

THE JUNGLE OF MANAGEMENT THEORY: A JOURNAL REVIEW

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Abstract

This paper is an article review regarding management theory of Koontz (1980) revisited from his 1960's first paper. The paper gives a fundamental understanding of the management theory which will be very useful and used during the study period. Through this paper, Koontz examined some approaches to management theory for the last twenty years up to 1980. The management theory jungle that he termed in his 1961 paper are reconsidered. This paper is his report of his revisit to the jungle. As conclusion, there were the need for more effort in disentangling the jungle. The most effective way would be for leading managers to take a more active role in narrowing the widening gap that seem to exist between professional practice and college and university business, management and public administration schools.

Keywords: management theory, Harold Koontz

Introduction

I think this is a compulsory and substantial paper to read for everyone who study management especially for doctoral student. This paper gives a fundamental understanding of the management theory which will be very useful and used during the study period.

Through this paper, Harold Koontz – Mead Johnson Professor of Management Emeritus in Graduate School of Management University of California Los Angeles, and Chancellor of the International Academy of Management - examined some approaches to management theory for the last twenty years up to 1980. The management theory jungle that he termed in his 1961 paper are reconsidered. This paper is his report of his revisit to the jungle.

Before I go through to the review of this paper, briefly I write down the main issues of this paper that will be summarized in the next paragraphs.

Koontz became realized that in the field of study of management, there was a dichotomous between practicing managers and academicians. It made the jungle of management theory became more dense and impenetrable. The college and universities which studied management were filled by intelligent and well trained instructors, but know too little about the actual task of managing and realities practicing manager face (p.176). He clarified for himself that why intelligent academic colleagues were coming up with such widely diverse conclusions and advice concerning management (p.175).

During that twenty years (1961 to 1981), there were many things happen in the jungle of management theory, so that it should be revisited and reexamined. However, various developments were occurring that might in the future bring a coalescence of the various approaches and result in a more unified and useful theory of management (p.175).

The management theory schools.

The old approaches in attempting to explain the nature and knowledge of managing were (also we called schools): (1) the management process school, (2) the empirical or case

approach, (3) the human behavior school, (4) the social system school, (5) the decision theory school, and (6) the mathematics school.

Among these approaches, the jungle perceived as confusing thing for practicing managers, because of varying meaning given common words to certain concepts, and inability or unwillingness of many experts to understand each other. On the other hand, many practicing managers were losing confidence in colleges and universities and the kind of management taught. Some professor believed they were teaching management when they are only teaching some specialties.

There was a continuation of the management theory jungle. In two decades, the approaches to management has been doubled. Koontz identified there were eleven approaches: (1) the empirical or case approach, (2) the interpersonal behavior approach, (3) the group behavior approach, (4) the cooperative social system approach, (5) the sociotechnical system approach, (6) the decision theory approach, (7) the system approach, (8) the mathematical or 'management science' approach, (9) the contingency of situational approach, (10) the managerial roles approach, and (11) the operational theory approach.

The approaches became double for some reasons. One of the approaches found nearly two decades ago has been split into two (p.176). The human behavior school has divided into interpersonal behavior approach and the group behavior approach. The social system approach is more accurate refer to cooperative social system approach. The management process school that now refer to more as the operational theory approach, remained the same with empirical or case approach, the decision theory approach and the mathematical or 'management science' approach. The sociotechnical system approach and the systems approach were assumed as a new approach that have become popular in that two decades.

The current approaches to Management Theory and Science.

The empirical or case approach is based in the premise that students and practitioners will understand the field of management and somehow come to know how to manage effectively by studying managerial successes and failures in various individual cases (p.177). But, it was likely to be questionable and dangerous approach, because what happen or did not happen the past cases is not likely help in solving problem in the future. The interpersonal behavior approach is based on the thesis that managing involves getting thing done through people, therefore the focus is on the individual, their motivation as socio-psychological being, human relation/human interaction or interpersonal interaction and leadership (p.177-178). The group behavior approach concerned with behavior of people in groups, group behavior patterns, organization behavior and cultural environment. The cooperative social system approach was a modification of interpersonal and group behavior approaches. The initial idea came from Vilfredo Pareto, Italian sociologist with his human relationship concept. This concept has become develop to organization theory. The sociotechnical system approach identified as newer schools of management that credited to E.L Trist. In this approach, personal attitudes and group behavior are strongly influenced by the technical system in which people work. It was therefore the position of this school of thought that social and technical system must be considered together and harmonious (p.179). The decision theory approach has been based on because of major task of managers to make decisions. However, making decision was assumed as easy thing if some certain conditions required. The system approach was felt as the most effective means by many scholars by which such thought can be organized, presented and understood. The system is a set or assemblage of things interconnected or interdependent to form a complex unity. The mathematical or 'management science' approach primary

focus in mathematical model that problems can be expressed in basic relationship with a given goal is sought, and the model can be expressed in terms which optimize the goal. The contingency or situational approach emphasized the fact that what managers do in practice depends on a given set of circumstances- the situation. Nevertheless, some scholars distinguish between the two terminologies: situational management merely implies that what managers do depends on a given situation, while contingency management implies an active interrelationship between the variables in a situation and the managerial solution devised. The managerial roles approach popularized by Henry Mintzberg is to observe what managers actually do and conclude what are managerial activities (or roles). Mintzberg concluded that managers have ten roles: interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader, liaison), informational roles (monitor, disseminator, spokesperson), and decision roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator). The operational approach attempts to draw together the pertinent knowledge of management by relating it to the function of managers, and endeavors to put together for the field of management the concept, principles, theory and techniques that underpin the actual practice of managing (p.181). It includes a central core of science and theory unique to management plus knowledge eclectically drawn from various other schools and approaches. Operational management science and theory is that part of the diagram enclosed in the circle that shows how operational management science and theory has a core of basic science and theory and draws from other fields of knowledge pertaining to management. It is thus an eclectic science and theory (Figure 1 p.182).

Promising Tendency toward Convergence of Theories.

The management theory jungle seems continued to flourish and got denser, because of the double approaches found. These with own gurus, own semantic, and overprotected various approaches, make the theory and science of management extremely difficult for intelligent practitioner to understand and utilize, and it became serious problem when it retarded the development of a useful theory and science and confused practicing managers. On the other hand, there was an opportunity to coalesce from the various schools of thought. However, it has not yet complete, at least there was a hope.

Hope came from a new emphasis on strategy and strategic planning that led many empiricists to come up with distilled knowledge that fits neatly into the operational theorist's classification planning. Many scholars recognized that system theory was not a separate approach that practicing managers as well as operational theorists had been using its basics. The field of operational management theory have more consciously and clearly employed the concepts and the theory of system, their attempts at developing a scientific field have been improved. The contingency approach has not been recognized as a new or separate approach. Contingency view was merely a way of distinguishing between science and art – knowledge and practice. Organization theory was also found as too broad an approach, because it refers to almost any kind of interpersonal relationships. Besides that, the more recent research on people motivation has tended to emphasize the importance of the organizational climate in curbing or arousing motives. The interaction between motivation and organizational climate not only underscored the systems aspects of motivation, but also emphasized how motivation depend on what managers do for performance. The theory of motivation, then fits nicely into the operational approach to management theory and science. Another interest thing was the melding motivation and leadership theory, because the fact that recent research found explanations of leadership have been related to motivation increasingly and also emphasized the importance of

organization climate and styles of leaders. Leadership theory and motivation were fitting into the scheme of operational management theory. Organizational development (organizational behavior) as the interpersonal and group behavior approaches to management were realized to be more closely integrated with organizational structure design, staffing, planning and control. Therefore, it easily and logically felt into place in the scheme of operational management theory. Intelligent practitioners have already recognized that the technology has an important impact on organizational structure, behavior pattern and other aspect of managing. The impact of technology is easily embraces by operational management theory and practice. Also, there was no doubt that operation research and similar mathematical and modeling techniques fitted nicely in the planning and controlling areas of operational management theory and sciences. On the other hand, along with the hope, there was the greatest obstacles to disentangling the jungle that was the problem of semantics. Those writing and lecturing on management and related fields have tended to use common terms in different ways (p.186). Fortunately, the Fellows of the International Academy of Management was trying to develop a glossary of management concepts and terms to be published in a number of language and distributed to many countries.

As conclusion, there were the need for more effort in disentangling the jungle. The most effective way would be for leading managers to take a more active role in narrowing the widening gap that seem to exist between professional practice and college and university business, management and public administration schools. They could be far more vocal and helpful in making certain that our colleges and universities do more than they have been in developing and teaching a theory and science of management (p.187). These schools are professional schools and their task must be to serve the professions for which they exist. Influential and intelligent top managers and other leading citizens encouraged to find out what happen in teaching and research of management.

The Original Management Theory Jungle.

In his previous twenty years, regarding the jungle, Koontz has already published a paper in 1961. At that time, Koontz has realized that there has been problem in examining management as well as absence of academic writing and research of modern management theory, however many scholars form variety field have been interested in studying management.

The major school of management theory that Koontz identified were: the management process school that perceived management as process of getting things done through people operating in organized groups with the basic approach was to look to the functions of managers; the empirical school that identified management as a study of experience; human behavior school (human relation/leadership/behavioral science) that based on the central thesis that since managing involves getting things done with and through people, the study of management must be centered on interpersonal relations; the social system school that looked upon management as a social system, that was a system of cultural interrelationships; decision theory school that concentrated on rational approach to decision – the selection from possible alternatives of a course of action or of an idea, dealt with the decision itself, or the person or organization group making decision, or an analysis of the decision process; the mathematical school with the central approach was the model, that problem was expressed in its basic relationship and in terms of selected goals or objectives.

There were many sources of mental entanglement in the management theory jungle according to Koontz (1961), those are: (1) semantic jungle, in term of the meaning of keywords such as management itself, organization, decision making, leadership, communication, and human relation, (2) differences in definition of management as a body knowledge, (3) the a priori assumption that represented a priori reasoning was to forget that experience in and with managing is empirical, (4) the misunderstanding of principles, (5) the inability or unwillingness of management theorists to understand each other.

It was important that steps be taken to disentangle the management theory jungle, the following considerations were important: (1) the need for definition of a body of knowledge, (2) integration of management and other disciplines, (3) the clarification of management semantics, (4) willingness to distill and test fundamentals.

In my opinion, Koontz in his 1961 paper has identified the major approach to management theory, the problem faced, and offered some solutions. With his experience journey in studying management twenty years after, he revisited his own paper and published it in 1980. I think, this is the strength of this paper. Since this paper is a long examination and observation through research, teaching experience on management. Therefore, it will be difficult to find the weakness of this paper. Moreover, this paper is written by Professor Emeritus in Management.

Rigorand Relevance.

Tushman and O'Reilly III (2007) suggested, that doctoral student encourage to do the research with the Pasteur's Quadrant which join a quest for basic understanding (rigor) and with consideration of use (relevance). In my opinion, Koontz's management theory jungle paper can be used steadily for the rigor aspect. Indeed, our basic understanding about management could and only could be reached with deep grasp in theory of management. Remains for us only the matter of relevance – the use of the research. I think, because in our doctoral program consist of much more part time students who have had experience in real business, it will not be too difficult to lead the students to the applied research. At least, it will be useful for their business activity. It can be a future research direction to be considered.

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