Management Culture and Practice in Ancient Civilizations of Sumerian, Egypt, and Greek

Fakidouma, Perewari & Oguara, Pagaranyo Otimi
Department of Management,
Niger Delta University, Nigeria.
E-mail: **perefakidoma@gmail.com** Tel: 08038341198
paggieo14@gmail.com

Abstract

The civilization of mankind started long ago, but the culture of management practices within ancient civilizations remains a subject of exploration. This research investigates the management culture and practices in the ancient civilizations of Sumerians, Egyptians, and Greeks, along with their impact on modern-day life. The study reveals that these civilizations exhibited management practices in decision-making, division of labor, information management, and more. The Sumerians showcased efficient leadership and a hierarchal structure, as evidenced by their record-keeping and division of labor. Similarly, the Egyptians established an organized bureaucracy that controlled the economy and managed labor for large-scale construction projects like pyramids and cities. In Greece, the Delphic Oracle and notable figures like Thucydides and Democritus emphasized information management and decision-making through data-driven practices and resource allocation. These findings underscore that management principles and practices have a historical foundation dating back to ancient civilizations, influencing modern management evolution.

Keywors: Management Practice, Civilization, Sumerian, Greeks, Egypt

Introduction

The success and survival of a society depend on the prevalent management practices in that domain. Management, as a systematic way of forming and maintaining selected aims, is a unique and fundamental aspect of human life and existence (Weihrich & Koontz, 1983 as cited in Usoro & Udongwo, 2018). It encompasses various processes, such as planning, directing, organizing, and controlling (Kilikily, Tambingon, Senduk, 2020). In the quest to understand the historical roots of management culture and practices, this research delves into the ancient civilizations of Sumerians, Egyptians, and Greeks.

The choice of these specific civilizations is deliberate and significant. Sumerians historically settled in Mesopotamia around 5000 to 4000 BC (Fischer, 1994, as cited in Khatun

and Islam, 2023). They are regarded as one of the earliest aborigines, existing in Southern Mesopotamia from the fourth to the early second millennia BC (Gates, 2011). Egypt, on the other hand, boasts one of the world's oldest civilizations, dating back to about 4500 to 3000 BC (Montgomery, 2012, as cited in Khatun & Islam, 2023). The ancient Egyptians developed a unique system of writing and state development, making them a fascinating subject for this study. Greece, often hailed as the birthplace of ancient civilization, is situated in southeastern Europe and played a pivotal role in the development of civilization, education, and culture (Khatun and Islam, 2023). Their early maritime activities for commercial reasons, population growth, and political power struggles provide valuable insights into management practices (Gates, 2011).

This research aims to fill a gap in the existing literature by comprehensively exploring the management practices within these ancient civilizations. While scholars have recognized the antiquity of management, there remains a need to delve deeper into the specific practices and cultures of Sumerians, Egyptians, and Greeks. By understanding how these ancient societies managed their affairs, including division of labor, control of the economy, organizational structures, internal control systems, crisis management, information management, and decision-making, we can gain valuable insights into the evolution of management principles and their enduring impact on modern-day management practices.

By bridging this historical gap, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the historical foundations of management culture and practice, shedding light on how these ancient civilizations continue to influence our approach to management today.

Literature Review
Brief Geographical History of Ancient Sumerian, Greek, and Egypt Civilizations

The emergence of management practices and culture in society means a management revolution otherwise called religious-commercial (Hakimova, 2022). Historically, let us examine brief geography and historical background. Fischer (1994) as cited in Khatun and Islam (2023) revealed that Sumerians historically are traced to have settled in Mesopotamia between 5000 and 4000 BC. Gates (2011) asserted that the Sumerians were well-known aborigines who existed within the fourth to the early second millennia BC in Southern Mesopotamia. He further revealed that Egypt was the third of the three river-based cultures that were great in West Asia and that of the East Mediterranean basin in civilization. It is on record that Egypt which started about 4500 to 3000 BC is among the oldest civilizations in the history of the world (Montgomery, 2012, as cited in Khatun & Islam, 2023). Gates, (2011) observed that the language of the ancient Egyptians was for the Hamito-Semitic language family in the home of South-West Asia and North Africa. The unique idea of writing began in Egypt at about the same time as it did in Mesopotamia which signaled the development in both regions of the state. The evolution of a true nation-state is well charted. Egypt is profoundly African but was largely influenced by foreign culture in the earliest times, though the extent and character of that influence is still debated (Rice, 2003). Gates, (2011) averred that the Step Pyramid was a clear innovation in both form and construction technique. It was the beginning of the building of the Fourth Dynasty and later smooth-sided pyramids when royal burials from the earlier Mastaba tombs were common. Egyptians organized slaves to

construct pyramids and cities using about 100,000 laborers working for approximately 20 years around 5000 BC (Adeoti, Olusoji, & Adegboye, 2013).

Greece is described as the birthplace of ancient civilization (Adeoti, Olusoji, & Adegboye, 2013). It is situated in the southeastern corner of Europe a small island country on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Van, 2016) as cited in Khatun & Islam 2023). Khatun and Islam (2023) averred that Greece depicts an ancient world standard in civilization, education, and culture. Gates, (2011) observed that in the sixth century BC, Greek cities went around to colonize other distant settlements along the shore through the sea. The intention among other interests was for commercial reasons, particularly the search for raw materials and minerals. In the same vein, competition for land to cultivate food, the rapid population spread in the eighth century BC and the competition for political power by the aristocrats struggling to take charge and control of the economy of city-states governments was another reason (Gates, 2011). Khatun and Islam (2023) concluded that Greek civilization was a base for modern Western civilization. Hakimova (2022) asserts that the evolution from primitive to civilization began in the middle of IV BC, to the highest stage of human society development in humanity. The development in the next stage was of social civilization which brought about begging of new management philosophical thinking in societies like Sumerian, Egypt, and Greek signaled the beginning of the stage of revolution.

Management practice in Ancient Civilization in Sumerian, Greece, and Egypt with the Principle of Division of Labour, Control of Economy, and Organizational Economic Theory

Management theories were applied in the ancient days which had military origins, this may be as a result of the needed efficiency and effectiveness that are important for success in warfare (Hakimova, 2022). According to Hakimova, (2022); Adeoti, Olusoji, and Adegboye (2013) the principle of division of labor and supervision was practiced as written in the earliest clay tablets records of the Sumerians. Sumerian society also had the best leaders and wisest men who were trained to be priests in religious administration. Calugay, Bondoc, Mariano, Obedicen, Santos, & Yrastorza, (2022) also found out that Ancient Egypt had a well-structured organizational hierarchical structure which was effective in dividing the labor at the time. Khatun and Islam (2023) opined that the administrators who are divided into 42 parts were responsible and accountable for their work but the economy was controlled centrally.

In ancient history, Sumerian society, as a result of record keeping produced the wisest and best leaders as priests and religious leaders (Ȍzgür, 2016). The cuneiform script was advanced as an instrument for recording bureaucratic activities which was the main writing system for about 3,000 years within the cultures in the late fourth to early third millennia BC by the Sumerians (Gates, 2011; Khatun & Islam, 2023). Rice (2003) observed that the Sumerians introduced the practice of living in cities by establishing great religious, hierarchies in administrations and state architecture. In Sumerian cities, leadership had their treasury, updated laws, and kept records of properties (Hakimova, 2022). Hole (1966) explained that the economy was controlled by people which influenced production and redistribution of goods and services in the early dynastic period in the city. A large staff of craftsmen, food producers, and laborers were dominant. Again, the temples also were manned by administrators. He described this practice where leaders were appointed as "Primitive Democracy". Ivanka (2013) cited in Ȍzgür (2016) revealed that though

scientific discipline in the organization is relatively young, however, the growth of organizational theory is traced to Taylor and Weber. Scott (1987) cited in Őzgür (2016) mentioned that in the old civilizations, organizations were present going back to Sumerians (5000, BC) and experienced its maturation phase with Taylor, Fayol, and Weber, continuing to grow to the present with modern management methods and principles. The clay tablets were the earliest form of writing of the Sumerians, revealing records of supervision practices and division of labor.

Management in Ancient Civilizations Greeks, Egypt, and Sumerian in Internal Control Systems, Crisis Management, and Bureaucracy

Lee (1971) opined that establishing the use of checking clerks in the city-states of Greece around 500 B.C. was part of the internal control of governmental receipts and payments. However, the records of the earliest Greek civilizations had little time for formalized accounting, with the result that internal auditing was not so sophisticated. There was rather a primitive form of audit which was superseded by somewhat more civilized forms in later years. For example, Stone mentions the time of Pericles (451-429 B.C.) in which each citizen effectively became an auditor "by the custom requiring contractors of buildings to report their receipts and expenditures on tablets chiseled in stone on the walls of the building (Lee, 1971). Vădan (2022) observed crises and conflict do not occur in a disciplined environment but are largely experienced in a world of changing situations with the language of expectation revealing how ancient decision-makers were able to communicate probabilistic decisions. The assertion portends that conflict management was also the central activity as a management practice.

Planning, organizing, directing, and controlling were critical components to achieving the great feat of the construction of pyramids and cities (Adeoti, Olusoji, & Adegboye, 2013). Ancient Egypt demonstrates the organizational structure of management practice and principles. Rice (2003) asserted that the Egyptian bureaucracy, from the foremost times, kept records of the annual reigns of the kings in the Nile. There were speculations of prehistoric chieftains and of kings who ruled various lands before Egypt became prominent. Adeoti, Olusoji, and Adegboye (2013) observed that the Classical theory sees management to be an ongoing process of interdependent parts functioning in such a way that is common to all which focuses on responsibility, accountability, and authority. Khatun and Islam (2023) said that Pharaoh who was then the supreme king of the country had all the authority and power over the wealth and land as head of the government and army but when it came to execution, he relied on a group of bureaucrats. According to the Canadian Museum of History, (n.d.), as cited in (Calugay et al. 2022), Egyptians had a well-structured and established bureaucracy which was still useful up to 5,000 years later; and they are upheld as a code of ethics and standards even expect from today's workers in modern organizations.

Management in Ancient Civilizations Greek, Egypt and Sumerian in Information Management and Decision Making

According to Adeoti, Olusoji, and Adegboye (2013), decision-making theory in an organization carefully be patterned in such a way as to accommodate areas of decision-making, in doing so professionals are to be made accountable for decisions in the respective domain of expertise. However, it was criticized that the theory cannot be applied until such an organization is well established and the areas of decision-making points are known. Looking at it from the

forgone, information and decision-making was prominent in the activities of the literature of the Sumerians, the Greek, and the Egyptians. Zanakis, Theofanides, Kontaratos, and Tassios, (2003) maintained that ancient Greeks, prognoses culture which was based on data and information was the responsibility of the Delphic Oracle for over 10 centuries. This was also witnessed in historian Thucydides of the fifth century BC, the mathematician Thales of Miletus in the sixth and seventh centuries BC, and the father of the atom Democritus in the fifth century BC. Similarly, Democritus introduced the allocation of resources, decision-making, and competition. Lowry (1965, 1979) cited in Zanakis et al. (2003) believes that the progenitor of the notion of linear programming is Xenophon's drive for the optimal combination of resources.

Zanakis et al. (2003) said Greeks' construction of projects for public works dates back to the sixth century BC and that planning and decision-making practices were visible in the construction of the 1,036 m (0.64 miles) tunnel which carried water from the spring to the city of Samos (Pythagorion). The involvement shows social psychology and sociology to enable the understanding of organizational behavior in problem-solving. This therefore deals with productivity, employee satisfaction, and morale which are connected to decision-making (Adeoti, Olusoji, &Adegboye, 2013). Ancients Greeks contributed greatly to the ideas and practices of economic and social decision-making in addition to the arts and philosophy (Zanakis et al, 2003). Xenophon presented the first ideas on stimulating economic growth, leadership, management, and fundraising in the fourth century BC in his manuals on public administration, Also, the patterns of behavior of the gods and goddesses of the ancient Greeks reflect styles of decision-making as possessing superhuman powers exposing human involvement (Zanakis, et al. 2003). Vădan (2022) also unfolded the different strategies by which ancient decision-makers formulated with the application of probabilistic thinking to quantify uncertainty and inform collective social, economic, and military decisions. Most times, the meetings were problem-solving participatory congresses, which involved brainstorming discussions for the best solution to the identified problem. The decisions reached by gods are related to mortals and implementation is carried out with follow-up reports (Theofanides 1999) cited in (Zanakis et al, 2003).

Mo, (2013) asserted that the effectiveness of communication among tribes was indicative of their power coordination against their common enemies. In Addition, writing as a way of communication promoted their mutual symbiotic exchanges of knowledge, technology, experiences, norms, and goods that brought members together.

Methodology

This conceptual paper employs a qualitative research design that relies on a systematic review and synthesis of existing literature and historical documents. Given the nature of the study, which seeks to explore and analyze management culture and practices in ancient civilizations, a qualitative approach is most suitable. The primary source of data for this study is scholarly literature, historical documents, and archaeological findings related to the Sumerian, Egyptian, and Greek civilizations. The following steps were taken to collect data: A comprehensive search of academic databases, libraries, and digital archives was conducted to gather relevant literature. Keywords included "management practices," "ancient civilizations," "Sumerian," "Egyptian," "Greek," and related terms. Ancient texts, inscriptions, and manuscripts that shed light on

management practices and cultural aspects were consulted. These included writings from historians, philosophers, and ancient administrative records.

Archaeological findings, such as artifacts, structures, and ancient inscriptions, were reviewed to provide additional insights into the management culture of these civilizations. Secondary sources, including academic papers, books, and articles, were reviewed to access interpretations and analyses of historical and archaeological data. The collected data underwent a qualitative content analysis process. The following steps were involved in the analysis: Relevant information from historical documents and literature was coded according to key themes, such as division of labor, decision-making, organizational structures, information management, and crisis management. Data from the different sources were synthesized to create a coherent narrative regarding management culture and practices within each of the selected civilizations.

Based on the themes and insights derived from the literature review and data analysis, a conceptual framework was developed. This framework forms the basis for understanding the management culture and practices in the ancient civilizations of Sumerian, Egyptian, and Greek. It also helps in organizing and presenting the findings in a structured manner.

Conclusion

Management practice dates back to the creation of the world. In the primitive era, the conscious effort to keep records was not given serious attention. However, as the era gradually faded out, civilization came in which brought in new ways of doing things. The process of getting things done further brought civilization through experience and learning. It was quite prominent that decision-making was a key aspect of revealing management practices and culture. This was experienced during divination during the consultation of the god and goddess. The message often is passed to the kings which requires critical thinking to bring about decision-making. Hierarchical Leadership was also evident in the well-established leadership structure, particularly in Egypt. One remarkable area where management practices featured significantly was the division of labor during the building of pyramids and cities. The writing was another form of communication that was used as a major communication tool during the exchange of goods and transactions in ancient civilizations among the Sumerians.

Results and Discussion

The discussion section of this paper interprets the findings within the context of the conceptual framework. It involves a comparative analysis of management practices across the selected civilizations, highlighting similarities, differences, and their potential impact on modern management theories and practices. From the aforesaid, the research found out that management and civilization existed even in the ancient and primitive eras. But as civilization evolved more and better ways of addressing issues emerged. This further brought about principles and theories that are used to guide the operations of organizations to date. It is also possible that shortly these theories and principles can be redefined. This study establishes the historical foundations of management theory by exploring the management culture and practices in the ancient civilizations of Sumerian, Egyptian, and Greek. It contributes to the understanding of how early societies managed their affairs, laying the groundwork for contemporary management principles. The paper offers a comparative analysis of management practices across these ancient civilizations, highlighting both commonalities and differences. This comparative perspective can enrich

management theory by revealing universal principles as well as culturally specific approaches to leadership, decision-making, and organization. By tracing the evolution of management practices from ancient times to the present, this study provides insights into the continuous development of management thought. It demonstrates that management principles did not emerge solely from modern and scientific management but have deep historical roots.

Implications

Understanding the management cultures of ancient civilizations highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity in modern organizations. It underscores the significance of adapting management practices to the cultural context of the workforce, enhancing cross-cultural collaboration and effectiveness. In addition, the historical examples of innovative management practices in ancient societies can inspire modern organizations to seek novel approaches to problem-solving, decision-making, and crisis management. It encourages organizations to be adaptive and open to experimentation. Also, Insights from ancient leaders and hierarchies can inform contemporary leadership development programs. Studying how leaders in these civilizations managed their roles and responsibilities can offer valuable lessons for leadership development and succession planning. Furthermore, organizations can draw on their cultural heritage and historical roots to build a unique organizational identity and management philosophy. Acknowledging and embracing historical influences can strengthen organizational culture and values. Lastly, the paper provides historical case studies that can be used for educational purposes. These case studies offer valuable lessons for management students and practitioners, encouraging critical thinking and reflection on the historical evolution of management practices.

In summary, this study's theoretical contributions shed light on the historical foundations of management theory, while the practical implications emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity, innovation, leadership development, organizational heritage, and historical case studies in contemporary management practice. By recognizing the historical roots of management culture, organizations can enhance their adaptability and effectiveness in a global and culturally diverse world.

Acknowledgement

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