



A PHILOSOPHY OF MANAGEMENT: A SEMANTIC PROBLEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have inquired into the nature of management, or managing, for many years. Its history goes back to a least the turn of this century but even earlier roots may be identified in Adam Smith's work, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. In this book he explains the effect of the division of labour or specialization on productivity.

Students of management identify the development of a theory or philosophy of management with F.W. Taylor who in 1911 published *The Principles of Scientific Management*. In his work, Taylor stressed the impersonal rationality of measurement.

The practice of management is generally considered to fall within the social sciences. It involves problem solving, devising and choosing appropriate courses of action in many perplexing situations and, particularly, finding the best combinations of scarce resources to achieve chosen objectives.

The definitions of management offered are very much alike, and all cite a similar process involved in managing. This process includes functions such as planning, organizing, leading and controlling. However, a definition of management which indicates that the manager is interested in choice in the use of all resources to achieve objectives is quite realistic and useful. It permits a better integration of the disciplines of economics and the behavioural sciences for

the betterment of management practice. Another definition that also stresses the decision making role of management implies that management is the practice of deciding for others, the use of all resources and getting others to implement these decisions.

Unfortunately, there is no single system of thought or theory of managing that is universally accepted as being definite in all its details, and consequently various theories emerged.

2. Schools of Management Thought

2.1. Different Schools

Several different theories on management are cited, each propagating a definite train of thought. At present there are a number of schools of management thought and the most significant are probably:

- (i) management by custom school
- (ii) scientific management school
- (iii) human behaviour school
- (iv) social system school
- (v) systems management school
- (vi) decisional management school
- (vii) quantitative measurement school, and
- (viii) management process school

Whilst some of the schools of thought are relatively broad in their scope, others tend to relatively specialized areas; some are closely related, others have little or no relationship

among them. Previously held concepts are further extended or the basic portions of different schools along with new core ideas are taken and a new approach formulated, whilst finally, others strike out in new directions, employing entirely different concepts and tools.

Each school's advocates view management as they conceive it to be. Some views are entirely compatible in spite of different values and beliefs. The perfections or shortcomings of each school of thought are embodied in their conception of total management.

2.2. Management by custom school

This school, also known as the empirical school, believes that management is guided by custom or tradition. What was done in the past by managers under similar circumstances is reviewed and the outcome used to handle the current problem.

This school seems to be founded on the premise that when the experience of successful managers, or the mistakes made in management are analyzed, the application of the most effective kinds of management techniques can be learned.

Detailed information on progress in other managements is of considerable help in solving managerial problems. This school contributes generalizations and masses of practical management information, written in a descriptive form and structured around a given core idea. The result is that the status quo is maintained and mediocre results are commonly obtained.

There is a general absence of breakthroughs in managerial techniques.

2.3. Scientific Management School.

The principal thought of this school is the use of the scientific method to discover new knowledge about management. Briefly stated, the scientific method confirms or disproves a proposition.

The most characteristic feature of this method is its cyclic nature. It starts with facts, ends in facts, and the facts ending one cycle are the beginning of the next cycle. The principle of scientific management is the use of thorough investigation; controlled expe-

rimentation, and careful interpretation of the resultant data, which provides a reliable basis for the determination and evaluation of new facts used by managers.

The value of this school of thought is not confined to its own school, for its line of thought is extensively used in other schools, notably the human behaviour, social system, and process schools.

2.4. The human behaviour school.

This school believes that the focal point of managerial action is the behaviour of the human being and human beings. It is a development from the application of the behavioural sciences, especially psychology and social psychology, to management.

The individual is viewed as a sociopsychological being and the problem facing each manager is twofold. In the first place he is to understand and secure the best efforts from an individual by satisfying his psychological needs, and secondly to comprehend the psychological behaviour of groups.

This school contends that human behaviour cannot be adequately known and utilized by use of abstractions and rationalization. Observable and verifiable data on human beings should be obtained, studied and the results interpreted. The applications of the behavioural sciences help develop more productive and adaptive managements. The human behaviour school of management focuses attention on the utility of the behavioural sciences. Its exponents contend that managements should scrutinize carefully their operations and processes and then improve and develop them with the aid of the behavioural sciences.

2.5 The social system school.

This school of thought is sociologically oriented and stresses the interaction and co-operation of people making up a social system. It deals with identifying the various social groups and their cultural relationships and finally integrating these groups into a complete social system.

In searching for an answer to fundamental explanations underlying the managing pro-

cess, this school developed a theory of co-operation, grounded in the needs of the individual to overcome, though cooperation, the biological, physical, and social limitations of himself and his environment. The total of these co-operative systems give rise to the formal organisation, in which there are persons able to communicate with each other and willing to contribute action toward a conscious common purpose.

The concept of system is crucial to this theory of management.

2.6 The systems management school.

The systems management school views an enterprise as a man-made system, and the concept is primarily a way of thinking about the task of managing.

This school of thought provides a framework for visualizing internal and external environmental factors as an integrated whole. A system is consequently viewed as an organized or complex whole, an assemblage or combination of things or parts forming a complex or unitary whole. Systems are basic to most activities.

The systems within which management must operate are necessarily complex, and developing a systematic framework for describing relationships dealing with management is the concern of the system school of thought. This concept fosters a way of thinking which helps to dissolve some of the complexity and helps the manager recognize the nature of the complex problems and thereby operate within the perceived environment.

It is important to recognize the integrated nature of systems. This leads to the evolving of interdisciplinary knowledge and emphasizes the interrelationships of formerly isolated disciplines, for instance economics, engineering, psychology, sociology and anthropology. Management systems are a part of larger systems, industry-wide and even of society as a whole.

2.7. The decisional management school.

The crux of this school of thought is that managerial decision making is the principal task of management. The decision

maker is the manager and the enterprise is considered as a decision-making unit.

The development of quantitative bases for decision making is contributing new science to managerial decision making, and decision theory comprises a large number of mathematical techniques. These techniques are divided arbitrarily into three groups, viz., the geometrical approach, the statistical approach, and the algebraic approach.

The geometrical approach is valuable in tackling certain kinds of problem in which physical space is actually involved e.g., military operations.

The statistical approach has to do with decisions that are in fact determined by the probabilities associated with the complex system.

The techniques of the algebraic approach may be summed up under the name mathematical programming.

2.8. The quantitative measurement school.

The focal point of this school is that it is primarily concerned with decision making. It views management as a logical entity, the actions of which can be expressed in terms of mathematical symbols, relationships, and measurable data. When the problem has been quantified by expressing its probabilism in terms of statistical expressions having parameters that are expressed numerically, a language competent to discuss that situation has been created.

This school employs specific techniques. The two basic requirements to comprehend are the optimization of the input-process-output of the system, and the use of a mathematical model.

Optimization means that all resources must be combined in exactly the correct balance and that this balance be maintained. Optimization is accomplished by suboptimizing the elements of each of the input, process, and output factors.

The optimization process is quantified by constructing a mathematical model. The complexity of the mathematical model depends upon the number of elements and factors involved.

2.9. The management process school.

Followers of the management process school view management as the performance of certain activities or basic management functions that distinguish the management member from the nonmanagement members, that the performance of these basic functions constitutes a process, and finally regard the management process as universal and regardless of the type of enterprise or level in a given enterprise.

Consequently, this school analyzed the process, established a conceptual framework for it, and identified principles underlying the use of this process or any part of it.

Four fundamental functions are discerned: planning, organising, leading, and controlling. These functions constitute the process of management, the means by which a manager manages, and distinguish between a manager and a non-manager.

The function of planning determines the objectives and courses of action to be followed; the function of organising distributes the work among the group, and establishes and recognizes needed authority; the function of leading sees to it that the members of the enterprise carry out their activities in a prescribed and enthusiastic way; and finally the function of controlling controls the activities to conform with the plans.

A fundamental corollary is that the four functions are interrelated and inextricably interwoven, are not carried out in a particular sequence, but rather in conformance to the requirements of the situation.

3. The semantic problem

Summarizing the concepts of the various schools of thought it can be concluded that management is implicitly and explicitly:

the art or science of directing, conducting and administering the work of others to achieve defined objectives;

the process of decisionmaking and leadership;

to the economist, a factor of production

concerned with the organisation and co-ordination of the other factors, manual labour and capital to achieve maximum efficiency.

the social process entailing responsibility for the effective and economical planning and regulation of the operations of an enterprise in the fulfilment of a given purpose or task;

the involvement of judgment and decision in determining plans and using data to control performance and progress against plans, and the guidance, integration, motivation and supervision of personnel in carrying out its operations.

Hence, to manage is to plan and regulate the activities or work of people associated in a given task. A manager, therefore, is a person who organises work and directs its completion through the services of others, and has the authority and responsibility for translating plans and policies into effective action to achieve specified objectives.

The semantics problem is paramount in the field of management and consequently management has far from a standard and agreed terminology. To standardize, management should be defined as a field of specific knowledge and the definition need not follow sharp, detailed, and inflexible lines. Neither should the definition be without fairly specific content, and the latter should reflect the field of the practitioner in management.

In defining the field, it is imperative that limits be set for the purpose of analysis and secondly that a distinction be made between tools and content. The science should be related to the art it intends to serve. Hence, mathematics, operations research, accounting, psychology, and sociology are significant tools of management but not a part of the content of the field.

Management should be regarded as a specific discipline, and other disciplines, with which management study should be integrated, should be looked upon as important bases of the field. Content should be

defined in the light of the practitioner's frame of reference.

And in the last instance, the semantic problems should be clarified. When a particular framework for reference is adopted, the essence of the framework is that the knowledge should be communicable. It is important that the word management should have exact semantic context in the framework of reference adopted.

4. Management framework of reference.

Because of the many differing versions of a useful framework for thinking about management it is necessary that one particular framework be selected for further reference purposes.

The basis of the selected framework is the postulates of the management process school. Management will be accepted as conceived of four main steps or functions : planning, organising, leading, and controlling.

It is further argued that the functions of planning, organising, leading, and controlling largely involve economic decision making in that they are concerned principally with choice in the use of scarce resources to achieve desired objectives. This implies interrelationship with the decision making and quantitative measurement schools of thought.

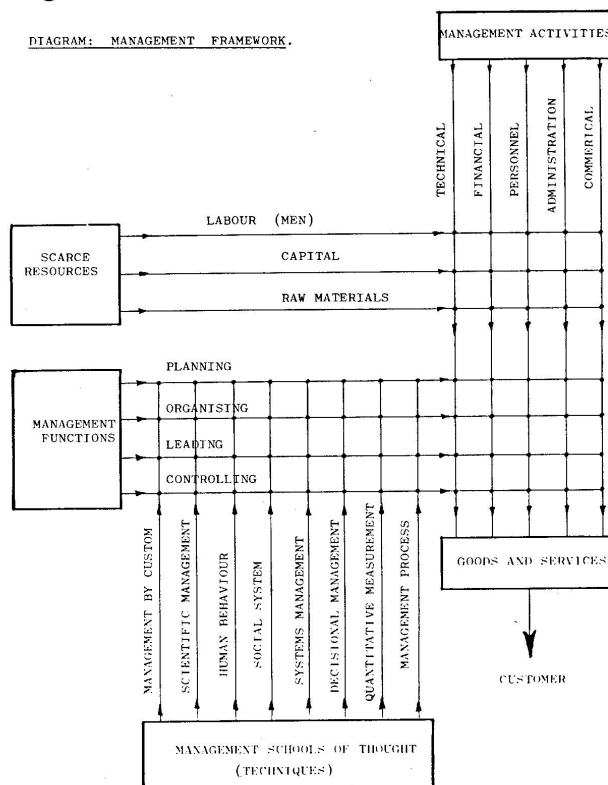
Getting action on the part of management must include a unique function for achieving performance — overt and unique action on the part of the manager is necessary to get planned work underway and to sustain it. This is called leading, supervision or motivating and implies interrelationship with the human relations, social system and scientific management schools of thought.

The functions comprising the process are not mutually exclusive. They are highly interrelated and, being interrelated, the functions of management form a system, thus linking up with the systems school of thought.

The interrelationships existing among: firstly, the management functions, planning, organising, leading and controlling; secondly, the management activities, production, admini-

nistration, financial, commercial, and personnel, utilizing the scarce resources, land, labour, and money to accomplish a definite purpose; and lastly the influence of the different schools of thought, are depicted in the diagram.

DIAGRAM: MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK.



In this framework, the discharging of the duties embodied in the management functions of planning, organising, leading, and controlling are supported by the various management schools of thought. Each school of thought makes a specific contribution which is closely related to the requirements of each of the management activities, production, administrative, financial, commercial and personnel, utilizing the scarce resources, land, labour and money. To exemplify: the function of leading will draw mostly from the human relations and social system schools of thought when interacting with the labour component of the management activities. In a similar vein, the function of controlling mainly rely on the human relations, social system, systems management, decision theory, and quantitative measurement schools of thought.