

Scientific management definition



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COMPARE AND CONTRAST APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT BASED ON SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND THOSE FROM HUMAN RELATIONS PERSPECTIVE. USE EXAMPLES FROM ORGANISATIONS TO ILLUSTRATE HOW THESE APPROACHES ARE BEING APPLIED IN CONTEMPORARY ORGANISATIONS

Management, despite its importance has no generally agreed definition. It is defined as the “ activity of getting things done with the aid of people and resources” (Boddy, 2008). This definition places the responsibility on the manager to blend the human and the material resources together to achieve a given objective. Fayol (1949) however articulates the responsibility of both the manager and the managed. He argues that management is “...an activity spread, ... between head and members of the body corporate”. Hoopes (2003) also defines management as: “ getting people to cooperate with each other in order to accomplish together more than could be done alone.” This definition encapsulates the view of human relations management theory which emphasises joined-up thinking and action from employers and employees.

This essay looks at the similarities and differences between scientific management and human resource management.

Many theories of management exist all aimed at fashioning out the best way to manage employees and resources to achieve efficiency and productivity. These include scientific management of Taylor, administrative management theory of Henry Fayol, and the bureaucratic organizational management of

Weber, Human Relations Movement of Elton Mayo and the behavioural school of management of Maslow.

Scientific management was pioneered by Taylor (1911). In a series of experiments he set out to calculate “one best way” in which work can be done most efficiently. The thrust of Taylorism is that work processes can be divided into simple minute details and performed in a repetitive manner. It advocates the division of labour and performance-related. According to Taylor this will lead to increased efficiency, productivity high profits and subsequently high wages and harmony between employers and employees. In applying these measures he advocated what he termed “time and motion” means of standardising and analysing work processes.

He ascribed low productivity at the workplace to what he called “systematic and natural soldiering” where employees deliberately and mischievously underperform in their mistaken belief that working harder will lead less of them will be required. Again the reliance on “rule of thumb” instead of the scientific “one best way” means more time is wasted by workers figuring out how best to perform a given task.

He argued that when laziness by an individual infects other employees and lead to groupthink and group loafing.

In order to eliminate soldiering, he advocated five principles for implementation at the workplace which he believed will eliminate waste, simplify job processes and increase productivity and increased standard of living for all.

Scientific management is very effective in work situations where precision and safety are of paramount importance. It is also effective where pre-determined goals are set and work processes can be broken down into constituent minute parts. It is very valuable and effective in food franchises where the need for uniformity in food production and service is crucial for the survival of the organisation. These include McDonald's, KFC, Burger King etc. In McDonald's, work processes like cutting and frying beef, service time, time allocation and the level and duration of service are standardised and followed scrupulously. Again Scientific Management is also very effective in the motor industry and is effectively used by Ford Motor Company. In the automotive industry, tasks can be divided into constituent minute details with each worker assigned to a specific task (Morgan, 1986; Parker, *et al* 2005).

Other advocates of scientific management are Lillian Gilbreth and Fayol. Fayol, while agreeing in the main with Taylor, categorised business activities into six groups, namely technical, commercial, financial, security, accounting and management and insisted that management processes is not so much about devising systems and processes and the rate of throughput but orderly integration of production, sales, financial, and accounting functions of the organization. Thus, Fayol's management function was a way of identifying management as something apart from technical activities but essential to getting economy from their integration.

Human relations movement pioneered by Mayo arose as result of the Hawthorne studies in 1924. After studying and varying various variables in the factory it was realised that output still increased. Mayo explained that: “

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what actually happened was that six individuals became a team and the team gave itself wholeheartedly and spontaneously to co-operation in the experiment”(Mayo, 1949 p 64). His interpretation was that the workforce under study was made to feel special and appreciated. Therefore to achieve higher productivity, employers should understand the emotional and psychological needs of employees and seek to promote these needs.

Marshall (1919 p. 351) puts it:

The relations of an employer to his employees generally contain some elements which have little connection with business: and even from a merely business point of view, account is to be taken of the fact that the trust, esteem and affection of his staff are a valuable business asset, of a kind which his machinery cannot supply.

Therefore to increase productivity and efficiency businesses have to take into account workers social needs and aspirations. Mayo believes that to be able to increase productivity, the organization should not be concerned about the work processes but understand, recognise and respect the emotional and non-monetary needs of their employees. Other advocates of human relations theory of management include Herzberg, Argyris and McGregor.

There are several similarities between these management schools of thought.

Firstly they all have increased efficiency and productivity as their core objective. Both scientific management and human relations management

schools of thought aim at high productivity of employees and believe will lead to increased profit and standard of living for all.

They all advocate for division of labour and each individual should be placed at positions where they can produce at their optimum.

On selection and recruitment Taylor advocated that the best person should be selected for the job. This has spawned Human Relations departments whose sole purpose is to select and match employees with the relevant experience and aptitude to the best suited jobs.

Also another similarity is Taylor's insistence on the systematic training of employees to be able to do their work efficiently (Taylor, 1903, p45). The argument that Taylor approached personnel "as a given rather than a variable in the system" (March and Simon, 1958 p29) is not supported by evidence. Berman (1974) states that "...Taylorism was not ...the destroyer of the craft system". Taylor argues that "...the man with sufficient brains to sweep the floor, under scientific management is trained and taught and helped so that he finally learns how to use, say a grinding machine..." (Taylor, 1912, p 155).

On incentives, they agreed that incentives form an important part of human motivation and drive.

There are however, several differences between the two schools of management schools of thought.

Scientific management movement understood the individual to be a productive unit apart and away from other people while human relations

movement stresses on the primacy of relationships at the work place. The organization has to be developed around the workers and managers have to take into account human feelings and attitudes.

Again management's duty under scientific management is to “ do the thinking” while workers are employed to work. The leader, under scientific management sets the work criteria and enforces them and has all authority reposed in him. Taylor puts it this way:

Each workman, instead of coming into direct contact with the management at one point only, namely, through the gang boss, receives his daily orders and help directly from eight different bosses, each of whom performs his own particular function (Taylor 1903: 99).

Power and authority reside in the manager and their instructions have to be obeyed without question. However, leadership under human relations movement facilitates cooperation between employees and employers and to be able to change working practices, managers have to do it full co-operation with employees. This is because change cannot be forced on people. Trincina (2000) remarks:

The only way people change is because they choose to . . . You cannot force change onto people, not lasting change, and not real change.

Follet rejected the notion of “ power over” in preference to “ power with”. According to her, it is preferable to develop the idea of “ power-with, a jointly developed power, a co-active not coercive power (Follet in Fox and Urwick,

1973, p 72). She argues further that the biggest contribution a businessman can make to the wider society is the “ demonstration of the possibility of collective creativeness” (Follet in Fox and Urwick, 1973, p64).

Scientific management depicts the worker as mechanical, passive being that worked only for monetary rewards. It adopts a simplistic and “...naive view of human beings as economically driven hedonists” (Bendix, 1956, p. 287-8). Loh (1995, p. 105) also stresses on this point and argues that scientific management as espoused by Taylor ignores “... the abilities of people” and eliminates any “ vestige of ingenuity on their part”. Scientific management is unsuitable for jobs where creativity is required.

Human relations movement on the other hand believes that the existence of such informal groups would increase sense of worth and co-operation, and as the Hawthorne study shows, increase productivity.

Even though scientific management’s primary aim is to increase efficiency, it pays little attention to individual growth. It also exercises complete control of the individual and relegates to the background individual needs, variations in competences and needs. It is argued that Taylor “ fell for too mechanistic, too inhumane image of human nature” (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008).

Mary Parker Follet, one of the leading names on human relations expressed “ belief in the power and potential of the groups and leaders... [and that] ... leadership involved understanding the whole group and each individual member” as individuals with physiological, psychological and emotional needs to be fulfilled (McLarney C. et al 1999).

Scientific management argues that the main motivator for employees is money. Therefore increasing wages will motivate workers to work harder. Thus he introduces the notion of “ economic man”. However, Maslow argues that worker’s aspirations go beyond monetary considerations and introduced the concept of the “ social man”. According to Mayo, satisfaction of social needs and the sense of acceptance are the driving force of the organization. According to the human relations movement, satisfied workers are motivated workers and therefore effective workers.

It could be seen from the above discussion that both schools of thought had its strengths and weakness. Scientific management is efficient, more productive and more suitable for job processes that can be broken into minute constituent parts. Division of labour, setting up of departments within organisations make for efficiency and are all applications of scientific management. However, it suffers from rigidity and therefore unsuitable for most work situations where flexibility and the ability to adapt to the rapidly changing business environment is the key to survival. Strict application of scientific management will discourage initiative, judgement and responsibility and leads to apathy. It leads to a syndrome of “ it is not my job” (Morgan, 1996, p 30). It deskills the individual; leads to stress, increases labour disputes, higher employee turn-over, industrial sabotage, low employee morale and worker- management conflict (Parker et al, 2005). However, it is important to train employees, make them aware of what is expected of them and monitor and mentor them to achieve these targets. Again once these targets are met they have to be rewarded appropriately as happens in the banking industry. Both theories advocate for increased

productivity through increased efficiency. Elements of both therefore have to be applied in the organisation to get the best results.