

Concept of Management in Islam – An Alternative Approach to Management Studies of Contemporary Times

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Abstract

Henry Fayol was a managing director of a large coal mining farm. He is famous for his writing of 14 Principles of Management. He largely emphasized that the concept of management is a vital one and which is an important activity to all human beings involved in business, government and even at the household activities. His endeavour led him to develop 14 Principles. It is now noted that many of his views have a very close linkage with the teachings of Islam.

If we examine and compare his principles with the Quranic verses we will find that most of the principles of management are also noted in the Islamic Text viz Holy Quran. It indicates that Islam has conveyed the contemporary Principles of Management before 1400 years ago to the entire mankind even when there was no existence of the subject called MANAGEMENT. Therefore, in the context of thoughts and theories in management studies, the Islamic views need to be studied and examined to strengthen the subject of Contemporary Management Studies.

The present paper is an attempt to examine the relationship between Islamic notions of work and management and their relevance in the context of management studies. A special emphasis shall be given in this paper to present an alternative discourse in management studies in the post-modern era which advocates for diversities in thoughts, behaviours and practices against the hegemonic and dominant discourse of western thoughts and ideologies in management studies.

The paper is based on facts gathered through review of textual sources. Some verses of Holy Quran (English Version) have been taken into consideration to prepare this paper. The author is concluded with the fact that more researches are needed to evolve the alternative paradigm in management studies and to which Islamic Verses have also a very crucial role to play.

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Henry Fayol was a managing director of a large coal mining firm. He became famous for his writing 14 Principles of Management. He emphasized on the concept that management was an activity common to all human beings in business, government and even at the home which led him to develop 14 Principles of Management.

But do the well versed readers know that some of these principles are the actual result and outcome from the teachings of the Islam. If we all compare these principles with *Ayats* and *Hadith* we will find most of the principles there. Therefore it means that Islam has already conveyed these modern day Principles of Management 1400 years ago to the entire mankind even when there was no existence of a subject named MANAGEMENT.

Now let me discuss some of such Principles in relevance to the Koran and Hadith:

1. Division of Work

The above principle signifies the concept that specialization increases the output and productivity which in turn helps in making the employees more efficient and fruitful.

The Koran says:

“No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them.” Surah Al Baqarah 2:233

This beautiful quote from the Holy Scripture can be explained as the fact that physical, emotional and intellectual capacity of an individual is limited and every person has its own talents and potentials. Therefore, it is important not to burden someone with extra task that is beyond his/her ability.

2. Decentralization

It may be defined as the process through which subordinates are equally involved in the decision making along with the top level management regarding any issue. This concept of decentralization has also been already depicted in the Koran 1400 years ago.

It is mentioned in *Surah Aal-e-Imran* in *ayat 159*:

“So by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him]”

This quote from the Koran can be explained as Allah says to Prophet to be kind to your followers and also consult with them in your affairs. This depicts the importance of consultation in different matters and affairs. The Prophet is ordered by Allah to consult and in the same manner the Prophet himself emphasized and motivated his followers to consult with their subordinates in different affairs because that can lead to a right direction through multiple alternatives.

3. Espirit De Corps

This principle highlights the concept of promoting team spirit in order to build and promote harmony and unity within the organization. This process also encourages the subordinates and treats them in such a way that they develop team spirit, belongingness and unity within an organization.

As per the Koran this principle is written in the following words:

“(Telling the Prophet) if you had been stern and fierce of heart they (the companions and followers of Prophet) would have disappeared from around you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the conduct of affairs.” Surah Aal Imran 3:159

In simple English language the following Ayat means – Allah is saying to Prophet to treat his companions and followers with courtesy. Therefore, if any well versed manager wants to keep his employees motivated then he must treat them with courtesy so he can promote the Team Spirit and Unity within an organization.

4. Unity of Direction

It emphasizes that any running organization must have a proper plan of action to guide managers and workers for achieving their targeted goals

This principle can be found in the Koran in these words:

“If there were in the heavens and the earth, other gods beside Allah, there would have been collision in the both” Surah Anbia, Ayat 22

Though this Ayat highlights the fact of the existence of one God but this also shows the importance and necessity of Unity of Command and Unity of Direction. The entire functioning of the Universe is managed and controlled by one God only and He doesn't have any companion equivalent to his position.

5. Equity

Allah does not take pity on one who does not have it for others” Muslim Tirmizi

This Hadith shows the importance of kindness not only with subordinates but also with superiors. The Prophet emphasized a lot on the Kindness. If a person deals employees with courtesy and kindness he can get maximum output from them.

Criteria for Promotion as per Islamic style of Management

The criteria for promotions were based strictly on merit, ability and talent, rather than that of one based solely on age. Khalid Bin Walid was selected on many occasions to lead the Muslim army based on his strategic abilities, military prowess and skills on the battle field. He was a force to reckon with. He participated in so many battles with a dream of embracing martyrdom, but that was not to happen by the will of God Almighty. Much of his body was covered with scars from the battle field but death on the field was not to be his. The Prophet on one occasion preferred a very young Muslim called Usama for leading the entire Muslim army. Usama led the army in which there were many valiant and well known companions of the Prophet who were older to him, but the role to lead the army was given to the young Usama. Much later in the early Muslim era in 711 AD, a seventeen year old man Muhammad Bin Qasim was selected by the Muslim Caliph to run the campaign against the pirates of Debal and free the Muslim captives held there. Muhammad Bin Qasim ended up spreading message of Islam in what is known as the present day Pakistan and people freely embraced the religion, who were oppressed by a tyrannical caste system that had been a plague to the Hindu society of that time.

Emphasis on Flat and Lean Organizational Structure in Islam:

It may be defined as *“An organizational structure in which most middle-management levels and their functions have been eliminated, thus bringing the top*

management in direct contact with the frontline salespeople, shop floor employees, and customers.”

The Prophet used the concept of a flat organization that was easily accessible to the Muslim society of the time who would come with a lot of issues and affairs to be resolved by the Prophet. The Prophet would always lead from the front and never shied away from doing his personal chores like cooking, stitching and cleaning or helping others despite being the leader of the Muslims.

Observation

Many sound management practices in the contemporary world owe their beginnings to the early Muslim managers who used the most humane and cutting edge techniques of management in those times and brought the light of knowledge to the human world. Even today the management concepts as per the Islamic way can be found in the Koran. It is about time to relive those times and do away with the archaic bureaucratic practices of management that the British have endowed to the lands they have ruled.

“Islam is perfect but Muslims are not”- So never underestimate and evaluate a religion just by visualizing the behavior of its followers. To know Islam study the Quran not the Mullahs or Muslims

Therefore, it can also be concluded by commenting that Koran is not only for the followers of Islam but for the entire mankind because it shows the right path of life as well as managerial skills for new entrepreneurs and managers. Koran has already shown us the path 1400 years ago but we humans are so intelligent and knowledgeable that we got to know its real meaning in this 21st Century.

