



MANAGEMENT THEORIES, PHILOSOPHIES AND PRACTICES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study and practice of management in Nigeria has been viewed to be based totally on western platform to the extent that those theories, philosophies and principles that are successful when applied in the western world have failed to yield the desired result when applied to the Nigerian setting. It is on this background that the authors reviewed some of the management theories, philosophies and principles that were operational in the Nigerian environment even before the British came to Nigeria. It is based on this that the authors advise that Nigeria should not do away with those management theories, philosophies and principles that were applied before the advent of the British in Nigeria, rather we should apply both the western and traditional ones, and try to align them to suit our environment, with a view to getting the best out of our local content.

Keywords: Management, management theories, philosophies, principles.

Introduction

The growth and development of Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, is significantly dependent on the growth and development an indigenous management philosophy (Adeoti, George, & Adegboya, 2013) Koontz, as cited in (Adegboye, 2013, p.205) states that “although significant progress has been made over several years in the evolution of management theories, the discipline has suffered from a deluge of theories that may be more confusing in practice than directional” Not much work, that I know, has been done in this area; therefore, the purpose of this paper is to attempt an evaluation of the application of management theories, philosophies and principles in Nigeria. Adeoti et al. (ibid) assert that “as long as there are economic activities and human endeavors, there must be procedures, people and system to take charge, to plan, organize, staff, and control the work” (p. 212). Principles can be defined as fundamental truths existing at any given time, which explain the relationships that exist between two or more sets of variables” (Adeoti, et al p. 215). The concepts of theories, philosophies and principles are very important because they help in the study and understanding of relationships between dependent and independent variables.

A theory is a systematic collection of related principles, and management theory is defined “as a way grouping managerial thinking” (Adeoti et al. 2013, p. 215). According to Olum (2004) a theory is a systematic grouping of interdependent concepts and principles (generalizations or hypotheses that are tested for accuracy and appear to be true to reflect or explain reality) that gives a framework to, or ties together, a significant area of knowledge Management practice has been in existence in Africa before the British came to West Africa. Little wonder, Oghojafor reports that “Africa has existed for several decades and has her own unique ways and her distinct cultures which have for long been managed qualitatively, in her own way” as cited in Adeoti, et al. (ibid p. 212). Iyang (2008) argues that the evolution and development of indigenous management theories and practices in Africa has been seriously affected and retarded

by colonialism. Little wonder, Oghojafor, Idowu, and George, (2012), note that “the applicability of management theories and practices has historically been a major concern to scholars in their study and analysis of developing countries’ economies” (p.73).

Similarly, one researcher has argued that “it is the arrival of British colonialist in Africa that disrupted the people’s cultural beliefs and traditions, and thus marked the beginning of what is referred today as “colonized African management” (Eze, 1995, p.136). Previous studies (Edoho, 2001) have shown that the practice of management is heavily influenced by the traditions, myth and culture of people as well as their political, economic and social considerations.

Management: Theories, Philosophies and Principles in Nigeria

According to Muo and Oghojafor (2012), the Nigerian peoples had their own management philosophies and practices before the advent of colonialism and they were indeed able to survive a very tortuous past-slavery, colonialism, brutal economic exploitation and attempted cultural annihilation- through these philosophies and strategies. Research has shown that “all groups of people no matter how ‘uncivilised’ have their own management practices built around their culture and that, it will be problematic to devise a single template of any management practice in a cultural area with the intention of applying such to another cultural area” (George, Owoyemi and Onokala, 2012). It is for this reason that Ahiauzu, (1999) argues that the application of Western management models and theories often proves less effective when transplanted elsewhere, hence, every nation, culture and setting is rooted in its contextual value system and culture.

Muo and Oghojafor, (2012), writing on OHAZURUEME managerial philosophy and practice of decision making note that “Africa and indeed Nigeria, had their own management philosophies and practices before the advent of colonialism and they were indeed able to survive a very tortuous past-slavery, colonialism, brutal economic exploitation and attempted cultural annihilation- through these philosophies and strategies”. It is a concept, philosophy and practice in the management of affairs among Ndigbo that ensures that decisions are easily accepted and implemented because, the people have collectively decided. This is a consensus based model of decision making. Iyang (ibid) went further to say that “African situation is rather unfortunate since colonialism did not permit the nurturing of indigenous management principles. If these principles were developed, they would have given us the framework for theorizing in management, within the African context” (p.122)

A review by Tamono, as cited in (Adeoti, et al, 2013, p.216) shows that “in the pre-colonial Nigeria, the economy was largely built on collectivism, articulated mechanism, cooperation and voluntary activity to meet the needs of the society” Similarly, Mangaliso, as cited in Olusoji and Ogunkoya (n.d) p.1), notes that “most management theories are based on the writings of the 20th century Western scholars whose disciplinary orientations were heavily grounded in economics and classical sociology” (p. 1). Oghojafor, Idowu and George, (2012) were of the opinion that before the coming of the white men, there was no proper recording of her past practice management philosophy.” According to Ifechukwu (2010) and Adegbeye (2013), some of the factors that influence our behaviour and invariably our practice of managerial philosophies are our extended family system, human relations orientation, social mutual concern, respect for elders and tradition, consensus, competition and hero worship. In fact, Oghojafor, et al (2012) added that religion can also be included as one of the factors that moderate our behaviour and actions.

Ifechukwu (2010) affirms that the Nigeria management model tends towards a management style that shows a high concern for both people and production. On the issue of cultural values and a determinant of behaviour. Adeoti, et al (2013) note that cross cultural researchers believes that there is no such thing called universal theory of management, in contrast, those with the universal view believe that culture does not limit the applicability of management theories. In other words, theories that work in Western countries have no reason not to work in Nigeria. Ifechukwu, (1994) argues that before the colonial masters came into Yoruba land, the Yorubas operated a decentralized political system that consists of the central head and the village or town head. The center was being led by an Oba. The villages or towns were headed by Baales. The Baales also have advisers. The Baales are entitles to pay annual homage to the Oba.

Any Baale that fails to pay homage will be dethroned or sanctioned. The Oyo political system is characterized by the principle of checks and balances principles. The Oyo mesi, for example, acted as a check to the Alaafin, who can

be removed from the throne at any time, through some process ritual, if he is found wanting. In the Ancient Benin kingdom, there were the Obas who governed the whole kingdom, with the support of his cabinet.

According to him, all these could not have been possible without effective organization. Before the white men came to Nigeria, the Igbos of Nigeria practiced a decentralized political that was characterized by communal living, love, oneness, justice, equity, fair play, and progress (Oghojafor, Alaneme, & Kuye, 2013, p. 9). Mua and Oghojafor (2012) argues that, before the British entered Nigeria with their democracy, the Igbos had the 'OHAZURUME' management philosophy which is the foundation stone to 'ohacracy', equivalent to the modern day democracy" (p.157). 'OHAZURUME' is an Igbo contribution to the world of management thoughts, philosophies and practices as well as an indigenous solution to a complex and complicated global problem in decision making The Hausas are without exception as Ifechukwu, (1994) explains that when the white men came they discovered that the Hausas already had an existing coherent administrative platform, which was supportive of the British indirect rule system. According to Dia (1996), 'the Nigerian society functions in a highly patriarchal fashion, with men exerting broad control over the lives of women, who are typically less educated and have limited access to wealth and social services' (p.37)

Some examples of Management systems and styles adopted in Nigeria

Espirit de corp

This is one of the 14 principles of management, according to Fayol (1949), that promotes team spirit and gives an organization a sense of unity. This refers to a feeling of fellowship and common loyalty or affiliation that is shared by the members of a particular group. It is similar to "strength in unity" in Igboland, which has been in practice before the adoption of foreign management philosophy (Oghojafor et al., 2013, p.12). Adegboga, (2013, p. 212) share the same view when he says that "team building theory as a management style is being adopted in Nigeria. According to him, this style reduces hierarchy leading to flatter structures, empowering subordinates through being part of decision making and increasing responsibilities and teamwork as key forms of increasing motivation and resulting work performance"

The concept of co-prosperity

This is based on the principle that every person descended from a common ancestor, hence brothers and sisters as related by blood. Before the British came to Igboland, they operated a communal life system that is why it is not very common practice for rich farmers assisting the have-nots who intend to venture into farming by giving them start up seedlings (Oghojafor et al, p.11).

The title system

In Igbo land signifies recognition and reward in motivation theory. The kind of title given depends on village or town. At times, titles of honour can be conferred on a non indigene that has shown some serious commitment to the course of the village by ways of contributing to the general wellbeing of the community. According to Oghojafor et al, "in Igbo land individuals are recognized and rewarded with titles befitting their disposition. A man who leads others to war and comes back successfully could be given title such as "Ochiagha" (Leader of war), "Odokara Olua" (One who says it and makes it happen), "Ikemba" (The power house of his people) etc. and is elevated to an elder and given an exalted position". The OZO title is given to persons for his or her contribution to the progress of the community. The title holder is thereafter perceived to be a dignified member of the King's cabinet, thereby being a law maker. Each title signifies certain achievement and carries with it, certain rights, privileges and symbols of authority just like in an organisation when one is given a promotion into an executive position with higher responsibility (Oghojafor et al, 2013, p. 12).

Patrimonial management philosophy

In Nigeria, the men are seen to be in charge of major decisions both at home and in the offices (Olusoji and Ogunkoya, (n.d).

Patronage philosophy

This happens when political leader allocate political offices to people who vote for them during the elections. This is very common in Nigeria since appointments are not based on merit. Most times, they appoint unqualified persons into offices thereby putting a square peg in a round hole.

Indigenous Ecological philosophy

Nigeria used to be the highest groundnut exporting country in Africa, taking note of the famous groundnut pyramid of Kano, but a combination of drought, rosette and other diseases wiped out groundnut production in the 1970s (Ajeigbe et al, 2014). Nigeria shifted their interest from agriculture to oil; this has resulted to Nigeria being classified as a mono economy.

Balance management philosophy

The relocation of the capital of Nigeria from Lagos to Abuja was done to bring about a balance of managerial power an effort to ensure equality and justice (Olusoji & Ogunkoya(n.d). There were some other policies that were aimed at bringing about balance in management philosophies, like employment quota system, admission into federal government colleges/unity colleges, and even federal own universities etc. Oghojafor, Idowu and George (2012) gave some examples of management principles in Nigeria

Employment relations practice in Nigeria

(George et al, 2012, p. 194) sum this up by saying that “One could therefore conclude that the transfer of the British Voluntarist ERP to Nigeria (and other former British colonies) is problematic and that part of the reason for this is the differences in culture between Britain and Nigeria as well as differences in the culture of all the ethnic groups that were forced to merge to become what is now regarded as one Nigeria”

Federal Character in Employment Consideration

According to Adamolekun, Elero and Oshionebo, as cited in (George et al, 2012, p.194) “when the British left after granting independence, the Nigerian civil service was dominated by the Southerners who were exposed to Christianity and western education while most of the Northerners who were exposed to the Islamic education could not be recruited” . According to Agbaje (1989) “federal character principle was enacted to guide against the above problem” (as cited in George et al, 2013, p. 194.) This federal character principle has led to the employment of unqualified personnel in Federal Government owned institutions such as The Police, Navy, Air force and Ministries, just to mention a few. According to Afigbo, (1989), as cited in (George et al, 2012, p.194) the result of this was that the less qualified were employed and an expatriate will be mandated to train the Northerner was trained as quickly as possible. In some instances the less qualified Northerners ended up being the boss of a more qualified Southerner.

Paternalistic Employment Relations Practice (ERP)

Nigerian managers and administrators are known to prefer “tried and tested” methods which is an indirect spin off paternalistic ‘leader knows best’ attitude towards their subordinates” (Adegboga, 2013, p. 212). It is not surprising to see Nigerian human resources managers or other managers saddled with the responsibility of employing people, to employ their relatives or based on who you know. “This reinforces the high communality and paternalistic environment in Nigeria. The probability that relatives or kinsmen would find themselves in the same organization and experience the issues described above is very high” (Adegboye, 2013, p. 213). Some researchers have this to say about the factors militating against the development of management theories and principles that will be applicable to Nigeria: “Inadequate finance and research facilities, bad attitude and lack of interest in research work, scanty statistics and documentation problem, intra cultural differences, newness of management as a discipline

in our higher institutions, poor linkage and collaboration between researchers and private sector among others” (Adeoti, et al 2013, p. 212).

Summary and Conclusion

It has been established that principles, even as fundamental truths, cannot be separated from theories and philosophies. In Africa, in general and Nigeria, to be specific, the indigenous peoples had their own management philosophies and practices even before the advent of colonialism, and they were indeed able to survive a very tortuous past-slavery, colonialism, brutal economic exploitation and attempted cultural annihilation- through these philosophies and strategies.

Foreign management theories and principles are not yielding the desired results in Nigeria, and so, the introduction and application of a new Nigeria management theories and thoughts has become a sine qua non. Management scholars both, local and foreign must understand Nigeria historical and cultural background in order to contribute effectively to Africa’s current management developmental needs. At this stage of our development, Nigeria and indeed Africa, must strive to ensure that they develop their own management philosophies that is unique, relevant and peculiar to her cultural identity. Nigeria needs management models, theories and principles that will be take cognizance of our cultural heritage, and such theories too, must be consistent and should be able to stand the test of time Inadequate fund and lack of interest in research have been identified as some of the reasons for the paucity of management theories development in Nigeria. It is recommended that greater attention should be given to the development of indigenous management philosophy and thought that will be relevant to our peculiar nature and character. Furthermore, some Western management philosophies that are universal in nature should be fine-tuned to take care of our own cultural identity at this stage of our political existence.

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