

# MANAGEMENT EDUCATION IN LDCs THEORY OR MODEL?

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## SUMMARY

*The objectives, design, content, and methodology of management education in most of the LDCs are excessively dependent upon those of the developed countries. The main thrust of this dependency relationship is the belief in universalism in management and its role in society.*

*The manager has two primary responsibilities: Responsibility for choice and for implementation. The societal significance of a managerial choice varies: Some choices are fundamental in nature and required for system building; Others are not fundamental and required for system growth.*

*Implementation of choice is basically a human and technological affair. The productivity of both human and technological behaviors are either universalistic or particularistic.*

*The most effective managerial behavior in a developing country could be that which accepts the fundamental nature of choice for system building and the particularistic approach to its implementation. This behavior cannot be valid for a large number of countries warranting theory. What seems useful is a number of models, including the Western models, according to which management education can be designed.*

*Apart from the concerns for change and productivity in LDCs there are other reasons to worry about the universality of Western "models". They are concerned with the dehumanizing process of organization and its implications for culture and community.*

The development of management as a distinctive discipline of education at higher learning institutes in many less developed countries (LDCs) has been dependent in terms of objectives, design, content, and methods on the disciplinary development of management education in the developed world. The various types of technical assistance programs of the late 1950s and early 1960s between those countries were mainly instrumental in the initiation of this dependency relationship. What is rather interesting, in fact, is not the beginning, but the continuation of this relationship over the past two decades.

The main thrust of this relationship was the belief on both sides, in the universalism in management objectives, content, and methods of delivery. The maintenance of such a belief over time

was possible in the first place because the ideology of management education in the LDCs came from leading American Universities such as Harvard, MIT, and UCLA, or prestigious English institutes like the BIM. Secondly, it was possible because the personnel involved in bilateral and multilateral technical assistance programs spread the same ideology through their management training programs in the LDCs. As a result, a third factor, the management literature available in LDCs, either imported or produced locally, was almost exclusively Western.

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The desirability of a universalistic approach to education may vary among disciplines. Managerial phenomena are predominantly social and therefore, the scope for a universalistic approach is limited, at least in the present time. However, there have been occasional dissatisfactions and frustrations about the experience with management education programs in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka.

The nature of the results of a program evaluation depends on the framework used for the evaluation. If the premises for conceptualizing the framework are derived from the universalistic ideals which are the foundations of current management educational programs in LDCs, then the results of evaluations will have a tendency to explain program dissatisfaction or frustrations in terms of variables external to the programs of education. In any case, evaluations within frameworks will fail to consider internal variables which are fundamental and related to program ideology.

The primary objective of my presentation is to share with you some of my thinking with regard to a number of ideological issues in management education programs in LDCs. It is no secret that my thinking is largely based on my experience with the case of Sri Lanka, where management education at university undergraduate level has existed over 20 years for now, and an MBA/MPA program has been in progress since 1981 with a significant Canadian participation in it. More specifically, the following are in my mind:

- (a) should the design of management education in LDCs be in line with universalism (theory) or particularism (models)?
- (b) what should be the role and strategies of international cooperation in management education? and,
- (c) should international cooperation in management education be explicitly located in relation wider international interests such as finance and trade?

### Manager and the Choice in Society

Manager has a key role in the determination of fundamental choices in the society. The fundamental choices provide a basic framework for action and give direction to societal progress. The Western societies have chosen the capitalist framework and have progressed within it. Managers there still have to make important choices but most of them ought to be within the framework, i.e. the system. Unfortunately or otherwise, many of the societies in LDCs have not yet succeeded in choosing the direction that is should go. Therefore, the managerial responsibility to make fundamental choices in LDCs is unabated.

Many social scientists believe that a system change is sine qua

non in the determination of fundamental choices in LDCs. Those who are concerned with "development administration" in LDCs, development economists, and political scientists, to name a few, increasingly believe that the satisfaction of basic needs of the majority of people should be the direction in which fundamental choices be made and the socio-economic system be changed.

If we could accept that such a distinction of the choice making responsibility of managers in DCs and LDCs is possible, then we could conceptualize of a scale of "managerial responsibility for choice". On one extreme of the scale we may have those managers who are responsible mainly for making choices for a system which has a built-in capacity for self-sustenance and growth. We may have, therefore, on the other extreme a category of managers whose responsibility is to make choices for a system which has no built-in capacity for self-sustenance and growth, and hence requiring system change or transformation (system building) in an structural sense.

The above distinction presupposes that a fundamental choice which suits one society does not necessarily meet the requirements of fundamental choices in another type of society, and therefore, theoretical prescriptions about choice are not useful.

### Manager and the Productivity in Society

Once a choice is made, the role of the manager is to be efficient or productive in the implementation of the choice: he is to utilize the organizational mechanism in order to minimize time and cost in the achievement of results as envisaged in the choice.

The time-cost minimizing behaviour is basically human and technological. It is human in the sense that productivity of individual behavior is intervened by an unconceivable number of variables and relationships which have at least something to do with the society in which the individual operates - the type of socio-economic development, social stratification, culture, religion, and so on. Nonetheless, not all the human behaviors and particularistic: some behaviors can be universally productive.

Productive behavior is technological in the sense that the ways in which resources are combined has a direct relationship to results. Again, as in the case of human behavior, the productivity of certain techniques and technologies are society bound.

As for the managerial responsibility for choice, we could conceptualize of a scale of managerial responsibility for productivity. One extreme of the

scale, we may locate human and technological behavior as particularistic and on the other extreme as universalistic. Thus, we may have the following, highly simplistic, typology of managerial roles:

#### Why Models?

While we all aspire for all inclusive theory and for a managerial science ultimately, we cannot forgive our lack of theoretical knowledge simply by elevating partial theories (models) to the status of theory. The managerial phenomena are so different across societies not only because they belong to civilizations which are basically different or at least largely self-characterized, but also because they are at very different levels of material achievement. (It is important to note that the potential for material development is marked by serious gaps among societies). Therefore, what many people want us to believe as theory falls short of the requirements of theories. They are basically models, occasionally ethnocentric, which

are useful and meaningful only within limited ranges.

At an empirical level, it may be interesting to examine the degree of integration and type of integration of students from LDCs who return home after higher studies in management in DCs, into their own society and the local production system. The basic material they study are largely irrelevant back home or difficult to adapt to local situations; technical sophistication of the skills they have developed is too high in comparison to what is useful and practical at home, and thus one finds isolated and alienated with own feeling of superiority among colleagues. The individual and the production processes are to be conceived as social rather than asocial or mechanistic ones.

More fundamentally, there are humanistic concerns emanating from the experience with modern organizations in the industrialized world. The human organization of the modern type grew in the pro-

### A Typology of Managerial Roles

#### Managerial Responsibility for Productivity

	<u>Particularistic behavior</u>	<u>Universalistic behavior</u>
<u>Managerial Responsibility for Choice</u>	Choice for system building	Choice for system growth
	TYPE A (1): Aspects of models applicable to a limited number of (similar) IDCs.	TYPE A (2): Aspects of models applicable to a large number of countries with similar aspirations.
	TYPE B (1): Aspects of models applicable to a limited number of (similar) DCs.	TYPE B (2): Aspects of models applicable to a large number of levels of achievement.

cesses of production revolutions over the past two centuries. In the early process of production revolution, the role of human factor was considered as equivalent to that of any other non-human factor of production. In recent times, there has been much talk to emphasize the key role that human factor plays among other factors of production. However, the basic assumption that has been sustained by the organization is that organization is there basically to produce for profits. Therefore, human resource is considered in practice only as an equal partner, and as a means to something else, such as profits. As a means of production, the individual is paid only for his labor. What is forgotten is that the individual is not paid for what he sacrifices as a human individual engaged in the process of exchange of his labor: individual sacrifices some of own values, the human character. Thus, the individual becomes asocial or mechanistic.

The increasingly mechanistic character of the individual reduces the difference between man and machine or labor and capital (I address the non-Marxist mind when I use the term capital here). As this happens, men will learn to not to pay much attention to what the machine produces, and what the outcomes will be. This dehumanizing process is further dangerous on two counts: one is that man will become the subject of machine, and the other is that man will increasingly eliminate himself from the community and emotionally integrate himself to the machine. Thus, the man's sense of community will diminish and the society will explode.

The systematic subjugation and dehumanization of the individual by the organizational process has to find its end point before the individual's sense of community is completely vanished. For this to take place, the organization has to sacrifice part of its objective of producing for profit or best output in a narrow sense. Or it has to find

ways in which some elements of the human nature can be integrated into natural objectives of the organization. As a prerequisite to this, it will be necessary for the organization to consider individual not as a means alone, but as an end in itself. While producing products, the organization should produce human values for the individual so that he/she can develop both materially and spiritually. Such human contribution, of course, would be measurable at the community level rather than at the organizational level. Despite severe infiltration of foreign elements, most of the LDC societies are still integrated in a community sense so as to sustain such an organization.

Further, one should not forget that the philosophical foundations of many LDC societies, particularly in Asia, apt to emphasize universal concepts and to subordinate the concrete individual and the particular perception to the universal. This view of an integrated society is incompatible with organizational/managerial concepts centered on the individual or the particular. Those concepts are hard to be absorbed by LDC societies effectively not because these societies are not yet differentiated enough but because the foundations do not provide scope for effective differentiation according to particularistic concepts. In any case, the ideal of a differentiated society has to give way to the idea of an organization supporting social fusion.

#### Type "A" Model

The typology of managerial roles outlined above may be useful for recognizing the variability of managerial roles in different countries; and for designing management education programs accordingly. Model type "A" differs from type "B" to the extent that managerial responsibility for choice is toward system building or system growth.

Producing managers who could effectively involve in making choice for system building should become the primary function of management education programs. Managers with that quality are rare in the LDC. They are going to be new managers in that environment.

A high degree of environmental consciousness and responsibility is needed on the part of the new manager for him to play a leading role in arriving at fundamental choices. He should be able to deal with basic issues of change in a dynamic and leading manner. Should "development" be interpreted only in terms of economic criteria and criteria of social justice such as growth and fair distribution, or should it embody socio-cultural elements? In other words, should development also mean the promotion of certain socio-cultural values, for example, social cohesion? If yes, then should it be considered as equally important as economic growth or distribution? In the formulation of strategy for developmental change, what are the guiding values? (dependence/interdependence/self-reliance; Westernization/modernization/social evolution etc.). This is the nature of some of the fundamental issues that the new manager has to address himself when fundamental choices are made.

The approach to fundamental choices is to succeed only when the particularistic character of the choice making mechanism is taken into account. Neither the dominance of the post-colonial bureaucracy nor the organization's clientele characterized by very different elements ranging from semi-feudalistic to those of the modern middle class and capitalistic entrepreneur can be ignored. If there is one characteristic which is common to many cultures in LDCs it is the inclination to comprehend phenomena statically: all things in this world are always changing and moving, while the substance of these things and their nature change little. This is a view that takes change as natural and the change

of substance as unnatural. This could be the context of mentality in the environment in which the new manager has to innovate, spread it and cause change.

Once choice is made ( a fundamental one in a particularistic way) productive implementation requires behaviors and techniques which are either particularistic (Type A (1) and/or universalistic (Type A (2)). Some fundamental choices can be made of course, in a universalistic way (Type A (2)), which needs little elaboration here.

If there is a useful meaning in Type "A" model, then the next natural question is what it implies for the design, content, and methods of management education in LDCs. I am compelled to think that the implications lead, inter alia, to the following considerations:

#### **Program design**

- a) Designing management education programs for preparing managers for key policy-making roles in government and business,
- b) Assigning equal weight to business and public management programs,
- c) Balancing the number of personnel in programs from key managerial positions with that of other backgrounds.

**Program content :** Include those which will air at

- d) developing the objective mind,
- e) developing the analytical and innovative mind,
- f) addressing the fundamental issues of organization and its environment,
- g) enlightening the role of different sectors of the socio-political economy,
- h) aim at generality rather than specificity,
- i) providing skills required for implementation.

**Methods :** Adopt those which will

- j) generate self-interest in management,
- k) generate desire to take risk, experiment, and innovate, and
- l) enable working with different status groups.

The above list is not exhaustive but only suggestive.

#### **Role and Strategy of International Cooperation**

The time has come to think about international cooperation for developing the field of management in LDCs as a self-sustaining discipline. For this purpose, what is essential is the creation of an institutional infrastructure in the local setting by which local resources will be systemically diverted to the development of the discipline. The institutional infrastructure, rather than depending upon a single local or foreign source for financial support, should sustain itself basically from both public and private funds; it should be able to generate new knowledge in the local setting which will eventually become the basis for the discipline and its growth.

It is in this context that one could talk about the role of international co-operation. The most important function of international cooperation seems to be the creation of an intellectual environment in the LDC which is conducive to disciplinary development in the LDC. Based on the infrastructure, organizational - both human and physical - climate and facility for research have to be created and enhanced.

There could be many strategies appropriate for this role of international cooperation. In the above context, it should be clear that the traditional forms of technical assis-

tance such as foreign involvement in teaching and supplying books and other material/equipment to go with them can no longer be considered as the methods which should be continued and promoted in the long run. In the short-run, this seems essential and should be effective for the purposes of beginning a long process. One should not let the purpose die in the strategy. For success it is vital that all the parties concerned perceive mutual benefit in the strategy. At the level of individual, it should be professionally and intellectually rewarding to engage in joint research in the LDC and research on a comparative basis. At the institutional level, a significant inter-institutional cooperation may lead to some pioneering works or to the development of new dimensions of the field which would bring a good deal of good will to the institutions involved.

#### **Cooperation in a Wider International Context**

It is sometimes useful for the countries collaborating in more than one field to work in an integrated common framework, where possible. The more the interdependence, the higher will be the strength of cooperation and its total benefits. Management is obviously concerned with production and trade. Therefore, those who are practically involved in international trade, investment, and production should benefit from while making a contribution to management education in LDCs. The success of trade, investment, and production should benefit from while making a contribution to management education in LDCs. The success of trade, investment, and production overseas depends largely on understanding the local situation and adjusting to it rather than on the attempts to change it. It is the time to make the interests explicit, and for the business professionals, policy makers, and academics to sit together to work out a formula which will enhance the mutually reinforcing interests.