

## MANAGEMENT – IS IT A DYING ART?

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### ABSTRACT

Management, over the years, is widely debated as being Art as well as Science. Art implies application of knowledge and skills whereas Science is concerned with developing and applying models and concepts that help to illuminate management issues and solve managerial problems. This paper is of the view that Management, as a function, is getting influenced by more sophisticated techniques nowadays in order to arrive at a decision. These management techniques apply in the domain of marketing, finance, production, human resources etc. Consequently, Management is now to be considered more as a Science than Art. Art form of Management is getting diminished gradually with more and more techniques developing. The paper also tries to elaborate the implications of Management as a Science.

**Keywords:** Management, Art, Science, Management techniques.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally management was thought of being a work of an art as it was perceived to be done only by those who were bestowed with managerial skills inborn. We have many examples all around us where people with innate abilities without having undergone any managerial training have become successful in their chosen field, one such example being Dhirubhai Ambani, the pioneer of Reliance Industries in India. This classic thought of management as an inborn skill was later challenged and modified with tremendous researches and scientific advancement in technology, training etc. Inborn ability was slowly being replaced by acquired ability.

**Management as Art:** Art implies application of knowledge and skills to get the desired results. Following are some of the features of Art as it applies to Management discipline as well;

1. The way a human being responds in a particular set of circumstances is an intuitive matter which is an art.
2. Those managers who were able to think out of the box and act appropriately have been found highly successful in their respective domain of industries worldwide. This makes management an art.
3. The age old premise that management is about getting things done by others is an artistic skill.
4. Art involves creativity with amalgamation of intelligence and creativity. Management as an art includes tremendous scope of creativity by making judicious use of human and other resources in order to achieve the desired goal.
5. Practice is a prerequisite for perfection in Arts. Management as an art needs thorough practice in managing resources in order to be precise and accurate gradually.

**Management as Science:** Firms universally follow certain pre-tested theories. This approach makes management more of a science.

1. When same theories are applied universally, outcome becomes more predictable.
2. Scientific principles represent basic truth about a particular field of enquiry. These principles may be applied irrespective of situation, time and place. E.g. – law of gravitation can be applied under any circumstance at any place or time. Management also contains principles which can be applied universally like the Principle of Unity of Command. This principle is applicable to all

types of organisation – profit making and non-profit making.

3. Scientific principles are derived through scientific investigation & experimenting, that is, they are based on logic. Management principles are also based on scientific enquiry & experience. They have been developed through experiments & practical experiences of large number of organisations and managers therein. E.g. it is observed that providing better after sales service to customers derives satisfaction.

4. Scientific principles lay down cause and effect relationship between variables. The same comes true for management too. E.g. Fair wages improve productivity where fair wages is the cause and productivity is the effect.

5. Validity of scientific principles stands the time of test. E.g. Principle of Unity of command can be tested by comparing two persons – one having single boss and one having 2 bosses. The performance of 1<sup>st</sup> person will be better than 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Science as well as Art:** Management is traditionally viewed as a combination of science and art. When it comes to handling human resources, it is a science of handling different human beings of distinct psychological makeup, where you not only have to get the work done by the subordinate but also respecting each individual having unique capability to perform certain duties in the own way. This gives the management the Art label, since different individual will do the same work in different ways. Then the most suitable process can be applied to achieve the maximum productivity. Management talks about physical and material resources too. Hence it is a beautiful combination of Science as well as an art.

As a science, management contains certain universal principles that are applied in managing people and other resources across the globe. As an art, management requires certain skills in managing resources which are personal possessions of managing person. In short, science teaches the 'process' and art teaches to 'apply them'. So, management is a judicious mixture of scientific and artistic approaches.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Management as an activity:** There is no universally accepted definition of management as an activity due to the variety of approaches to the theoretical background of the subject' (Echu, 2000). Definitions of management over the time have taken various shapes depending upon the perspective with which it is seen. In order to have a good understanding of management one needs to examine the various definitions and the various schools of thought about management. According to Henri Fayol (1916) 'to manage is to forecast and plan, to organize, to command, to coordinate and to control'. In the words of McFarland (1971), management is the process by which managers create, direct, maintain and operate purposive organisation through coordinated cooperative human effort. Ejiofor (1987), however, defines management as 'the art of working, particularly through people, for the achievement of the broad goals of an organization'.

If, as many have argued, management really is an art, if leadership entails more than analytic and statistical skills, it would make sense for businessmen to look at the creative and performing arts to learn something about their own endeavors (Boettinger, 1975)

**Management as Art:** In sheer banality, few statements exceed the assertion that management is an art. Grizzled managerial veterans sometimes shout it to silence insolent or overeager newcomers who brandish shiny scientific methods during decision-making sessions. On happier occasions, appreciative observers use it to explain unexpected success, when chance and the probability of failure surrender to competence and nerve. And who could deny that such a platitude is in some way descriptive of experience? Surely no sensible person would say that management is not an art (Boettinger, 1975).

**Management as Science:** As per the Department of Management Science, Lancaster University, "Management Science is concerned with developing and applying models and concepts that help to

illuminate management issues and solve managerial problems. The models used can often be represented mathematically, but sometimes computer-based, visual or verbal representations are used". Science is a method of doing things. It "is the organized, systematic enterprise that gathers knowledge about the world and condenses the knowledge into testable laws and principles" (Wilson, 1998). Science is extraordinary. With the aid of science, we can visualize matter across 37 orders of magnitude, from the largest galactic cluster to the smallest known particle (Wilson, 1998). When science is done correctly, it can advise us in all of our day-to-day decisions and actions. The origin of a modern science of management can be traced to the work of Frederick Taylor and Luther Gulick. Thompson envisioned an applied science built from a combination of both deductive and inductive techniques for the development of logical, abstract, tested systems of thought. From its struggle to be taken seriously in the 1950s, the science of management and administration has become a principal component of management theory and practice in the 1990s. It is prominent in the academic literature (Assad et al., 1992; Austin, 1993; Culbert, 1996; Mingers and Gill, 1997; Plane, 1994; Reisman, 1992; Sproull, 1997) and in business school classrooms (e.g., Anderson et al., 1996; Eppen et al., 1998; Taylor, 1998). In public administration, a "new" science of administration (Daneke, 1990; Dennard, 1996; Kiel, 1994; Neumann, 1996; Overman, 1996) is establishing a presence with the literature of traditional administrative science (Dunsire, 1973; Lee, 1990; White, 1975).

**Debate of Science Vs Art:** An art-versus-science dialogue flourishes in business administration (Ashkenas et al., 1998; Bort, 1996; Gilad and Herring, 1996; Haslip, 1996; Lewis, 1997; Marullo, 1998; Mullin, 1994; Sexton and Smilor, 1986; Sherden, 1994; Smith, 1998) and related areas such as banking (Wray, 1996). The debate also continues in public administration (Beard, 1939; Lepawsky, 1949; Lynn, 1996) and related areas such as health administration (Jeska and Rounds, 1996; Meszaros, 1997) and corrections (Bowker, 1982).

### 3. TECHNIQUES IN MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS

The "science" related aspects of management in general consist of the application of formal methods, tools and techniques in order to achieve project objectives, for example in the areas of planning, budgeting, risk management, quality control and performance measurement (Shroeder, 2011). Following is an indicative list of functional areas of a manager where management is more dependent on tools and techniques in order to perform managerial functions;

**Decision Making:** Decision making is required to be done by all functional managers. It is expected to be accurate and must not lead to any confusion. This requires the availability of accurate and timely information on the basis of which decisions are to be made. Decision making is an art as it might differ in application under different circumstances. However the impetus lies on the way decisions are arrived at. Various techniques including operations research, models, simulation, linear programming, games theory, PERT & CPM, Probability theory etc are used for that matter. Hence decisions are more dependent on these techniques. Decision making as a science is about more objectively using data to support decision making. Management as a discipline draws heavily from various other streams including statistics, psychology, economics etc. As far as psychology is concerned, there are various theories that put a person into a block of behavioural aspects. It is now relatively easy to predict human behaviour at work considering the various personality traits and their respective theories. The control process starts early. At a very early stage during recruitment, employees are selected using modern techniques and thereby making it easier to govern them.

**Marketing:** Marketing as a science is about looking for patterns in the market and in customer behaviors. This is where data science is applied in the exploration of marketing data. It's about whittling those patterns into models and hypotheses that can be tested. Marketing as a science is about embracing ideas from other scientific and engineering disciplines like psychology, economics, computer science, neuroscience, biology, industrial engineering, anthropology, sociology, etc. It's about translating the work of other scientists and engineers into the context of

marketing, at least as an inspiration for new models and hypotheses. Marketing as a science is about running good controlled experiments to test hypotheses. This is the heart of the scientific method applied to any discipline. It's about designing good experiments.

**Accounting and Finance:** According to Wikipedia, Finance is the science of funds management, or the allocation of assets and liabilities over time under conditions of certainty and uncertainty. Various models serve as direct reference for better management of financial resources.

**Production:** Science of production management lies in the application of various techniques in managing the production flow of a company. Production planning and controlling techniques like MRP, CRP, Inventory management techniques such as EOQ, Selective control techniques; quality control techniques; work study techniques; etc have made production management more of a direct application of scientific techniques in order to arrive at a decision.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS OF MANAGEMENT AS A SCIENCE

1. **System design change:** A system designed to operate on judgment need to be realigned in order to incorporate the change that is enforced with technique replacing the art element in judgment.
2. **Human efforts minimized:** More mechanistic procedures get involved with new techniques of management. This result in more technical intensive systems rather being labour oriented. Techniques and science will demand lesser variability as with human beings in order to arrive at a predetermined goals or objectives.
3. **More rationality towards problems / issues:** Techniques seem to approach a problem more in a rational way rather being artistic in approach.
4. **Faster decision making:** Decisions emerge faster when art form of managing is replaced with more sophisticated techniques to arrive at a decision. For example, in a marketing department, promotion policy was so far a matter of judgment as to what would best be tied up with a product as a free product. Now with sophisticated data mining techniques, it becomes quite easy to identify exactly which product will match better as a free product with any product category or class.
5. **Complex set of data requirements:** However better managerial techniques would require up-to-date and sophisticated data types in order to be closer to accuracy in results.
6. **Stronger MIS prerequisite:** Each technique getting better day by day reinforces the requirement of a stronger Management Information System (MIS) department within the company. MIS ensures right information at the right place and time and in the right amount.

#### 5. CONCLUSION:

Any skill that produces similar result less reluctantly and more consistently happens to be less of an art, more so. In persuading employees, managers do not need to try out different ways only to be unsure of its outcome and thus call it an art. The manager now has many techniques in persuading subordinates and thus making management a lesser of an art. Management as a function has grown over the years spending resources more on technically feasible approaches for arriving closer to the anticipated outcomes. Scientific principles and concepts are highly useful in designing models and techniques that help managers derive better results while utilizing resources at their disposal. More techniques have evolved over time in the field of management covering areas of marketing, finance, production, human resources etc. Management, thus, as a function, has travelled its course of evolution from being more of an Art to Science of late. Contemporary technical development in management has raised an issue – Is management as an art dying?

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