

Taylor - Scientific Management

Introduction

Taylor carried out a number of 'time and motion' studies on workers in the USA at the turn of the twentieth century – including the workforce of the Bethlehem Steel Works in Pennsylvania. He discovered that the workers made their own decisions about the methods required to carry out the various tasks required, and concluded that many of these methods were inefficient. Taylor believed that managers could find out the most efficient way of completing tasks by observation and experimentation.

The Theory



According to Taylor, Managers should:

- Study tasks carried out by workers, identify the quickest way of doing each one and eliminate any unnecessary activities
- Match tasks to the skills of the workers, giving each worker specific instructions as to what to do and how to do it
- Supervise workers closely, punishing those that do not work efficiently (the 'stick') and giving financial rewards to those that do (the 'carrot')
- Establish schemes that pay more to those who produce more

Taylor believed that money motivates and that pay systems should, therefore, be designed to allow workers to maximise their pay by increasing their efforts.

Examples

Mass production assembly lines - workers are closely supervised and the work rate is dictated by the speed of the conveyor belt

Piece rate systems of payment – workers are paid a fixed amount for every unit or 'piece' produced, or offered financial incentives to reach certain production/sales targets

Criticisms

- Assumes there is one 'best' way to organise production – workers may need to adopt different methods to achieve the same results
- Treats workers as resources to be used and controlled – may lead to industrial conflict
- Focuses on money as the only motivator – ignores workers' other needs

Question

Do you agree with Taylor that money is the only factor that motivates people to work?