



BOOK REVIEW

MANAGEMENT SKILLS AND APPLICATIONS BY LESLIE W. RUE AND LLOYD L. BYARS, 10TH EDITION, MCGRAW-HILL IRWIN, 2003. ISBN 0-07-249536-7(ALK.PAPER); ISBN: 0-07-119885-7 (INTERNATIONAL: ALK.PAPER), 482PP.

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ABSTRACT

All business entities, from small to larger ones need managers. Smaller business may be managed by a single manager while large and medium- sized may have different levels of management. Currently, all these organisations are facing many challenges due to changes in the business world and working environment. Consequently, contribution of management skills and applications remain vital in the development and management of concerns. This book is a nice piece of work; it has contributed new knowledge and understanding of the important issues in managing organisations by narrating the principles necessary to keep organisational workforce in good practices. The main weakness of this book is its failure to openly show that, management practices, skills and applications are ever changing and that there are exceptions to different principles in their own applications. Issues ranging from different stages of economic development around the world, progressed information technology that has great influence on technological advancement, cultures and the contingency approaches to organisations to mention a few, do differentiate the application of management skills and practices. This book review is very important as it helps readers decide whether or not to read the book. It presents the synopsis of the book and does a critical evaluation of the content and then offers an endorsement, weakness and strength of the book.

Key words: Management practices, Management Skills, Applications, and Management levels

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1. SYNOPSIS AND REFLECTIONS

Businesses in the 21 century operate in the world of continuous change. Application of sciences in different perspectives and society's daily life are experiencing a quick paradigm shift. Anxieties for milieu protection have required organisations to review and become conscious about their actions which will affect the quality of human compulsory requirements. Rivalry among business entities is severer and organisations around the world are trying to offer products and services to the similar customers physically or online. Working areas has become more and more assorted; disadvantaged groups like women, disabled and refugees partake more than ever.

This book emerges from vast experience of the authors in both academic and field works they have done for quite a long time specifically in the United States of America. However, as management principles and practices are spelt the same, only the application may differ across countries and organisations, the book is relevant and the contents being applicable. The differences may be due to a number of factors including the environment, development level and management skills available to mention a few. To that end, authors have worked hard to create a book that prepares students for a future in business. According to the authors, they have mainly relied on questions from other professors, managers from the field, a number of reviewers of their book editions, students, and of course their own thought and understanding of the management field.

2. EVALUATION AND DISCUSSIONS

Part one of the book offer clues on management skills in terms of historical overview, importance, decision making skills, and on how philosophies and ideologies are more expected to change than physical codes. Authors put clear that, these ideologies are also likely to be interpreted by different people. Basing on these reasons, management principles are best regarded as monitors to deeds than rigid laws. A manager is guided by management doctrines utmost in his/her conducts. If, conversely a code is evidently not applicable to explicit situations, an experienced person in management will not apply it. Importantly, managers need to determine when a code should be followed and when not; being able to change and adapt in times of doubt, is an imperative management skill. It is true that there are examples of managers who follow management principles like all workers to be at work at the same time, people in the same office need to dress in a certain way by observing some dressing codes and that entity now are allowing their employees to work flexible schedules (p.9). However as presented by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2018), countries are at different levels of adapting to new approaches to work schedules depending on development, cultures, technology and attitudes about certain things at work (p.47). Basing on this, decision making process and management practices differ depending on context and level of management skills.

It is imperative to note that, many other functions of management are dependent upon good plans by managers to run organisations effectively. This part of the book designates the planning objectives, strategic management approach and operations processes. Authors argue that, it is ineffective trying to achieve other functions without a plan at hand. An attempt for managers to organise without a plan find themselves re-organising every time (p.95).....the action of planning empowers a manager or an organisation to dynamically impact than submissively accept the forth coming. Objectives setting and logging a path of accomplishment, an entity binds to derivable settings which allows an entity to move forward. Short of planned path of deeds, an entity is further expected to fall down by letting things occur, and then respond to those occurring in predicament style (p.96 & 97). However, this section ignore key issues that may result into plans failure as identified by Morden (2016, p.72); and Moutinho, & Vargas-Sanchez (2018, p.109) such as disregarding reality of market situations, reality and expectations; unworkable goals or short of attention and means; and lack of accountability or follow through. The situation is even more pronounced in the developing economies than the developed one because a lot of risky environments surrounds organisation in operations as mentioned earlier. Unexpected events such as the September 11th, erratic incidents such as terrorists operating globally challenges management in so many ways, not ignoring health issues such as tsars, Ebola and COVID 19. As a result, strategic management approaches may differ due to resources available and unaccountability of leaders which has been a situation surrounding most of the African countries and generally the global south (The Global South is an emerging term, used by the World Bank and other organizations, identifying countries with one side of the underlying global North–South divide, the other side being the countries of the Global North).

Establishing lines of authority referred to organisational structure is one of the key areas of proper organisational management which create directives of communication and reporting mechanisms. Part two and three of the book analyses the organising and staffing skills of management, organisation doctrines and the development of structures, role of formal and informal working teams, staffing process; training and developing skills of employees and managers. Authors put forward that, the trend in today's organisation is more decentralised with the benefits of consenting for more plasticity and faster action can be recognised. Organisational structures also discharge officials from long facet labour and mostly result in greater assurance of compliance by permitting lower level employees to be aggressively involved in organisational resolutions and decision making process. The main drawback of delegation as a result of organisational structure is the latent defeat of control. Replication of hard work can also accompany delegation (p. 149).....The parity principle indicates that power and obligation must accord. Organisation structures must decentralise adequate power to empower junior staff to do their jobs. Similarly, juniors are likely to consent duties only for those in their ability (p.151).

As Hutchings (2016) contends, it should be remembered that, under normal circumstances, managers delegate authority to subordinates so as to segment assignments. Normally what happens is that employees on the lower

side of the organ gram will thrust process of decision-making more nearer to the basis of evidence. Those at the top and middle level of management assume that subordinates to make complete use of the power and make judgements that are in their purview of the authority. In some exceptional cases however, when subordinates are not capable to make decisions on their own, they can always discuss the issues with their superiors. Hutchings (2016) further argues that, a superior does not liberate accountability by entrusting powers. Therefore, it is important for a manager to device control systems to assist them ensure proper use of the delegated powers (p. 46). The aforementioned control methods should echo divergences early enough with no interference to powers. Managers must select assistants prudently for entrustment. As part of their control mechanisms, managers can also get back the powers entrusted to subordinates at any time when need arise. Additionally, when specific scenarios require taking back the powers multiple ways are used by managers to make decision about it. In some cases this is also termed as splintered authority (p. 64). The process is effectively complemented by training and developing employees and managers by instilling much more skills through practices.

Moreover, according to book authors motivation is about the thrust of the pyramid of needs and that the lowest-level unsatisfied need causes manners. The levels denotes what Maslow thought was the order in which discontented needs would stimulate behaviour. Part four of this book analyses the directing skills of management in which chapter twelve and thirteen examines motivation in entities the status of leadership in improving organisational performance. Chapter fourteen describes approaches to managing conflicts and stress while chapter fifteen put emphases on managing change and culture. Authors argue that, for a long time, managers have thought that in most cases, fulfilled employees habitually will be good workers. This means that, if superiors could make sure all workers are satisfied, impressive performance will spontaneously happen. Further, authors of the book agree that many research works confirms synonymously rejection to the more popular interpretation that workers contentment results into better output (p. 257 & p. 258).The research evidence provides that reasonable support for this view is supported by more other factors like reward systems and current performance cause consequent higher outputs(Lee & Raschke, 2016). Many other researchers also try to reconcile and find mutual implications from these traditional theories (e.g., Shukla, 2017), they do neglect taking a general view for a broad theory that should integrate research and other disciplines.

The basic premise of organisations is that all activities will function smoothly. However, the possibility that this will not be the case rises to the need for control. Part five of the book explores the controlling skills of management, rewarding performance as a method of control and direction, applications and the operation processes. Authors acknowledge that, managers must balance two issues, stability and objective recognition. To uphold steadiness, managers must ensure that entities are operating within its conventional margins of limitations. The boundaries of constraints are determined by policies, budgets, ethics, laws and many others.....objective realisation requires constant monitoring to ensure that enough progress is being made toward established objectives (p. 338). Authors further argue that, a manager may become overly worried about one concern at the expense of another. One that sets production by omitting safety checks is an example of this behaviour.

The above concerns create a paradox. According to author Tom Peters (1987), to him "control is an illusion"....no one real controls anything.....most success is due to luck." This "illusion of control," according to Peters, leads to "the control paradox" wherein "you are out of control when you are in control" and you are in control when you are out of control." He explains this rather interesting view by giving the example of executive who "knows everything" (such executives are surrounded by layers of management and tons of paper documents telling them what is going on) but is inept because he or she is so removed from reality as to be real "out of control." In contrast the manager who is "in control" despite the thousands of things going on (people taking initiatives, plans being made at various levels, and people exceeding their job descriptions as a part of tactical and operational decision making) because he or she sticks to the assigned task or plan and sees it to completion (p. 421). Using Peters idea, managers would do well to understand that control is as much as attitude as a physical reality.

Another facet of business currently is the increasing internalisation of business as a result of country's dependence on transnational trade to preserve standard of living supported by technological advancement and divergence of countries' endowment to different resources. Part six of the book is on the contemporary issues in management

where chapter nineteen examine the role that information systems for managers in today's organisations. Chapter 20 focuses on ethics and social responsibility; and chapter 21 describes the increasing internationalisation of business. Authors of the book (p.407) argue that, nations need to have absolute benefit in production of goods and services to trade. Some may be less competent at making all goods than others. Those countries that are not very resourceful and better producers are better at making some goods than others can do, however.....According to the law of comparative advantage, individuals, companies and countries should specialise in what they do best (p. 409).

According to Vasiliev (2017), it should be noted that, comparative advantage theory in its own explanation is not a dynamic theory and does not take on board some of the elements shaping world trade. Specifically, the determinants of production investment are not natural resource, and so may come externally to the scope of the theory (p. 92). This means, speaking about resource endowment may be an ambiguous inference to the law of comparative advantage. Many other factors like costs of transportation, tariffs and exchange rates across currencies may change the absolute prices of goods and may mislead the concept comparative advantages. Additionally, imperfect competition may lead to prices being different to opportunity cost ratios (p.170). As technology advances more and more, amplified gaining expertise may lead to diseconomies of scale while also governments may limit smooth trade operations. Generally comparative advantage measures stationary or motionless benefits and not any vibrant advantage. For example, in the future India could become a good producer and seller of books than any other country in the world if necessary investments are made.

3. ENDORSEMENTS, WEAKNESSES AND STRENGTH OF THE BOOK

According to the critical evaluation made, the main weakness of the book is its failure to openly show that, management practices skills and applications are ever changing and that there are exceptions to the different principles in their own applications. Issues ranging from different stages of economic development around the world, technological advancement, cultures and the contingency approaches to organisations do differentiate the application of management skills and practices. Technological development has changed working places. It has made much quicker to find a book catalogue in library, easy of communication to remote places and performing other multiple tasks. Product development has also shortened production cycles by speeding up the pace of work and escalates organizational capacity to process information. Furthermore, information technology has altered space and time borders to work. The use of emails, conferencing, skype has improved teams to work together without colleagues working together in same physical locality. For colleagues working together in same location can easily communicate while out of office. With a convenient electronic gadgets and Wi-Fi availability, a lot can be done in terms of work accomplishment. Nevertheless, the book is still valid and a good resourcefull for university lecturers and students especially those pursuing business management specialization, human resource, public administration and governance, economic development, development economics and engineering, manufacturing and other related fields. It is an important resource book for researchers on under-developed economies and policy makers on productivity strategies and new approaches to organisational development and employees' motivation and performance.

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