

MANAGEMENT THEORY JUNGLE: THE THREATS TO THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE MULTIPLE THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the management theory jungle and the threat expresses on the functionality of the multiple management theories. The dichotomy of management theory jungle and the environmental forces that posse threat to the functionality of management theories and principles are addressed through an exhaustive exploration of the management literature. The paper relied significantly on the table top review of the existing literature. It was indicated that management theory development is intended to increase efficiency and effectiveness of work activities in organizations for profit maximization. It was also revealed that several attempts have been made to unify or integrate management theories with other disciplines. Thus the paper contributed that different propositions and approaches can be recommended to solve management/organizational problems and each approach comes with its unique principles to addressing organizational issues. The emergent of theories is an indication that changes emanating from the environment expresses threats to the functionality of management theories, hence the responsibility of managers to apply a theory or combination of principles and theories to produce the best result that suit the organization.

Keywords: Management theory Jungle, Effectiveness and Efficiency, Public Work Organization, Hawthorne Studies, Ubuntu Management.

INTRODUCTION

Management as a discipline transcends passive conceptualization making it plethora of thoughts, philosophies and ideological underpinning to help improve organizations. The unending development as well as the proliferation of constructs, concepts, models and theories in the field of management stimulated an idealized thinking known as management theory jungle. This philosophical mental model has significantly contributed and expanded the frontiers of management scholarship and knowledge through several debates and arguments among scholars, practitioners and commentators. The various views of management is an indication that management, a behavioral science subject does not have a unified or universally accepted definition, thus, the subject can be interpreted differently by different people.

Furthermore, there exist different approaches in solving organizational problems. Management also falls into this category and scholars have developed several approaches to solve organizational problems. The persistence in the search for the best approach to solving human and organizational problems resulted to the blossom and proliferation of the multiple theories in the field of management. These multi-dimensional concepts, principles and theories in management made a management scholar and philosopher to describe management as a theory Jungle. The phrase, "management theory jungle" has attracted several debates among management scientists and theorists. There are different views and contributions to the subject matter. The pro-management theory jungle scholars argued that management evolved through the activities of man, starting from the pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial to the contemporary periods of human activities in the history of the world. Each of the phases in management development attracted different approaches to solving managerial problems. The supporters of this thinking believed that the contribution of individual theorist to the development of management is key and superimportant because no one theory can address or solve the problems of all organizations.

Contrarily, the anti-management theory jungle scholars argued that the proliferation of management theory is a sign of the unsophisticated adolescence of management theory and the current plethora of management concepts and tenets exposes great differences and apparent confusion. Kootz (2008) argued that from the orderly analysis of management at the shop-room level by Frederick Taylor and the reflective distillation of experience from the general management point of view by Fayol, we now see these and other early beginnings overgrown and entangled by a jungle of approaches to the management theory. The critics of management theory jungle argued that the major sources of mental entanglement in the jungle are; semantics, differences in the definition of management as a body of knowledge, misunderstanding of principles, hence, the need to disentangling the management theory jungle by establishing a concrete body of knowledge, integration of management and other disciplines clarification of management semantics and willingness to distill and test fundamentals. This constant disagreement, debate and divergent views of management theorization prompted this paper to explore through the lens of management theory literature the historical perspective and development of management theories. The paper also identifies threats to the functionality of the multiple theories and advocates the DNA of management thoughts.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT THEORIES

The historical perspective indicates that early contributors to management laid the foundation for management activities that blossomed in recent times. It is widely noted that management is as old as mankind, thus, the history of management extends to several decades into the past. Sridhar (2017) noted that the practice of management is as old as the human race but its theories and conceptual frameworks are of recent origin. Baridam (2002) stated that the activities of management existed right from the pre historic era. This prehistoric period experienced family groups and tribes moved enterprises for the performance of activities that were of mutual benefits (Baridam, 2002). The art and practice of management have been used for several centuries to plan, organize, direct and control people and other resources (Gomez – Mejia and Balkin, 2002). The history of management is incomplete without acknowledging the

activities of some ancient cities and kingdoms in the world. It is a well-established fact that early civilization started in Africa. Thus, most cities in Africa have also made significant contributions to management development. In Africa, the well-known kingdom of Ghana, Mali and Songhai are known to have had a superlative administrative system. For example, Ghana's administrative and judicial system was well organized and structured. The relevance attached to trade was evidenced by the lucrative business activities between Ghana and other countries like Spain, Morocco and most North African countries. The celebrated and well documented organized administrative system was that of the Egyptians who painstakingly designed and constructed the pyramids, irrigation projects and the building of canals (Nwachukwu, 2006). Management and administrative activities were also practiced by Babylonians, the Roman empire and the Greeks who were into craftsmanship and trade. The designing and construction of such huge public project as the Great Wall of China required some management techniques. Early ideas about the design and efficient organization of work has its trace to the contributions of Adam Smith in his book. "The Wealth of Nations," Smith was the first to recognize the principles of the division of labour (Gomez – Mejia and Balkin, 2002). The contributions of Smith laid the theoretical groundwork for the classical theories which is our next point of interest.

Classical Perspective

The classical management era encountered several challenges during the industrial revolution. The industrial revolution was the period of intellectual and managerial renaissance. The intellectual discoveries and contributions of Galileo, watt, Harvey, Gilbert and other geniuses stimulated the industrial revolution. The positivism associated with the industrial revolution is the growth of large scale businesses and needed to bring large numbers of people to work under one organization. The negativism of the industrial revolution is the difficulty encountered to bring people with varied background to work under one organization with different interest and harmonizing their interest to achieve the organizational goals for the general interest. The challenges that halted the work activities during the industrial revolution gave rise to the classical management theories, such as the scientific management theory, general management theory and the bureaucratic management theory (Gomez – Mejia and Balkin, 2002; Jones and George, 2003). However, a "Bird's eye view" of the classical management theories are underscore here after.

Scientific Management (1856 – 1915)

The most celebrated advocate of the scientific management is known as Fredrick W. Taylor. Taylor is best known for defining the principles and techniques of the scientific management. Scientific management is the systematic study of relationships between managers, employees and tasks for the purpose of redesigning the work process to increase performance (Jones and George, 2003). Taylor was a manufacturing manager and consultant believed that if the amount of time and effort that each worker extends to produce a unit of output can be reduced by increasing specialization and the division of labour, the production process will become more efficient and effective (Jones and George, 2003). Taylor developed four principles to enhance the organizational performance. His principles are;

1. Scientifically study each part of tasks and suggest ways of improving how tasks are performed.

2. Codify the established methods of performing tasks into written rules and standard operating procedures
3. Carefully select workers who possess skills and capabilities that match the needs of the tasks and train them to perform the tasks following the rules and procedures
4. Ensure that an acceptable level of performance for a task is established and develop a pay system that rewards employees to enhance their performance above the established level.

Other contributors to the scientific management movement were; Henry Gantt, Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, and Harrington Emerson. These fellows were known as Taylor's associates who made significant contributions to the scientific management theory. Henry Gantt is well known for his contributions of the psychology of the worker and among the first to emphasize the concept of motivation. Gantt developed a wage – payment system through a control chart for scheduling production operations. Frank and Lillian Gilbreth made several contributions with the help of their experiment known as the time and motion study to develop more efficient ways of performing tasks. Emphasis was made on the piece - rate incentive system. This means the biggest sum of income goes to the employees who produce the maximum output.

The scientific management theory, despite the huge benefits was criticized on the grounds of treating worker as “economic man” leading to dehumanization of employee. Critics also said there is no “One best way” of doing a job because the changes from the environment will require new methods of doing a job. It is pertinent to note that Taylor's scientific management principles are still used by contemporary management practitioners.

General Management Theory (1841 – 1925)

The general management theory is an administrative management perspective advocated by Henri Fayol. Administrative management is the study of how to create an organized structure that will lead to increase efficiency and effectiveness. Fayol made several contributions by organizing and structuring the organization into six separate work units or departments such work units were; administrative unit, commercial units, technical unit, financial unit, Accounting unit and security unit. He also identified functions of a manager as planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling. Fayol further developed the most celebrated 14 principles of management; Division of labour, authority and responsibility, discipline, unity of command, unity of direction, subordination of individual interest to the general interest, remuneration, centralization, scalar chain, order, equity, stability of tenure of personnel, initiative and esprit-de-corps. Fayol's administrative theory was also criticized on the grounds of contradiction between two or more principles and that the principles were not empirically tested and they are founded on intuition.

Bureaucratic Management Theory (1864 – 1920)

The bureaucratic theory is also an administrative management perspective advocated by Max Weber. The bureaucratic theory was advanced at the turn of the twentieth century, when Germany was wrestling its industrial revolution. To help Germany manage its growing industrial ventures and enterprises at a time when the nation was struggling to become a world power, Weber advanced the principles of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is defined as a formal system of organization and administration designed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness

(Jones and George, 2003). The basic principles of bureaucracy developed by Weber are; formal authority derives from the position in the organization, impersonality, a well established hierarchy of authority, a well – defined system of rules, standard operating procedures and norms.

The Weber’s bureaucratic theory was also criticized on the grounds of administrative protocols leading to the slow movement of files known as red – tapism. The practices of the bureaucratic principles have not created the “one best way” of doing job however, Weber described it as the ideal model through which efficiency and effectiveness is guaranteed. The classical management perspective could not provide all the solutions to management problems, hence, the need for other perspectives in solving management problems emerged.

Neo – Classical Perspective (1920 – 1950’s)

The classical management perspective was hugely criticized on several grounds such as dehumanization of workers, economic rationality, lack of motivation, and no proper empirical tests carried out on the assumptions, resulting to intuition, thus, such principles do not represent the heart of knowledge of management but a narrowed body of administrative management ideologies. These and many other reasons motivated management philosophers to advance the neo – classical perspective with the concern for people or human – oriented work and celebrated the behaviour and attitudes of employees in the organization. The two widely cited approaches to the neo – classical perspectives are; the human relations approach and the behavioural approach emerged during 1920s and 1930s respectively.

Human Relations and Behaviourial Approach

The records of the human relations school of management may be incomplete without the acknowledgement of the Hawthorne studies. The Hawthorne experiments were carried out to examine or investigate how the characteristics of the work setting specially the level lighting affect workers fatigue and performance. Some of the experiments include the illumination test, the relay assembly test, the bank wiring experiment and the interviewing group experiment. The findings of these experiments were puzzling; however, the concern for workers takes the centre stage of management thinking that led to the human relations approach. The human relations approach is a management approach that views the relationships between supervisors and employees as the most important aspect of the organization. Elton Mayo has been considered as the advocate of the human relations approach. The two associates of Mayo were F.J. Roethlisberger and William J. Dickson. The human relations movement advocates believed that organizations are made up of people and always involve interrelationships among members, therefore, it is the responsibility of the manager to see that mutuality as conflict free and encourage co – existence. Mayo and his associated noted the existence of informal organizations and employees’ behaviour can also be affected by psychological factors which is non – economical. The contributions of the neo – classical school were directly against the classical perspective of management. This theory was criticized on the grounds of overemphasis on human variables such as the psychological variables against the material or economic variables forgetting that the material rewards also enhances the psychological factors, hence can affect the performances of the worker.

The behavioural approach is an extension of the human relations theory. The behavioural management is the study of how managers should personally behave to motivate employees and encourage them to perform at high levels and be committed to achieving organizational goals (Jones and George, 2003). The behavioural approach gave birth to several motivation and leadership theories, Examples of such theories are the man's – actualizing needs theory by Maslow, the two factor theory by Herzberg, the Douglas McGregor's theory X and Y, the managerial grid by Blake and Mouton, path – goal theory by Robert House etc. All these theories suggested different principles to solving managerial problems, yet the problems were not totally eliminated because the changes in the environment and the difficulty in predicting human behaviour were part of the challenges that led to the contemporary theories of management known as organizational environment/management theories.

Modern/Organizational Environment Theories

An important milestone in the history of management thoughts occurred when researchers went beyond the study of how managers can influence behaviour within organizations to consider how managers can influence the organization's relationship with its external environmental (Jones and George, 2003). The modern management theories highlight the complexity of the organization as well as individuals and the diversity of their needs, motives, aspirations and potentials (Sridhar, 2017). In this complex situation, the principles of universal management are not practicable. Contrary to the rational economic man of the classical theory and the social psychological view of the neoclassical theory, the complex work view is the premise of modern management theory

The modern management theories include the following: systems theory, contingency theory, total quality management, management science/quantitative management theory etc. The systems theory is an integrated and holistic approach to management problems. A system is a whole made up of two or more interrelated parts that frequently interact to form a functioning organism. The human body is a perfect example of a system. An organization is also a system. Organization is an entity made up of subsystems that frequently interact to achieve its objectives. Thus, a system like an organization must interact with its immediate environment to take in input as raw materials, process or transform such raw materials and bring them out as output or finished goods to the environment. An organization that interacts with its environment is an open organization that reflects an open system while an organization that does not communicate or interact with its immediate environment is a close organization that reflects close system. An organization that fails to interact with its immediate environment may lead to systems entropy; therefore, there is no totally closed system.

The contingency theory is a situational approach to managerial issues. The contingency theory stresses the absence of a "single best way" to managing organization. It emphasizes the need for managerial techniques or methods to base on all relevant facts. The contingency theory was an attempt to unify the various schools of management. This approach suggests that managers need to be developed in knowledge, skills and ability that are most significant in a particular situation and will best contribute to the achievement of management objectives.

The total quality management approach is an organizational-wide activity that encourages continuous improvement of its work processes and conformance to specification that provides goods and services to satisfy customers. Quality goods or services must deliver

value and value-driven production operations must imbibe the culture of zero-defect. The concept of total quality management became a movement both in the United States of America and Japan initiated by quality gurus like Deming, Juran, Ishikawa, Taguchi, etc. to encourage organizational actors to reduce wastages in providing quality goods and services to satisfy customers.

More so, the management science approach also known as the quantitative approach is evolved from the early application of some of the scientific management techniques. This approach gained relevance during and after the world war when interdisciplinary groups of theorists called operational research teams were set up to sought solutions to many complex problems. The teams ended up developing mathematical models to simulate real life problems and by changing the values of variables in the model, analyzed the effect of changes and presented a rational basis for decision makers (Sridhar, 2017). The quantitative model used were; linear programming, queuing model, simulation models, net-working models, inventory control, assignment model and quality control tools.

Other emerging management theories include the decision theory, management by objective, management by example, participative management approach, Ubuntu management philosophy etc. Understanding the various theories will help managers to put things in perspective. The proliferation of management theories indicated that different methods and techniques have been used to solve organizational problems. From the diagnostic analysis of the theories, it revealed that each theory was developed to improve the performance of the organization, thus creating a theory jungle.

MANAGEMENT THEORY JUNGLE DICHOTOMY AND ITS IMPLICATION

The study of management over the past decades has experienced significant development in terms of constructs, concepts, principles, models and theories. The increasing number of theories in management informed the idealized thinking of management as a Jungle of theories. Management scholars have made several attempts to classify the theories into various schools of thought. Koontz (2008) in his article titled, "the management theory jungle" identified the following management schools; management process school, empirical school, human behaviour school, social system school, decision theory school and mathematical school. Koontz (2008) argued that there are different sources of mental entanglement in the jungle and suggested means of disentangling the management theory jungle. To Koontz, the sources of mental entanglement include; semantic jungle, differences in definition of management as a body of knowledge, and misunderstanding of principles, hence, argued for the disentangling of the management theory jungle. Suggestions were also made to disentangle the jungle, such as; The need for definition of a body of knowledge, integration of management and other disciplines, clarification of management semantics and willingness to distil and test fundamentals. The view point of Koontz to disentangling the management theory jungle is towards unification and integration of management theories. The envisaged unification of management theories is intended to establish a common thought in management theorization. The question is, how can the ideologies and philosophies of the various scholars be unified or integrated? Another perspective argued that the movement towards the unification is like "throwing the baby with the bathwater" thus undermining the significant contributions of some management theorists. A management thinker named Peter Drucker suggested that

management is a theory jungle because of the unending theory development in the field of management. Indeed, management is a theory jungle because the changes in human behaviour and its environment need seasoned approach in solving organization problems. This is true in the sense that the human problem encountered in the traditional society is different from the contemporary period of human existence. This is to say that the different periods in management theory development from the classical, neoclassical to the contemporary periods needed varied techniques in solving managerial problems hence, the emergence of the multiple theories making management theory jungle. The supporters of management theory jungle also believed that the contributions of the classical theorists (Taylor, Fayol, Weber) are still relevant and can be applied by today's management practitioners in coordinating contemporary organizations. Management is a behavioural science like economics, psychology, sociology, political science etc that have definitional problems of its body of knowledge, hence, should not be interpreted as an entanglement. The notion to unify management theories and other related discipline suggested by Koontz is not well intended to advancing management knowledge.

THREATS TO THE FUNCTIONALITY OF THE MULTIPLE THEORIES

The threats to the functionality of the multiple management theories largely depend on the changes in the environment. The environment constitutes all the forces that can affect the functioning and application of management theories among public work organizations. These forces or factors also reduce the efficacy of the universality principles of management that says management principles, functions and practices across the globe is the same, irrespective of the organization or nation. Public work organizations refer to government and private institution that provides goods and services to the general public. Thus, the changes in the environment can affect the functionality of the multiple theories. These environmental conditions include; economic, social, cultural, political, legal, demographic, competition and technology.

The recent recession in Nigeria that swept all business firms to a close despite the unique application of the management theories is a good example. The principles of the various management theories were carefully applied, yet problems continued and several businesses closed. The cultural variables such as the traditions, norms, values, beliefs and the ethos also constitute threats to the functionality of the management theories. The value system and work culture have greatly affected the functionality of the management theories in Nigeria where most high ranked office holders are not free from corruption. The institutional weakness as a result of poor regulatory processes and system have composed negativism to the functionality of management theories. The drastic increase in human knowledge and competition resulting from globalization is also a threat to the functionality of management theories, thus, making emphasis on the DNA of management thoughts which is our next concern in this paper.

THE DNA OF MANAGEMENT THOUGHTS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

The DNA of management thoughts refers to the most common link, relatedness and objective of management theory application. The purpose of management theory development is to enable practitioners to apply the right principles and functions to improve the performance of the organization. The most common link among management theories is to

increase efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency refers to how well resources are used in achieving the organizational goals while effectiveness measures the degree of appropriateness of goals and the means to achieve them. When there is efficiency and effectiveness in an organization, the result is a high performing organization. Increasing efficiency and effectiveness require reducing the threats from the environment. A major challenge that hinders the achievement of this objective is the inability of management theorists and practitioners to harmonize their differences. The management theorists argued that the bulk of management knowledge is created by them and the practitioners have no significant contribution in management theory development, while the practitioners said the experiences documented in management practice resulted to the plethora of theories and the contributions of the management philosophers are minimal. This is a debate for another time. The variable that blends management theories is the systematic processes and procedures recommend to achieve the organizational goals or objectives. All management theories are intended to produce result. The principles proposed in each of the management approaches is to enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness premised at increasing the profitability of the organization. This is the link or relationship between the existing management theories, hence known as the DNA of management thoughts.

CONCLUSION

In the field of management, different propositions and approaches have been recommended to solve human and organization problems. Despite the limitations that have led to the plethora of theories, significant successes have also been recorded and more theories are expected to emerge. The emergent of theories is an indication of the changes emanating from the environment that expresses threats to the functionality of management theories. The attempt by Koontz to integrate management with other disciplines too is not well intended to addressing the management problems as a specific and independent field of study. The proliferation is an indication that management is a theory jungle directed at increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

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