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THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.

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JOHN JOSEPH FENDROCK

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Sponsoring Committee: Professor Earl R. Zack, Chairman
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PERCEPTIONS OF WORKING STUDENTS REGARDING
THE APPLICATION OF CERTAIN MANAGEMENT
THEORIES IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

John J. Fendrock

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Professional Studies in the Graduate School
of Pace University

1977

JOHN J. FENDROCK

Perceptions of Working Students Regarding the Application
of Certain Management Theories in Their Organizations

A number of commentators on management have expressed the opinion that there is a need for a closer integration between the teaching of management theory and management practice.

This study was undertaken to investigate the perceptions of full-time working students regarding the application in their organizations of Reality-Centered Leadership, as proposed by Argyris; Information Systems Control, as seen by Drucker; Participative Management, as proposed by Likert; and Bureaucracy, with emphasis on the views of Bennis, Drucker and Chandler.

The data were collected through 43 oral interviews and 64 mailed questionnaires from respondents working and attending graduate school in metropolitan New York. All respondents had accrued at least 27 credits towards their Master's Degree in Business Administration or Management. They were required to give their perceptions of the application of the concepts in their organizations and asked to give their opinions as to which concepts should be given greater emphasis in their companies and as to what the effects of such emphasis would be. They were asked to select, from choices given to them, reasons why they felt greater emphasis was not given these concepts in their companies, and ways in which, in their opinions, the teaching of concepts such as these could be made more applicable to management practice.

The respondents felt that Participative Management was the most important of the concepts under study; Reality-Centered Leadership was second most important; supervision of Management Information Systems was

third; while Span of Control, as one aspect of Bureaucracy, was the fourth most important of the concepts; they felt that emphasis should be given these concepts in their organizations in the same order and that the "greatest" result of this emphasis would be "higher employee morale," first, and "lower employee turnover," second.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents felt that "top management's lack of knowledge of these concepts" was responsible for preventing greater application of these concepts in their companies. Most felt the concepts could be applied in their organizations without too much difficulty. Almost two-thirds of the respondents felt that "more case study" and the "greater use of practicing managers as instructors" would be the "most likely" and the "next most likely" factors in college teaching that would result in these management concepts becoming more widely applied in management practice.

PREVIEW

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

The problem is to investigate the perceptions of working students with respect to the extent to which certain widely taught management theories are translated into management practice in their organizations.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions will be used for the purpose of this study.

Management theory refers to the cumulative body of concepts that have been advanced and taught over the years and that if practiced should, under certain conditions, result in more productive and profitable businesses. The specific management concepts under investigation in this study are:

1. Reality-centered leadership: an approach to management that requires the executive to focus upon the development of the human personality in a particular organizational context.¹
2. Information management (which has created the knowledge professional²): the accumulation, interpretation and utilization of facts pertinent to the operation of a business. Its potential, expanded

¹Chris Argyris, Personality and Organization (New York: Harper & Row, 1957, p. 211.

²Peter F. Drucker, Management: Tasks-Responsibilities-Practices (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 454.

by the computer, demands that each manager measure his own performance. To be meaningful, it requires that information be received in time to enable him to make the changes necessary to reach the desired results.³

3. Participative management: that approach which requires managers to develop emotionally and socially mature persons who are capable of effective interaction, initiative and leadership;⁴ this is accomplished through "management of the human component."⁵

4. Bureaucracy: the formal organization that may be visualized as a pyramid of officials whose roles are carefully defined, following rules that are clearly delineated in directing and coordinating the work of specialists.⁶

Working students are those persons who have full-time jobs and attend classes as a secondary activity.

Delimitations

The subjects of this study will be working full time in the New York metropolitan area. They will be attending night school at local universities, will be studying for Master's degrees in Business Administration or Management and will have completed 27 or more credits towards that degree. Since members of the sample group may have attitudes, work and educational backgrounds biased by their exposure to the

³Ibid., p. 440.

⁴Rensis Likert, New Patterns of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1961), p. 236.

⁵Rensis Likert, The Human Organization (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 1.

⁶Ibid., p. 176.

New York metropolitan area, whatever generalizations are drawn from the experimental data in this research will be restricted to the population as delimited.

THE NEED FOR THE STUDY

Managers have long recognized the necessity of introducing new ideas into their established methods of operation in an effort to improve performance.

Nebuchadnessar, King of Babylonia after 604 B.C., developed a scheme of incentive payments to spinners of yarn and weavers of cloth. The amount of incentive paid was dependent upon the productivity of the individual.⁷

In the 16th century, Venice, then at the zenith of its commercial position in world trade, developed an arsenal where rank and file workers as well as artisans were paid on an incentive basis, where quality of output was a determining factor for their pay, and where workers were given merit reviews by a committee.⁸

More recently, the works of Hugo Munsterberg, Frederick C. Taylor, Henry L. Gantt and Mary Parker Follett have attempted to formalize methods of improving individual performance on the job. They contended that if management focused upon the organization as a whole, company effectiveness can be enhanced.⁹ To a great extent these investigators were working people--managers.

⁷L. P. Alford, quoted in Claude S. George, Jr., The History of Management Thought (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1972), p. 10.

⁸Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁹Ibid., p. 151.

The studies conducted by Elton Mayo and F. J. Roethlisberger at the Hawthorne Works of Western Electric in Chicago undertook to formalize, through careful observation and controlled experimentation, a body of knowledge that could be used to optimize employee performance.¹⁰ With this study, the academician became a major factor in attempting to resolve the difference between management theory and management practice.

These early efforts at improving operating results were focused primarily upon the employee. It was inevitable that those who supervised would come under close scrutiny. One of the first to concentrate on the manager was Peter Drucker. In his classic study of General Motors, published in 1946, he treated the corporation as a social institution and singled out managers--the "leaders." He said:

But what determines the structure of a society is not the majority but the leaders. It is not majority behavior that is the typical behavior in a society but that behavior that comes closest to the social ideal; and that, by definition, can only be the behavior of a small minority.¹¹

With the growth of the number and size of business schools and an increase in the number of managers who received their initial understanding of managerial concepts from school rather than on the job, a new dimension was added to the world of business: the college trained manager with a background of academic managerial theory, attempting to apply that theory to management practice.

Since Drucker's initial efforts at postulating good managerial practice based on his General Motors experience, much has been written on the subject, and many experiments have been performed in an attempt

¹⁰Ibid., p. 152.

¹¹Peter Drucker, The Concept of the Corporation (1946; rpt.; New York: New American Library, 1964), p. 19.

to develop quantitative data. Still, one must ask how well this knowledge has been transmitted to active, practicing managers and how effectively management theory has been translated into practice by working managers.

Richard Beckhard contended that the transmittal of information to developing managers may not be as good as expected. He said:

Many faculty members who are producing new knowledge, and teaching it in the classrooms, are so heavily committed to the transmission of their own information that they have little time or energy for looking at how it integrates with data from another field. As a result, the application of this knowledge to the organizational situation tends to become exclusively that of the student.¹²

The student, then, is an important instrument in the interpretation of what he is taught in the classroom and in translating this knowledge from theory into practice. However, the extent to which the student can apply this knowledge to the job is conditioned by the organization and the receptiveness of that organization to change and innovation. Because of these limitations, Beckhard went on to say:

Conversely, I think we need to develop new mechanisms for keeping the faculty of the school better informed on how effectively the knowledge they are teaching is being applied.¹³

The way to facilitate this transfer of information is through:

... more dialogue between the manager-user and the faculty-educator on the curriculum in the school and the transition to the firm.¹⁴

John W. Darr, referring to the problem of a need for a closer integration between the teaching of management theory and the practice that

¹²Richard Beckhard, From Confusion to Fusion: Integrating Our Educational and Managerial Efforts (Paper presented at fourth Douglas McGregor Memorial Lecture in Honor of the late Douglas McGregor, Alfred P. Sloan Professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology - IMR - Fall, 1968), p. 3.

¹³Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 11.

managers make of that theory, had this to say:

... and from what can be a continuous spiral of improvement in both theory and practice, a better understanding and acceptance of the process theory of management, leading not only to more efficient and more effective work satisfaction on the one hand, but also to the enlargement and enrichment of theory and to improved codification of practice on the other, will permit both academicians and practitioners to move forward more rapidly than would otherwise [have] been possible.¹⁵

Perhaps the observations of a practicing manager-academician may shed some light on why there seems to be an unbridged gap between theoretician and practitioner in management. G. Jackson Grayson, writing about a related field, had this to say:

Most Management Scientists are still thinking, writing and operating in a world that is far removed from the real world in which most managers operate (and in which I personally have been operating.) They often describe and structure non-existent management problems, tackle relatively minor problems with overkill tools, omit real variables from messy problems, and build elegant models comprehensible to only their colleagues. And when managers seem confused or dissatisfied with the results of their activities and reject them, these scientists seem almost to take satisfaction in the confirmation of the crudity and inelegance of the managerial world.

Have I overdrawn the picture? Only very slightly.¹⁶

While Grayson is referring specifically to the quantitative school of management, what he says supports Beckhard and Darr in their call for better understanding between the theorist and the practitioner of management.

It is not only the specialist in management who has failed to get his message across. Twenty-eight years after his initial efforts at analyzing and proposing good management methods, Peter Drucker was still

¹⁵John W. Darr, "A Reflective Analysis of Management Theory and Practice," Personnel Journal (October 1969), p. 782.

¹⁶C. Jackson Grayson, Jr., "Management Science and Business Practice," Harvard Business Review (July-August, 1973, vol. 51), p. 43.

attempting to get managers to innovate and to adapt to that innovation. With the ultimate goal of "good" management that of greater productivity, he said:

Finally, to make the worker "achieve" demands that managers look upon labor as resource rather than as a problem, a cost, or an enemy to be cowed. It demands that managers accept responsibility for making human strengths effective. And this means a drastic shift from personnel management to the leadership of people.¹⁷

And, how is this to be accomplished? He went on to say:

It would, therefore, seem appropriate to stress that the first criterion in identifying those people within an organization who have management responsibility is not command over people. It is responsibility for contribution. Function rather than power has to be the distinctive criterion and the organizing principle.¹⁸

Thus, a full generation after Drucker proposed much the same concepts, he felt compelled to restate them in an effort to get managers to practice his seemingly sound and reasonable concepts.

It would seem, then, that the theoretical ideas that have been developed and proposed to managers for their use have not been implemented as successfully and effectively as their promoters would like. There are implications that it may be because practitioners do not understand the language of the theorist; it may be that managers cannot apply successfully in everyday situations proposals that have been developed or studied under controlled conditions.

Referring to the present study, Gunther F. Florstedt, General Manager-International Division of M & T Chemicals, Inc., a subsidiary of American Can Company, wrote the investigator (See Appendix A):

Your proposed dissertation on "the disparity between management practice on the job and management theory as taught in schools:

¹⁷Drucker, Management, p. 304.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 394.

evaluation by working night college students" strikes a sympathetic chord.

He continued by emphasizing what he saw as a major benefit of the study:

Such an investigation will substantially serve the need to foster grassroot contacts between the two institutions: Education and Business, as it, in a very real sense, will contribute towards the treatment of the disparity you have perceived. In my experience, the dissertation is timely and will prove to be invaluable.

In subsequent discussions with the researcher, Florstedt elaborated on his observations. There are, he felt, two basic problems that arise from the college-business relationship. The first develops when the student who received management theory without exposure to the business world accepts a job upon graduation and finds management less than receptive to the ideas he brings with him into the business world. Disillusionment develops and frequently remains with him throughout his life. Florstedt expressed satisfaction with this study since it concentrates on the working student who has the opportunity to compare theory with practice. Because of this approach, he felt the study would receive responses from individuals who can empathize with both worlds.

He said that the second problem is the seemingly simplistic solutions that are developed by management theorists to what are in reality complex managerial problems. As an example, he contended that while participative management sounds like an excellent idea, its application is most difficult. What is implied by this concept is the acceptance of some ideas and a rejection of others. According to Florstedt, to achieve harmony in a group where the proposals of some are considered good while those of others are considered unacceptable is a fine art.

Reality-centered leadership certainly would give a manager more understanding of his subordinates, their aims and aspirations. However, there has always been a reluctance on the part of managers to pry into the personal affairs of employees, particularly at this time when invasion of privacy is a delicate issue.

He argued that since managers are in an environment that is in a constant state of flux, the demands of the moment frequently preclude experimenting with innovation. He pointed out that even when an attempt is made to introduce new methods to achieve better results, before an evaluation of the innovation can be made the changing nature of business conditions distorts, interrupts, or stops the effort, invalidating any conclusions that might be made.

He felt that the study, by attempting to identify degrees of difficulty in introducing these theories into companies and by looking at reasons for these difficulties, could lead to a better understanding between the theoretician and the practicing manager. Too, the results of the study could be used by others as a point of departure in pursuing other problems in this area.

Mr. G. E. Ottoson, Director, Personnel Department, Allied Chemical Company, wrote (See Appendix B):

... There is no question that one of the common accusations in industry is the failure of the academic community to teach on the practical level. I don't know that there are any studies that have been done to verify this complaint. Perhaps your research will provide some insight for the dilemma.

Mr. Ottoson elaborated in interview on these observations by pointing out that, with the exception of specialty fields such as law, engineering and accounting, there is little in common between theory and practice in management.

He contended that each corporation, each company and certainly even each division within a company, develops its own environment, its own culture. He added that, without an understanding of the environmental atmosphere, a manager who attempted to make changes could destroy an effective organization that had developed its own style of doing things over a ten or 20 year period. Moreover, with managers being constantly reassigned, promoted and relocated, it is exceedingly difficult for an individual to become familiar with the "beat" of an organization. This condition discourages the innovative manager who recognizes the need for compatibility between the traditional and the new in introducing ideas that could improve performance.

As he sees it, either a corporation may have to develop concepts that will be introduced over a number of years by managers who accept these ideas and will implement them as they are transferred from one position or location to another, or the corporation will have to change its policies on relocation and promotion of individuals, allowing managers to become more familiar with their particular organizations and giving them a period to introduce and implement new concepts.

He pointed out that both approaches have serious obstacles to overcome. In the first instance, the diversity of company operations reflected in geographic location--including overseas operations--state of unionization and type of business, to mention but a few influencing factors, forces companies to develop policies and procedures that recognize differences between operations.

In the second case, the ambitions of managers and the needs of growing companies almost preclude keeping individuals in specific positions, in specific locations, for extended periods of time.

His letter continued:

I know that some universities have been trying to solve the problem by loading up the teaching staff of the extension programs with practicing businessmen. The trouble with this approach is that the business people are generally not very effective instructors. I am sure that the eventual solution will lie with the academic community changing some of their style and course content.

In an interview Ottoson said that perhaps over a period of years management teaching would reach the level of legal or medical teaching. He said that it may not be too optimistic to think that corporations of the future may find long-term advantage in retaining good managers who are also good teachers and allowing for flexible schedules that will permit part-time work with part-time teaching. Too, he saw the possibility of an expansion of work release programs where students will share study with work as is done in some colleges with full-time students. Then, he said that more case study, akin to the mock court room of the legal student or laboratory work of the medical student, might improve the transition of the student of management into the business world.

The above review suggests the existence of a need to investigate the practice of management on the job and theories of management taught in the classroom. By utilizing the knowledge of full-time working students, it is possible to get insights from those with an active and current relationship with theory and practice. It would seem there is a need for this study and that it can make a contribution to the body of management knowledge and practice.

CHAPTER II

RELATED READING

As indicated in "The Need for the Study," interest in introducing ways to improve performance on the job goes back in history 26 centuries. But it is the American experience in business and industry that is of interest to this researcher. Indeed, contemporary management theory and its successful application to business and industry in the future were the prime motivators in undertaking this research.

Except for some rather provocative thoughts on the subject by individuals such as Hugo Munsterberg, some experiments by Frederick C. Taylor, and some observations by Henry L. Gantt and Mary Parker Follett, who gave the words "togetherness" and "group thinking" to the field of management,¹ it wasn't until Elton Mayo and F. J. Roethlisberger began their research at the Hawthorne Works of Western Electric Company in Chicago that a systematic approach was taken to understanding people at work.² The immediate conclusion was that people respond to improvements in their work situations. Subsequently, the term "Hawthorne Effect" began to be applied to those effects resulting from attention to the worker. The implication of this description was that change in the work environment, or attention to a person or group, is sufficient to produce some results in their motivation resulting in greater output.

¹George, Management Thought, p. 151.

²Ibid., p. 152.

From this beginning others carried on. Lewin and Lippitt experimented with boys' clubs and concluded that productivity increases more under permissively led groups than under an autocracy.³ Though their studies were confined to boys' groups, what they reported encouraged further studies into human relationships in industry.

The interplay between supervisor and supervised was a topic of interest to an ex-manager who developed his thoughts at about the same time that Lewin and Lippitt were generating their reports. Barnard emphasized the need for, and results of, cooperative effort and defined the executive's responsibility as developing the capacity to get others to accomplish the purposes of the company.⁴

The war years suspended formal investigation into the activities of people at work. Shortly thereafter, however, a breakthrough took place with Drucker's analysis of the General Motors Corporation. In this study, he showed how individual initiative was being discouraged.⁵ He developed the concept of the corporation as a social institution with employees the citizens of that institution.⁶

As a result of the rapid growth of unionization during and immediately after World War II, the institutional nature of the factory and office became more pronounced. Management now had to contend with

³Bernard M. Bass, Leadership, Psychology and Organizational Behavior (New York: Harper Brothers, 1960), p. 253, quoting from K. Lewin and R. Lippitt, "An Experimental Approach to the Study of Autocracy and Democracy: A Preliminary Note," Sociometry (1938, vol. 1), pp. 292-300.

⁴Chester I. Barnard, The Functions of the Executive (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1938), pp. 59-283.

⁵Drucker, The Corporation, p. 40.

⁶Ibid., pp. 114-173.