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Management and Culture

Two concepts that interrelate at many levels. Theoretical principles and practical implications for teaching and research.

San Salvador de Bahia

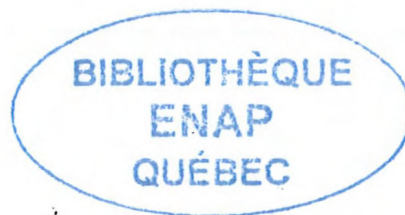
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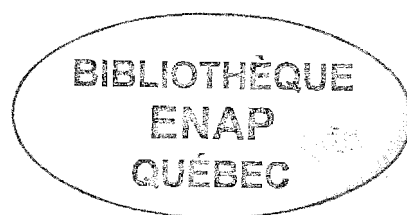
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Abstract (English – Español)

Management is a human activity that consists of doing what should be done in order to have results obtained through social organizations. It refers to technical principles and tools such as planning, evaluation, control and to human principles such as what has to be done to motivate people toward achieving these results, leading them to the results, communicating with them and taking related decisions. As this is obtained through a collective work, management has integrated notions of culture related to the interrelations between the members of the “managed” organization. Finally management is a science that developed considering the importance of dealing with the environment, this term referring to all external systems (economic, demographic, social, cultural, political) that surround the organisation.

Culture is a multi faced concept that goes far beyond the organizational culture which we referred to previously. The term may refer to ethnologic culture, as means of doing things or means of surviving in a specific environment, that has little to do with art. In fact, the term also refers to the critical culture, that is obtained through efforts, readings or observations. This last one precludes the definition of what is beautiful, for it gives a base to judge. A cathedral is on one hand a cultural object useful to practice religion and on a second, a cultural object of pure beauty. Management for conservation deals with cases much less evident and has to be clear on its bases and its support: preserving traces of our past (ethnologic culture) and maintaining objects of beauty (critical culture).

Management of a cultural environment, like management for conservation, implicates the clarification of choices in relation to culture, and it is not neutral. The whole strategic choices made to determine what has to be an organisation and its management as a whole, *raison d'être* and goals, will determine the means in consequence. Management for conservation will hence be based on participation of people involved in the decision as well as in the making process.

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Teaching of this broader vision of management, like research, has to consider local culture and local ways of doing things. Therefore it relies on the participation of the trainees and must develop their professional capacity as a basic objective, with a strong orientation on managerial abilities. The modern management learning must, in consequence, make place for a humanistic approach and self knowing because of the values involved, on relational abilities because of the people involved and on technical abilities because of the complexity involved. Just knowing the right words and concepts is not enough, personal capacities as well as abilities become essential. People may use the same words with different meanings using their cultural referent. Finally, what recent research has taught us is that planning is useless to the one who does not have a personal taste for planning, and that knowing techniques is not worth much unless they are used, while the use is determined by cultural values.

Abstract: Gestión y cultura, dos conceptos en interrelación. Principios teóricos y implicaciones prácticas para la enseñanza y la investigación.

La gestión es una actividad humana que consiste en hacer lo que debe ser hecho para obtener resultados a través de organizaciones sociales. Refiere a principios técnicos y herramientas como planeación, evaluación, control y principios humanos como lo que debe ser hecho para motivar a gente hacia el alcanza de resultados, para dirigirles, comunicar con ellos y tomar decisiones. Como todo se obtiene a través de un trabajo colectivo, la gestión integró nociones de cultura vinculadas a las relaciones entre los miembros de la organización. Al final, gestión como ciencia se desarrolló considerando la importancia del entorno, entendido en el sentido de los sistemas externos (economía, demografía, social, cultura, político...).

Cultura es un concepto complejo más amplio que lo de cultura administrativa. El termino refiere a la cultura etnológica como manera de hacer cosas o sobrevivir en un entorno dado, y tiene poco que ver con arte. De hecho, el término refiere también a la cultura critica, obtenida a través de esfuerzos, lecturas o observaciones. Esta última incluye la definición de la belleza, dando una base para el juicio. Una catedral es a la vez un objeto

cultural útil para practicar religión y un objeto cultura de pura belleza. La gestión de la conservación trata de casos menos evidentes y debe tener claridad sobre sus bases y su soporte: preservación de huellas del pasado y mantenimiento de objetos de arte (cultura etnológica versus crítica).

La gestión en el entorno cultural, como la gestión para la conservación, implica una clarificación de elecciones culturales y no es neutra. Las decisiones estratégicas, para precisar lo que será la organización y su gestión (razón de ser y blancos), determinarán las medidas en consecuencia. La gestión para la conservación será basada sobre la participación de la gente implicada en la decisión como en la realización.

La enseñanza de esta visión amplia de la gestión, como su investigación, debe considerar la cultura local y las maneras locales de actuar. En consecuencia debe apoyarse con la participación de los empleados y desarrollar su capacidad profesional como objetivo fundamental, dándose una fuerte orientación hacia las habilidades de gestión. El aprendizaje moderno debe, en consecuencia, hacer lugar al enfoque humanista, y al conocimiento de sí mismo a causa de los valores involucrados, a las habilidades relacionales a causa de la gente involucrada y a las habilidades técnicas, a causa de la complejidad involucrada. Pero simplemente conocer las palabras y conceptos claves no basta, es esencial tener habilidades y capacidades personales. Individuales utilizan las mismas palabras con sentidos diferentes a partir de sus referencias culturales. Al final, la investigación recién hecha nos enseñó que la planeación es inútil si los que la utilizan no tienen ganas planear y que el conocimiento de técnicas no vale más si no se usan, mientras que el uso se determina por valores culturales.

About management concepts' teaching ...

In universities, we teach management. We teach concepts, techniques, new ways of doing things, but most of all we teach words. If we consider that the important thing about universities are not what they teach but what is learned, maybe we should assume that the most important thing that is learned inside training and courses on management, and particularly public management, is words.

Once, the school of public administration where I teach was offering a program on Total Quality Control in the public sector. We were asked by the management of a hospital to give them our three day program and we had to discuss the plan with them. The last half day of the session was dedicated to the establishing of a plan in order to implement the whole "Quality Management Program" in the hospital. They accepted the whole course except for the implementation part. They commented that they were interested in knowing all about Quality Management, concepts, practices and so on, but they had no interest in implementing that in the hospital. They said that their main concern was that they did not want to look stupid when meeting guys from the ministry of Health or working with colleagues from other hospitals.

So, even if we have precious concepts and useful tools when talking about management, we have to care about what the people we work with want to do with it. When a person who manages in the field of culture begins a speech using the magic words like "effectiveness", "efficiency", "economy", "citizen or user focus", etc., it tells us that this person knows the words; it does not mean that she will do anything similar to another person who does actually use them. In reality, the important thing is what the manager does, not what the manager says.

What is public management?

Management is a human activity that consists of “doing what should be done” in order to have results obtained through social organizations. It refers to technical principles and tools such as planning, evaluation, control and to human principles such as what has to be done to motivate people toward achieving these results, leading them to the results, communicating with them and taking related decisions. Consequently, if management’s purpose is achieving results, it should be evaluated according to the specific results attained. Whatever may be the management techniques and vocabulary used, the only thing that is worth talking about is results.

As these results are obtained through a collective work, management has integrated notions of culture related to the interrelations between the members of the “managed” organization. Consequently, in management, the relationship between the people involved in the processes should be extremely important. Because of the evolution management had during the last century, we give more importance today to the fact that nobody can manage public systems alone and that the way human resources are used is extremely important. At the end of 19th century, when classical theories of management emerged, the focus was on how to do things, looking for the best way to achieve production. Production and procedures were everything; people were tools like everything else and had to adjust. The emphasis was put on technique, the vision was mechanical, and jobs had to be simple because the people were considered and used for their arms and not their brain.

Then came the humanistic approach and management theory started to involve the people working in the production, considering these did not react like machines and were a lot more productive when treated correctly, that actually meaning with a humanistic approach. Then the emphasis was on human resources management, and human resources development, even at times with excess, but the preoccupation for the production stayed and melted with the human perspective.

Finally management is a science that developed considering the importance of dealing with the environment, this term referring to all external systems (economic, demographic, social, cultural, and political) that surround the organization. On the one hand, we have the organization and on the other we have its environment. The organization must react to the environment constituted by what surrounds it, particularly if it is active, or adverse, or simply changing. Inside the concept of environment is the idea that the organization exists only to serve what is inside the environment: the *raison d'être* must be elsewhere than inside the organization; it must be where we find those citizens any specific organization was created for. This gave birth to the principle that organizations are about serving users or customers even when public.

We then have a definition of management that is very interesting. Finding the best ways to do things while respecting and developing human resources and coping with the environment so that users or citizens get the best services from the public organizations that serve them. In reality, it still does not go on like this. Why?

Difficulties of Public Management

In part, this is related to a phenomenon of responsibility, of values and paradigms and of culture. The question of responsibility deals with the difference between the professional and the manager. A professional (architect, engineer, lawyer or physician) is held accountable for the way he works, for his professional act, while a manager is held accountable for his results whatever the way the work was done. Hence, the restoration manager will be evaluated on the final work that has been done, not on his architectural skills or job, while the same manager may be expecting, because of his professional background to be evaluated on the way the job is done. This is a philosophical difference, but at the same time, it is huge: many public managers having to deal with politics, economics, social values and human resources have difficulties accepting that, even if it is the essence of their job. What is important is not the way you work; it is the quality of obtained results whatever the part of luck in it.

In reality, public managers have their personal values, ideas, their own paradigms that they use to reinterpret the theory material in the sense that pleases them. First, they learn how to manipulate a language and then become modern. Then they practice what they learned in their professional life, looking at the leaders that were theirs, reproducing the behavior they showed them to, repeating fashionable sentences they learned and heard from other people. And then, when a part of these ideas and concepts are integrated and things can be modified, public administration goes on and may become better.

Furthermore, groups of human beings, when they are put together, tend to behave according to social principles. That is what has been observed in general inside societies, and then the concept has been applied inside organizations. Each organizational structure gives emphasis to some behaviors and the whole of these behaviors constitute the organizational culture. In consequence, management has to deal with virtual concepts like culture because their implications are concrete. But culture is another term that needs to be defined in order to clarify our preoccupations.

What is culture?

Culture is a multi faced concept that goes far beyond the organizational culture which we referred to previously. Although at the beginning it referred to Agriculture, the term may also refer to ethnologic culture, as means of doing things or means of surviving in a specific environment and that has little to do with art. This type of culture is learned passively, in the local environment someone grows in, and includes language, behavior, dressing, individualism, pop music, and so on. Actually, the term “culture” also refers to something different that is the critical culture, which is obtained through efforts, readings or observations: consequently, it is an active culture, for it is not given, it has to be acquired. This last type of culture includes the definition of what is beautiful, for it gives a base to judge. A cathedral is on the one hand a cultural object useful to practice religion and on the second hand, a cultural object of pure beauty. The concept of culture is used in two different meanings, here. Management for conservation deals with cases much less evident and has to be clear on its bases and its support: preserving traces of our past

(ethnologic culture) and maintaining objects of beauty (critical culture). We know we can work on a specific issue while justifying it for one reason and that it will be accepted for another.

Although these two interpretations of the word culture are almost opposites, very often their use make us believe they are synonyms. The only problem is that ethnologic culture is useful to survive in a particular environment and is very present in the life of the nations. So it is deeply valued by the people who need it to survive but poorly valued by people coming from another environment, i.e. another culture. That has been the problem of most colonies in History, because a dominant culture met a dominated culture that was not valued: that produced the expectation that the latter would disappear in favor of the strongest one. What we name "Occidental Culture" is in a sense pretty different from theses ethnic cultures because it is the sum of outbreaks in tradition: democracy, equality, justice for all, humans' rights are recent developments in History that are shared by a number of countries. At the same time, this culture is a threat to ways of living, some good some bad who can tell? A part of the answer surely comes from the mix of ethnic and critical elements in the reality of this Occidental Culture.

Cultural management and management of culture

Management deals with results, with client satisfaction and with maintaining low costs. At this point we encounter a first difficulty, as managers of culture, or as managers dealing continuously with culture. Management of a cultural environment, like management for conservation, implicates the clarification of choices in relation to culture, and it is not neutral. The whole strategic choices made to determine what should be an organization, its *raison d'être* and goals, will determine its management style and the means in consequence. Management for conservation will hence be based on the participation of people involved at all levels in the decision or in the working process. The science that will tell us what should be the best goals, the best decisions does not exist. The more important decisions refer to orientations, to strategic decisions, to decisions related to establishing policies. These decisions cannot be taken using a

decision model, there is no help for these decisions, decision making in these cases has to base itself on intuition, on using the available data the best possible way while knowing that it is not sufficient, while also hoping to get more solid information that never comes. More a decision is important, less one can be confident about its outcome. This type of decision must deeply rely on personal values, on social references, on particular paradigms.

Teaching this broader vision of management, like research, has to consider local culture and local ways of doing things. Therefore it relies on the participation of the trainees and must develop their professional capacity as a basic objective, with a strong orientation on managerial skills. The modern management learning must, in consequence, make room for a humanistic and self knowing approach because of the values involved, on relational skills because of the people involved and on technical abilities because of the complexity involved. Just knowing the right words and concepts is not enough; personal capacities as well as skills become essential. People may use the same words with different meanings because they are using their cultural referent. Finally, what recent research has taught us is that planning is useless to the one who does not have a personal taste for planning, and that knowing techniques is not worth much unless they are used, while the use is determined by cultural values.

Effectiveness, Efficiency, Culture and Decision

These words make an odd mix, but it is exactly what is management in the field of culture is about. We have to define what we want deeply and struggle for it, because this is not a place for easy performing and smooth decisions. The ultimate criteria to assess the validity of our goals, to know if we do the right things does not exist: this is a huge difficulty. We have to prove what we have to do is precious, useful or critical but our criteria refer to personal values deep inside us. One interesting point is that meeting other people who share these values has a possible effect to reinforce these values in between us, but we will still have to fight in order to deal with the level of critical culture of those we negotiate with.

In consequence, effective management is based upon personal and professional skills that permit to deal with the challenges of making people inside the organization productive and people outside the organization cooperative. This implies technical capacities as well as relationship capacities or conceptual capacities. The first ones are related to your knowledge of your field of expertise, the second ones are related to your capacity to communicate, motivate and lead people that interrelate with you, the last are related to your capacity to understand who is important, who you have to see and deal with, inside as outside the organization. We will come back later with details on these skills.

Perceptions of management: a survey

We made surveys in some countries of the public managers' evaluation on what their perception is of the function and the role of the manager. They were asked 71 specific and general questions on their level of acceptance of management issues. The differences we observe are extremely useful to show the national values and perspectives of the groups. Some questions relate to present issues in public administration and demonstrate the cultural gap that exists among the managers of different countries.

As an example, we have asked public managers if they consider that managing by results is important. Those who showed the strongest acceptance were public managers from Cameroon, followed by managers of Mexico, then by managers from Morocco, then from Chile and finally from Canada; we expected that the results would have been quite the opposite. This is a typical example of differences between what is said and what is done. This does not mean that African managers are actually more concerned by managing by results; it means they say they agree more. Furthermore, it tells us a lesson. We all know that what we say is less important than what we do; hence, the formation of public managers should show more preoccupation with action than pure concepts and the knowledge of any "magic words".

A second element appeared when we asked questions on human relations management. We then observed that the people who consider them important consider them difficult. This means that if you really try to manage considering the importance and value of human relationships, you will find it difficult, because it is the most arduous thing someone can try in management life. Making people motivated through financial, political or social difficulties is something very difficult. Finding the ways to influence them on a positive basis, in order to attain institutional goals, or to communicate with them the way they understand better, or even keeping control on what they produce without bothering them are pure difficulties for those who try. For those who consider formal authority is enough, or that people are paid so they just do the job, there are no problems even if the productivity they show is low. It generally depends, according to them, on external factors.

Maybe this explains why “knowledge of the law” is something managers in Cameroon, Morocco or Mexico consider extremely important while Canadians do not. This is explained by the use that is made of law, of hierarchy, of power relationships. Law is the basis of public administration. Organizations live by laws, create laws, control laws and this in turn makes their employees become law specialists. Many civil servants are lawyers and those who are not have to deal with this particularity. The sad part of that is that they may come to think that law is everything, and then forget about what are human relationships apart from law. Human institutions and organizations live with their ideas, their ideals, their conflicts, their struggle for power and their symbols as well as with the official objectives and goals they long for. Their complexity is unlimited and it has to be managed as a whole: the diagnosis of an organization must include all these elements in order to be complete and be useful and effective. Otherwise we limit ourselves to what is pleasant or unpleasant but we may miss the essential.

Let me give you an actual example of this, although it is quite extreme. Once, in Africa, I was director of an Administrative Reform Program, financed by the World Bank. There was a sector inside the Ministry that was named “Administrative Reform Department”. Although it was responsible for implementing the reform, employees were arriving late

and leaving early. When I commented this fact to the director, he immediately told me: “I know what I have to do”. He wrote a note saying something like “everybody should be in the office on time, by order of the director” and put it beside the entrance door, with some other notes of the same kind. In my opinion this is useless, and in fact it was. But it refers to a conception of public management where the important is the text, or what is said, and the informal behavior is not considered. For instance, if this manager would have desired to change his employees’ behavior, considering that it relates to deep cultural values, he would have found that the exercise was much more difficult.

The differences between the groups are relatively constant. When compared to Cameroon, Morocco or Mexico, Canadian public managers prefer more autonomy: rules that are less formal and less numerous, less detailed plans for their subordinates, and they are not as obsessed by secrecy as their counterparts are. So we can observe that their conception of their job, their function and their role are more based on a national cultural perception than on pure administrative techniques or concepts. This tends to show that national values like hierarchical distance or individualism play a significant role in the way public management is understood. The tools we use when managing organizations are defined through a national and a cultural bias that make the practice of management a result from these values more than an influence to modify them.

One can teach participative management and explain how it is fantastic for achieving sustainable results; but it will be learned in a way that is conform to the listeners’ values. Consequently, the management techniques are not sufficient, just as the intensive use of management theory “magic words” may be useless to achieve results (although very good to make a first impression). It looks as if the most important thing about management is the way people feel they have to behave. Management theories have been mostly developed in the United States, where people do not show big differences in hierarchical status (Hofstede, 1990). Public administration systems in many countries have been developed according to the French Civil Service system, which emphasizes the law, the status, and the formal relationships. Some countries value hierarchical distance much more than the US and even than France; if their new model for public management is

borrowed from experiences made in the UK or in New Zealand, their risk may become that their national culture will appear incompatible with the proposals. Someone recently wrote an article with a funny title: “Administrative Reforms: don’t try this at home!”. It refers to the necessity of adaptation to cultural and local specificities inside a society.

A focus for teaching and research

Consequently, what should we keep as fundamental lessons for the development of specific training programs in the field of culture management related urban heritage? On the one hand, we have people who have little theoretical background in public management with a concrete experience of dealing with national, provincial and local governments. On the other hand, we have an obligation of achieving results that is very important, considering the financial limitations and the global task’s size.

From this text it appears as pretty clear that we cannot limit us putting on new concepts that will enrich the global theory. What we need in this context is to have real skills, concrete capacities to put on effective diagnosis on organizations, to learn how to deal with people inside and outside the organization. The managers need to be able to give precisions on what is their vision of the future, what are the goals they loan for; they also need to clarify what their role should be in relation to the environment as in relation to the people they work with at different levels.

The managers in this context need a formation with a strong emphasis on managerial know-how, oriented on the manager as an individual. Management skills are very important because, on an informal basis, they determine the level of effectiveness that is attainable by organizations. We should help the development of interpersonal skills as well as intellectual or managerial. This question of emphasis on the know-how makes the whole formation process more acute to the personal needs of the managers.

Interestingly, surveys show that needs definition is usually strongly focused on what is known and experienced. At ENAP, as a School of Public Administration, we made

surveys of civil servants' needs to help define new programs, and we realized these people were generally using our documents to determine what their needs were. So very few "brand new things" appeared in the process. Consequently we now have the obligation to propose ourselves something new using the diagnosis we make of the whole situation. We have to determine the managers' weaknesses in order to define their needs. Generally, achieving goals and developing human resources around are more common weaknesses than modern concepts use.

There is a model that tells us that three types of skills exist. In this model, at the lower level, managers need to be able to do their technical job. This means use the techniques and the tools appropriated to their specific field. In our case, this means management of architectural tools as well as conservation and restoration. More your field of professional activities is technical, more this aspect becomes important. For example, you need more technical skills in a computer oriented activity than for educating young kids. This means also that once you master these skills, you are ready only for the technical part of the job.

The middle level is where managers need relationships skills. This is necessary to come in contact with other people, understand what they want, making them understand what we want, maintaining a bidirectional communication, understanding people, helping them being comfortable and working together. This is the main skill someone needs to have in management, for this relationship takes the most out of people's energy and time. This skill has nothing to do with technical skills except that we can imagine that someone who does not master technical may experiment serious problems at the interpersonal level. These skills are the base of modern management training, and most recent developments in public administration have something to do with mastering these skills.

The upper level is where managers need conceptual skills. This refers to the manager's capacity to determine who he should see for a specific case, what he should do and with whom. This refers to a conception of the organization and to a particular way of thinking and interpreting the events and the external relations outside the organization. At our

level, this includes the ability to maneuver in the political environment and the capacity to use key people to achieve goals.

There exists actually no formation or training for mastering the conceptual capacities, and the only factor we can imagine is related to your personal and critical culture. Are you able to understand things that are not said, understand the symbolic part of organizations' management, understand the conflicts inside the organizations and their effect on your managers? Management training can deal with the knowing of these parameters but the one and only manager will succeed in doing it correctly. Nonetheless the conscience of these elements can be very important to develop the ability to master them.

Formation and research for the future

The most important part of training in the context that is ours should deal consequently with the skills that will be most useful in the future. We have identified here quite a few important groups of parameters related to the theme. First one is the conception we have of what is public management, and in our case what is management in the field of culture, particularly restoration and urban renovation. The second one comes with the different notions of culture, ethnologic culture and critic culture, with the application that can be made to the organization. Preserving culture and developing culture refer to different concepts but actually we are continuously involved in both at the same time and it is difficult. The third one is related to the management skills that we, as managers, should demonstrate. There are different skill levels, not only in the sense that some people have more skills than others but also in the sense that the proper nature of the skills that are needed correspond to different type of managers.

Conclusions

We have still much work to do in order to identify the specifics of each society, and therefore to develop the type of management most adapted to the situation. At the same

time, lessons we get from experience is that the ability to modernize the way we manage our organizations has very much to do with the respect and the proper use of subordinates in the functioning of the organization.

This means that if we think management has to adapt itself to cultural characteristics, we are right, but at the same time we have to deal with the fact that the problem may be with the managers themselves. Highly hierarchical structures cannot be as effective, on the long run, as egalitarian ones. This comes from the fact that human beings who went through the process of formation and profesionalization find that the emergent model is more adapted to them than the more traditional power-structure-hierarchy oriented model. In many cases, managers have to forget cultural references they learned unconsciously in order to gain the effectiveness they are looking for.

Finally, managing in the field of culture deals with different conceptions of culture (ethnological and critical), different conceptions of society, based on different values and paradigms, but with numerous similar problems. One of the key characteristics of organizations is their capacity to attain specific goals, using different means and ways. This is why management has to focus so much on results, because it is the only thing that counts, at the end.