

APPRAISING MANAGEMENT THEORIES AND PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

¹Adeyoriju, Rotimi, ²Adewumi, Samson Adeoluwa & ³Agbadudu, Joseph Edewor

^{1&3}Department of Business Administration, University of Benin, Benin-city, Edo State, Nigeria

²School of Social Sciences, College of Humanities, Discipline of Industrial, Organisation and Labour Studies, Howard College Campus, Durban 4001, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

Email: rotimiadeyori@yahoo.com, adeolu.adewumi@gmail.com, edewor.agbadudu@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study examines management theories and practice and how well it can be applied to resolve some of the menace that has impacted negatively on Nigerian organizations. To achieve the above objective, this study reviews extant literatures on the concept of management and its origin, management theories and its relevance to practicing managers, problem associated with the development of indigenous management theories and practice as well as the concept of management and culture. By implication, there is need for a detailed empirical study to test the applicability of management theories and practice in Nigeria and to ascertain whether Nigerian managers are on course or not. Also, there is need for sociological research viewpoint on how to solve most of the menace (corruption, bad leadership, tribalism, ethnic violence etc) that serve as the bane of societal growth and development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Management Theories, Colonization, Culture, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The current management practice in both formal and informal sectors of the Nigerian economy is encumbered by both administrative and bureaucratic bottleneck which have often resulted in slow pace of organizational growth and development, high rate of employee turnover and workplace unrest. Anichebe

(2013) confirms that the achievement of organization's goals and objectives over the years has remained in vague despite the numerous management theories that advocate organizational productivity and efficiency. The above assertion could be justified with the perceived high level of inefficiency and low productivity amongst Nigeria organizations and consequently resulting in untold hardship from the employers and employees alike. From personal observation, only few organizations in recent times have managed to sustain their existence and maintain their distinctive competence over competitors in the face of myriads and unabated environmental challenges.

In hindsight, managers and policy makers must begin to investigate why certain things changed and the major steps needed to resuscitate the system to function appositely again for the immediate and future benefits. For instance, could it be that management theories have not been professionally applied to Nigerian organizations? Or could it be that Nigerian business environment has not been supportive to accommodate organization's vision and mission?. In view of this, appraising management theories and practices in Nigeria will help to unveil its importance in the 21st century since account has shown that managers who are up-to-date on existing management theories, philosophy and thoughts are more likely to be effective and efficient in achieving organizational goals and objectives (Stoner, Freeman & Gilbert, 2008).

Management is a profession that is diverse and transcends every facets of human endeavor. The concept of management has been interpreted in ranges of perspective reflecting divergent strands of theoretical and practical standpoint. For instance, Yaya, Akintayo and Uzohue (2016) contend management as the process through which a manager uses the limited available human and material resources in the task of achieving organizational goal and objectives. Similarly, management is a set of activities including planning and decision making, organizing, leading and controlling, directed at an organization's human, financial, physical and information resources with the aim of achieving organizational goal in an effective and

efficient manner (Griffin 1990 cited in Agbonifoh, 2012). Given a critical understanding of the subject matter, it is imperative to understand that the chief motive of management is the achievement of organizational goal (s) and objectives irrespective of the foretold limitations. On the other side of the discourse, management scholars assert that theories are perspective with which people make sense of their world experiences (Inegbenebor, 2012b; Fajana, 2006). Inegbenebor (2012a) asserts that theory plays an important role in organizing the diversity of knowledge into a systematic form so as to enable managers have a perspective by which behaviour can be explained. Similarly, theory is a set of coherent group of assumptions put forth to explain the relationship between two or more observable facts and to provide a sound basis for predicting future events (Stoner *et al*, 2008).

This paper examines management theories and practices by looking at the three pertinent schools of thought; namely the classical school, human relations school and modern school of thought. First, the classical school of thought shoulders on the Scientific Management pioneered by Fredrick W. Taylor (1856-1915) which evolved in quest for improved organizational efficiency and productivity; the Administrative School initiated by Henri Fayol (1841-1925) grew out of the need to find guideline for managing complex organizations while the Bureaucratic Management School pioneered by Max Weber (1864-1920) contend the need for a defined hierarchy and clearly regulated rules marshaled in line of authority. In addition, the human relations school pioneered by George Elton Mayor (1890-1949) recognizes man as a social being whose environment and behavior must be given a fuller understanding to achieve organizational goals and objectives while the Modern School integrates the classical and human relations school through system and contingencies approach (Inegbenebor, 2012a; Stoner, Freeman & Gilbert, 2008; Lawal, 1993). To fittingly justify the essence of this discourse, this paper through theoretical lens will not only add to the dearth of literature on management theories and practices, but would particularly exude the ineptitude of the application of management theories in Nigerian organization, which unarguably calls for a rousing attention.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of management: its origin and practices in Nigeria

Conceptualizing management is an arduous task. First, the subject is broad because of its professional background and perception of researchers. Second, the concept is very vast and could mean different thing to different people depending on the focus of study. To put together, this has made it very difficult over the years to have a generally acceptable definition of management. Historically, the origin of management could be traced to the early creation of man by God in the Garden of Eden when God made Adam to oversee the affairs of the garden and revert accordingly. This by implication means that the various principles and practice of management were carried out by Adam and Eve in the garden (Buble 2015 cited in Yaya et al, 2016). Also, management has been revealed in ancient histories of Egypt, China, Greek and Rome but the study officially began in the nineteenth-century till date and led to the postulation of many theories as broadly categorized into three distinct schools, namely: classical, human relations and modern school of thought (Iredia, 2015; Mofope, 2013; Anichebe, 2013; Inegbenebour, 2012a; Makinde, 2012; Inyang, 2008).

Account has shown that the human societies in Africa, Nigeria inclusive have been administering their respective families and engage them in craft by producing in one unit or the other long before industrial revolution (Anichebe, 2013; Inyang, 2008). During this period, production was based on handicraft system which entails staying at home and producing one thing or the other in form of hunting and farming and the output from such adventure were used for family sustenance while the leftover were swapped with neighbors in form of barter system (Anichebe, 2013). The above illustration is a clear indication of the actual existence and practice of management by our forefathers long before the motif began to grow in sophisticated and revolutionized manner overtime. Therefore, this submission would rather contravene the shared assumption that management practices were not in existence in Nigeria prior to colonization. In fact, right before colonization, Nigeria as a country has existed in her special way with remarkable

culture and management principle which includes communality, hard-work, clan loyalty and integrity (Olusoji, 2012).

As equally reported by Oghojafor, Alaneme and Kuye (2013), the indigenous people of Nigeria had an existing and unique management philosophies and practices long before the advent of colonialism. During this period, the traditional rulers such as Jaja of Opobo in Ogoni land, Oduduwa in Yoruba land, Sheikh Uthman Danfodio of Sokoto Caliphate were known to have been great administrator with quality leadership style to govern their respective territories. In the same vein, the great Benin Kingdom enjoyed effective administration from the traditional head while the Igbos were not in any way left out of the traditional management practice. The Igwe enjoyed remarkable and special advice from the council of elders and also from their age grade whose roles centers on the protection of their respective villages from external aggression. Also, the Hausa community at that period had functional and existing traditional arrangements that were eventually adopted as the first by the colonial masters for their foisted indirect rule arrangement (Oghojafor, Idowu & George, 2012).

Reflecting on the above, the Nigerian colonization by the British brought a new focus to the process of management theories and practices in the country. This process was considered by Inyang (2008) as transferability of western management theory and practices to Africa and eventually regarded as the official beginning of management theories and practices in Nigeria. Although, the much prevailing management principle and practices during this period was design to meet the need and requirements of the colonial master who were already in charge of policy making and administration across the country (Oghojafor *et al.*, 2012). Soon after the amalgamation of the colony of Lagos and protectorate of southern Nigeria with the protectorate of northern Nigeria in 1914, the Nigerian state was established and made it imperative for Lord Lugard to put in place legal framework and personnel to create a pool of qualified labor force to serve the colonial administrator and bureaucracy (Inyang, 2008). Hence, the existing indigenous civil servant in the country began to agitate for collective participation in

the country's affairs. The effort of this group of civil servants later led to their inclusion in the management of the affairs of the country and regarded as the origin of indigenous management participation in Nigeria. Also, the inclusion of this notable Nigerians in the cabinets and subsequent inclusion in the country's constitution drafting committee led to further participation and development of indigenous managers, while the establishment of some professional bodies like the Nigerian Institute of Management, Centre for Management Development, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria were of great value to the advent of management in Nigeria (Adebisi, 2008; Lawal, 1993).

Management Theories and their Broad Categorization

Management theories serve as a means of classifying pertinent management knowledge as the basis of providing manager with requisite skill, ability and guideline to solve organizational problems (Inyang, 2008). In a bid to appraise management theories in Nigeria, this paper focuses on three relevant and the most frequently discussed school of thought vis-a-vis: classical, human resources and the modern school.

Classical school of thought

The classical school had contributed significantly to the development of management theory (Sarker & Khan, 2013). Worthy of our discussion is the scientific management theory pioneered by Fredrick W. Taylor (1856-1915), the administrative school of thought pioneered by Henri Fayol (1841-1925) and the Bureaucratic Management School pioneered by Max Weber (1864-1920). The scientific theory was formulated by Fredrick W. Taylor and other writers like Henry L. Gantt, Frank and Lillian Gilbert as well as Harrison Emerson between 1880 and 1930. The theory explicates specifically the scientific way of performing a job in an efficient and productive manner. It also looks at scientific method of selection, training and development as well as building cordial relationship between management and labour. Meanwhile, Iredia (2015) and Stoner *et al.* (2008) have categorically stated that the whole idea of scientific management is on the need to increase organizational productivity and by extension profitability.

Some of the fundamental principles and assumptions that underlie the scientific theory is the need to replace the old rule of thumb with scientifically developed techniques that will result in vast increase in efficiency; obtaining harmonious relationship rather than creating rift and discord among workers; working for maximum output and complete development of workers for individual and organizational growth (Anichebe, 2013). Despite the general relevance of scientific management theory assumptions across board, some useful critiques were offered on the following ground. First, the quest for higher productivity to generate higher pay among workforce were adjudged to have created unhealthy rivalry and thereby resulted in disharmony and unhealthy industrial relations environment. Second, scientific management theory placed less emphasis on human while huge emphasis was placed on machine. Third, scientific management theory leads to excessive workload and thereby affected the health of workers adversely and makes workers frustration imminent. Also, since the motive of scientific management theory is to increase organizational productivity and by extension profitability, it therefore gives room for managers to exploit workers and customers (Stoner et al, 2008). Lastly, it creates fear and insecurity in the mind of workforce due to exhaustion of task to perform (Yaya et al, 2016).

Moving away from the scientific school, Henri Fayol in his classical organization theory made an attempt to identify the principle and skills that underlie effective management with the identification of six functional areas of business activities to include technical function (production, manufacture and adaptation), commercial function (buying, selling, and exchange), financial function (search for and optimum use of capital), security function (protection of property and persons) accounting function (stocktaking, balance sheet, costs and statistic) and managerial function (planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Inegbenebor, 2012b). Fayol also identified five different roles of managers which include planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. While Fayol proposed fourteen general principle of management in his quest for the proper management of an organization including division of labour;

authority; discipline; unity of command; unity of direction; subordination of individual interest to collective interest; remuneration; centralization; hierarchy; order; Equity; stability of tenure; initiative and esprit de corps (Mofope, 2013). All these principles are integrated to enhance the administrative role in achieving organizational goals and efficiency. However of the relevance and acceptability of Fayol's administrative management principles, some useful critiques were offered on the following ground. First, the principles are said to be unclear and ambiguous, containing poorly defined terms. Second, the principles are not the result of empirical research but based on personal experience which makes the principles to be vague. Lastly, the theory tends to be relevant when organizations are operating in a stable and predictable environment but appears less appropriate in a turbulent and dynamic environment (Herbert Samson 1946, cited in Nhema, 2015).

Also central to the classical school is the bureaucratic management theory pioneered by a German Sociologist; Max Weber (1864-1920) which stressed the need for a defined hierarchy and clearly regulated line of authority. This theory gives room for explicit division of labour and a set of rules that govern organizations in the discharge of duties and activities (Stoner *et al.*, 2008). Looking at the basic idea behind bureaucratic management theory, it will be quite appropriate to say that an organization will function well if organized under some empirical order of official procedure that will help to establish among other things the appropriate personnel that is in position of authority to carry out a certain task, at what point in time and to what extend (Iredia, 2015). The general features of bureaucratic theory are as follows: division of labour, authority hierarchy, formal selection, career orientation, formal rules and control. Also, there are some significant criticism to bureaucratic theory which includes: negative connotation of rigidity, inefficiency, and red-tapism; officials seeks to avoid taking responsibility by claiming to be following organization's rules; officials failed to recognize and respond to changing condition in work place due to strict adherence to rules that often result in negative effects on their

operations; while there is high level of employee alienation ((Inegbenebor, 2012a)

Human Relations School of Thought

The twentieth century marks a remarkable period in the development of human relations theory of management as a swift reaction to the classical motive of achieving organizational efficiency and productivity through financial incentives as advocated under the classical management school (Sarker & Khan, 2013). The human relations school started with the Hawthorne studies conducted in 1920s as led by George Elton Mayor (1890-1949) of the Harvard Business School. Human relations theory also gave credence to the studies of other scholars like Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Fredrick Herzberg, and Chris Agryis who are psychologist and sociologist with sound research on workers' motivation. The general assumption underlying the human relations school is the recognition of man as a social being whose environment and behavior must be carefully studied to achieve organizational goals and objectives. The human relations school touches and transcends every life because of its relatively vast and encompassing ideas. According to Obisi (1996), human relations is an encompassing body of knowledge by which workers and management get things done through each other. Human relations assert that workers respond primarily to the social context of the workplace in terms of group norms and interpersonal dynamics. The human relations principle led to a major shift about human behaviour at work and recognizes the inner role of group in worker behaviour. (Sarker & Khan, 2013; Yaya *et al.*, 2016). It is evident that human relations school will result into open communication, participative management, democratic leadership style, paternalistic relationship between management and workers, maintenance of conducive working environment, individual, group and team collaboration, existence of formal and informal organizational structure and the need for individual and group motivation.

Modern School of thought

This school of thought incorporates and integrates the classical and human relations school of thought. This school seems to be a novel idea relevant to the current challenges in the world of work. Modern school of thought can be grouped into two major headings; namely: system approach and contingency approach. The system approach has diverse background and could be attributed to the contributions of scholar like Austrian Biologist, Ludwing Von Bertalanffy 1956 that recognize the need for organization to interact with its external environment. That is, operating in an open system rather than a close system (Tafamel & Adekunle, 2016; Chikere & Nwoka, 2015). A system is an organized whole comprising of various subsystems to function effectively. Similarly, system is an interdependent part which together forms a unitary whole to carry out a task. From the foregoing, system approach enable managers to perceive organization as a subset of the general society where the activity of one segment affect in varying degree the activity of other (Yaya et al, 2016). The application of system approach in management is imminent since no organization can operate in isolation but rather interact with other elements in the environment to achieve stated objectives. A good system must be dynamic in nature so as to give room for free interactions; overlap with other system and exchange information with other elements in the environment. A good system must be self-regulating, has a boundary and bounded in time and space. Lastly, a good system must have a process whereby input can be transmitted to an output without any impediments (Chikere & Nwoka, 2015).

The contingency approach on the other hand was developed by managers, consultant and researchers as a case study of a real life situation. This approach is a form of management concept that states the universal applicability of relevant management principle and practices to arrest a given real life problems (Omoluabi, 2016; Yaya et al, 2016). The contingency approach could be better understood with the work of John Woodward (1965) on organization structure which concluded that there is no best way to organize and manage an organization (Mu'azu, 2017). Likewise, the idea of organic and mechanistic approach of Burns and Stalker

(1961) as well as the differentiation and integration strategy of Lawrence and Lorsch (1922) gave credence to contingency management approach. Stoner *et al.*, (2008) opined that the task of managers under the contingency theory is to identify in a proactive and strategic manner, the most suitable techniques of solving a problem under particular circumstance and which means that managers must show dynamism in their response to a given situation since a principle that work for the first circumstance might not work for the second circumstance.

Relevance of management theories and practices to managers in Nigeria

As observed by Inegbenebor (2012), the large number of theories in the field of management should not be surprising due to its relevance in proffering solutions to day-to-day challenges that confronts practicing managers. For instance, a typical Nigeria organization is currently confronted by heavy competition, high inflationary trend, poor leadership, corruption, low productivity and the likes. Therefore, management theories and practice are needed by practicing managers to address some of the issues raised above through effective planning, organizational design and structure, power and authority, decision making, leadership, communication and conflict management. To be specific, most practicing managers in Nigeria requires proper understanding of leadership theory so as to overcome the shortcomings of bad leadership that serve as the bane of the nation and hinders societal growth and development over the years.

Equally, managers in Nigeria should have broad knowledge in the area of conflict management theory due to the volatile nature of the Nigeria environment. Such knowledge will assist managers in conflict resolution since conflict has become a recurrent phenomenon and part of organizational activities in Nigeria. Although, the pluralist in the field of industrial relations already sees conflict as inevitable in industrial organization due to several sources of constraints and numerous interest groups. Pluralist asserts that conflict will ensue as a result of diverse views necessitated by divergent interests, opinion and goals; hence, the

need for the knowledge of management theory among practicing managers so as to properly manage these pluralities of interest. Also, management theory will enable managers to have diverse view of numerous issues within and outside the organization that requires managerial attention. For instance, the contingency theory enable managers have diverse view on how to solve problem in a real life situation by applying the most suitable techniques, knowing that a method that is highly effective in one situation might remain impotent in another situation. Managers in Nigeria need management theory in the area of motivation so as to understand the needs, goals and expectations of workers and been able to effectively motivate employees and subordinates. In view of this discussion, it is worthy to state categorically that effective managers are those with proper understanding and adequate knowledge of management theory, principles and practice and are able to apply them appropriately to fit the specific situation under consideration. Therefore, with management theories, Nigerian managers will be able to provide their organizations with the following: proper staffing, proper training and development, proper remuneration, adequate welfare and good working environment, eliminates bureaucratic bottleneck that characterize traditional society and institutions, improved productivity and above all, achieve organizational performance and efficiency.

Problem associated with the development of indigenous management theories and practices in Nigeria

As much as we emphasize management theories and practices in Nigeria, it is quite surprising till today that most of the theories and practices relied on in the field of management to solve most of our indigenous problems are simply western management theories developed in America, Europe and Asia. None of these celebrated theories in management emanated from scholars in Nigeria which means that the scenario upon which the theories were built were simply westerners. No wonders some of the applications do not fit into our local environment. On this note, some of the barriers to the development of indigenous management theories in Nigeria and Africa are as follows. First, lack of adequate research facilities. It is very unfortunate that most of the government in Nigeria; both past

and present along with other countries in African have not been contributing significantly to research effort which has affected the ability of researchers to come up with ground breaking quality and original research on indigenous management theory and practice that soothes our local environment (Inyang , 2008).

Second, cultural diversity and ethnicity has also been identified as the bane of indigenous management theory in Nigeria and other African countries. For instance, Nigeria is a country in Sub-Sahara Africa with over 250 ethnic groups embodied with several local languages which make some scholars to see the nation as a cultural maze (Mofope, 2013; Ojo, 2005). This diverse cultural background has repelled common ideas and centrally acceptable management practices. Similar to the above is disunity and change which has made the Nigerian environment to be very volatile (Oghojafor *et al.*, 2012). The issue of disunity began soon after our leaders divided the country into six geo-political zones. At that point, each citizen is aware of where he comes from and ready to support, promote and develop their zone to the detriment of other zones. Today, even the citizens themselves are unsafe in their own communities due to several communal conflicts.

Another major barrier is the inconsistency in the nation's legislation. Our legal framework and policies have not been consistent and strengthened enough. It will surprise you that some parts of the nation's constitution still provides for the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies to conduct it affairs in such a manner that will reflect the principle of federal character, a condition whereby quota is given to less developed communities in terms of federal jobs, appointments, selections and promotions (Iredia, 2015, Oghojafor *et al.*, 2013). The whole fundamental idea of federal character as entrenched in the nation's constitution has over the years featured prominently incompetent personnel in most of the federal jobs and appointments and consequently resulted in inefficiency, incompetence and deficient manpower. Also, the newness of management as a discipline in our academic institution is a bane to indigenous management theory in Nigeria. Management studies

came rather too late and now that management is been offered in our respective citadel of learning, academic are not motivated to engage in studies that would produce relevant management theories. Also, the inability of managers to document their experiences has made the development of indigenous management theory in Nigeria and Africa as a whole absolutely impossible till date (Inyang, 2008; Oghojafor et al., 2012).

Management and Culture

Research has shown that the evolution of management thought in Nigeria is rooted in culture, colonization, socio-economic and technology development (Olusoji, 2012). Culture is a collective phenomenon, shared with the people who live in the same social environment (Hofstede 2001 cited in Iguisi, 2010). An attempt to understand the predominance of culture in the development of management theory gave an insight to the assertion of Inyang (2008) which contends that the impact of culture on management practice and principle was due to heavy reliance on human traditions, value, norms, belief, idea and habit as well as the political, social and economic orientation of our people. Digging deep into the cultural background of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria vis-a-vis the Yorubas, Ibos and the Hausas clans, there was a conclusion that the three major ethnic entities were known for their unique cultural orientation (Oghojafor *et al.*, 2013; Olusoji, 2012).

Beginning with the Yoruba clan, they have their own unique cultural orientation ranging from respect for elders, emphasis on seniority in decision making, regards for the Obas as the overall community head and the chief custodians of their local deities who is in position of authority to make pronouncement and whoever defile such authority among its subject incurs the wrath of the gods. Likewise, the Igbo community are rooted in culture where the Igwes or Obis make pronouncement that is binding on all others after due consultation with the council of elders and the village heads. The Igbo communities were known for peace as they often relied on the age grade to make peace among peers and as well protect their communities against external attacks. The Igbo people value their

culture and consider any attempt to defile it as a sacrilege. Their customs and tradition includes religion, marriage, death ritual, use of language, music and dance, speech, language dialect which makes them to be easily recognized and distinguished from other ethnic groups. The Hausa community likewise revered their culture and religion in high esteem. In short, they give special respect to the Emirs who is their traditional head. They have unique cultural practices which has stood a test of time due to their strong native system of government. Being the largest ethnic group in Nigeria, majority practices Islam except for few who practice Christianity. They are known to be trustworthy in their dealing and well recognized for trading and farming activities as major occupation. In summary, the rich cultural values and orientations of the three ethnic groups made the colonial masters to employ the Emirs, the Obas and the Igwes as the recruitment agents in the course of administering their colonial territories (Oghojafor & Ofuani, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Management theories and practices have generated discussions in social and management sciences literatures because some of the assumptions under different school of thoughts (classical, human relations and modern) were examined with deep notions from different perspectives. Meanwhile, irrespective of the way you look at management theories and practices in our modern society, there exists a convergence. This paper has evidently shown that management theories and practices have a significant role to play in the effectiveness and efficiency of practicing managers as well as the performance of an organization generally. Thus, understanding management theories and practices in relations to the peculiar nature of our local environment will help organizations in Nigeria and society in general to strive for efficiency and productivity, as well as building indigenous management theories and practices that will in future relevant and suitable to our local environment. The entire gamut of this discussions shows that management theories will remain relevant in the twenty-first century while expected to be fully explore by academic researchers, managers and captain of industries for the growth and development of African nations like Nigeria.

By implication, management theory will help to solve or mitigate most of the societal menace such as corruption, tribalism, bias and discrimination, ethnic and communal clashes that serve as the bane of our societal growth and organizational development in Nigeria. This study will further provide eye opener to managers, researchers, institutions and government on the need to develop indigenous management theories and practices that will be relevant to our local environment. Lastly, there is need to strengthen our management oriented institutions like Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, Centre for Management Development, Nigeria Institute of Management *etc* .

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