

Why Managers of Zimbabwean Local Authorities Need the Knowledge of Management Theories: An Evaluation of Specific Management Theories.

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Abstract

Theories of management that managers of local authorities in Zimbabwe should be familiar with include Taylor's scientific management theory, administrative theory and bureaucracy theory; behavioural approaches and the systems approaches. Knowledge of management theories is essential for successful management and leadership. To help meet the challenges like competition, efficient and economical uses of resources and maximum output, knowledge of management and theories of management is basic requirement.

Discussion

The classical school of management was primarily concerned to improve management effectiveness in organisations. Local authorities in Zimbabwe face a lot of challenges like poor service delivery, conflict and corruption. Therefore, the classical theories provide the tool managers of local authorities require for dealing with their organisational challenges. According to Grey (2005) classical theories enhance the management abilities to predict and control the behaviour of the workers. In this sense, workers in Zimbabwe local authorities behave in a manner that inhibits proper service delivery. These theories thus are designed to predict and control such kind of behaviour in organisations. However, these theories consider the tasks functions of communication in the organisation and ignore the human relational and maintenance functions of communication. Despite that, it is now crucial for the managers of local authorities to be aware of the theories of management so as to be able to diminish the challenges facing local authorities.

Knowledge of the management theories by managers of local authorities help in developing a comprehensive management solution. Scientific management principles are supposed to be applied by managers in a very specific fashion. The implication of scientific management is that the manager is primarily responsible for increasing services in councils. In relation to this, most managers lack responsibility for service delivery in local authorities in Zimbabwe. For example, at Bulawayo city council there is erratic supply of water. Thus Taylor's 1910 scientific method would provide the answers necessary to resolve the most difficult service provision problems to management in local authorities. Scientific management's primary responsibility is to make local authorities productive. According to Shake (2008) scientific management theory is the solution of the problem of all industrialists' conflict. For example in Zimbabwe local authorities conflicts are more pronounced due to different political differences among council employees and officials, especially during the government of national unit (GNU) era of 2008-2013. Mahwood, Basharat and Bashir (2012) say that Taylor developed four principles in his scientific management theory to increase efficiency. Scientific management ensures that workers are competent and skilled and be rewarded positively for positive outcomes. That is why local authorities like Harare city council allow their employees for further studies at universities like the Midlands State University in Gweru to enhance their capacity to improve service provision through improvement of managerial knowhow in human resources. Therefore, it becomes paramount for managers of local authorities to familiarize with the scientific management theory so as to help resolve conflicts, increase efficiency and effectiveness for increased production of proper services as indicated in the client service charters.

Administrative management approach proves that while subsequent organisational research has created controversy to Fayol's principles they are still widely used in management theory. Administrative theory seeks to establish an organisation which leads to efficiency and effectiveness. According to Lile (2011) administrative management seeks to coordinate work and ensure efficiency through the organization of the agency. It also calls for each department (and each worker) to answer to one supervisor, ensuring effective communication up and down the hierarchical scalar chain of command. Then, it requires managers of local authorities to be aware of the administrative management approach to ensure enough and properly effective supervision which is currently missing in Zimbabwe local authorities. Therefore, it brings sequence for one to argue for the need to understand and apply management theories by managers of local authorities so that they are able to define a clear line of

command to improve communication. This can allow the smooth running of local authorities thereby fulfilling the mandate of service provision.

Hartman (n.d.) postulates that Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory helps the manager to visualise employee motivation. In Zimbabwe local authorities there are little or no motivational measures for council employees. For example, at Binga Rural District Council (BRDC) in 2013 employees went for months without getting salaries. This interprets that weak or lack of human resource incentives demotivate employees hence negatively affecting service delivery systems. Therefore managers in local authorities should be aware and use Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory in order to motivate employees for better productivity. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory helps understanding the motivations and needs employees have and the requirement to satisfy basic needs in order to achieve higher level motivation. Thus Maslow puts forward that there is need to satisfy human needs for motivation. Therefore, it is a crucial element indeed for managers of local authorities to be familiar with this and other theories of management.

Managers in councils should understand the differences that exist among individual employees. McGregor's theory X and Y is appealing to managers and dramatically demonstrates the divergence in management view points towards employees. Theory X and Y are extremely helpful in providing management understanding of supervisory styles and employee motivational assumptions. Stewart (2010) confirms that there can be little doubt that Theory Y is a good thing, and that McGregor did an even better thing in bringing it to the attention of managers. Lack of knowledge of management theories by managers therefore creates a gap for them to be aware of the distinctions among individuals. Hence, if a manager believes in theory Y he/she can be in a position to motivate the employees since each employee knows what to do and feels passion for the job.

"A number of theories in the organisational field claim to be of practical use to managers, who claim to make use of them and for those theories which are meant to be effectively put into practice, practical successes are claimed. Thus, the impression is sometimes created at the different theories of organisation amount to a toolkit for practicing managers" (Gabriel, 2002, 134). Under such circumstances, knowledge of management in management theories is valid because it works in a way that managers in local authorities of Zimbabwe must accept. Therefore, it is very paramount for managers of local authorities to be aware of such management theories which help enhance the way they manage the organisations.

According to Donaldson (1992) management and organisation theories embrace both situational specificity and operational precision leading to theories that consists of concepts that are thus specific enough to be capable of giving practical guidance to managers. The systems approach theory helps managers to look at the organisation more broadly. It has also enabled managers to interpret patterns and events in the workplace, that is, by enabling managers to recognise the various parts of organisation, and, in particular, the interrelations of the parts. In managing there is no place managers can turn under meaningful guidance other than the accumulated knowledge (theory) underlying their practice. Olum (2004) argues that no doubt, a manager who makes serious attempts to translate theory into reality is bound to increase productivity more than a manager who chooses to use the "fire brigade" or trial and error approach. Thus after having been realised that most managers of local authorities in Zimbabwe lack the requisite knowledge in the management field, it is therefore commendable enough for them to be familiar to the theories of management.

The field of public administration is varied and diverse. There will never be one theory or set of ideas that will eliminate all others. That is why managers of local authorities in Zimbabwe need to be familiar to various theories. Not every theory applies to every person or organization and producing the same results. Therefore familiarity to various theories helps expose local government managers to use varying approaches to deal with organizational issues. Lile (2011) recommends that managers must sample bits and pieces of these ideas until they find the combination that best suits their field, their organization and their staff. The call for a greater relevance and applicability of management theory to organisational problems has gained momentum and has become more prominent than ever before (Hambrick, 1994). The principles of classical management theory are helpful in placing management objectives in the perspective of an organisation; however, they fail to fulfill one of their earliest goals, that is, providing management tools for dealing with organisational personnel challenges. However, classical theory ignored employee motivation and behaviour. With such varying concepts and theories

it then calls for all managers of local authorities not only to be aware of the theories but also apply them depending on the environment of the organisation they manage.

Conclusion

Managers of local authorities in Zimbabwe should be familiar with the theories of management because they help to motivate employees, set performance targets, manage conflicts and set strategic plans. As highlighted above, knowledge of management theories is essential for successful management and leadership. Also, in order to meet the challenges like competition, efficient and economical uses of resources and maximum output, knowledge of theories of management is basic recipe. It is undoubtedly true that managers of local authorities need to be exposed to the theories of management given the mentioned irregularities and milestones characterising management of local authorities in Zimbabwe currently. Theories help managers to properly manage, lead, motivate and control organisational operations.

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