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Class : B.Com Sem - III & M.Com Sem – I
Topic : Neoclassical Theory of Management-2-

Hawthorne Experiment:

A famous series of studies of human behaviour in work situations was conducted at the Western Electric Company from 1924 to 1933. In 1927 a group of researchers led by Elton Mayo and Fritz J. Roethlisberger and Dickson at the Harvard Business School were invited to join at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant near Chicago. The studies began as an attempt to investigate the relationship between the level of lighting in the workplace and the productivity of workers.

The initial experiment carried out over a period of three years sought to determine the effects of different levels of illumination on worker's productivity. The results of the experiments were ambiguous. When the test group's lighting conditions were improved, productivity tended to increase just as expected, although the increase was erratic.

But there was a tendency for productivity to continue to increase when the lighting conditions were made worse, besides lighting was influencing the worker's performance, as the work group was not able to maintain relationship between illumination and productivity.

In the second set of experiments, a smaller group of six female telephone operators was put under close observation and control. Frequent changes were made in working conditions such as hours of work, lunch break, rest periods, etc.

Again the results were ambiguous, as performance tended to increase even when the improvements in working conditions were withdrawn. It was found that socio-psychological factors exercised a greater influence on productivity and working conditions.

The third set of experiment attempted to understand how group norms affect group effort and output. It was noted that the informal organisation of workers controlled the norms established by the groups in respect of each member's output. The researcher concluded that informal work groups have a great influence and productivity.

In the subsequent experiments, Mayo and his associates decided that financial incentives, when these were offered, were not causing the productivity improvements. The researchers concluded that employees would work harder if they believed management was concerned about their welfare, and supervisors paid special attention to them. This phenomenon was subsequently labelled as the Hawthorne Effect.

These findings concerning human behaviours at work focused on the worker as an individual and considered the importance

of caring for his feelings and understanding the dynamics of informal organisation of workers. The view point of Hawthorne Effect thus gave birth to human relations movement and provided the thrust toward democratization of organizational power structures and participative management. It ushered in an era of organizational humanism.

Human Relations Approach:

Hawthorne experiment led to the development of human relations approach. It revealed the importance of social and psychological factors in determining workers, productivity and satisfaction. This movement is marked by informal grouping, informal relationship and leadership Pattern of communication and philosophy of industrial humanism.

The values of human relation are exemplified in the work of Douglas McGregor and A. H. Maslow. Human relation approach is a social psychological approach and suggests business enterprise is a social system in which group norms play a significant role.

Financial incentive was less of a determining factor on a workers output than were group pressure and acceptance and the concomitant security. It ushered an era of organisational humanism. Managers would no longer consider the issue of organisation design without including effects on work groups, employees' attitudes, and manager-employee relationships.

Elton Mayo, Mary Parker Follett and Douglas McGregor, Roethlisberger, Dickson, Dewey and Lewin, etc., were the main contributors that led to the development of Human Relations Movement.

The human relations movement marked by the following factors:

This movement viewed organization as a social system composed of numerous interacting parts in which groups norms exercise a significant influence on the behaviour and performance of individuals. The movement emphasized that apart from economic needs, the employees have other social and psychological needs such as recognition, affiliation, appreciation, self-respect, etc.

The groups determine the norms of behaviour for the group member and thus exercise a great influence on the attitudes and performance of workers. Group Dynamics at the workplace become a major force. The human relations approach was focused on teaching people-management skills, as opposed to technical skills.

This approach strongly believed that there should be no conflicts or clashes in the organisation; and if it arises, it must be removed through improvement of human relations in the organisation. They consider that informal organisation does

also exist within the framework of formal organisation and it affects and is affected by the formal organisation.

Contributions of Human Relations Approach or Hawthorne Studies:

The human relations proposed the following points as a result of their findings of the Hawthorne experiments:

1. Social System:

The organisation in general is a social system composed of numerous interacting parts. The social system defines individual roles and establishes norms that may differ from those of the formal organisation.

The workers follow a social norm determined by their co-workers, which defines the proper amount of work, rather than try to achieve the targets management thinks they can achieve, even though this would have helped them to earn as much as they physically can.

2. Social Environment:

The social environment on the job affects the workers and is also affected by them. Management is not the only variable. Social and psychological factors exercise a great influence on the behaviour of workers. Therefore, every manager should adopt a sound human approach to all organizational problems.

3. Informal Organization:

The informal organisation does also exist within the framework of formal organisation and it affects and is affected by the formal organisation.

4. Group Dynamics:

At the workplace, the workers- often do not act or react as individuals but as members of groups. The group determines the norms of behaviour for the group members and thus exercises a powerful influence on the attitudes and performance of individual workers. The management should deal with workers as members of work groups rather than as individuals.

5. Informal Leader:

There is an emergence of informal leadership as against formal leadership and the informal leader sets and enforces group norms. He helps the workers to function as a social group and the formal leader is rendered ineffective unless he conforms to the norms of the group of which he is supposed to be in-charge.

6. Communication:

Two-way communication is necessary because it carries necessary information downward for the proper functioning of the organisation and transmits upward the feelings and sentiments of people who work in the organisation.

It will help in securing workers cooperation and. participation in the decision-making process. Workers tend to be more productive when they are given the opportunity to express their feelings, opinions and grievances. This also gives them psychological satisfaction.

7. Non-Economic Rewards:

Money is only one of the motivators, but not the sole motivator of human behaviour. The social and psychological needs of the workers are very strong. So, non-economic rewards such as praise, status, inter-personal relations, etc., play an important role in motivating the employees. Such rewards must be integrated with the wages and fringe benefits of the employees.

8. Conflicts:

There may arise conflicts between the organizational goals and group goals. Conflicts will harm the interest of workers if they are not handled properly. Conflicts can be resolved through improvement of human relations in the organisation.