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Problems and challenges of management practice in emerging economies: An explanatory commentary on African context with emphasis on Nigeria

M.O.M. Akpor-Robaro

Department of Economics and Business Studies, Redeemer’s University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.

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This paper discussed the problems and challenges of management practice in emerging economies with a focus on African societies. It adopted a theoretic analytic approach in the study and discussion of the subject matter, identified seven specific approaches commonly adopted by managers in Africa using Nigeria as a pointer, and posited that each approach reflects at least one of the prevailing features. The factors which account for the existing approaches to management are also identified and discussed. It was however, noted that the factors are majorly socio-cultural and include cultural heterogeneity, cultural authoritarianism, colonial impartation, ethnicity among others; however, it particularly noted the negative role of excessive religiosity, use of foreign theories and practices, and fraternal association (religious and ethnic fraternity) in organizations. The highpoint of the paper is the recognition that poor management practice is a major impediment to organizational performance and industrial growth in emerging economies, particularly in Africa, and therefore emphasized the need to seek solution to the identified problems and challenges to effective management practice in these societies. It concluded with the recommendation that the solution to problems and challenges of management practice in these societies lies greatly in socio-cultural re-orientation among captains of industries, managers of enterprises, and the people in general.

Key words: Management practice, emerging economies, Africa, problems and challenges, explanatory commentary.

INTRODUCTION

Managing organization is a complex act. It is both a Science and an Art, involving the development of facts and knowledge about problem situations and application of skill in dealing with such problematic situations. A major element of management is identification of both existing and potential problems which requires a thorough understanding of the dynamic relationships within the socio-technical system (the internal environment) and the relationship to the external environment with which the system is in constant interaction. Management practice is the skillful application of scientific (science based) knowledge to deal with and solve organizational problems.
in order to achieve set goals and objectives, and the mission of an organization. The essential processes include decision making, strategy formulation and implementation, and allocation of resources; all of which involve managerial tasks of planning, organizing, directing/leading and controlling.

However, effectiveness of management practice is largely influenced by environmental factors and vary from one society to the other. In the earlier industrialized societies with organizational history spanning a period of over two centuries, the environment of industry and management practice have evolved and reached a state of near equilibrium and effective and enduring methods and processes have become entrenched through experience from past failure based on trial and error, and success based on the application of concrete scientific knowledge. Furthermore, the institutional frameworks for aiding and ensuring organizational stability in a dynamic environment are established. The emerging economies do not yet have this advantage.

The emerging economies are the societies with high prospect of industrialization in the very near future. They are societies or countries on the threshold of industrial development. However, in these societies, industrial experience is comparatively low and management practice is still much dependent on non-scientific methods and processes, and at best imported approaches that are often inappropriate to their industrial and organizational contexts (Igusui, 2014). The institutional frameworks are also still weak or not as established and strong as they are in industrialized societies. Although industrialized societies may have their own problems and challenges in terms of industry and management practice, they are not the same as those of emerging economies. These two groups of societies apparently have different problems in management practice.

A few African countries, for example, Nigeria, South Africa and Ghana have attained the status of emerging economies with the great strides they have made in recent years to provide industrial infrastructures, create a conducive and enabling industrial/business environment with high level stability; and diversify their economies to achieve backward integration. However, these countries are now confronted with the challenge of moving yonder to attain full status of industrialized economies. In their drive, effective management practice is considered as a major impetus. In other words, it is considered that to achieve industrialization, there must be effective management practice. But unfortunately, management practice in Africa is apparently be-deviled with problems and hence retarding the journey towards utilizing the continent’s full potentials for industrialization. These problems are multi-dimensional with far-reaching effects on organizational performance on the continent.

As Drucker (1974) observed far back, the low quality of management practice in Africa largely accounts for the drag in their economic development. In his view, African countries are not underdeveloped, but are undermanaged. Major problems identified by Drucker include ignorance of management knowledge, lack of management ability, absence of management discipline and vision, and lack of entrepreneurial and managerial initiative and innovativeness (Eze, 1995). Although Drucker’s observation pertained to management at government level, the problems of management practice are not only apparently visible at the level of government, but also very much at the organizational level whether public or private organizations. This paper presents an X-ray of the problems and challenges using the Nigerian context as a pointer to other emerging economies particularly in African continent. The objective is to provide an understanding of the challenges and problems so as to be able to find enduring solutions to them and pave way for a smooth journey towards complete industrialization on a fast track, from the present realm as emerging economies.

**OVERVIEW OF MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN AFRICA**

General characteristics underlying management practice in Nigeria

The characteristics of management practice in Nigeria are extant. They derive mainly from the Africa’s socio-cultural background and colonial influence (Eze, 1995; Ebitu, 2016). These characteristics have constituted problems which have also led to other problems in the wheel of effective management practice. The checklist includes: abstractive mode of management thinking; managerial authoritarianism and autocracy; high managerial power distance; high uncertainty avoidance; perception of an external cause of events (external locus of control); high level bureaucracy; low environment context-dependent orientation; high centralization of decision authority; low delegation of authority; low
participative management orientation; Theory x Leadership behavior; low confidence in subordinates resulting from the assumption of limited creative potential in subordinates (Osigweh, 1985).

These characteristics result in a number of problems in management practice in Africa. Such problems as: Indiscriminate assimilation of transmitted management knowledge (Igusi, 2014); inability to effect adaptation and the use of shrewd adaptation strategies; master-servant relationship between superiors and subordinates, that is, authoritarian control of subordinates by superiors resulting from colonial influence; poor leadership; excessive bureaucracy; top concentration of management decisions; policy rigidity; low subordinate initiative; managerial lethargy; entrepreneurial inertia, that is, lack of managerial initiative and innovativeness; lack of foresight; low level environmental assessment and appreciation; restrictive information flow between managers and subordinates and between various units of enterprise; lack of transparency; unwillingness/inability to delegate authority; inadequate managerial skill acquisition due to lack of regular training/inadequate training programmes; reliance on intuitive power for decision making instead of fact based approach; lack of intergroup cooperation and collaboration; nepotism; passive-reactive task orientation; weak planning orientation; rigid organizational structure; weak corporate governance system resulting in weak management control process; and internalized job insecurity by position holders who consequently resort to suspicions, mistrust, withholding of information, spying strategies, victimization, inexplicable coercive measures, and frequent use of threats and warnings (Ogundele, 2005).

Approaches to management practice in Africa

The nature of management practice in Africa is reflected in the various approaches to management in Nigeria. Each of these approaches is influenced by a number of the characteristics presented above. However, each of the approaches is a measure of one problem or the other. Some of the management approaches which are visible include:

(i) Reactive management approach: This involves reactive response to problems or decision situations, in contrast to proactive management.
(ii) Curative management approach: This is in contrast to preventive management and is based on remedial actions to problems that have already been allowed to occur.
(iii) Conjectural management approach: This encompasses management by guess work and intuition where decisions are made by subjective process devoid of scientific assessment and evaluation.
(iv) Bottle-neck management approach: This involves management by enforcing rigid and draconian rules that impede the smooth and quick achievement of objectives in the name of due process. Creating inflexible management structure in organization is common in Africa as a means of controlling the behaviour and actions of members of organizations.
(v) Authoritarian management approach: An approach based on command structure rather than consensus between super-ordinate and his sub-ordinate. In other words, instructions on tasks are given as commands to subordinates with penal measures instead of corrective measures for erring subordinates. It is an approach based on high power distance between the manager and his staff.
(vi) Task-oriented management approach: This is one where employees’ comfort, safety, feelings and general welfare are less important to management than the task to be done. In other words, focus is more on the employee doing the task at any cost than providing good working conditions and remuneration for him to perform. Simply, the “work” is placed above the “worker”.

Factors that account for the approaches to management practice in Nigeria

The Nigerian management approach or practice reflects the Nigerian cultural values and environmental challenges and realities. The values of Nigerians generally result in managerial behaviours and practices that are very different from what obtains in other societies, particularly the industrial societies of the west (Zidafamor, 2016). A people’s philosophy is a fundamental determinant of the management approach that is adopted by the people. “Philosophy” is a view or belief of an individual or group of individuals about life, which guides the individual or group in his or its orientations, ideologies, activities and attitudes towards life and nature (Frankl, 1968). Eze (1995) has posited that Africans’ management approach is attributable to African philosophy about life and existence. He argues that a people’s philosophy is determined by their reasoning and logic. But the reverse is also true. However, as Eze (1995) pointed out, philosophy affects all actions of the individual, including his managerial actions. In terms of managerial actions and behavior, a well-articulated philosophy influences management policies, goals decisions, functions,
operations and attitudes to workers and the external environment. The African people have negative management philosophy deriving largely from their philosophy of life which is expressed in their superstitious beliefs, interpretations of existence and cultural values.

Essentially, the management approach in Nigeria is a function of both factors within Nigerian society and factors from abroad. The fundamental internal factor is Nigerian socio-cultural system (way of life). Culture affects managers’ general behaviour patterns, levels of intellectual development and problem solving and decision making processes as well as group affiliation and network system. Some cross cultural management researchers have also pointed out that socio-cultural factors also inhibit the introduction of advanced management practices and know-how into societies (Farmer and Negandhi, 1981; Heigan, 1981; Osuji, 1984 cited in Eze, 1995).

Elements of Nigerian socio-cultural system which pose challenge to good management practice include, ethnicity, cultural heterogeneity, excessive religiosity, cultural authoritarianism, superstitious beliefs (Katupha,1994). These are formidable obstacles to the enactment of a conducive system for the adoption of good managerial practice. Some other Nigerian cultural characteristics which have infiltrated management practice in Nigeria include perception of an external locus of causality, high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, authoritarianism, and abstractive mode of thinking. These elements are examined herein.

Ethnicity

Most African societies have very diversified ethnic groups. Ethnicity or ethnic affiliation has serious negative psychological consequences on the overall functioning and motivation of managers in Africa, as it breeds inter-personal and inter-group rivalries, tensions, mistrust, suspicions, ill-feelings and antagonism and treachery. Apparently, ethnic orientation and emphasis has resulted in a great deal of corrupt management practices, lack of inter-group cooperation and collaboration and preferential treatments in personnel recruitment, selection, placement and promotions as well as allocation of resources because of ethnic fraternity. The result of this has been managerial inefficiency and ineffectiveness. Ethnic affiliation has profound negative effect on human resource practices and work output of employees. As Emerole et al. (2013) noted, Africans are excessively affective towards their relatives and this has compromised discipline and encouraged complacency in workplace and therefore organizational performance.

Cultural authoritarianism

The African culture is authoritarian in nature. Hofstede (2001) cited in Adegboye (2013) described African society as a high masculinity culture. Africans believe in hierarchy of authority and individuals are subjected to serve under superior powers. In Africa, people are believed also not to be easily amenable to laws and order and therefore, to deal with them, one must be tough, strict and vigilant at all times. Again, the interactional relationship between the senior and junior is a command relationship with the senior commanding the junior on issues. In African communities, the elder is always right and he is not to be blamed or scolded for his mistakes or bad acts openly before his junior ones (Emerole et al., 2013). Furthermore, African cultures require a great deal of approval seeking (Iguisi, 2014). The implication of this is that decisions are made only by the approval of a higher authority even under emergency. Thus, allowing subordinates to use their discretion in critical situations is out of order for African managers. These cultural orientation and tendencies are transmitted into management arena such that African managers tend to believe in giving directives by command rather than persuasion and agreement. They believe that being soft and friendly or condescending to subordinates’ level would make workers ride on them. Idris and Gabriel (2014) argued that “as result of the influence of cultural beliefs, norms and tradition, an authoritarian style of management appears to be pervasive in Nigerian organizations” to the extent that contributions by subordinates in decision making is regarded as a challenge and effrontery on the authority of management. What makes it more difficult for African Managers is the fact that the African culture created gully between managers' behaviour and what African workers expect as motivating factor for followership. Whereas in the western culture people are motivated by achievement and personal recognition, in African culture people in work setting are motivated more by affectionate relationship between them and their superiors than recognized achievement, challenging work and participation in decision making; all of which are high motivators by Hertzberg (Iguisi, 1994 cited in Iguisi, 2014).

Excessive religiosity

Excessive religious orientation constitutes a major obstacle to basic acquisition of psychological power and development of basic science of management (Eze, 1995), and the adoption of scientific approach to management problems among African managers. Excessive religiosity refers to religious fanaticism and allowing religious beliefs to override logical reasoning and analytical thought process, such that the individual is disallowed from making decisions based on scientific, analytical and rational thinking or common sense. In the circumstance, natural cause and effect relationships are undermined in decision making and problem solving as every problem is interpreted as a satanic expression and
solutions as divine.

People who are very highly religious often interpret every situation with religious connotation and rely on divine instructions or orders for solutions to all problems. They usually believe that progress and achievements are divinely ordered and hence beyond human effort and control. Majority of Africans belong to this class of people being more oriented to religion than science, and consequently, attach more value to divine solution to problems than science. Religion and Science are somewhat antithetical. While religion is based on faith and believing in Almighty God to provide solutions, science is based on doubt, questioning and analytical reasoning as means for solutions (De Cruz, 2017).

Africans developed this orientation as a result of hardship and lack of resources and inability, due to ignorance, to naturally find solutions to many of the problems which plague them. They helplessly found solace in divine intervention and over time have become used and more inclined to search for divine solutions to their problems even when many of such problems are solvable with scientific process and human efforts. This orientation pervades all aspects of human engagement in Africa whether in private life or industry, and has become an obstacle to effective management practice in Africa today.

Religion has become a powerful motivating factor for the behaviour of members of organizations (Emerole et al., 2013). For instance, in the Nigerian society, it is believed that moral rectitude, control and social order can be more elicited from individuals through religion than through reason and impersonal laws as is in Western culture which is prevalent in formal organizations (Emerole et al., 2013). “The tremendous growth and success of religion in Nigeria, especially Christianity, is an indication of how religion is influential in the lives of the people” in determining their actions even in organizations. While it is agreed that divine solutions are real but not in all situations, they are provided only for problems that are beyond science and logical reasoning as well as human efforts and capacities.

**Superstitious beliefs**

According to Merrier-Webster dictionary, “superstition refers to a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation. Unlike rational thinking, superstition is not based on reason or knowledge” (Wang et al., 2012). It is an attitude, or attitudes, individually held by people which relate their existence to the general order of the cosmos but which are not based upon empirical evidence nor incorporated within the institutionalized belief systems of a society as defined by leading representatives of these systems at any given time (Jarvis, 1980). Superstition may be a belief in supernatural phenomena in the conventional sense (Levitt, 1952). Dissa et al. (2017) reported that superstitions are simply the belief in supernatural elements: that one event leads to the cause of another without any physical process linking the two events. As Levitt (1952) suggests, superstition has the following features: (1) it is fundamentally irrational (2) it usually influences the behavior of the holder, and (3) superstition has no sound evidence of personal experience to support it. It is majorly a cultural phenomenon with relativity. Specific superstitions differ across cultures (Carlson et al., 2009).

Superstition can influence various human behaviors, even in business, where rationality is expected. Fudenberg and Levine (2006) confirmed that some superstition can persist under the rationality assumption and persistent superstition does affect human behavior. Finance scholars noticed the impact of superstition on investors, such as how Friday the 13th is linked to stock trading (Kolb and Rodriguez, 1987; Lucey, 2001). Life is full of decisions and choices. Decision-making is among the most important functions performed by human beings in life and it has direct impacts on success or failure both in private life and in business management. As a cultural phenomenon, superstition influences our assumptions and shapes our mental maps and values. It affects the assessments, judgments and decisions we make. They constitute part of the decision making process, our choices and aspirations (Wright and Bower, 1992). Thus, belief in superstition has great influence in business decision-making as core function of management.

Generally in Africa, people are highly superstitious resulting in a skewed sense of judgment, decision making and choices especially when it affects businesses, culture, tradition, beliefs and rituals. Beliefs about the spirits, the dead, witchcraft and ancestorship portend a veritable sphere for consideration particularly as it affects growth, development and general well-being of the people.

A major reason why Africans are highly superstitious is their low core self-evaluation. This means the basic conviction they have in themselves. Core Self-Evaluation consists of four assessment criteria-self-esteem, self-efficacy, emotional stability and locus of control (Judge et al., 2002). These four criteria share great conceptual similarities and reflect managers’ basic assessment of themselves. Core self-evaluation is a strong predictor of human behavior (Judge et al., 2002) and fundamental components of decision makers (Hillier and Hambirk, 2005).

People with high core self-evaluation view themselves positively. They tend to rely on themselves rather than external factors; and are more likely to use their own thinking to make decisions rather than relying on supernatural forces (Wang et al., 2012). In a number of non-managerial decision-making contexts, it has been proven that an increased tendency to engage in superstitious behavior is associated with low self-esteem and ego-strength (Epstein, 1991), low self-efficacy.
(Tobacyk and Shrader, 1991), external locus of control (Tobacyk and Milford, 1983), and emotional instability (Epstein, 1991; Wiseman and Watt, 2004). These relationships suggest that the desire to engage in superstitious behavior is related to a deficit in the ability to maintain self-integrity and self-worth (Wang et al., 2012). In other words, the greater a manager’s core self-evaluation, the more negative his/her attitude towards superstition would be. Africans suffer from the four criteria.

Reliance on superstitions in decision making by managers is a major management challenge in Africa. Decisions based on superstition are never objective and achieve set goals only by chance of 1 - 50 at best. This summarizes the fact that management by Africans is almost always never effective.

**Cultural heterogeneity**

Cultural heterogeneity refers to the presence of multiple different cultures in a population. It is simply people from multiple ethnic or religious backgrounds living together. Essentially, the construct is used to describe how relatively dissimilar different groups of people are from other groups in their beliefs and ideas. African societies are multi-culture and multi-religious with varying belief systems, norms and values. Thus, a management group in Africa consisting of people from different backgrounds will be heterogeneous. Cultural heterogeneity causes distrust among group members and this usually have negative effects on team play, which inhibits effective teamwork (Zidafamor, 2016). This is the scenario with organizations in Africa.

As empirical evidence has shown, high level of diversity reduces agreement-seeking behaviours and social cohesion in the context of strategic decision making (Ferrier, 2001). Heterogeneous decision-making groups are slower to reach consensus than homogeneous groups (Watson et al., 1993). In other words, decision-making speed, as well as a firm’s ability to effect strategic change, are often impeded (Hambrick et al., 1996) by the outplay of distrust among group members and lack of team play due to differences in values and norms. These potentially negative consequences suggest that a highly diverse management might have difficulty operating successfully in a context characterized by an emphasis on risk taking and pro-activeness. These features evidently characterize African societies and organizations, and bedevils management in Africa (Adegboye, 2013). Although cultural heterogeneity is not peculiar to African societies, it has more potential for breeding problems in management in Africa because of the uncooperative attitude or tendency among Africans (Adewunmi and Akhaba, 2014). A major effect of cultural heterogeneity is on human resource management (Higazi and Lar, 2015). Heterogeneity creates strata in human resource structure in organization with a capacity to cause unresolved conflict among different strata based on cultural differences, as a result of suspicion and mistrust among members of the organization from different cultures (Zidafamor, 2016).

According to Parboteeah et al. (2014) cited in Zidafamor (2016), the different strata try to defend their identity by creating feelings of self-superiority, and making people from other cultures feel sidelined. This conflict of superiority affects staffing process and corrupts the human resource function. This situation is the major underlying cause of discriminatory practices in human resource processes in organization in Africa. Impliedly, cultural heterogeneity is a source of corruption in organization in Africa as less privileged persons have to use bribes and other corrupt means to get by. As Zidafamor (2016) argued, the problem for Nigeria organizations through cultural discrimination is that it has allowed for real talent and competent skillful people to be left out of positions in organizations.

**Colonial impartation**

The major external factor which has affected management practice in Africa is colonialism. Majority of African societies was under the rule of colonial masters from whom Africans imbibed a lot of negative ways of life and relating with people. Under the colonial masters, African managers were not allowed to initiate things on their own without getting clearance from their colonial masters who did all the thinking, reasoning and planning and made all the vital decisions for them (Ebitu, 2016). The loyalist management that developed from the colonial training was primarily a maintenance and implementations management, not a creative and innovative one (Ebitu, 2016). As Eze (1995) implied, contemporary management practice in Africa is a development from a psychologically emasculated robot management that suffered from managerial lethargy, lack of managerial initiative, entrepreneurial inertia, and absence of managerial innovation. Among the management residues of colonialism which African managers have imbibed today are bureaucracy, master-servant rider horse relationship between superiors and subordinates, toughness and bullying approach, extreme mistrust and suspicion, and managerial discriminatory activities. One of the biggest pitfalls of the colonial management approach in Africa is the emergence of bureaucratic managers. Bureaucrats are characterized by anti-intellectualism, dictatorship, corruption, rapacity, anti-meritocracy, and selfishness (Eze, 1995). In Drucker’s (1974) view, bureaucracy constitutes the worst barrier to good management practice because it inhibits adoption of new approaches, environmental adaptation, along with the accompanying transformation and revolutionary processes. Bureaucracy is management that misconceives itself as an end and the organization as the means (Drucker, 1974).
Religious fraternity

In African organizations, religion has become a melting point for people with the result that allegiance and cooperation on religious basis have now been elevated even above tribal affiliations (Emerole et al., 2013). A major development in organizations in many African societies which is gradually becoming a cog in the wheel of effective management practice is what can be referred to as “religious fraternity.” This is a situation where various religions or denominations of a major religion in an organization pull their members to form brotherhood cliques and to work in the interest of their members, helping them into positions and to rise, and protecting them against adverse management decisions. Often, members of the dominant religion or denomination become the more powerful group in the organization exerting great influence in decision making, and distributing and allocating resources and positions in favour of their members to near exclusion of other members of the organization. In cases where the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) does not belong to the majority religion or denomination, his religion or denomination usually dominates and executes the processes of management, in-spite of its minority position. It is a known fact that group membership influences behavior, that the groups individuals decide to join or that its members convey information about their characteristics and strength or status in society and in particular an organization.

“Religious fraternity” is essentially a vent for organizational politics and it has increasingly gained ground in highly religious societies such as African societies. This system of organizational politics is usually initiated and created by CEOs of organizations as means to garner loyalty from members through religious ties by making them believe that they are brothers in one faith with common beliefs and values, different from those of other religions or denominations or sects of the same religion. In this connection, religion offers a strong cohesive force for bringing people to conform to orders from superior authority because members fall under the indoctrination that dissidence is insubordination and a sin against God that cannot be condoned.

In organizations where fraternity exists, rewards and promotions are made based on the leadership assessment of staff members’ level of cooperation and commitment to the fraternity values and ideals irrespective of such members’ capabilities, productivity and contributions or genuine commitment to the corporate goals and objectives. Productivity of members is usually measured in terms of members’ commitment to the values of the brotherhood/fraternity, whether or not those values conform to the corporate values, goals and objectives of the organization.

As Frank (1994:207) noted, trustworthiness are purportedly assured by invoking religious faith, and consequently, often times, trustworthiness of prospective employees are determined based on religious group membership. The ‘religious fraternity’ is aimed at providing social support both for the individual and organizational managers in the group. As in any other social support group, religious fraternity in organizations promotes individual reciprocal commitment as well as loyalty to their religious groups. It is used to facilitate approval of demands or to provide solidarity to members.

Fraternity in organizations, in whatever forms they exist, have a number of great implications for effective management practice in any society. Beyond partitioning the organizations into factions with its attendant conflict of interest and disunity among members of the organization which is capable of derailing the organization from its mission and corporate goals, it leads to demoralization and lower productivity of genuinely committed staff members, and sabotage by disgruntled ones. Thus, its first toll is on human resource management of the organization. The effect on human resource management comes in a number of ways. One of its effects is that, it allows for round pegs to be fitted in square holes. In other words, people are given positions they are not qualified for and do not have capacity and ability to manage, with the consequence that they perform below corporate target and thereby constituting a drag on the achievement of organizational goals by being ineffective in their duties.

Another effect of fraternity in organization is that it weakens the organization’s ability to access stabilizing feedback through critical assessment of organization’s values and policies by staff members that can lead to re-organization and re-enactment of an effective system. The organization’s self-equilibrating mechanism is lost. This so because members of the fraternity who are beneficiaries of the leadership cannot look in the face of management to offer critical suggestions that violate the values of management because of the fear of being seen as decamping, which can lead to their losing management goodwill. On the other hand, other members of the organization are careful not to make criticisms and offer critical suggestions for fear of being labeled dissidents and sanctioned for insubordination. In the situation, management is left to follow its chosen path outside what may be the right way, often resulting in misappropriation of resources and unscrupulous practices. But more saddening still, is the fact that when such misappropriations and unscrupulous practices are uncovered, members of the fraternity offer explanations to remove blames and protect the leadership in order to continue to remain relevant.

Lack of indigenous management theories

Lack of African indigenous management theories is a major challenge in management practice in Africa. This situation has caused indiscriminate adoption and application of imported management theories. Many
organizational practices and management development programmes in African countries are based on the prescriptions of theories founded on the experiences from western societies, with utter disregard for the fundamental variations in socio-cultural conditions and circumstances which may affect the effectiveness and hence the validity of theories across societies.

The result of this uncritical adoption of western theories and thought by managers in emerging economies such as in Africa is that, in many cases, organizations are unable to achieve set goals following strategies or prescriptions of western theories. Jaeger (1986) puts it that, uncritical transfer of management theories and techniques based on western ideologies and value systems has in many ways contributed to organizational inefficiency and ineffectiveness in the developing country context.

Essentially, the theoretical prescriptions on which managers in Africa rely heavily are based on problems and solutions which existed in other environments, and are never exactly relevant to African situations. As Koontz and O’Donnell (1976) observed, two management situations are seldom alike in all respects, and therefore, it would be erroneous for managers to assume that exact technique applicable in one situation will necessarily work in another. Apparently, problems occur under different situations, therefore solutions would be more effective if they are based on individual problem situation. No doubt, solutions to problems are simplified and easier to arrive at if there is knowledge about the problem situations on how and why they occur and the peculiarities of the environment which may likely affect success of decision methods.

A great deal of research has been undertaken with respect to the applicability and fruitfulness of western management practices in African context. The evidence to date in the literature strongly suggests that most of the assumptions underlying the western management practices are not or only partially valid and not very appropriate in managing organizations in African environment (Iguisi, 2014).

Implications of management practice in Africa for effective management and organizational performance

Effective management implies being able to achieve set goals and objectives through the right and appropriate decisions and actions. Organization’s performance is a reflection of effectiveness of management. The extent of performance by an organization is a measure of the effectiveness of its management practice. Organization’s performance is the extent of achievement of the purpose for which the organization is established (Folorunso et al., 2014). It reflects the judicious application of the organization’s available resources to achieve the purpose of its existence. Consistent and continual achievement of goals and objectives cumulate into desirable organization’s performance.

The approaches to management by organizations in Nigeria and Africa in general as discussed above have great implications for management effectiveness and performance of organizations. From general observation, it has been shown that many organizations take inappropriate decisions and actions in many situations they find themselves and are therefore unable to achieve desired goals and objectives which invariably affect negatively the achievement of their primary purpose of existence. Many originally well purposeful and established organizations have in the course of time fallen by the wayside as a result of ineffective management styles and inability to attune themselves with the dynamism of their business environment due to the weaknesses of the management approaches and styles they have adopted. Some areas in management processes in which the African approach to management has had negative implications include planning process, personnel recruitment and management, team building for effective work, staff motivation and loyalty, labour relations, problem analysis and decision making, environmental assessment and adaptation, resource utilization and control, organization structure, performance measurement, among others. These elements are the pillars of success in management and organizational performance.

Conclusion

The discussion of the challenges and problems of management practice in African societies in this paper reveals that Africa is confronted with a web of problems in managing organizations, and these problems are mainly socio-cultural problems.

The various approaches to management, each of which reflects a number of limiting factors to effective management practice are derivatives of the socio-cultural orientation in African societies. The nature of management practice is such that it does not allow for smooth organizational operations and achievement of organizational goals. It is recommended therefore that effectiveness of management practice would be overcome through positive socio-cultural re-orientation by Africans in a way that enhances smooth organizational operations. In this regard, we canvass for science based approach to management rather than reliance on spirituality and waiting on supernatural order; environment dependent indigenous approaches and avoiding over dependence on foreign based theories and practices, as application of such approaches does not usually fit the peculiarity of the situations of emerging economies; disuse of fraternal relationship in the deployment of staff members and organizational resources to avoid mismatch
and misappropriation. Emphasis must be on who can best perform the task and not on some fraternal loyalty, whether ethnic or religion. The authoritarian approach to decision making based on the cultural orientation of Africans is an impediment to effective human relations and participative management. Thus, there is also need to democratize management and organizational processes in Africa. All of these require developing new organizational culture in organizations to move away from the existing systems that impede effective management practice currently.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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