

Essay henri fayol or henry mintzberg essay



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Management, management today is one of the subjects with the most widely branched areas. Management is an area under discussion and criticised since many years before till today by many contributors and authors. There have been developed many ideas and notions regarding the right way to manage and been successful manager. Some of the most important contributors are Henri Fayol and Henry Mintzberg with two different views but, in the same time very similar.

Henri Fayol came first with his revolutionary principles and elements to change and establish a new model of ideas regarding how a manager can manage effectively, he also writes a book which can be used as a guide for new inexperienced managers and anyone who is interested in how to manage. After some years when Fayol published his book an associate professor Henry Mintzberg will reject his ideas by researching what really managers do, today. The ideas and arguments presented will show if Mintzberg was wrong or not. Henri Fayol is the initial and fundamental designer of the whole idea how to manage efficiently.

Fayol spent almost his entire life in a French company as a manager. During that time he creates and forms concepts and elements from his personal way of managing and his own experiences. His five basic elements in order to manage are “ to forecast and plan, to organize, to comma, to coordinate, and to control” (Fayol, 1949, p. 141). Fayol believed that with these five elements and the rest fourteen principles he introduced, if a manager can understand completely Fayol’s ideas and succeed to adjust them in his own needs, he and his company can be successful.

Since his book was published, Fayol's work was deeply investigated and then heavily criticized by researchers, academicians and many others. Henry Mintzberg is an associate professor of management at McGill University in Montreal, and one of the first individuals to disagree with Fayol's five important elements, which managers need to follow in order to run an effective organization. Mintzberg "addresses the basic question: What do managers do?" (Mintzberg, 1975, p. 49). Mintzberg, after many researches and observations, supported that managers today do not have any contact with what Fayol introduced.

The main of Mintzberg's argument after all his work is that managers today say and think that they devise plans for the future, organize all the departments of the organisations, command the personnel, co-ordinate the whole structure in order that everything flows smoothly right and as it should, and lastly they control that all the rules and commands are followed with consistence (Fayol, 1949, p. 141). But through Mintzberg's research, in reality they do not apply what they say. Mintzberg tried to pass an idea that Fayol's elements have nothing to do with what really managers do.

He describes exactly how, and the way managers work today. Mintzberg forgot to consider that there have been passed many years since Fayol introduced his concepts. Through all these years it is normal that the structures, the policies, the technology, the competition, the resources, etc. in the organisations have been changed. As a consequence managers had to change in order to keep in track. All the managers have changed and adjusted Fayol's elements based on his/her needs or the needs of the organisation. As a fact that managers would not act exactly by the way Fayol proposed.

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Mintzberg was researching only the surface of the managerial acts and not where they derived from. This is why he could not see the influence of Fayol's elements on the work of managers, because they are only the basic and theoretical tools in order to build their own way of managing. " Tsoukas argue that Mintzberg was dealing with the most directly observable practices of managers, while Fayol was dealing with specific management functions as necessary conditions for the existence of these practices and as a basis for explaining the derivation of their characteristics"(Lamond, 2004, p. 334).

When Fayol as a manager wrote his concepts the era and the way of managing was very different in contrast with nowadays. Fayol developed a strategy based on the way he was managing, for instance he was the only one who had to make the plan, to organise everything, to command and get involve in situations where it was necessary, co-ordinate and synchronize all the activities take place in the organization, and last control everything. In few words he was the only main head of the organization.

It does not mean that he was alone but in compare with the present most of the organizations operate with the bureaucratic structure of Max Weber's theory that " organizations are managed on an impersonal, rational authority basis and they are not depend on to a particular person who may leave or die"(Weber, 1997, p. 45). Today all the organizations have been divided in many departments and all these departments with the help of the assistant managers have been undertake by one Fayol's element. These departments make all the work and then introduce their work to the manager.

So the only thing that managers have to do is consider ready information and reports that the units of the organization have done, and then just take a decision. And this is what exactly Mintzberg observes in his research. As a fact that Fayol's elements are widely used not exactly by the managers but rather from the whole organization. "Luthans and others believe that Fayol's elements and principles remain valid and in use today" (Fells, 2000, p. 350). In the end of Mintzberg's reports it can be described that most of the roles that Mintzberg set up are almost the same to those of Fayol's.

Mintzberg observes what managers do and can not find any similarities with Fayol's theory, but when he converts their way of function to theory it comes up that Mintzberg express roughly the same things as Fayol's (Tsoukas, 1994, p. 295-296). Of course he talks more for managerial style than for functions but that is the different that Fayol's "functions are more general" (Fells, 2000, p. 347) and more theoretical than Mintzberg's managerial styles which are more specific and more realistic.

What Hales propose is that "the research work of Mintzberg and his colleagues fills in the fine detail of the practical manifestations of the more abstract functions" (Lamond, 2004, p. 334). Or we can contrast Fayol's elements with Mintzberg's styles, for instance the "disturbance handler might include controlling, commanding and possibly coordinating" (Fells, 2000, p. 351) What Mintzberg does is trying to replace Fayol's elements with his managerial styles. But he can not do that because basically most of the theories on management refer to Fayol's elements.

So Mintzberg as researcher creates a thought which he thinks will guide him to results that would change peoples believe about Fayol. But the results he receives not only can not change peoples believe but unlike he will support Fayol more. What Mintzberg achieves is to “ say the same thing but from a different view” (Lamond, 2004, p. 334) It is not necessary Fayol’s principles been accepted and adapted by everyone. Surely there are many different and contradicting views from many researchers perhaps even and from other grounds.

Many have found weaknesses in his principles like Mintzberg, Kotter (1982), Gray (1984) and tried to overshadow Fayol with their criticizes, but his elements are established after many years of experience and managing, so these already tested elements and principles are very well-built to be overshadowed by anyone. Although there are some thoughts that Kotters and Mintzberg “ tend to confirm rather than deny Fayol’s classical view” (Fells, 2000, p. 351) There is something that either Fayol talks neither Mintzberg.

The most important is that both of them did not think about how a manager can and should satisfy his employees in line to win their trust and persuade them to work harder in turn to increase the productivity. It is vital for a manager to have the support of his employees, because without their support and cooperate it does not matter what theories and what kind of managing a manager uses he/she will fail as a manager.

Archer refers to this by saying that Fayol’s principals were very famous in USA and “ used by academics until 1960s were the motivational panaceas

and needs theory and job enrichment” (Fells, 2000, p. 350) were introduced. Kotter, Mintzberg and some others who contradict Fayol were observing what managers do. Kotter for example after research reached that managers were not “ strategic, reflective, proactive or well organised”(Mumford, 1987, p. 29), he draw the conclusion that these managers are not acting by this way thus Fayol is wrong. But this is mistaken, it does not mean that because these managers do not use Fayol’s elements that they are not effective and they are “ folklore” (Mintzberg, 1975) by looking few managers. They did not find any information that can prove the failure of a manager by using those elements.

Thus it is not really “ what mangers do but what we would like to do” (Mumford, 1987, p. 29). Some of Fayol’s weaknesses was that his elements were very general, and they do not indicate to new managers in practice what should they do in line to progress. His mistake was that he had to write more information about how all these principles and elements can be used. This is what exactly Mintzberg recognize in Fayol’s work. Mintzberg with his researches finds that many managers act by Fayol’s elements but in the wrong way or there have been added more principles.

But they still use them by a more complicated or other way. These can be seen in the managerial styles were Mintzberg draws the main managerial roles “ Figurehead, Leader, Liaison, Monitor, Entrepreneur, Resource allocator, Disseminator, Negotiator, Disturbance handler” (Lamond, 2004, 332). There are many similarities and some more principles, for example Fayol does not say anything about leadership where Mintzberg identifies the

leadership through his research. Thus lead as to the fact that Mintzberg can not say that Fayol is wrong but he can say that Fayol's work was incomplete.

In conclusion, Fayol and Mintzbrg create two different views about how a manager should act or what kind of style he/she should adopt. Both of them talk about the same thing but in a different ear with completely dissimilar background and with different kind of research. Fayol was based on his own experiences and his own experiments to find the best way of managing. In contrast with Mintzberg who uses others experiences to do his researches and observes only the surface. It is clearly obvious that Fayol's approach is far more superior of Mintzberg's. Mintzberg's approach is only additional to Fayol's elements.