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Management & Human Civilization: Past, Present, and Beyond

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At the dawn of the human civilization there was neither an inter-governmental alliance like *European Union* nor a corporation like *Apple*. But even in that time people used to move in groups, pursue pre-determined goals (that is hunting animals for eating), take decisions for survival, and so forth, collectively all these activities in today's setting referred as Management – means to make human live better, easier and more fulfilling.

Past Expedition:

The earliest recorded document of mankind was found in the age of Sumerian Civilization five thousand years ago.¹The main purpose of recording at that time was to establish, in today's term, a managerial control on tax collection and the organization concerned was a religious one managed by priests.²After the Sumerians, more comprehensive managerial task was undertaken by Egyptians that was the construction of the great pyramid of Giza in about 2560 BC.³A workforce of 100,000 people worked for 20 years for the construction,⁴ which is twice as large as Apple Inc. having 46,600 employees⁵, and managing such task was anything but easy. At later stages, civilizations like that of Babylonians through codes of laws and incentive wage payment, Chinese through staff principles and military treatise, Greeks through new ideas of governess and work standardization, and Romans empire through organization and farm management contributed a lot in developing managerial concepts and practice.⁶ A common aspect in all these historical development is exclusion of business in developing managerial concepts and practice, as the organizations concerned were either religious or political.

¹ Claude S. George, JR The History of Management Thought (New Delhi: Prentice/Hall of India Private Limited, 1974), p. 3.

²Ibid. p.4.

³Encyclopedia Britannica ultimate reference suit

⁴Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Pyramid_of_Giza

⁵Apple Inc. official website

⁶Claude S. George, JR The History of Management Thought

History, as it always did, indicates that applicability of the concept of management is universal regardless of organizational types, not merely a sole domain of businesses.

Business and Management:

Although management has been practiced long since, but, in today's meaning, it is not very old. Advent of modern and complex business organizations revolutionizes management. The commercial revolution of 16th century in Europe⁷ along with subsequent industrial revolution in 20th century pushed the productive system to a new order that is *Factory System*, which is the concentration of workers under one roof. This shift in system bred new challenges for the people running the factories, hence, new perspective of management developed. With a new system and ever increasing demand, managers at that time were mainly concerned about how to produce more in least cost. Therefore, scientific management or the classical perspective of management came up as the solution. Rise of the new system gave birth to a new segment in society that is – industrial workers. Informal group within factories and social relationship at work were identified as important factors for productivity. Then the humanistic perspective of management came into the play and directed the possible way outs. After World War II businesses grew too large and were no longer confined within a single territory. Rapid expansion of technology and business posed new managerial challenges to the organizations, expanding globally. Within and outside the business, the environment got more complex and difficult to predict. Management science perspective emerged on this background.

⁷Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Commercial_Revolution

Each new paradigms of management came across to face the challenges organizations encountered in new socio-economic realms. Therefore, relevance of management to those preceding social contexts changed over time.

The new reality:

Now, over the past few decades, the driving philosophy of managing organization and people has changed and such phenomenon is attributed to the clearly-evident intertwining relationship between businesses and the other social organizations or society at large. Business has immense impact on society and other social organizations but inverse effect is also manifested. Inappropriate management of social and governmental organizations limits development of business as well. In developing countries poorly managed infrastructure paving the prosperity of business, on the other hand poorly managed economy and improper distribution of wealth destroying potential of creating healthy consumer market base although these nations accounts for largest number of population. In developed countries mismanaged businesses resulted in corporate downsizing, expanding unemployment, environmental degradation, and most importantly diminishing customer value. So ***the necessity*** of proper management in present condition and further is ***felt like never before***.

Functionally, with the blessings of modern communication technology, organizations are not only spreading across the globe but also the office is getting more and more disperse. Outsourcing based business models are more frequent phenomenon and are emerging as most efficient ones. A team working on same project but members are located different corner of the world and managing such physically disperse team members requires new knowledge and new

assumptions. However, the earlier thoughts of management is suffering from major deficiencies in current setting, therefore, it is losing its grip on such situation.

Management Now!

Today certain things are certain- that is uncertain future. Changing technology and communication pattern that vastly revolutionized the organizational structure and organization as a whole is integrating business and society while deepening dependence between these two, any turbulence in any one bears considerable amount of influence on others, which was not apparent in earlier stages. Finally changes in way of communication and growing dependence on each other are rapidly shifting attitude and outlooks of people in the society. As management is primarily concerned with people, so it should be attuned accordingly and concentrate all its verve to make peoples' lives better and to help us get more out of our time, relationships, education, and investments.

Whenever we think about management, most often it is depicted as a process or sequential tasks whose only objective is to organizational objectives in efficient manner. This process view was developed by Henry Fayol and other classical management theorists but relatively contemporary empirical studies, especially that of Henry Mintzberg (*The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact*), revealed that this view no longer hold firm in present reality. As everything around us is on continuous change, every day, while playing the role, managers has to face new and unwanted challenges, which was not so intense earlier. Therefore, managerial activity in sequential manner is unthinkable even in wildest dream.

Again as stated, management's task is to achieve organizational objectives. Objectives always must be measurable but organizations do not exist merely to achieve some pre-determine

numbers instead to pursue rationales far beyond those numbers. To accommodate this pursuit, management should be entitled for more comprehensive focus.

Management- The Catalyst

Role of today's management is to build a holistic system that will make human lives more fulfilling by helping humans achieve principle centered goals effectively, efficiently and ethically. Therefore, we may rephrase **Management** as *the collection of concepts and operating practices to create an optimal combination of productive factors through applying appropriate and available technology in order to fulfill organizational mission.*

How management practice should be, is largely depends on the question- What we expects from it? Management empowers the society to start and continue its march towards progress and the progression will go on as long as the society remains productive. Thus, productivity may best describe the worthiness of management in present condition and beyond. So, good or sustainable management may be defined as *the practice which will enhance productive capacity of resources, including both human and non-human assets, employed by any sort of organizations.*

Ultimately the performance of management will be measured in terms of enhancement in boosting productive capability of the resources employed.

As only a legal structural entity, organizations themselves does not take the decision. Managers do that on behalf of the organizations, so whenever organizations conduct anything wrong people raise their fingers towards managers ultimately management bears the responsibility.

Ready-made garment industry in Bangladesh earns majority of foreign currency but at the same time is responsible for huge contamination of surrounding rivers in Dhaka (The capital of Bangladesh) Buriganga, Sitalokkha and Turag.⁸ So every time newspaper or any other environmental group reports the adverse impact of the contamination, management is victimized.

The recent financial breakdown is another example. Although economies, in developed world, are started to recover from the breakdown⁹ but still unable to provide expected number of employment opportunities¹⁰. On the other hand, the deteriorating ecological and environmental condition is mostly attributed to the inability of management to preserve natural resources. Therefore, the growing perception of people about management is it enabling organizations to grow at the expense of society and environment. Instead of creating positive synergy, management is actually destroying productive capacity of the resources and losing the opportunity to create synergy.

Management is like the *catalyst* within this inter-dependent social context. Just like a good catalyst that works to blend all the substances in more effective manner, a good management practices crafts such an interlocking chain that enable organizations to achieve greater productivity hence creating a self-sustaining value creating system.

Toyota Motor Corporation persistently strives to develop a learning organization and so far they are succeeded to do so. Here management enables Toyota to boost productive capacity of its workers (a factor of production) eventually productive workers made other factors capable to produce more value for customers and finally satisfied customers contribute in further development of the corporation.

⁸ The Financial Express: http://www.thefinancialexpress-bd.com/more.php?date=2011-08-01&news_id=144644

⁹ DW-WORLD.DE: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5433474,00.html>

¹⁰ The New York Times website: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/03/business/global/03euro.html>

Ultimately sustainable management practice permits the corporation repeat its success through creating a circle of value for betterment of its own and society at large.

Reinventing the Wheel

Every organization in the society is like ***spokes of a wheel*** running towards a single vision that is to accelerate growth of human civilization towards future. Here the wheel is used in allegorical sense to illustrate the inter-dependence of human society. Just like a feeble spoke that can weaken the progression of the wheel, any institution in society weakened by poor management may also hamper the future progress of human civilization. Thus, ***the purpose of management*** is to hold every institutions/spokes tight to the center of the wheel that is the human society to attain the ultimate goal of mankind.

Organizations do not exist for their own sake instead to create value for the society that will enable people to sustain and develop. It is apparent that organizations, formed within our social setting, are directed towards greater good of the society and management enables those organizations to do so. Therefore, management and common good cannot be separated rather the more tightly these two will intertwined with each other the more fulfilling life we will realize.

Ultimately, the fortune wheel of mankind depends on Management- until and unless the potential of this wheel is fully realized, the quest of Management will go on.