

COMPONENT-I PERSONAL DETAILS

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COMPONENT-II DESCRIPTION OF MODULE

Items	Description of Module
Subject Name	Public Administration
Paper Name	Public Administration: An Introduction
Module Name/ Title	Human Relations Approach
Module Id	
Pre-requisites	
Objectives	The discussion in the module explains about the informal relations among employers and employees, concerned with moral and psychological rather than legal aspects of an organization in order to understand the issues pertaining to human relations, self respect, informal social relations, individual motivation, psychological feelings and tendencies of the workers.
Keywords	Human relations, Hawthorne, Elton Mayo, economic man

COMPONENT-III

Abstract

The Human Relations approach explains the informal relations among employers and employees and concerned with moral and psychological rather than legal aspects of an organization. Unlike Classical approach, which studies organization from structural point of view, it puts emphasis upon human relations, self respect, informal social relations, individual motivation, psychological feelings and tendencies of the workers. Thus, it believes in analyzing the multidimensional nature of human beings and their interactions for understanding the working of organizations.

1. Introduction

An approach is a way of gaining access to the understanding of a subject or a discipline. It refers to a particular manner of dealing with the problem. Several approaches to the study of Public Administration -- Classical, Scientific Management, Bureaucratic, Human Relations, Behavioral, System and Ecological -- have been developed since the inception of the subject as an independent field of study by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. Among these, Human Relations Approach occupies a significant place in the understanding of the comparatively newly emerged discipline of public administration as a science.

The human relations approach is also known as New Classical approach. Elton Mayo termed it Clinical approach. It attempts to explain the informal relations among employers and employees are concerned with moral and psychological rather than legal aspects of an organization. The approach considers worker not only one of the means of production system but as a 'man'.

The credit for shaping this approach goes to Elton Mayo and his associates such as F. J. Roethlisberger, William J. Dickson, T. North Whitehead, E. Warner, W. Lloyd and L. J. Henderson.

2. Emergence of Human Relations Approach

Human Relations approach emerged after 1920 to explain the informal aspect of an organization. It emerged as a reaction to the Taylor's Scientific Management approach--an offshoot of broad Classical approach--which became popular in the beginning of the 20th century. As a result of the Scientific Management approach whole human culture was influenced by material and mechanical environment. In industries emphasis was on increasing production. Resultantly, labor became a commodity and human being cog in the wheel. Main problems before workers were low wages, more hours of work, unhealthy working conditions and labors' exploitation. Managers were ignoring psychological needs of labors and social aspects of work. All these factors made workers apathetic towards their work. Besides, technological advancement in industry increased the educational level and professional skills of the workers to a great extent which made them more assertive about their rights and interests. Further, the class conflict and Trade Union movement in U.S.A. coupled with Communist Revolution in Soviet Union became the catalyst factors for the emergence and evolution of the Human Relations approach. In this regard B. Venkateswarlu has rightly observed, "given the state of dehumanization of the working class and growing trade union movement—the results of Taylorism—new problems of management and organization arose in the capitalist industry in the west

especially in America, in the first decade of the 20th century...Mayo and his colleagues, concentrating mainly on the behavior of the workers and their productive capacity, keeping in view physiological, psychological, physical and economic aspects, came out with the conclusion...that the whole problem is one of 'human relations.'

3. Contribution of Elton Mayo

The basic features of human relations approach have been the result of various experiments conducted by Elton Mayo and his colleagues in twenties and thirties' of the last century focusing their attention on the problems of industrial workers. The first major research study which came to be known as "The First Enquiry" undertaken by Mayo was in a textile mill in 1923 near Philadelphia. Under the then prevailing circumstances, the mill provided all the facilities to the workers. It was well organized and considered to be a model organization. Despite this, it faced some serious problems in one of the sections--the mule spinning--of the mill. The turnover of the employees in this section was estimated to nearly 250 percent per annum as against 5 to 6 percent in other sections. The management introduced several schemes by way of incentives to retain the workers but of no avail. Finding no way out of this ticklish problem, the matter was referred to Harvard University which in turn entrusted it to Elton Mayo.

Mayo studied the problem from various perspectives i.e. social, physical and psychological and started experiments with the permission of the management. In the very beginning, he studied the problem of physical fatigue. In order to overcome this problem he introduced rest periods of ten minutes each in the morning and afternoon for every worker of the mule section. Finding positive and encouraging results of this exercise, the scheme was extended to all other sections. Consequently, the symptoms of fatigue disappeared and the labor turnover almost came to an end as the workers started taking interest in work. The overall production level increased and the morale of the workers boosted. Further, Mayo suggested certain measures whereby workers had to earn their rest periods and bonus by producing more than a certain percentage. While these privileges made the workers happy but not liked by the supervisors as the same were not available to them. Keeping this fact in mind Mayo introduced a new scheme of shutting down whole of the spinning department for ten minutes, four times a day. This brought a new change in the outlook of supervisors and employees as all of them were satisfied with this new work culture. Besides, he placed the control of rest periods purely in the hands of workers which led to mutual consultations among them giving rise to the process of social interaction. Thus a new awakening began whereby the assumptions of 'rabble hypothesis' which assumes 'mankind a horde of unorganized individuals actuated by self- interest', was questioned and replaced by group interest.

4. Hawthorne Experiments

Hawthorne Experiments of Elton Mayo are considered as the bedrock of human relations movement in the management. These experiments were conducted in the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company from 1924 to 1932. It may be pointed out that these experiments were initiated by the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences along with George Pennock, supervisor of the company, and his associates. Thus, Mayo was involved in the experiments after some initial probing by the research team especially when it failed to come to any definite conclusions. The main

objective of these experiments was to know and understand the factors affecting efficiency and productivity of workers.

4.1 The Test Room Studies—Great Illumination Experiment

The first in the series was ‘The Great Illumination’ experiment (1924-27) having its objective to find out the impact of single variable i.e. illumination on the working capacity of workers. Under this experiment, two groups (control and experimental) of female workers, consisting of six members each, were formed and located in two different rooms, each group performing the same task. In the beginning, the rooms were equally illuminated but later on the experimental group was subjected to changes in the level of illumination. The research team observed both the groups and kept accurate record of production. The result was that regardless of the level of illumination, the production in both the groups increased. This made the researchers to conclude that certain other factors rather than illumination influence the level of production. So, various experiments were conducted to find out the other factors. During these experiments wage payments, duration of working hours, and rest periods were changed from time to time. Further, instead of group incentive plan, an individual piece rate plan was introduced. All these changes led to continued rise in production. Likewise, provision of refreshment like tea, coffee and soup as well as reduction in working hours and total work time in a week further accelerated the output. To explore further, the research team decided to withdraw all the newly introduced incentives and reverted to original conditions of work except individual piece rate system. The result was that initially the output declined a little but soon it rose to all time high. The findings puzzled the research team and it failed to give any plausible explanation.

Meanwhile, George Pennock met Mayo and requested him to unravel the problems confronted by the research team. On the basis of the findings derived by the research team, Mayo felt that mental attitude of the workers was perhaps responsible for this phenomenon. He further elaborated that the test room girls became a social unit and because of the increased attention of research team in them they developed a sense of participation. This paved the way for further research into social man. The network of these experiments had been hailed as the “Great Illumination” because it had thrown light on new areas of industrial relations.

4.2 Human Attitudes and Sentiments—Interviewing Studies

An interviewing study of psychological nature was conducted by the Harvard team from 1928 to 1931 in the same plant with a view to know the attitudes and sentiments of workers towards management and supervision. Under this workers were asked to express their views freely on the programs and policies of the management, working conditions and treatment by the supervisors. This provided an opportunity to as many as 21126 workers who were interviewed with the help of interview schedule to ‘let off steam’. As a result of this exercise, a change was witnessed in the mental attitude of the workers as they felt better though there was no material change in the environment as no reforms were introduced. The analysis of the data revealed that there is no correlation between the nature of complaints and the facts. The study team concluded that there were two types of complaints—the manifest material and psychological latent. The team realized that the complaints express the hidden grief of the workers rather than being symbolic of

actual facts. The preoccupation of workers with personal problems which Mayo called as 'pessimistic reveries,' many a time inhibited performance in the industry.

4.3 Social Organizations—Observational Studies

It was the last stage of the Hawthorne experiments conducted by Elton Mayo and his team during 1931-32 with the objective to observe a group behavior of workers performing a task in the natural setting. Under this 14 employees consisting of three groups of workmen were selected whose work was of interrelated nature i.e. to solder, to fix the terminals and to finish the wiring. Wages were paid on the group incentive plan and each member got his share on the basis of the total output of the group. It was found that the workers had a clear-cut standard of output which was lower than the management target. The group as per its standard plan did not allow its members to increase or decrease the output. Although they were capable of producing more, the output was held down to maintain uniformity. The group became highly integrated and it used social pressure to set right the erring members by maintaining a code of conduct.

The main findings of the study were that: a) the behavior of the group has nothing to do with the management or the general conditions of the plant; b) the workers viewed the interference of the supervisors and technologists who were supposed to increase efficiency as disturbance because to them the logic of efficiency followed by experts puts constraints on their group activity; c) the supervisors were considered as separate category with authority meant to discipline the workers. In brief, the logic of efficiency did not go well with the logic of sentiments, which had become the cornerstone of the 'social system'. The study concluded that one should not ignore the human aspect of organization. Mayo suggested that besides, technical skills, management should also handle human situations, motivate, lead and communicate with the workers. As regards concept of authority, he suggested that instead of expertise it should be based on social skills.

4.4 Absenteeism in Industries

The final experiment was conducted by Elton Mayo along with his research team in 1943 in three industrial undertakings engaged in manufacturing important components for aircrafts with a view to find out the causes responsible for high turnover of labor and chronic absenteeism. On the basis of Hawthorne experience, the study team found that it was due to the lack of informal groups and natural leaders to knit the workers into a team. Therefore, Mayo suggested that to the extent possible, management should encourage formation of informal groups to elicit cooperation of employees and treat the workers' problems with human understanding. Workers should not be treated as cog in the machine but human beings. The labor should develop the feeling that they were not subject to exploitation by the management.

In brief, the significance of Mayo studies lies in discovering the informal organizations to encourage spontaneous cooperation and realization of human factor in work situations so as to achieve the objectives of the undertaking without any difficulty.

5. Characteristics of Human Relations Approach

The most important contribution of Hawthorne experiments is the development of Human Relations approach. By Human relations we mean the process of integration and inter-relations of persons working in an organization. The focus of the approach which became popular after the Mayo's experiments is the 'human behavior' which has a great bearing on the administrative efficiency and organizational dynamics. The main characteristics of this approach are as under:

5.1 Emphasis on Human Element

The foremost characteristic of human relations approach is its emphasis on human element in industry. It assumes man not as a machine rather a living and sensitive entity having his own views. Prior to Mayo, workers were considered as 'cog in the wheel' or 'extension of a machine.' Labor was treated as commodity or non living means of production. There were wrong assumptions of human nature in industry. Generally, society was considered as horde of unorganized people. In the eyes of managers workers were a 'contemptible commodity'. Mayo while refuting these assumptions re-established human factor in industry. Thus, he advocated human relations approach by emphasizing needs, aspirations and sentiments of workers.

5.2 Impact of Social and Human Factors in Productivity:

Advocates of Human relations approach believe that output is affected by social and human factors along with technical and material ones. Before Hawthorne experiments, the impact of only technical and material changes was considered on productivity. However, Mayo's experiments showed that the impact of human and social factors is more than the material and environmental ones. To him, human relations include, among others, high morale, cordial relations, fulfillment of human needs and human management.

5.3 Man is not only an Economic Man:

Human relations approach strives to know the non-economic motivations instead of purely economic ones. According to this approach man is not only an 'economic man' who works only for material benefits and rewards. Mayo realized that there are some social and psychological needs of man such as social prestige, appreciation, sympathy, recognition of work etc. which inspire him to work. So, he suggested that managers should pay due attention to the individual and social needs of workers in addition to proper wages. Hawthorne experiments proved that financial means are inadequate to provide incentive to employees rather non-financial incentives such as participation in management, security of service, freedom of work are more important. In fact, human relations approach believes in the concept of 'social man' who is altogether different from the 'economic man'. Such a man is influenced by the standards laid down by the group and, in turn, affects the working of the organization because of his personal problems.

5.4 Discard of Rabble Hypothesis:

Human relations approach discards the rabble hypothesis and its two basic premises i.e. laissez-faire and concept of scarcity. This hypothesis considers whole society as a horde of unorganized people wherein each one competes for its self defence and fulfillment of self-objectives. Conversely, human relations approach assumes that in a working group

cooperation is more important than competition; man work not for his self defence but for the defence of group's prestige; and man is motivated more by sentiments than logic.

5.5 Satisfaction of Psychological Needs of Workers:

This approach put emphasis on the satisfaction of psychological needs of workers such as recognition, self actualization and morale. Mayo, during the course of his experiments observed that work in the American industries meant humiliation. It was just performing of mechanical, tedious, unimportant and non-significant routine activities. It was just negation of workers' personality and non availability of opportunities to show and develop their abilities. Thus, in such a monotonous environment there was no scope for the satisfaction of psychological needs of workers. Resultantly, there was feeling of tension, disappointment, and worry among workers which Mayo termed 'anomic' situation. His studies proved that morale of employees can be boosted by providing them opportunities of recognition, self respect and self actualization. In this way he emphasized upon the satisfaction of psychological needs of workers. Thus, this approach puts emphasis upon the understanding of workers' satisfaction, their participation in management, problems, informal relations and the internal social-psychological environment of an organization.

5.6 Importance of Informal Groups

Human relations approach lays emphasis on informal groups. Advocates of this approach assume that the study of informal groups is must for understanding the activities of formal groups. According to Mayo as a result of working together there emerges interaction among workers which leads to formation of small informal groups. Workers become members of these groups socially and psychologically and their social activities continue within and outside the workplace. These groups keep social control over the activities, behavior and outlook of workers. Further, these groups lay down their own standard of work, rules and principles which affect the whole work environment. Social pressure is used by informal groups to fulfill their standard of work. Workers as social beings give more importance to these groups than the goals of an enterprise and material rewards. Mayo observed that since these groups greatly affect work environment so managers should accord recognition to them and make their use in management system. He further clarified that by becoming member of social informal groups, workers' attitude towards the institution become better which helps in developing cordial relations with management. Moreover, through these groups effective leadership and communication system can be established.

5.6 Liberal Supervisory Style:

Human relations approach supports liberal supervisory style in industry. According to Mayo, free, liberal and sympathetic supervision inspire workers to work more. When workers have freedom of discussion, determining work procedure and controlling work environment, they work more enthusiastically. Further, morale of employees is boosted when supervisors behave friendly with workers, sympathetically consider their personal problems and avoid strict control.

5.7 Workers' Participation or Group Endeavor

This approach stands for worker's participation or group endeavor. Mayo was of the view that management efforts will succeed only when based on group endeavor. Further, to get constructive co-operation of workers, their participation in planning, organization and control is must. So, he suggested that managers should build up a new social order based on workers' co-operation.

5.8 Organization as a Social System

The Human relations approach perceives industrial undertakings as social units formed by social relations. It accepts factory or an administrative organization not merely a work-place but a social organization in which all persons work collectively. In fact, it is an individual entity closely associated with society. In this regard Mayo has rightly observed that 'the manager is neither managing men nor work, he is actually administering a social system.' Further, this approach did not view organization as a formal structure. According to it, work place is a complex social structure—a system of informal communication. Therefore, it puts emphasis on the maintenance of balance between 'logic of efficiency' and 'logic of sentiments' as well as development of interpersonal competence along with technical skill among managers.

5.9 Other Characteristics:

There are certain other characteristics of human relations approach in addition to the above mention ones which are as follow:

- It assumes that the relations between employer and employees are not always determined by laws or rules but by moral and psychological factors.
- It suggests managers and supervisors to develop quality of constructive leadership to boost up morale of workers.
- As per this approach worker is affected by the total work situation of an institution and adapt himself accordingly.
- It believes in analyzing the multi-dimensional nature of men and their mutual inter-actions to understand the activities of an organization.
- It emphasizes upon coordination of individual interests with that of the organizational objectives.
- It lays too much emphasis on human collaboration in industries. However, for eliciting cooperation, it suggests that authority of manager should be based on social skills rather than technical skills.

6. Critical Evaluation:

Though human relations approach is quite popular yet it has been victim of several criticisms by scholars like David Ashton, Peter F. Drucker, Alex Carey, Miller and Form, Loren Baritz, B. M. Selekman, Daniel Bell, Bendix and Fisher, Harold Sheppard etc. The main grounds of criticism are as under:

6.1 Unscientific Enquiry

Human relations approach is primarily the outcome of Hawthorne experiments conducted by Elton Mayo and his team which according to critics has no scientific base. The very

selection of work, workers and environment was unscientific. According to Alex Carey, whole research method was defective because of small size of sample and improper analysis of data. He has pointed out that the research team selected in their first experiment 'cooperative' girls who were willing to participate in the research program rendering it 'worthless'. Further, a sample of five or six could not be taken as reliable one to make generalizations. He further observed that evidence obtained from experiments does not support any of the conclusions derived by the Hawthorne investigations. Daniel Sell, one of the bitter critics of the human relations approach, also remarked that the methodology adopted by the Harvard group was defective. Likewise other critics pointed out that sweeping conclusions have been drawn from a relatively few studies.

6.2 Anti-Unions and Pro-Management Bias:

The approach is criticized for ignoring the role of trade unions in a free society. Selekmán while criticizing the Hawthorne experiments remarked that in more than twenty thousand interviews on which the conclusions of these experiments were based, nowhere the affairs of trade unions find mention.. It is argued by critics that Mayo never tried to integrate unions into his thinking. Hence, Loren Bartiz and other criticized 'Mayoists' as anti-union and pro-management. In fact, United Auto Workers in America bitterly criticized Mayoism for its assumption that 'satisfied workers are productive workers'. While reacting to this, they branded human relationists as 'cow sociologists' who believe that a satisfied cow gives more milk. To them, this can hardly solve the real problems of workers.

6.3 Economic Dimension Ignored:

The human relations approach is criticized for its failure to take into account the impact of larger economic, social and technological factors on the productivity of workers in organization. Peter Drucker, father of management thought, criticized the advocates of human relation approach for their lack of awareness of economic dimension. He felt that Hawthorne experiments neglected the nature of work and instead focused on interpersonal relations.

6.4 Untenable Ideal of Conflict-free Society:

In Human relations approach too much emphasis is given to cooperation and coordination while there is no place for 'conflicts'. Critics are of the opinion that conflicts provide new life to the organization and open up the gateway for competition and progress. Further, to think that a conflict-free state and worker contentment would lead to success of the company is not tenable because some tensions and conflicts are inevitable in every situation. They alleged that this approach sought to achieve organizational harmony through the subordination of individual and the group interests by the administrative elite. They opine that the goal should be to provide healthy outlets instead of indulging in utopian ideals of conflict-free society.

Beside, the approach is criticized for Mayo's sentimental concentration on the members of an organization to the neglect of its work and purpose, and a general softness and a lack of direction. Notwithstanding, these criticisms, the human relations approach

occupies important place for the study of organization highlighting the positive effects of treating the workers with human understanding.

