

Annotated Model Essay

Taylorism and the Scientific management model is still relevant today.

In what ways do you agree or disagree with this statement?

INTRODUCTION

Information presented from general (contextual) to specific (positional) with thesis statement at the end of the paragraph. Introductions may include; attention grabbing statement, background, definitions, introduction to key ideas, theories, research and thesis statement/statement of purpose.

Introduction

It is argued that for large-scale business enterprises, one of the great strengths of the Scientific Management model is that it rationalises and standardises production methods which leads to significant improvements in efficiency and productivity, and maximises profits for an organisation. The Taylor approach incorporates division of labour, predetermined methods of work, repetition of simple movement, minimum training requirements, financial incentives and time optimisation (Caldari 2007). While the system has great capacity to be a source of economic success for employers due to these technical efficiencies, a number of critics including Marshall 1919, cited by Caldari 2007; Smith 1988, Greeves 1998 and Baker 2004) have pointed out that the model can lead to serious disadvantages for employees. Hoxie (1916a) and Braverman (1974) have been critical of such Taylorist labour principles, claiming that it can lead to worker alienation and de-skilling. Despite these criticisms, some academics and experts such as Locke (1982) and Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) argue that Scientific management approaches continue to be relevant and effective in certain business, industrial and manufacturing contexts, such as high volume production. This essay will

Attention-grabbing statement

See Getting started on your essay

Supporting information with more definitions and details

'While' indicates qualifying statement and identification of a problem

Harvard in-text citation

See Referencing with accuracy

Use of Referring verbs

See Critical thinking and analysis

Summary of problem/controversy

despite these criticisms, some academics and experts such as Locke (1982) and Huczynski and Buchanan (2013) argue that Scientific management approaches continue to be relevant and effective in certain business, industrial and manufacturing contexts, such as high volume production. This essay will

Use of complex sentences and correct punctuation

See Writing with accuracy

Thesis Statement

See Getting started on your essay

demonstrate the advantages of Taylorism for employers, whilst also identifying key deficits in the theory from the perspective of the workforce. It will suggest that a firm's operating context is an important determinant of success applying Scientific Management principles to work design, with quantity-focused manufacturing industries

Linking back devices and 'This' + summary words

See Writing with clarity

Purpose Statement

(The Routemap)

See Getting started on your essay

best placed to benefit from the approach. It will account for the structures, labour methods and motivation techniques promoted by Taylor through analysis of specific examples of its application, whilst examining numerous theories to support the thesis and explain the continuing relevance of the methodology.

Main Body

Topic Sentence

Link and signpost words and phrases help organise the flow of ideas in the paragraph

See Writing with clarity

There are a variety of contrasting definitions, interpretations evaluations of the scientific management approach as an effective means of business operation.

In a broad sense, the fundamentals of Taylorism are based on a mechanistic perspective of the workforce as a key part of the production machine (Smith, 1984). Weber's (1947, cited by Huczynski & Buchanan 2013) bureaucracy theory implies Taylorism is management in its most efficient form, as it is based on legitimate authority incorporating rationality. Burns' contingency theory (1994) however, argues that organisations should be viewed more organically with greater value attached to diversity, difference and initiative than Taylor considered necessary, and also outlines the importance of the environment within which the firm is situated in making a decision to implement a scientific approach, for example a manufacturing firm versus a design company. And while Weber's bureaucratic approach (1947, cited by Huczynski & Buchanan 2013), demonstrates that bureaucratic structures may be beneficial to employers as it is easier to control and predict worker outcomes, contingency theory shows that there may be deficits for employees and some may thrive in a more fluid and organic structure, which allows for social interaction and the freedom to be creative. Taylorism does not account for these variances and therefore the approach may have an adverse impact on employees working in these types of business sectors.

Topic sentence:

With link to previous paragraph

Taylorism has been widely critiqued by academics such as Hoxie (1916a), and Braverman (1974). Taylor advocates time-and-motion studies, which identify the 'one-best-way' to undertake a job in order to maximise efficiency (Koumparoulis & Solomos 2012). However, others argue the 'one-best-way' concept is flawed, as the best way for one worker may not be so for another worker (Braverman 1974). Taylor would argue that if time-and-motion studies were taken on the worker performing the task, this would not be an issue for employers, and that they would then benefit in terms

Logical organisation of known and new information to improve flow of ideas

See Writing with clarity

Thesis Statement

One to three sentence summary of your position or argument and analysis that is to follow

Provides the reader with a guide to your argument

Tests your ideas by distilling them into one or two sentences

Helps you stay focused and answer the question

Links directly to the assignment question

Paragraph theme:

Descriptions and explanations of Taylorism and identification of weaknesses

Development of Problem 1 + Link to next paragraph topic

See Writing with clarity

More detailed analysis of Problem 1) with variety of supporting evidence (paraphrase, summary and quote), relevant to the thesis

See Critical thinking and analysis

of efficiency and productivity. However, this scientific reductionist approach can result in a deskilling of the workforce, as workers are trained to execute the easiest, quickest and most efficient method of work. This makes workers easier to control (Hoxie 1916a), and the need for more expensive skilled craftsmen diminishes, so clear cost benefit accrues to employers (Hoxie 1916a). Despite this apparent benefit, it can limit worker scope for promotion as there are fewer opportunities to demonstrate higher capabilities (Marshall 1919, cited by Caldari 2007). Deskilling may also lead to job specialisation, which 'deprives workers of thought, initiative and inventive genius' (Hoxie 1916a: p.65), and this can result in creativity and flexible-working issues. Thus, while rigid structures promoted by Taylor provide short-term technical efficiencies, they may cause long-term inefficiencies as a firm's flexibility is limited (Marshall 1919, cited by Caldari 2007). Taylor would argue that efficiency benefits are more important than being flexible and having the capacity to deal with uncertain events, which by definition cannot be planned for. However, in industries prone to rapid change such as creative environments, Taylorism may be less applicable.

Use of hedging (can/may)

See Writing in academic style

Topic sentence:

With link to previous paragraph

Taylor's view of labour as a tool that 'could be engineered to achieve efficiency' (Koumparoulis & Solomos 2012: p. 150) has been challenged by Lawrence (2010) and Marshall (1919, cited by Caldari 2007) who contend that while Taylorism may offer certain benefits to employers, it may not lead to a dynamic, flexible and creative workforce; traits now considered essential job skills for many 21st century business organisations.

Taylor identified the issue of systematic soldiering within groups, which is the organised restriction of output by workers to prevent their employers knowing how fast they could work, in order to pursue their own interests (Huczynski & Buchanan 2013). He considered individualised work to be more advantageous to employers because it removes the risk of systematic soldiering. It also prevents 'group-think' which involves workers over-riding managerial direction and conforming to their team norms (Janis 1972, cited by Locke 1982), and 'social loafing' where some workers exert less effort than others in the team (Latané, Williams and Harkins 1979, cited by Locke 1982). However, individualised work patterns can neglect the social aspect of employment in which some workers may thrive, and this

Argument and counter- argument with further criticism of Taylorism (Weakness 2) with variety of supporting evidence (paraphrase, summary and quote), relevant to the thesis

See Critical thinking and analysis

Suitable use of formality

See Writing in academic style

may have a significant detrimental impact on motivation and productivity. In order to counter this effect, NUMMI, an innovative and highly successful car manufacturer in the 1980s created a productive and efficient workforce using Taylor's time-and-motion design, but with work occurring in teams (Adler 1993). Adler's study (1993) found that the workers were highly satisfied and motivated by this innovative job design which gives workers the freedom to socially interact, and be creative, while at the same time adopting elements of scientific management. This suggests that some aspects of Taylorism could be used in partnership with more holistic approaches to work design. However, while Adler's (1993) study concluded that group working can lead to higher levels of motivation and production, it did not investigate the effects of the pay incentives also in place at the plant (Smith, 1994). Taylor maintained that financial rewards were best served to negate the impact of systematic soldiering, group-think and social loafing, and increase the motivation of the workforce.

Critical evaluation of Weakness 2

See Critical thinking and analysis

Further critical evaluation of Weakness 2 and link to next paragraph

See Critical thinking and analysis

Paraphrase:
To express the meaning of something written or spoken using your own words

Summarise:
A brief /shortened outline of the main points

Synthesise:
To combine sources or ideas in order to form a connected whole & explain support (or criticise) and develop an argument or position

Argument- Counter-Argument
See Critical thinking and analysis

Further Counter-Argument to support criticisms of Taylorism + thesis statement

See Critical thinking and analysis

Taylor's motivation theory was based upon his ideology that all workers were self-interested (Wagner-Tsukamoto 2007), thus he attempted to ensure sufficient benefits were given to workers via financial incentives with regard to quantitative productivity measures. He believed cooperation would not prevail over time if profit was not shared fairly in accordance with personal contribution (Wagner-Tsukamoto 2007). Although this appears to be beneficial to employees, it can have the reverse affect, as organisation members attempt to increase their own gain at the expense of others (Wagner-Tsukamoto 2007). The Trades Union Congress Report argued that financial incentives created an anti-social feeling amongst workers, and that it was a 'scientific method of squeezing the last drop of blood out of men' (1910: p. 28, cited by Caldari 2007). This is evidence that a purely financial incentive scheme is not always beneficial to all workers.

More recent motivation theories do incorporate Taylor's relatively simple view of employee motivation to some extent. Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964, cited by Locke 1982) involves the assumption that people will not work unless they attain personal benefit (Locke 1982). However, the primacy of financial reward as a motivator does not feature as strongly in more recent motivation theories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1943) and Expectancy Theory (1964, cited by Locke)

Reasoned Response

Analyse and evaluate in addition to describing

To develop an effective academic response to an essay question

You MUST

Analyse and evaluate in addition to describing

Consider & show evidence of a range of arguments or viewpoints using accurate referencing & citation

Support your ideas/research & build your thesis using evidence from academic sources: (expert views; data; theoretical models; research findings; expert views; case studies & examples; work experience (your own or from academic sources)

Be measured and objective

1982). Williamson suggests (1985, cited by Wagner-Tsukamoto 2007) that simple financial incentive systems have become inferior to blended reward systems. So the argument is that a system based purely on financial rewards is becoming outdated in modern society where people work in group-orientated creative industries, where it is harder to attribute individual contribution to overall success. That said, financial incentive bonus structures founded by Taylor are still common today in call centres and other sales jobs, signifying they may still motivate people (Russell 2009, cited by Carter, Danford, Howcroft, Richardson, Smith & Taylor 2010). Therefore, Taylor's concept of standardised systems and financial incentives and standardised systems may have some relevance in terms of individualised work within suitably bureaucratic or highly controlled organisations, limitations are being increasingly identified in areas where sophisticated teamwork is required for organisational success, such as in the creative and high tech industries.

Critical evaluation + qualification of counter-argument

See Critical thinking and analysis

Combining sources to Develop a reasoned response & Critical evaluation of evidence (including evaluation / qualification of the writer's own argument)

Self -evaluation can strengthen your case

See Critical thinking and analysis

In terms of bureaucratic organisations, Taylorist principles have been incorporated into the British Civil Service via the introduction of lean management which draws directly on the principles of scientific management (Carter et al. 2011). This implies limitations of creativity within the workforce are less important than overall efficiency experienced by employers (Jones, 1999). McDonald's is another example that illustrates the continuing use of Taylorist principles in work design, with its aim to achieve predictability, calculability and efficiency, with carefully planned and imposed limits on employee creativity (Huczynski & Buchanan 2013). These examples suggest Taylorism may be applicable in industries other than manufacturing. However, there are industries that require constant innovation, creativity and flexibility from employees to adapt to changing markets, and whether Taylorism is suitable for their needs is questionable. Apple and Google are examples that have rejected Taylorist theories, and they dominate their respective markets. Their desire for speed and creativity to respond to their fast-moving marketplaces requires fundamentally different job design principles outlined in Contingency Theory (Burns 1994). Nevertheless, Taylor would argue that if employers re-evaluated job designs frequently, adapting to a changing marketplace would not be an issue. Although the appropriateness of this is questionable, especially in the creative sector.

Signpost words

Development & progression of ideas

See Writing with clarity

Conclusion

A brief summary of what was covered

Future Implications and closing statement

By considering the structures, labour methods and motivation techniques promoted by Taylorism, it is clear that in industries where products are fairly standard, employers can benefit via increased productivity and efficiency, as shown by the UK Civil Service. However, workers are inevitably disadvantaged with promotion and creativity opportunities limited due to the rigid structure Taylor advocates. It is these issues that mean Taylorism is most suited to manufacturing environments, and less applicable to creative sectors. However, the criticisms of Taylorism do not underpin the validity of its principles in all business environments. The essay has shown that Taylor 'was able to create a system founded on issues present in his lifetime, that could transcend time and in some circumstances be beneficial to all generations, be it past, present or future' (Koumparoulis & Solomos 2012: p. 155), as shown by McDonalization. However, shortcomings with regard to employee performance and achievements have also been highlighted (Hoxie 1916a; Braverman 1974; Marshall 1919, cited by Caldari 2007). Consequently, future business enterprises, may need to think carefully when considering the possible adoption of a scientific management approach, as there may be more suitable models available.

CONCLUSION

Information presented from specific to general -
Re-phrased thesis statement; summary of issues and arguments; future implications; closing statement

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Reformulation of Thesis Statement

Use of Present perfect tense to indicate past event

See Getting started on your essay

APA Referencing System

Note: only sources used in text to be included in reference list & alphabetical order- by surname

Other popular referencing systems include; Harvard, Chicago, Numerical

See Referencing with accuracy

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