

LECTURE 2

THE EVOLUTION OF MANAGEMENT -
AUTOCRATIC TO PARTICIPATING

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GERRIE K.A. ROODT

B. Mil. (Stellenbosch), M.B.A. (Pretoria), P.M.D. (Harvard), I.A.T.
Graduate School of Management of the University of Pretoria

ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the work of the most influential thinkers of the science and art of management. Evidence is submitted that most of these thinkers were as much concerned with the philosophy of the intrinsic value of a human being as they were with devising techniques to optimise the use of labour as an input to the production of goods and services. It is submitted that management practitioners often see and use a specific technique as if it constitutes a complete philosophy. This tendency has resulted in the incorrect perception that participative management represents a dramatic new breakthrough in management theory and practice.

EKSERP

Hierdie voordrag gee 'n oorsig van die werk van die mees invloedryke denkers van die bestuurswetenskappe. Bewyse word voorgele dat meeste van hierdie denkers net so veel besorg was met die filosofie van die intrinsieke waarde van 'n meens as wat hulle oor die daarstelling van spesifieke tegnieke om die gebruik van die menslike hulpbron te optimaliseer in die vervaardiging van goedere en dienste. Daar word voorgestel dat praktiseerende bestuurders dikwels neig om spesifieke tegnieke te beskou en te gebruik synde 'n volledige filosofie te wees. Hierdie geneigdheid het daartoe gelei dat deelnemende bestuur verkeerdelik beskou word as 'n nuwe en dramatiese deurbraak in die teorie en praktyk van bestuurswese.

Many records and ideas relating to management date from antiquity. This paper is confined to modern times. Frederick Taylor who did his work in the early years of the twentieth century is usually called "the father of scientific management". Many persons before him however made considerable contributions to management thought. James Wall Jnr and Matthew Robinson Boulton took over the management of the Soho Engineering Foundry in 1796. Among the many techniques developed by these men were such things as production planning and market research and forecasting. They also instituted a sickness benefit program administered by an elected committee of employees.

Robert Owen was one of the most successful industrialists of the early nineteenth century and also an outstanding pioneer of management thought. In an instruction he wrote to his superintendants he declared "Many of you have long experienced in your manufacturing operations the advantages of substantial, well contrived and well executed machinery. If then, due care as to the state of your inanimate machines can produce beneficial results, what may not be expected if you devote equal attention to your vital machines which are far more wonderfully constructed".

Charles Babbage was a professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University from 1828 to 1839. Babbage is best remembered for his invention of a mechanical calculator in 1822 and for his book "On the Economy of Machines and Manufactures" published in 1832 : Even he did not overlook the human element. He argued strongly for a kind of profit sharing system by which workers could share in the profitability of factories as they contributed to productivity.

Henry Varnumpoor was the editor of the American Railroad Journal in the latter half of the nineteenth century. He saw management as a system with a clear organisation structure in which people were and could be held completely accountable by means of an adequate management reporting system. However, he recognised the danger that such systematization might make people feel like cogs in a machine. His solution was to recommend a kind of leadership, beginning at the top of an organisation, that would overcome routine and dullness by instilling in an organisation a feeling of unity, an appreciation of the work and an esprit de corps.

Frederick Winslow Taylor's famous work "The Principles and Practice of Management" was published in 1911. Taylor's principal concern was that of increasing efficiency in production, not only to lower costs and raise profits but also to make possible increased pay for workers through their higher productivity. It is true that some of the techniques Taylor and his colleagues and followers developed in order to put his philosophy and principles into practice had certain mechanistic aspects. It is likewise true that these techniques could be and indeed were used to increase labour productivity without providing ample reward, adequate training, or managerial help. When, however, Taylor spoke of management, he never overlooked the fact that "the relations between employers and men form without question the most important part of this art". Among the immediate disciples of Taylor were such outstanding pioneers as Henry L. Gantt and the husband and wife team of Frank and Lillian Gilbreth. Gantt is perhaps best remembered for his development of graphic methods of depicting plans and making possible better managerial control. He emphasised the need for developing a mutuality of interests between management and labour and of appreciating that "in all problems of management the human element is the most important one".

Perhaps the real father of modern management theory is the French industrialist Henry Fayol. His acute observations on the principles of general management were published in French in 1911 under the title "Administration Industrielle et Generale". No English translation was published in the United States until 1949. Fayol's monograph discloses an extraordinary insight into the basic problems of modern management. He noted that principles of management are flexible, not absolute, and must be usable regardless of changing and special conditions. He listed fourteen such principles including the following three:

Equity: Loyalty and devotion should be elicited from personnel by a combination of kindness and justice on the part of managers when dealing with subordinates.

Initiative: Initiative is conceived of as the thinking out and execution of a plan. Since it is one of the "keenest satisfactions for an intelligent man to experience", Fayol exhorts managers to "sacrifice personal vanity" in order to permit subordinates to exercise it.

Esprit de Corps: This is the principle that "in union there is strength", as well as emphasising the need for teamwork and the importance of communication in obtaining it.

During the same time that Taylor, Fayol and others were concentrating on "scientific management" many scholars and practitioners were thinking about, experimenting with and writing on industrial psychology and social theory, both of which, in many instances, were stimulated by the scientific management movement. This social systems approach to management was the foundation to what is considered by many to be the most influential book published in the entire field of management, The Functions of the Executive, written by Chester I Barnard in 1938. In this book Barnard stated "Co-operation, not leadership, is the creative process; but leadership is the indispensable fulminator of its forces".

The conclusion arrived at is that participation management, or at least many of the elements thereof, have been known and practised for some time now. The philosophical essence of the classicists appear to be rooted in the belief that a human being is not an inert object but indeed has an intrinsic value. Any management approach which is not firmly anchored in this belief runs the risk of being consigned to the already filled graveyard of outdated management techniques.

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