

# Defining Management from Different Perspective: Implications for Management Education

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## Abstract:

Students of Management in any part of the globe are conversant with one or other definitions of management or with one or several approaches to the attainment of management objectives. But, the traditional definitions of management from processes, functions or in any other perspective seem to have overshadowed the vision to visualize the all important external environment of any social system have failed to go beyond seeing management, at the best, not more than that of 'designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals working together, in groups accomplish efficiently selected aims, Thus, there remains a need to define management which shall attach supreme importance to 'environment'. In this paper we have hoisted a trial balloon. We like to define management as the social process of designing and maintaining an environment and/or subsystems thereof to enhance and ensure congruence between work setting factors as well as relating each of them or all of them to each other or all other effectively and efficiently with the internal stakeholders and influences and external forces, factors, circumstances, institutions, issues, events etc. in a reciprocal manner to generate surplus. This definition, we think, has several implications and added importance for management education. First of all, this definition tends to minimize the disputes and discrepancies between oft-quoted operational theory and the role theory of management. Second, this definition is likely to integrate all the wealth of the different approaches to the attainment of management objectives whatever way we want to formulate them i.e. in terms of dynamic equilibrium between the organization and its environment or in terms of generating surpluses. Third, this definition may help to draw our attention away only from structure strategy, processes, people and culture to why such strategy, structure, processes, behavior or culture, at the least, do arise or need to be deployed. Thus, an outward looking search and way of finding solutions tend to begin at the level of external environment. This is perhaps the right orientation in view of the supreme importance of the external environment mostly as an independent variable and some time as a dependent variable. Obviously, such an orientation shall cause paradigm shift. The implication of this shift is far reaching for designing and implementing curricula and syllabi of management education and writing text books which will enable students to discover science of exploring scanning, measuring the environment and devising ways and means of taming the environment without being a passive spectator or subservient to it.

Already that trend is visible in the disproportionate emphasis being given to the study of Strategic Management and inclusion of courses which few years back were the exclusive domain of other disciplines Even the study of physics, chemistry, mathematics statistics, quantitative methods, economics, politics, government, psychology, sociology history, languages, computing, programming, e-commerce, communication, business law, and industrial law have entered in the domain of business studies. As days pass, the students of management shall generate a goat like tendency (in the positive sense) of grabbing and eating whatever comes on their way and whatsoever is capable of enhancing their stock of knowledge to comprehend, analyze, predict or negotiate, confront, compromise or control the environment. In days to come, Human Resource Management will occupy a more coveted place along with the organizational

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*Development as lucrative areas of specialization as well as management, marketing, finance, banking, entrepreneurship, organization behavior or organizational theory or international business.*

**Key Words:** *Congruence; Dynamic equilibrium; External environment; Goat-like tendency; Paradigm shift; Strategic management.*

## **1. Introduction**

The practice of management is as old as the advent of human being on earth although the codified knowledge about management is of recent origin (Wehrich & Koontz, -1993). Perhaps the practitioners were never interested in providing a definition of management, although the most talked about definition of management came out from the writing of —an engineer and a practicing manager name Henri Fayol (Fayol H 1949). Ever since we have started reading management as an utilitarian discipline, we have come across many definitions of management given by the academics and seen many approaches to management based on such definitions or having no connection with any s, fell definition giving rise to what Koontz (1961) called the 'management theory jungle'. Koontz and associates (Koontz, O'Donnell & Wehrich, 1980) in an effort to integrate all different approaches and disentangle the management theory jungle and more specifically to develop a science of management to be disseminated in the formal learning settings to make managers, offered the definition of management in terms of the 'process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals working together in groups accomplish selected aims efficiently (Wehrich & Koontz, 1993) This definition and the word 'environment' caused many of us to jump to the conclusion that Koontz and his associates have, at last given explicit recognition to the supreme importance of environment in defining management. But, upon a closer examination we were shocked to see that their-'environment' simply means a structure and climate created to accommodate and ease people to attain selected objectives. This does not even say where from such objectives arise or dawn. It is then clear that neither Koontz nor his predecessors (even afterwards) could look into management from a perspective that focuses on environment in its truest meaning. In this situation, one may even argue that Koontz and his followers have rather increased the size of the jungle leaving no significant way to come out of it. There are evidences that management begins at the level of environment defined in terms of factors, forces, institutions, circumstances etc. in and around an organization, like marketing begins at customers' levels (Kotler & Armstrong, 1996). Then, there is a need for making environment the focal point of analysis. This we have felt over the years especially when we have started receiving odd remarks by practicing managers in the classrooms We are also confronted beyond the class rooms as to why environments so important and so cardinal a factor in the management, has not surfaced prominently in the academic write-ups, although successful managers almost everywhere start their journey from the environment defined in terms of forces, factors, circumstances with which they have to interact. These questions are mostly asked in developing countries but not much in the developed countries. This is also not the whole truth. We teach most of the texts that come from the western writers, most of whom visualize management in terms of certain functions or processes being carried by people in a structure with some technology, without explaining why managers do what they do or why managers play certain roles (Mintzberg, 1975).

## **2. Our Definition of Management and its Explanation**

Faced with some such vexing questions, we have tried several definitions ranging from 'management is what a manager' does in order to relate his system to the demands and circumstances of his environment to the more inclusive way of visualizing management that make environment as the focal issue in attaining surpluses. To us, management is the social process of designing and maintaining an environment and/ or subsystems thereof to enhance and ensure congruence between work setting factors as well as relating each of them or all of

them to each other or all other effectively and efficiently with the internal stakeholders and influences and external forces, factors, circumstances, institutions, issues, events etc. in a reciprocated pattern to generate surplus. This is a lengthy definition but such lengthy definition is not uncommon in social science (French & Bell, 1999)

This definition has several characteristics that deserve scrutiny, namely:

Contrary to popular saying that charity begins at home; management in fact begins at or with the analysis, understanding and prediction of environment. Therefore, our definition has made environment as the focal point of attention.

Although there could be several definitions of the term environment, it has been given a meaning which envelops both the ideas of internal and external environment as well as all different types of environment with which the organization interacts or interfaces.

This definition attaches special meaning to the word 'congruence' and recognizes that congruence is a must at all levels to have surplus, Congruence may be conceptualized not only among strategy, structure, process, people and culture but also among the different factors of organizational work setting. Such factors are organizing arrangement, social factors, physical factors and technology. Organizing arrangement factors include goals, strategy, techniques, policies, structure, administrative policies and procedures, administrative system, reward system, ownership; social factors include culture, management style, interaction process, informal patterns, and networks, individual attributes; physical settings include space configuration, physical ambience, interior design, architectural design; and technology such as tools, techniques, equipment and machine, information technology, job design, work flow design, technical expertise, technical procedures and technical system (Porras & Robertson, 1992 modified)

The word relating means coping, adapting, surviving, prospering, taming or even being subservient

The general themes that organization is a system as much as environment is also a system are retained in the definition.

The word surplus has been attributed the same meaning as Wehrich & Koontz (1993) have attributed and, it means economic and-socio psychological surpluses. We have also borrowed many ideas and concepts from Koontz & Associates as well as from the process school of thought and recognized fondly their attempts to integrate all different approaches to management.

The functions of management as envisioned in POC3 (Fayol, 1949), or POSLC (Wehrich & Koontz, 1993) or PRINCESS (Mahoney & Associates, 1965) SPICES (Gillen & Carroll, 1985) have been totally or partially given due cognition. The rationale of role theory (Mintzberg, 1975) and the roles being played by managers at different levels and different times have not missed our attention; nor the effort to integrate different approaches to management (Carroll & Gillen, 1987) prominently the functional approach having highest number of citations in the management literature and the role theory- second in importance in terms of academic citations have not been overlooked.

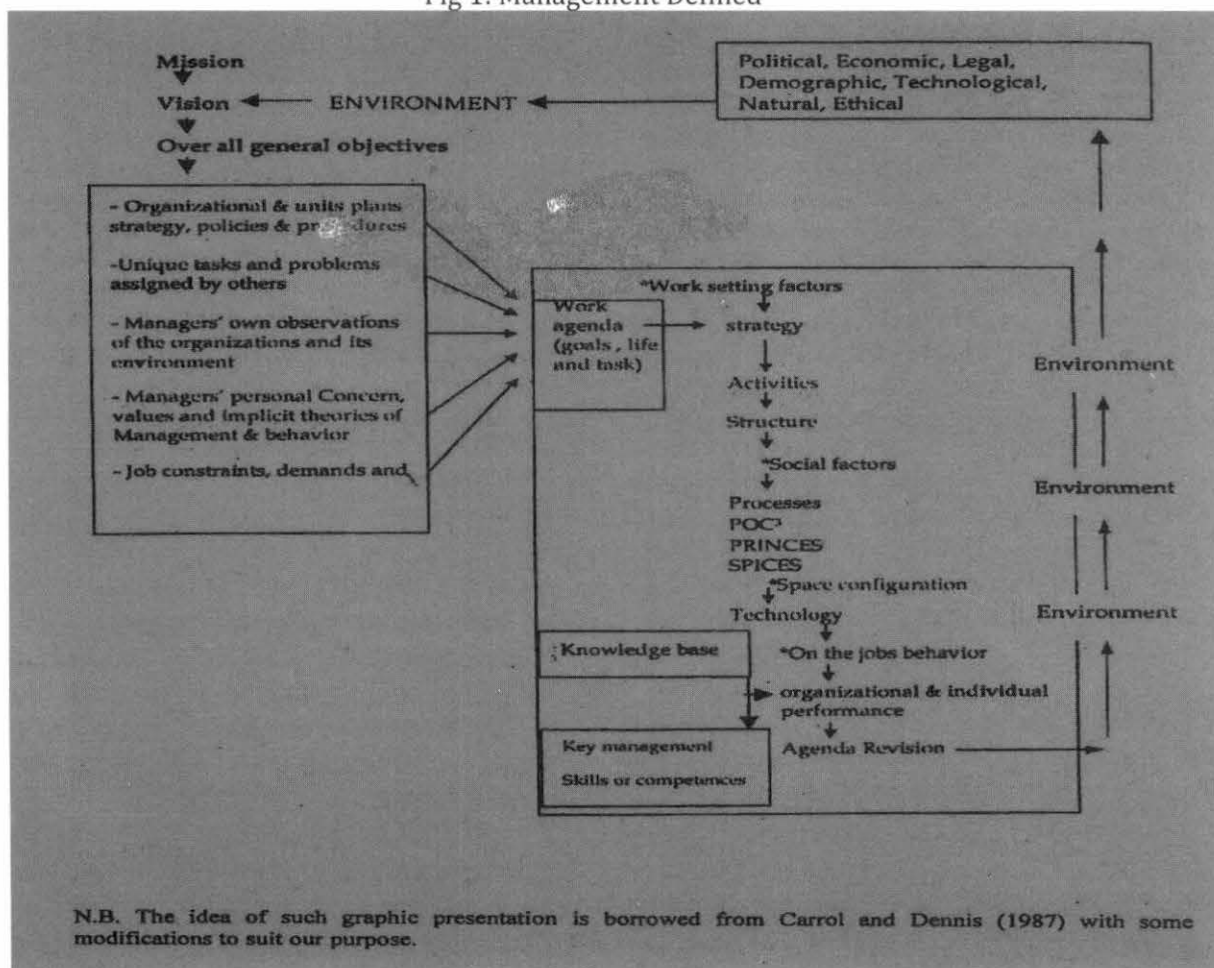
The people and their culture have received due importance in this definition who are instrumental in the internal integration and external adaptation (Lutham, 2001).

Like Wehrich & Koontz (1993), we are of the opinion that management applies to all different kinds of organizations and at all levels of management.

The definition has made it imperative that organization is not only passive recipient of the dictations of environment but can also be bent, reshaped, redesigned or made subservient to organization (Lutham, 2001).

This definition further recognizes that management begins with the creation of an internal environment as seen by Wehrich & Koontz (1993). in which people start the process of analyzing, understanding, evaluating and predicting the external environment. On the basis of critical appreciation of the environment, the organization's mission, vision overall objectives are determined. Thereafter or simultaneously, the strategy especially the corporate, business and operational strategies are formulated; additional people are brought in who undertake certain processes, functions or tasks with chosen and congruent technology and create further structure. All these tend to ensure a congruent behavior that ensures productivity and satisfaction. However, the other side of the story is that organization through its people, culture, structure, strategy, mission, vision, and objective can influence characters of the environment and thus create the congruent interfaces. This is being reflected in the fig 1 below:

Fig 1: Management Defined



All managers have work agenda, which includes goal agenda, and a task agenda as well as life agenda. The managers especially the top managers work from 'goal agenda', which is a set of desired future states they are trying to reach. Managers must be concerned not only with their

own goals but also with those of other managers. Therefore, a manager allocates time to the organization's formal goals and plans, to goals and plans of others in the organizations and to their own goals and plans (Carroll & Dennis, 1987). Besides, they need to interact with relevant and significant environments.

Managers also devote time to organization building, management development, mentoring and coaching of organizational members. Managers perform a large number of task and activities to build organization, leader direct the subordinates, coordinate with other units or continuously revise such goals, plans and strategy. These are specific observable task activities and invisible and often less or in comprehensible more fundamental managerial functions

Thus, managers play roles and perform functions. They play the roles or functions in a framework after determining the basic thrust or goals on their strategic evaluation of the organization and their environments and they act like consummate opportunists (Carroll & Dennis, 1987).

Managers perhaps require more skills (Katz, 1974) and competences (Anderson, 1984) than knowledge to ensure internal integration and knowledge is all the more important in scanning the environment than in comprehending what are to be done in order to enhance productivity and personal well-being. One of the major determinants of success of a manager is the knowledge of the key customers and suppliers, knowledge of the industry and technology, general knowledge of political and economic condition along with knowledge of organization culture and technology, knowledge of management policies and techniques which sharpen the vision, the mission, objectives and strategy (Carroll & Dennis, 1987) This knowledge can be expanded and enhanced by injecting knowledge of psychology, sociology, anthropology, sociometry, econometric, mathematics, calculus, computing, physics, chemistry, biology, business administration and accounting especially for structuring the unstructured and taking decisions in uncertain, unpredictable and complex environment and implement them in changed circumstances.

### **3. Other Meanings and Implications of this Definition**

This definition has brought environment in the focus at the beginning and environment at the end and will convince one that management is apparently the management of the environment. However, it has other meanings and implications especially the added implications for the philosophy, mission, vision, objectives, curricula and syllabuses for those who have not yet taken any step to overhaul the traditional management education; and for recasting reshaping overhauling the management education where such education started as a matter of blind imitation. Now that environment has become complex, turbulent and uncertain (Worthington & Britton, 1999) and that it has been and is the most important determinant of ultimate success and failures (with limited exceptions) of any organization, the management education should be sensitive to the environment as a concept of supreme importance. Thus, in addition to teaching strategic management and including the different components or types of environment in nutshell, the business environment should be taught as a separate discipline and its various components like internal and external environments or the political, economic, social, demographic, technological and ethical parts be separately taught to impart a clear understanding of the environment before managers do any other thing. This outwardly orientation shall make the strategic management, strategic human resource management and organizational behavior as the more important arena of management education. There is no alternative than to redesigning, shaping, reshaping, orienting and reorienting and overhauling the present day business education, which is an improved version of earlier commerce education in many places.

The definition implies that managers 'require clear shift of paradigm in visualizing, scanning, measuring environment from a superficial to scientific standpoint with discovery of new tools, techniques and knowledge. Such innovative and creative efforts will equally be needed in almost everywhere including, development of mission vision objectives, strategies, and process or in handling people and their culture.

This definition gives additional responsibility to researchers and practitioners of finding out tools and techniques, methods of projecting, forecasting, predicting the environment and developing people who will ultimately play the pivotal role in the internal integration and external adaptation of the organization. It is heartening to see that the time old labor management has become HRM, which now is a line function and integrated closely with the organizational strategic planning.

Such an orientation will compel managers to go beyond the known process of adaptation through forecasting, planning, buffering, smoothing, lobbying, boundary spanning, domain shifting, hiring and retaining of right persons, rationing, strategic alliance, joint venture, role playing, confrontation, consultation, bribing, encroachment, discharging social responsibility, upholding ethical standard etc.

This definition shall also force us to think that social system is not a pawn to be dictated by the environment but a force that can influence the environment in the process of dynamic equilibrium without being all the time responsive, loyal or subservient to demands of the environment. Last but not the least, if this definition is pursued, then Mintzberg (1975) and role school of thought (McCall & Sergist, 1980, Snyder & Wheelen, 1981, Kurke & Aldrich, 1983) would also be able to see that organization entails unending spree of planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling in visible and invisible forms before or during the time managers start playing any roles and/or after playing such roles.

#### **4. Empirical Exposures of the Definition**

This definition was tested in the empirical situation. The samples were the different groups of undergraduate or graduate students at Dhaka University, World University of Bangladesh and National Institute of Business Management and Information Science for the last several years, among the audiences, there were large number of practicing managers with degrees in commerce. Before putting this definition to empirical tests, the participants were exposed to a good number of definitions of management. They were asked to find out the strengths and weaknesses of each and every definition. This was done with the undergraduate students followed by regular MBA students and lastly with the MBA executive program students. Each group was also exposed to all different definitions of management that had explicit recognition of the internal and external environment. The opinion of each group was recorded and summed up. Then the groups were exposed to situations resembling the FGD and or confrontation meetings. The outgrowth of such exercises is the definition we have given in this paper. On the basis of this definition and its inner and outer meanings, we have designed our curricula and syllabi as well as redesigned or reshaped them. Such curricula and syllabi are in vogue for several years. Most of the private and public universities in the Country numbering not less than 79 have designed their course curricula, which place emphasis on the analysis, evaluation, prediction and control of the environment. One may be surprised to see that Business schools in Bangladesh teach such courses which were the exclusive domain of other disciplines Already, the study of Strategic Management and the courses like physics, chemistry, mathematics statistics, quantitative methods, economics, politics, government, psychology, sociology, history, languages, computing, programming, e-commerce, communication, business law, and industrial law have entered in the domain of business studies. As days pass, the students of management are compelled to generate a goat like tendency (in the positive sense)

of grabbing and eating whatever comes on their way and whatsoever is capable of enhancing their stock of knowledge to comprehend, analyze, predict or negotiate, confront, compromise or control the environment In days to come, Human Resource Management will occupy a more coveted place along with tile organizational Development as lucrative areas of specialization alongside the general management, marketing, finance, banking, entrepreneurship, - organization behavior or organizational theory or international business to enhance the stock of knowledge that proved to be more relevant for the comprehending the relatively more turbulent, more uncertain and unpredictable an environment unleashed by increasing globalization, intense competition revolution in the information technology (Luthan, 2001).

It is said the test of the tree is in its fruits. The redesign, reshuffle of the previous commerce education have been found useful. The business graduates groomed on the basis of present curriculum and courses have themselves proved more acceptable to the employment market than the commerce graduates. The employers have responded positively towards such graduates. This is apparent in advertisement they put up for recruitment.

## **5. Summary and Conclusion**

From the text books on management, it appears even today that management is defined in terms of what a manager does The apparent answer to the question what does a manager do, are planning, organizing, staffing, leading and controlling or something alike or akin to these from an operational, functional or process school perspective or playing as many as ten roles or such number of roles as envisioned by role school of thought. These two perspectives stand first and second respectively in terms of citations in the textbooks. Not to speak of others, the popular schools do not clearly specify why such processes are undertaken or roles played. They have also terribly failed to include environment as a leading concept in their definitions. The influence of environment on organization is a fact, which no practicing manager can deny. There are evidences too that managers at the beginning create an environment from which evaluation, measurement of external environment are activated and there after they decide about the mission, vision, objectives and strategy structure etc. in line with the demand of the circumstances surrounding an organization. The reciprocity of organization and its environment is also well-documented fact. Taking these two things together, it is opined that management should be defined by attaching utmost importance to environment; and course curricula, syllabi should be developed accordingly. The textbooks on management should start with environment as the focal point.

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