

SOCI 425

Industrial Sociology I

Session Ten: Work and Man (Theory X and Y)

Lecturer: Dr. Samson Obed Appiah, Dept. of Sociology
Contact Information: soappiah@ug.edu.gh



UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

College of Education

School of Continuing and Distance Education

2014/2015 – 2016/2017

Session Overview

- **Overview**
- When it comes to work and man, there is a debate as to whether human being lives work or dislike work naturally. This session focuses on McGregor's theory X and Y regarding the nature of work and man.
- **Objective:** At the end of the lecture, the student will be able to
- Identify the assumptions of Theory X and Y;
- Identify the characteristics of Theory X and Y managers;
- Examine how to manage a Theory X manager;

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in this session are as follows:

- Topic One: Work and Man: Introduction
- Topic Two: Assumptions of Theory X
- Topic Three: Assumptions of Theory Y
- Topic Four: Characteristics of Theory X Managers
- Topic Five: Characteristics of Theory Y Managers
- Topic Six: Working with a Theory X Managers

Topic One: Work and Man: Introduction

- Throughout history, different positions have been advanced concerning human beings and work namely:
 - That human beings naturally dislike work and for that matter men must be compelled before they could work;
 - That it is not the case that men did not like work but rather work itself is unpleasant and for that matter it must be organized in a way that could motivate men to work;

Work and Man: Introduction Cont.

- These positions have been challenged by J.A.C. Brown who indicated that ordinarily human beings like their work and when they did not like it;
- It is the social and psychological conditions of the work rather than the nature of man;
- In other words, work by nature is not unpleasant and that is it not naturally distasteful to man.

Work and Man: Introduction Cont.

- In the view of the above debate, whether human beings dislike work naturally or it is the conditions of the work;
- Douglas McGregor in his book “The human side of enterprise” studied how managers organized and coordinated work activities based on their perception of the nature of work and man;
- He presented his findings into two major theoretical assumptions known as theories “X” and “Y”;
- The two theories represent what he identified as two different set of opinion that managers hold about workers.

Topic Two: Assumptions of Theory X

- The specific issues that are raised in theory “X” can be spelt out as follows:
 - That the average human being is naturally lazy and unreliable;
 - That the average human being has an inherent dislike for work and would like to avoid it as much as possible;
 - That man is not ambitious and has very little desire or responsibility but rather want to be directed, controlled and coerced before they could work;
 - The average human being has very little capacity for creativity in solving organizational problems;

Assumptions of Theory X Cont.

- That motivation for man occurs only at the physiological and safety levels such as material/financial incentives and the threat of punishment;
- And that man must be closely controlled and supervised in order to achieve organizational goals;
- The manager who holds these views represent the mechanistic organizational theorist;
- They emphasize the importance of hierarchy of authority, strict administrative control and obedience of rules as the most efficient ways of achieving organizational goals.

Topic Three: Assumptions of Theory Y.

- The theory “Y” has a contrary view to that of theory “X” since they do not share the idea that man is lazy and unambitious;
- They are of the view that it is the responsibility of the manager to identify the potentials of the worker;
- And put in place the necessary conducive environment for workers to put their potentials to better use of the organization.

Assumption of Theory Y Cont.

- They have the following assumptions:
 - That the average human being does not dislike work and whether men would like to work or not depends on the conditions of the work;
 - That work is as natural as sleep or play and men like it naturally;
 - External control and threat of punishment are not the only means for making men work; rather men would work if the conditions are conducive;
 - That human beings would exercise self-direction and self-control in the achievement of organizational goals.

Assumptions of Theory Y Cont.

- That the average human being learns under proper conditions not only to accept responsibility but will seek responsibility.
- Avoidance of responsibility, lack of ambition are rather the consequence of experience and not an inherent character in the worker.
- From these assumptions of theory “Y”, it is not the worker who is lazy,
- Rather it is the responsibility of management to identify the potentials of the worker and put them at the right place to achieve organizational goals.

Topic Four: Characteristics of Theory X Manager

- Theory “X” managers is mostly autocratic and use autocratic management styles;
- Typically, they have the following characteristics:
 - They are result-driven and deadline driven to the exclusion of everything else;
 - They are intolerant, distant, detached and issue ultimatum;
 - They are arrogant, short-tempered, poor listeners and issues threats to make people follow instructions;
 - They are one-way communicators and unconcerned about workers welfare.

Characteristics of Theory X Manager Cont.

- They do not participate and do not build a team and are relatively unconcerned with investing in anything to gain future improvement;
- They seek to apportion blame instead of learning from experience and they do not praise people nor give thanks;
- They take criticism badly and are likely to retaliate if from below or peer group and seek culprit for failures or shortfalls;
- They hold on to responsibility but shifts accountability to subordinate and do not welcome suggestions.

Topic Five: Characteristics of Theory Y Manager.

- Theory “Y” managers are result-oriented after all, but they are also concerned with not just the completion of work but they assist their subordinates in doing things;
- They are very tolerant in nature i.e. they tolerate mistakes and try to rectify them by explaining what should not be done and what need to be done;
- Do not distance out from their employees i.e. they think it is all one team including oneself and move along providing motivation and encouragement to the team;

Characteristics of Theory Y Manager Cont.

- They do not threaten employees for non-compliance, they explain to them about the norms and compliance issues and make them realize that instructions are for the betterment of work;
- They actively participate in the team building process and make sure that every employee in the team is more than a better performer;
- They are good communicators and good listeners and take suggestions and constructive criticism seriously;
- They praise their employees for their good work done, responsible and accountable.

Topic Six: Working with a Theory X Manager

- Working for a theory “X” boss is not easy since some “X” managers are extremely unpleasant;
- However, there are ways of managing such bosses namely:
 - Theory “X” managers are primarily result-oriented, so orientate your own discussions and dealings with them around result i.e. what you can deliver and when;
 - They are facts and figures oriented so cut down on the incidentals i.e. be able to measure and substantiate anything you do for them;

Working with a Theory X Manager Cont.

- They generally do not understand or have an interest in human issues, so do not try to appeal to their sense of humanity or morality;
- If a theory “X” manager tells you how to do things in ways that are not comfortable or writes for you, do not question the process, simply confirm the end-result;
- Be aware also that many theory “X” managers are forced to be theory “X” by the short-term demand of the organization and their own superiors so try not to give them anymore problems.

Conclusions

- It is important to note that both theory “X” and “Y” can be used in organizations depending on the nature or the kind of workers;
- For instance if workers are unskilled and always want to be controlled, theory “X” is appropriate;
- However, if workers are professionals and willing to take initiatives, theory “Y” is the most appropriate;
- It is therefore possible to see a manager who uses both assumptions at the same time in the same organization.

Reading List

- Refer to students to relevant text/chapter or reading materials you will make available on Sakai
- McGregor, D (1960). **The Human Side of Enterprise**. New York: McGraw Hill Inc.

Activity/Assignment

- Which of the theories are the best for managing workers in Industrial Organization?.