

# Brief overview of apple management essay



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Each individual has their own ways in defining the world that will result in different knowledge and therefore each perspective has their own unique concepts and theories. The four main perspectives are namely Modernism, Symbolic Interpretivism, Critical Theory and Post-Modernism. By placing us in modern, symbolic interpretive critical or postmodern, we can understand different situations about how an organisation can be true and how it can be explained and described in different scenario. It can also re-enact how individuals or groups in an organisation respond and behave in certain ways under certain circumstances.

In this essay, we will discuss on modernism and Critical Theory perspectives mainly focusing on the views of structural and power that is present within an organization and each perspective will be analysed through comparison and contrasting.

## **Modernism**

Modernist believes they understand how an organisation functions and how external environment influence them. In order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, they would control environment, predict outcomes and learn about individual's power by the means of scientific methods.

From a modernist's perspective, their ontological assumption is objectivism. Modernist understands that it is predictable on how individuals approach on what is happening in the environment. Their perspective of epistemology assumption is positivism which means that by using the objective world as a reference, knowledge can be discovered and tested. The analysis regarding the hypotheses of the reality against the real world can be derived from

statistical method and deductive approach. Theoretical models can later be concluded to provide rationalization of how an organisation works. Modernist's point of view is to zero in on the truth behind how organisations function and to zoom in on the most efficient and effective methods.

According to the modernist's perspective, quantitative data and knowledge are vital and can be derived through the ways of science (Clegg & Kornberger 2003). Power followed the structure of a command hierarchy which is seen as a rational and political system according to the modernism perspective. Facts and truths are a staple to gain authority and control within the organisation. In order to ensure organisation effectiveness and efficiency, traditional hierarchical organisation design is used. It is believed that someone with expertise and ability together with power given will make necessary decisions that are tasked within the organisational goals (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006).

Through modernism perspective, we can take a closer look at organisation power using agency theory. According to Eisenhardt(1989), agency theory is used to ensure the action of individuals is met with the interest of the organisation owner. By controlling the behaviours and actions of the individuals, they can protect the well-being of the organisation owner. Under the agency theory, individuals can be restrained through contracts which would ensure that they would not neglect their job responsibilities. Other strategies would be using surveillance to monitor their action and also rewarding them based on their commitment and performance. Agency theory aims to achieve efficiency and effectiveness by aligning the welfare of individuals as well as the organisation owner (Eisenhardt 1989).

Bureaucratic theory is another way to understand power through modernism perspective. Bureaucratic control is implemented to achieve greater efficiency through the use of a set of rules and regulations that is bounded within the hierarchical structure. According to Hatch & Cunliffe (2006), in order to measure and predict an individual's behaviour, bureaucracy theory is used to determine power and authority.

Clan control theory is use through a modernism perspective to prevent any unbalance through the divergence of interests among individuals. It observes everyone's behaviour within the organisation by uniting their shared values, norms, expectations and commitment. This theory highlights the importance to mingle with the individuals who will help to increase their commitment and helps the organisation to observe their performance and outcomes. (Govindarajan & Fisher 1990).

The use of hierarchical authority and the technical control of using machinery through management whom become responsible for precise scheduling and organising of work activities. The means of using a time motion studies is to reduce the number of motion in performing a task in order to increase work rate and productivity.

## **Critical Theory**

Critical theory would give a special way for us to understand an organisation and how they would manage. The purpose of Critical theory in the study of organizations is to analyse the ontology and epistemology assumptions (Steffy & Grimes, 1986 and Gioia & Pitre, 1988).

The ontology assumption of Postmodernism is objectivism where they believe that reality is independent of our knowledge living in it. Critical Theory in epistemology believes in subjectivism where the knowledge is tainted by a dominant ideology as the knowledge that we know cannot be assumed for what it is.

According to Clegg, Hardy, Lawrence & Nord (2006), the term critical theory would mean taking a rational and critical point of view on the ever-changing society by paying particular attention focusing on uncovering exploitation, repression, unfairness, asymmetrical power relations which include gender or position, distorted communication as well as false consciousness.

According to Clegg, Hardy, Lawrence & Nord (2006) Critical theory will mainly focus on rationalization as well as reasoning using the Weberian theory of bureaucracy.

Another Critical Theory's perspective is Feminism which deconstruction of the idea of leadership and decision-making are dominated by males in the organisation due to unequal power in the workplace and decision-making. It focuses on the meanings and identities of gender equality which created through sexual division of labour. On top of that, feminists looked in the gender stratification where unfair treatment exists between genders within an organisation to uncover the truth behind organisational relationships of power and control (Hatch & Cunliffe 2006). According to (Catalyst 2012), women are sharing just 16.1 percent of senior leadership roles in 2012 despite women accounting for 46.6 percent of the US labour force and having a 36.8 percent of MBAs earned between 2010-2011.

## **Brief overview of Apple**

Apple Inc. not only designs and develops but also sells consumer electronics like personal computers, portable media player as well as mobile devices and services. Since 1976, Apple repeatedly set the standard for high quality personal electronics and is known for their innovation and ground breaking products. In this essay we will take a look at Apple internal structure as well Apple external party, Foxconn.

## **Modernism**

We can apply the bureaucratic theory to Apple by looking at the modernism perspective. The implementation of bureaucracy within the organisation is to ensure that the behaviours and performance of the employees can be measured with accuracy. Due to hierarchy of authority, rules and policies to generate behaviour, there will be high degree of centralization in a bureaucratic organization. Under the bureaucracy theory, modernist indicated the importance of hiring and selecting the right employees based on technical qualifications. We can apply this theory to Apple where quoted from Mike Janes, a former Apple executive, remembering Steve-ism on the topic of talent where: "A Players hiring only A players" and emphasising that they only want A players here. According to Lashinsky (2012), they hired potential employees who are egoless and fanatical. These are the quality for a person to thrive at Apple as it requires people to really work hard and take on lot of tasks and complete them in a short period of time. Apple assessed their potential candidates by using aptitude test and open-ended interview questions. Apple employees are no doubt world class due to the fact they are able to attract high performing employees that are usually best of the rest.

The clan control theory exist in Apple through the modernism perspective, Apple attempt to manage power and control over employees by enshrining the importance of a small group called “ Top 100”. The meeting would be usually held in secrecy even to the extent that the room would be swept for bugs beforehand. Jobs also forbid food servers from entering the room while products are being shown. However during these meetings, employees are able to come together to converse and exchange ideas openly and freely during the one hour presentations. The importance of increasing commitment which could in turn help the organisation bring out the point that once a candidate is shortlisted and hired by Apple, they will remain with Apple for years. According to Lashinsky (2012), every member of the executive team or middle ranks had been in their jobs since the year 2000.

By taking a look into agency theory from modernist perspective, Apple workers at Foxconn are constantly surveillance. Chan & Pun (2010) suggest that there are more than 1000 security guards standing guard 24 hours a day to prevent there are unauthorized personnel from entering the areas. Another point made was that their actions are monitored. Even if they want to seek help and support from the police, the in-factory telephones will be automatically diverted to Foxconn’s own private security department. The workers of Foxconn are being treated as prisoners due to the fact that everywhere they went either going to toilet or going to eat have to be checked. Modernist also state that individuals can be restrained through their contracts so that they do not neglect their job responsibilities as any leakage of information could mean financial losses. Chan & Pun (2010) suggest we take a look at the tragic incident of Sun Danyong where he was

held responsible for losing one of the 16 prototypes. He was feeling despair and loss of hope after being suspected of stealing, interrogation and solitary confinement by the security officers and to the extent of having his home searched. The way he was being treated, alleged beaten and humiliated it was as if they wanted him to admit to something he did not do. The way Foxconn handled this case show the inadequate management in helping a young workers cope with all those psychological pressures of working at the company.

Foxconn International holdings and Apple Inc can be viewed as a suggestion that power relations exist and the impact on Chinese ratios. According to Forbes (2012, para. 9), Apple are able to fund the money needed for suppliers to set up their factories as well providing them to purchase the equipment needed and hiring the necessary labours to manage and run their day- to-day operations. This could be seen as part of a reason why Apple is so successful and profitable as an organisation is that they can have other firms like Foxconn to produce products using machinery that may not be at all valuable to Apple in coming years but they still can cover the rest of the depreciation by manufacturing second-tier laptops or phones. Looking from Froud et al. (2012) perspectives, this could point out the ability to organise production in ways which could deliver superior productivity like Apple producing in low wage supply chain in China and then selling it into a high income markets like the USA.

## **Critical Theory**

By looking at Critical Theory perspective, gender inequality exists in organisations. Despite Women having a higher graduating rate, they have

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consistency been paid less and promote less often than men and they have treated in a less professional manner than their male counterparts. Acker (2006) Arguments could be made that woman are more family oriented than man which is why woman becoming pregnant and leaving the company to raise a family is always used as an excuse. Gender inequality also exist in Apple organisation as Apple is led by an all-male team and has only appointed one female board member, Avon's Andrea Jung since 2010 (Hubpages 2012, para. 9).

Labour-Power as commodity is also a perspective of Critical Theory. It is like a worker selling his own labour-power in exchange for a wage or salary. Blunden (2005) suggests that the worker basically does the labour like producing goods and services stated in their contract. In a form of alienation, the products that produced by the workers are the property of the owners. The capitalist would then sell the goods that was manufactured and obtain a profit for it since the amount of wages paid to the workers are usually lower than the value of the goods and services produced by the workers. In the course of the working day, workers would produce more than what he is actually paid in wages. Due to capitalism, the workers are not paid for how much they would produce rather they are paid on how many hours they have worked. The profit is kept by the owners and not paid to the workers. Blunden (2005) state that the workers will only get a minimum wages regardless how well the business is performing.

Due to the mindset of greater the exploitation of labour means the greater the profit would be. This could be achieved through extension of working day but paying the workers the same wages. According to Chan & Pun (2010), <https://assignbuster.com/brief-overview-of-apple-management-essay/>

leading international brands have a tremendous influence over their contracting manufacturers. In this case, Apple are putting pressure on their worldwide suppliers with little sympathy to the workers who are producing those products. The most infamous incident of exploitation of workers happened in one of those Foxconn factories where 13 workers attempted to commit suicide and 10 of them succeeded. Workers in those factories were forced to work overtime for long hours with reduced overtime payment. Moreover, Foxconn imposed restrictions on workers where they were virtually give no rest and even if they were to go toilet or having a sip of water, they will need to find a substitute to continue their work before they are allowed to do so. On top of that workers were not allowed to send email unless they were given the green light to do so (Blanchard 2012). In short, Foxconn employees experience long hours of doing the same procedure for a very low income. Management also uses illegal and abusive ways to increase efficiency. Workers would require to work till 9p. m everyday even though the Chinese law state that normal working hours should not exceed 8 hours a day and 40 hours a week and overtime should not exceed 3 hours a day according Article 3 of State Council Rules on Working Hours and Article 41 of Labour law respectively.

Due to the cheap labour market in china, we can take a look through Critical Theory regarding the existence of labour market. According to Chan & Pun (2010), the post 80 and post 90s new generation of migrant works usually from the rural parts of china coming to Foxconn to work in order to provide their family with a better life. They tend to have high expectations of life. Chan & Pun (2010) suggest that those who work in Foxconn are not really

interested in what they are doing at Apple. For example, 21 years old Li Hai enjoyed drawing and became disillusioned with Foxconn way of life of assembling process at high speed most difficult. 24 years old Lu Xin was assigned to the production department and not his preferred research and development unit. He would enjoy writing music everyday but due to poverty he had no choice but to work at Foxconn. Another 24 years old Lu Xin who wanted to be a model and studying overseas is her aspiration. Workers of rural origins are marginalised and excluded materially and culturally. These young workers became disillusioned as they do not find a sense a belongingness to the city neither do they want to return to the life living in the countryside. It was also stated that even if they were to quit Foxconn, there will be other factories who will exploit them more or less the same way Foxconn does (Chan & Pun 2010). In summary, the young workers only work to improve their rural families living conditions despite the fact that they are doing something that they disliked.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, it would be reasonable to understand that different belief are derived from different perspectives due to the reality, knowledge and power that is present within an organisation. By looking at the modernist's perspective, their belief of power and authority need to be assigned as well as measured theoretically in order to control an individual within an organisation to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. From the Critical Theory's perspective, their ideal society is to preserve and legitimise any unjust and undemocratic relations within organisations. They would also uncover the things like exploitation and inequality as people are unable to

view what they really are. Even though, Modernism and Critical Theory infer power in organizational environment differently, both have their own views equally. To sum it up, different perspectives have given us a boarder understanding and explanation of organisation and organisation behaviours. It would give us a better understanding of the complex situations in Apple and its relationship with its environment.