillen, J. G, (1987), Are the Classical Management Functions useful in describing Managerial work? , *Academy of Management review*, 12, (1), 38-51