

BOOK REVIEW

Management: Current Practices And New Directions

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What are the differences between organizations run on faith-based principles and those run without that filter? Historically, academics and practitioners have answered this question by providing broad comparisons in perspectives or motives, or they have simply contrasted the two types of organizations and management through anecdotal evidence. There have been few resources on the market that address this question in a systematic analysis of organizational management. The landscape changes with a new management text, co-authored by Bruno Dyck and Mitchell J. Neubert, that provides the first systematic framework and language on which to hang this discourse. Mainstream texts were beginning to add pieces to our understanding of other-centeredness management concerns, such as corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, social entrepreneurship, and servant leadership, but these were often presented as add-on features, or fringe elements, to an entrenched orthodoxy. Dyck and Neubert weave the foundations of other-centeredness into a fully integrated “alternative” approach and perspective to organizational management, while comparing and contrasting it to mainstream views.

It should be noted that this text is not identified explicitly as faith-based; it is a text for all audiences and published by one of the major North American mainline publishing groups (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt). Dyck and Neubert capitalize on what they view as a subtle but determined shift in management theory and practice in the West from a perspective that is more materialistic and individualistic to one that seeks a more wholistic balance among multiple forms of well-being, and the latter simply aligns more closely with the principles and tenets of the major faith groups. The “mainstream” and “multistream” terms were coined by the authors to identify the contrast-

ing perspectives on management in this text, with MAIN giving reference to materialism and individualism, and MULTI providing reference to “multiple forms of well-being (e.g., material, physical, social, ecological, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic) for multiple stakeholders (e.g., owners, employees, suppliers, customers, competitors, neighbors, future generations)” (p. xix). Mainstream assumptions, many of which are drawn from Rational Choice Theory, are increasingly being called into question, particularly with renewed emphasis on sustainability and sustainable organizational practices. By contrast, multi-stream management methods are increasingly being advocated not only on moral and humanitarian grounds, but also in the interest of better and more sustainable management, including a better bottom-line over the long term.

Management: Current Practices and New Directions follows a similar scope and sequence to the most popular management texts in use today. The authors begin with a section introducing students to management basics, followed by several chapters on the environment and context of management. The heart of the text is the analysis of the familiar four major functions of management: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, also known as the POLC Model. For each of the book’s 18 chapters, the authors present the material first from the mainstream perspective, which compares favorably with other popular management texts. Then they present the same principles from the multi-stream perspective and provide comparative analysis of each facet of management with the mainstream view. For some chapters and principles the differences are very subtle; for others, it is quite stark. This juxtaposition of perspectives, presented item-by-item, provides the continuous and consistent contrast and comparison that builds a new framework of understanding of the multistream

view, and it invites students naturally to identify their own experiences and views with one of these two perspectives.

The contrasting of perspectives approach in the text provides an excellent launching pad for comparative assignments and class discussion. While the authors espouse a preference for multi-stream management techniques in most organizational situations, they provide a fair and balanced view of both approaches, and they teach the importance of situational management and leadership, even providing examples where mainstream techniques may still be the ideal methods to apply. My students have really enjoyed the comparison of the two approaches to management, and a good percentage of them have identified with both perspectives, given specific management situations.

For the past several years I used one of the top mainline management texts, and I found that I was trying to add many of the perspectives offered in the Dyck/Neubert text that I am now able to identify as “multi-stream.” With the new text, the multi-stream perspective is fully integrated into every element of management we study, and it provides a semester-long analysis of the competing perspectives; this presents for the students a more systematic, comprehensive, and integrated review that bolsters student interest, reflection, analysis, and learning. Class discussions now almost always revolve around the comparison of the mainstream and multi-stream approaches, and I believe my students are energized by this analysis, drawing them in for deeper learning and understanding of the principles of management.

Whereas mainline management texts often focus on U.S. for-profit organizations, another difference the Dyck/Neubert text offers over many others on the market is that management is explored within the broad organizational contexts of both for-profit and nonprofit, and both domestic and international. This more inclusive approach allows students from all countries and cultures, and in such diverse fields as business, education, social work, biology, and sport and recreational leadership, to find relevance to organizational management in their settings and in their chosen career fields. Since adopting this text, I have fewer questions from non-business majors about how this material and course is relevant to them, and I have documented more in-class participation from non-business majors.

Many of the features and resources packaged with textbooks today are included with this management text. In addition to having excellent readability qualities, each chapter includes an opening and closing case study that applies the learning for that lesson with real life experiences; these are selected with a good balance of for-profit/nonprofit, and domestic/international. One of my stu-

dents, who had previously used another mainline text, commented to me that he found the cases in the Dyck/Neubert text “more real”; I attribute his assessment to the contrasting approaches to management and in more settings, thus allowing a more diverse student population to find relevance. Chapters are also infused with special break-out boxes that explore “Management in Practice,” “Digging Deeper,” “What Do You Think?,” and “Hands-on Activities”; these provide relevance to student experiences and make good discussion starters in class. Each chapter begins with a helpful “Road Map” outline and also concludes with a chapter summary and questions for reflection and discussion. A full line of instructor resources is packaged with the text, including a good set of chapter-by-chapter short video clips.

As a professor of business and economics in a Christian Anabaptist university, I had struggled for several years trying to teach principles of management using secular, mainline resources while also trying to integrate values consistent with my/our faith and heritage — the values that distinguish our institution and program from nearby state universities. While it felt like the two perspectives were converging naturally in some areas, a virtual glass wall between the two seemed to block full integration. Dyck and Neubert have shattered that barrier with their groundbreaking text that I believe represents a tipping point in the way we study and teach management theory and practice. It reminds us that we don’t need to consider faith-based and secular views to organizational management in isolation; rather, a fully integrated perspective is not only possible but preferred in bringing the best of management thinking and experience to readers who are ready to receive an integrated perspective.

I needed a text like this to lend validation to the distinguishing characteristics of my faith and faith-based university, and the structure and language provides a standard framework for analysis, communication, and collaboration with these issues. At the same time, I think secular programs and universities will find equal validation in this offering, if not from a faith-based perspective then on the basis of best practices for sustainable organizational growth and development. I recommend this text for all audiences but strongly suggest that professors in faith-based institutions add it to their list of examination review copies for undergraduate management courses.

REFERENCE

- Dyck, B. and Neubert, M. (2010). *Management: Current Practices and New Directions*. Boston: Cengage/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt