

Key elements of scientific management management essay



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Scientific management is a discipline of management technique that was developed by Frederick W. Taylor in a time where industries faced constricted output along with high staff turnover rate which badly/greatly affected productivity and eventually profits. Scientific management sought to do away such problems. It started to fragment jobs, introduce specialization and create a division between managers and workers. This helped to improve labour productivity, economic efficiency, control of over workers and standardization of processes and procedures. Even so, this discipline of management has been met with critiques claiming that it deskills, dehumanises and micromanages the workers. This essay will describe this management technique and critique on its relevance, applicability and its flaws.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT: JOB FRAGMENTATION & SPECIALIZATION

Scientific management focused on how work should be done and introduced certain changes through three key elements to work processes. The first key element was job fragmentation and it broke jobs down into numerous short and repetitive component tasks that were simple to perform. The second key element was specialization and the workers were trained and specialized with respect to the component tasks they worked in.

The combination of these two key elements made the training of workers much more cost effective (cheaper) and time efficient (faster). In addition, it standardized work done as workers followed precise and detailed steps laid out/developed by the management. As a whole, it gave companies and an extreme control over output and predictability as work was standardized

with dimensions and specifics regulated by the company's management. In brief, this marked the beginning of a system put in place that ensured a controlled process with a standardized output with extreme predictability.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT: DIVISION OF MANAGERS AND WORKERS

The third key element of scientific management was that it understood the importance of planning and decision making and that it should not be left to just any worker; it divided employees into two basic categories, the low calibre and high calibre terming it as workers and managers respectively.

These managers were bestowed upon hierarchical authority and were responsible for planning and supervision of the workers. In essence, managers were no longer involved in the laborious process of executing the component tasks but instead represented a system that ensured and enforced the implementation of the management's policies. The need for managers was further propelled by the fact that scientific management assumes that all workers have a natural inclination to loaf and to avoid a full day's work thus requiring the need for close supervision on the workers to not compromise productivity.

THE INCREMENT IN LABOUR PRODUCTIVITY & ECONOMIC EFFICIENCY

Scientific management measured labour productivity and economic efficiency as performance indicators. With the aforementioned three key element changes put into place, scientific management managed to record an improvement to the productivity of workers with respect to a specific amount of time to given to produce a product or service. In addition, the

economic efficiency measured an improvement in the amount of product or service produced with respect to a specific amount of resource given; it had maximized output to the fullest extent such that there was no wastage of resource.

The best example of no wastage of resource would be the elimination of workers loafing. The modern management today still aims to improve key areas of performance indicators like labour productivity and economic efficiency.

CRITIQUE BY THE HAWTHORNE STUDIES & HUMAN RELATIONS MOVEMENT

The Hawthorne Studies created a starting point which became a spur for the Human Relations Movement which critiqued scientific management. It argued and stressed that the social aspects in an organization were important and that scientific management was simply too rational and scientific. It described scientific management as rigid as it was based on logical which did not consider the social aspects of the workers and the work environment. In addition, it critiqued that scientific management saw workers as nothing but mere tools/machines and it had paid no regard to the social well being and needs of the workers.

CRITIQUE BY HARRY BRAVERMAN

Harry Braverman (1920 - 1976) critiques and argues that scientific management deskills workers as workers are no longer needed to have a unique set of skills. Every worker hired was deskilled eventually as workers are hired not based on their skills but as a workforce and a number, only to

be retrained and taught to operate simple repetitive component tasks that require no skill at all. This eventually saw the decline of unique skills and it gave way to simply just performing repetitions of component task that require little/minimum or no art/skill.

CRITIQUE BY KURT LEWIN

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1890 - 1947) critiques and argues that scientific management dehumanises workers. Lewin rebukes the assumption that scientific management has made; which is that workers do not possess an intrinsic drive that motivates them to work. Lewin believed that workers want their work done to be enriching and wide as opposed to crippling and narrow. This is evident when Lewin critiques and mentions that the component task are mundane, boring and repetitive and workers do not do anything else but to rinse and repeat the endless cycle without getting a chance to develop their potential and capabilities. Lewin further argues that work should cultivate a worker's potential as opposed to limiting it.

Employees in scientific management were categorized based on current calibre and does not consider potential.

ESSAY'S CRITIQUE ON SCIENTIFIC MANAGMENT

Having shared the multiple views and the principles of scientific management, this essay will henceforth form its own critique on scientific management.

Scientific management share many similarities to modern management.

Firstly modern businesses are departmentalized (components), with each department taking up different roles with standardized operating procedures

implemented at intra and inter department level by the management.

Secondly, the division of subordinates and superiors is similar to the workers and managers. Thirdly, both scientific management and modern management recognises the need to select the right person with a high calibre for the managerial role. The presence and authority of an immediate superior is still present and it is a fundamental part of modern organization behaviour and structure.

Despite the similarities and the presence of job fragmentation and specialization, there are subtle differences with the modern day context as work might no longer be simple to perform as it is heavily dependent on type of business and industry a company is engaged in. An example will be a highly skilled worker from a investment company as opposed to a lowly skilled worker from a textile company; the job scope of the highly skilled professional may not be so fragmented and he/she might possess specialization in multiple areas. With that said, the cost and time needed to train the aforementioned workers will vary.

The essay vehemently agrees with the critique by the Hawthorne Studies & Human Relations Movement that social well being of workers is important. Despite acknowledgement by scientific management, it did little to address this aspect and is evident with the increase in the frustration of workers. This aspect should not be overlooked as workers have social needs and are not machines; looking after their needs can also ensure that workers put in their best efforts when working.

The essay moderately agrees with the critique by Harry Braverman that it deskills workers however the essay does not feel that it should be looked upon negatively. In a capitalist driven world like today, hiring is based on qualifications and skills and commonly follows up with some form of deskilling and retraining as it is often easier to fit the worker in the organization rather than to change the organization for just one worker. In essence, there is nothing really wrong nor ethical with this process as it is simply the interpretation of the company's perspective to maximize the talent hired.

The essay agrees with the critique by Kurt Lewin that it dehumanises workers. The assumption that all workers do not possess an intrinsic drive to work is simply groundless and unproven. Instead, it is a well known fact that humans crave for recognition and it very much applies to work. In short, it is dehumanising to not consider potential of workers and to simply categorize workers based on current calibre; workers are not machines.

CONCLUSION

Scientific management was developed by Frederick W. Taylor as a solution to tackle industry issues like constricted output and high staff turnover rate.

Scientific management had three basic key elements with the first key element being job fragmentation, the second being specialization of workers and the third being the division of workers and managers. Under the implementations of the three aforementioned key elements, productivity soared and the throughput of companies using scientific management increased. Equally important, the observed improvement was achievable

through an extreme control over the work the workers produced and the <https://assignbuster.com/key-elements-of-scientific-management-management-essay/>

standardization of processes and procedures. In retrospect, scientific management has nevertheless been met with critiques have and been animadverted that it ignores the social aspect and well being of workers, it deskills workers and it fails to draw the potential out of its workers. Above all, no matter how great a theory's contributions and achievements, there will always be criticism and the same applies to scientific management. In conclusion, scientific management brought new changes to the working environment with three key elements which certainly improved the output and productivity of companies.