

From past to future

When analysing the evolution of management, the past times can be seen as certitude, while the future ones can be discussed in terms of work hypotheses. Scenarios have the great virtue of providing unlimited possibilities to treat future realities. We can talk about virtual realities as forms of manifestation of future contexts.

If, by the end of the 19th century, we were talking about Fayol's theories, nowadays we have the possibility to analyse such theories from the perspective of their validation within the real economy. It is obvious that the critical analysis is at hand rather than the construction of a system architecture able to reveal, in terms of reflection and experiments (with successes and failures), the evolution of miscellaneous phenomena. The success of Fayol's work is the result of an experience of 30 years in Administration and of 50 years in Management. If, after 1925, Fayol's contribution has been forgotten for a while, in 1935 Lyndall Urwick reminded us of the important steps the former has made for the development of management. Therefore, at present, we can designate him as one of the management classics. That's how, circumstances and, most important, value-related considerations impose authors the vast experiences of whom can influence systems at both micro and macro level.

Theory becomes virtue when it is issued by practitioners able to identify (based on the repeatability of certain phenomena) that clear rules can be defined, thereby allowing for the outlining of specific behavioural patterns at the level of individuals and systems. Many of the hypotheses set up by contemporary experts in the matter can turn into tomorrow's theories. I strongly believe that great theories can be created only by people having really experienced related issues. Otherwise, these become stylistic exercises without coverage in the real world.

Hence, past is always the future's germ. Paraphrasing „from art for art's sake to art as means of knowledge“ we can discuss the possible meanings of the words „from theory for theory 's sake to theory as means of knowledge „.

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