
Department of Preparatory Training

Level: 1st Year

Module: Human Engineering

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Course 2: Rational Structure (Taylorism)

Course Outline

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Academic Year 2025-2026

Introduction

During the second half of the 19th century (1890-1910), the industrial revolution allowed the establishment of a new technical system (the transition from an artisanal production system to an industrial production system with the use of machines), and also the emergence of the engineers category. These two factors played a determining role in the birth of Taylorism. This theory developed the first reflections on industrial organization. These reflections are based on a rationalist postulate.

1- What is Taylorism

Taylorism is a method of management and organization of production workshops, the principles of which were developed and implemented by the American engineer Frederick Winslow Taylor.

This method is based on the principle of scientific organization of labour. This principle aims to define the best way to produce in order to maximize the yield.

2- Winslow Taylor biography

Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915). He entered a factory as an apprentice and passed through all professional levels through his hard work and legendary methodical spirit. He thus rose to the rank of foreman and then to that of engineer.

He spent much of his career at the Midvale Steel Company and then worked as an organizational consultant. In 1893, he published a technical thesis on belts, in 1906 a first book on steel cutting: «Shop Management».

At the same time, he is thinking about work organization and in particular production management in industrial workshops.

Taylor published a memoir in 1895 on coin wages and, in 1903, on the management of workshops. Finally, in 1911, he published his reference book, (Scientific Management).

In this book he explains the management principles that must be respected so that managers and employees of a company can work in good intelligence.

3- Taylorism principles

A- Vertical division of labour: Distinction between designers (engineers) and performers (workers), (the right man on the right place).

B- Horizontal division of labour: The fragmentation of tasks, a simple task, a repetitive task, in a short time. The tasks are broken down to show the best production method (the one best way).

C- Performance pay system: In order to promote the productivity and motivation of staff, wages depend on the number of pieces produced (introduction of productivity bonuses).

D- Work control system: Establishment of foremen to control work.

4- Taylorism goals

- Taylor believes that managers and employees can and should act together with the essential goal of improving productivity.
- Productivity must reduce waste of time, materials and reduce costs to achieve better prices.

5- Taylorism advantages

- Rationalization of the functioning of the enterprise.
- Improving production by tackling waste.
- The motivation of workers through the adoption of the pay-for-performance system in order to increase productivity.
- Principle of specialization at work.

6- Taylorism disadvantages

- The dehumanization of work within the enterprise (it makes employees simply accessory machines).
- It imposes undue control over the worker and attacks the creative sense of the individual.
- Monotony of work (repetitive, very hard work and it has negative effects on the morale and health of workers).
- The enterprise was considered as closed technical system.

Conclusion

The main reactions of rejection of the application of Taylorism in industrial enterprises are limited to the emergence of strikes organized by the unions as well as the increase in absenteeism and the turn-over of work.

Taylorism as a mode of organization based on the specialization of tasks and the motivation by the wages was criticized by the human relations school composed of psychologists and sociologists who proposed another form of organization which gives more importance to the human dimensions within the enterprise.