

The Need to Redefine Management from the View Point Of Scarcity: The Ontological and Epistemological Consideration

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ABSTRACT

he objective of this research paper was to study the expediency in considering the causative factor of the emergence of management, so as to pointedly appreciate its original meaning. This research paper presented the need to redefine management by management scholars, scientists, students and researchers; shifting from the popular process or applied definition of management, which dwells only on the application and administration of management, rather than the ontological and epistemological viewpoint of management, which ideally takes our focus back to the foundation of management. This study looked at management from its default state, basing its definition on the doctrines of logicality and rationality. The study is anchored on redirecting researchers' minds to the root cause of management as against the emphasis on the application and administration of management by the huge body of literature. This research paper posed as contributing to the body of knowledge a new way to looking deeply at management as a construct of natural circumstances.

Keywords: Scarcity, Process definition, Content definition, Redefining, Administration, Prudence, Judicious,

1 PREAMBLE

Management is the most diversely defined phenomenon, concept and construct, globally. There is single point agreement on the definition of management. The total number of management scholars, management scientists, management students and management authors there be, equals the total of definitions of management. In the month of April, 2022, the author typed into the Google search engine: 'The definition of Management' and one hundred and fifty-four million definitions of management popped up within 0.055 seconds. You can try yours and see how many definitions would pop up. The questions we should ask are: why are there so many definitions about management? Why are so much diverse opinions about management? Why do different authorities see management differently? This article tends to address these questions.

2 INTRODUCTION

Etymology, as we know, is the origin of a word. What is the origin of the word management? Management had its root from the Latin word – Manus-andagre, meaning "hand in action" – Nomadicleaning.com¹. So then, it is not out of place to conclude that the term management is coined from the word manage, which got its root from two Latin words 'Manus' and 'Andagre', meaning 'hand' and 'to act'. Therefore, these two Latin compound words 'manus-andagre' means 'hand in action'. This could also mean using the hands to do things. This is a process definition, upon which the amoebic definitions of management lie. The fact, however remains that management, from the ancient time sprang from a content definition - Frederick Winslow Taylor², rather than a process definition – SETHY³ view point. It is this understanding of management as a process phenomenon, rather than a content phenomenon that has given rise to the proliferation of the understanding of management. According to MBA KNOWLEDGE BASE⁴, "Management is a word that is quite wide spread and cannot ever have a precise and concise definition. There have been lot of definitions to it in the past that have

tried to define the meaning, objective and scope of management in our lives but none of them has been able to precisely and completely define the scope and meaning of management.”

Definition, be it a phenomenon, a construct or a concept rest on two pillars – rationality and logicity. It is under these two doctrines management got its appropriate content definition. That is, how did the entire concept of management come about? What are the justifications? It is expedient to open up at this entry that the meaning of management loses its true value when its definition is to the exclusion of the concept of SCARCITY, which stands as the pivot on which the entire content of management revolves. On the strength of this belief, scarcity is the brain behind the entire gamut of management.

3 THE PROCESS DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT FROM LARGE BODY OF LITERATURE

The process definition of management, which is seen, virtually in all literature is the anecdotic definition of management. You can call it the applied definition of management. It explains the ‘HOW’ aspect of management, as against the content definition of management that presents the ‘WHAT’ aspect of management. The process definition of management has its advantages – making all and sundry to embrace management, talk about it by the dictate of the discipline and circumstance, apply it and pass it on. The only disadvantage of the process definition, noted by the author is the hidden foundation of and the true essence of management. Going by the doctrine of parsimony, what the author would present below include, but not limited to the avalanche of process definitions of management:

- 1 Quizlet.com⁵ defines management as the “organization and coordination of the activities of a business in order to achieve defined objectives”.
- 2 Theo Haimann & William G. Scott⁶ defined management as “a social and technical process, which utilizes resources, influenced human actions and facilitated changes in order to accomplish organizational goals”.
- 3 Joseph L. Massie⁷ defined management as “... the process by which a cooperative group directs action towards common goals.”
- 4 According to George Robert Terry⁸, management is “A distinct process consisting of planning, organising, actuating and controlling; utilising in each both science and arts, and followed in order to accomplish pre-determined objective”
- 5 According to John Franklin Mee⁹, “management as the art of securing maximum results with a minimum of effort so as to secure maximum prosperity and happiness for both employer and employee and give the public the best possible service.”
- 6 Harold Koontz¹⁰ asserted: “Management is the art of getting things done through others and with formally organised groups”.
- 7 According to Frederick Winslow Taylor², “Management is the art of knowing what you want to do and then seeing that they do it in the best and the cheapest manner.”
- 8 Peter Drucker¹¹ stated that: “Management is a multipurpose organ that manages a business and manages managers and manages workers and work.”
- 9 Natalia Victorovna Kuznetsova¹² quoted Mary Parker Follett as saying: “Management is the art of getting things done through people.”
- 10 Henri Fayol¹³ defined management as “... to forecast, to plan, to organize, to command, to coordinate and control activities of others.”
- 11 Mary Cushing Howard Niles¹⁴ said: “Good management, or scientific management, achieves a social objective with the best use of human and material energy and time, and with satisfaction for the participants and the public.”
- 12 James L. Lundy¹⁵ asserted: “Management is principally a task of planning, coordinating, motivating and controlling the efforts of others towards the specific objectives.”
- 13 Davis, Ralph Currier¹⁶, stated: “Management is the function of executive leadership anywhere”.
- 14 According to Henry L. Sisk¹⁷, “Management is the co-ordination of all resources through the process of planning, organising, directing and controlling in order to attain stated goals.”

- 15 George, Esmond. Milward¹⁸ asserted “Management is the process and the agency through which the execution of policy is planned and supervised.”
- 16 George, Claude S.¹⁹ defined management as that which “Consists of getting things done through others—A manager is one who accomplishes organisational objectives by directing the efforts of others.”
- 17 Lyman A. Keith & Carlo E. Gubellini²⁰ asserted: “Management is the force that integrates men and physical plant into an effective operating unit.”
- 18 In the words of James David Mooney & Alan Campbell Reiley²¹, “Management is the art of directing and inspiring people.”
- 19 Donald J. Clough²² said: “Management is the art and science of decision making and leadership.”
- 20 MBA KNOWLEDGE BASE²³ asserted that: “if the views of the various authors are combined, management could be defined as a distinct on-going process of allocating inputs of an organisation (human and economic resources) by typical managerial functions (planning, organizing, directing and controlling) for the purpose of achieving stated objectives namely — output of goods and services desired by its customers (environment). In the process, work is performed with and through personnel of the organisation in an ever-changing business environment”
- 21 In the words of William Spriegel²⁴, “Management is that function of an enterprise which concerns itself with the direction and control of the various activities to attain the business objectives”.
- 22 According to American Management Association and Peter Bregman²⁵, “Management is guiding human and physical resources into dynamic organization units which attain their objectives to the satisfaction of those served and with high degree of morale and sense of attainment on the part of those rendering service”.
- 23 In the words of Peterson, Elmore and Plowman, Edward Grosvenor²⁶, “Management is a technique by means of which the purpose and objectives of a particular human group are determined, classified and effectuated”.
- 24 In the words of S.B. Srivastava²⁷, “Management is a kind of coordination activity between all the social process and man, machine, material, money and method; in such a way as to achieve the stated goals”.
- 25 According to Lawrence Asa Appley²⁸, “Management is the development of people and not the direction of things”.

On the strength of parsimony, the author could not go on and on reflecting the endless chain of process definitions of management. It is obvious that towing the line of process definition of management, there is no single point agreement as to what management really is. For instance, while on one hand, Henry L. Sisk¹⁷, stated that management is the co-ordination of all resources and directing such resources in order to attain stated goals, Lawrence Asa Appley²⁸, asserted that management did not get involved in direction things. Resources of organizations include tangible and intangible assets, which in part, could be referred as ‘things’. So, while Henry L. Sisk¹⁷ preached that management was involved in directing things, Lawrence Asa Appley²⁸ insisted that management did not get involved in directing things. This is how confusing the process definition of management has led us. It is the author’s view that what management scholars refer to as the definition of management is, in fact, the administration and the application of management practice and not the meaning of management itself. This author is not alone on the quest for the proper definition of management. Boris Kaehler and Jens Grunde²⁹ also cried out for a change in the definition of management. In their own words: “The concept of management is well established and very familiar to scholars and practitioners alike. However, it is also very vague, with traditional text book definitions containing almost no concrete characteristics.” The topic of their write-up: “The Concept of Management: In Search of a New Definition” is even more pointed to the demonstration of their hunger and thirst for a change of the prevailing process and applied definition of management.

Not until management is looked at from its foundation, subjected to scarcity, the increasingly increasing trajectory of the proliferation of its definition will be retained. For the fact that management is science, there is no scientific justification that you ask 500,000,000 (five hundred million) people to define management and you get, straight on, 500,000,000 (five hundred million) definitions of management. The proliferation and diversity of management definition is due to the loss of the idea of the foundation and logicity behind emergence of management.

4. THE CONTENT DEFINITION OF MANAGEMENT

According to the author, management can be defined as an act of prudent and efficient use of scarce resources within a framework of social or non-social activities with the sole aim of achieving optimization. This definition tends to emphasize the remote causative role scarcity plays on the subject of management, which have been the foundation and the rationale behind the whole gamut of management. This definition also reveals that animals too can practice management as both humans and animals have common denominator – SCARCITY OF RESOURCES. Do not forget scarcity, scale of preference, choice and opportunity cost as basic principles of macroeconomics. Words that should be included in content definition of management that would ooze out the originality of its meaning are – wise, prudence or judicious, scarce resources, efficiency, aim or goal or objective and optimization. Any definition of management that is not related to scarce resources has deviated from its true and original meaning, but merely giving the applied, process and administrative meaning of management. There is only one definition that the author has seen that is very close to the true meaning of management. That definition was put forth by Karl Marx as revealed by Sethy³. Karl Marx in Sethy³ defined management as: “The activity of using resources in an efficient and effective way so that the end product is worth more than the initial resources”. The comment made by Sethy³ on the definition of management by Karl Marx was: “This simple definition has the advantage that it focuses upon the crucial role of management to transform inputs into outputs of greater value.” Sethy³'s comment has proximity to optimization, efficiency and scarcity of resources.

The truth is that the entire gamut of management is a direct consequence and product of scarcity, caused by nature. If everything were to be enough, and all resources were to be sufficient for use, there would not be any need for management. No one has gone to the river to fetch water and tries to show some pity on the river, on account that the river may run out of water. Whoever goes to the river to fetch water takes as much as he/she wants or could carry because the river can never go dry. Another instance is that of the air. No body, no matter how big his/her nostrils are can exhaust the oxygen in the air by mere breathing. This is because there is enough oxygen in the air for all to breathe. It is therefore; appropriate to conclude that the act of management is never applied when it comes to situations where there are enough resources. It is on the strength of this default situation of scarcity that the author based his content definition of management. However, management can be applied to every situation, every discipline and every social and non-social activity. Sadly, it is the applied and process definitions, rather than the content definition of management that the bulk of definitions of management by various scholars revolve. The application, administration and the process of management, as defined by most scholars is, of a truth different from the meaning of management itself.

5 CONCLUSION

The definition of management by many management scholars is based on the application of management, giving rise to the multiplicity and diversity of its definition. For the fact that management can be applied in any social activity that is driven by goal or objective, does not diminish the true and actual meaning of management. The application of management is actually a process; and, if its definition is based on the process management, no doubt, its definition would be endless and amoebic. If management is seen from the stand point of being a product and consequence of scarcity of resources, then, there would be almost a single point definition of managements. So then, the entire world is faced with scarcity of resources. How to deal with the limited resources available gave birth to the subject of management.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the body of literature cited and explanations given in this article by the author, as it relates to the cacophony of definition of management by various authorities, it is the author's recommendation, therefore, that we look into what gave birth to management. This will give management scholars a better grasp and a more single pointed definition of management. It is also the author's recommendation that in order to understand the true and real meaning of management, its definition should revolve around scarcity of resources, prudent or wise or judicious or efficient use of the scarce resources and resource optimization. It is the author's recommendation that management should be redefined to give managers a better understanding in prudent utilization of scarce resources within the organization to profit. The author recommends that the redefining of management in our institutions of learning and organizational milieu is well overdue.

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