



**THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA
COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MASTER OF BUSINESS/PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION
FINAL EXAMINATION – 2015
MCP 1602 – MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONS
DURATION: THREE (03) HOURS**

Date: 22.08.2015

Time: 9.30 am – 12.30 pm

**Answer All Questions in Part A and
any THREE (03) Questions from Part B**

(Question Number ONE (01) and TWO (02) are compulsory)

Part A

**Management in Critical perspective
Alvesson and Willmott**

Questions in Part A are based on a book chapter '*Management in Critical Perspective*' by Alvesson and Willmott (2012). Answer these questions drawing on your understanding of their discussion as given below.

What Then of the Managers?

Managers form a heterogeneous group whose members work across a variety of sectors – e.g. public, private, and voluntary – and in diverse organizations where they undertake a wide variety of tasks. They occupy different specialisms (e.g. marketing) and work at different levels in organizational hierarchies. They manage in uncertain conditions and are in possession of imperfect information; and they are under pressure to be responsive to a plurality of demands. This diversity and dynamism makes it far from easy to generalize about what management is and what managers do.

Amid confusions and uncertainties about managers, and their collective activity as management', there is a tendency to privilege one single, technical meaning: management as a universal process comprising a number of functions, such as planning, coordinating, and so on. Ignored in this conception is the embeddedness of the managers performing these functions, individually and collectively, within relations of power and domination. These social relations are

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crucial as it is through them that the functions ascribed to management are defined, allocated and undertaken.

Management is inescapably a social practice (Reed, 1984) as it is embedded in social values, politics, interests and relations of class, gender, ethnicity, etc. As such, the meaning and activity of management are most 'intimately bound up with the social situation of the managing group' (Child, 1969: 16). The nature and significance of management depend upon the historical and societal context(s) in which it emerges and takes shape (Wilson and Thomson, 2006). The decision making of (senior) managers increasingly shapes these contexts (Scarborough, 1998).

The 'social situation' in which modern management has developed is one of specifically capitalist economic relations and the rise of the modern state within diverse societal contexts. This is important because, when the historical and cultural embeddedness of management is appreciated, it is no longer plausibly represented as a set of universal functions. Instead, it is more compellingly understood as 'an outgrowth of disparities in socio-economic power, the acquisition or initiation of work processes by private capital or the state, and the desire for control which flows from that' (Hales, 1993: 6). Management is conditioned by the specific, local contexts in which it develops and which it shapes. It comprises diverse practices that develop within institutions established by private capital and the modern state and which are conditioned by disparities of socio-economic power. In these institutions, managers are delegated responsibility to exercise discretion in a manner that secures the control and reproduction of established, yet inherently fragile, relations of power. Their work involves reforming these institutions in order to sustain them. To this end, managers develop and apply whatever technologies – coercive and seductive – that are believed to be effective and legitimate. Yet, while managers are empowered *inter alia* to raise funds, generate revenues and allocate resources, the nature and extent of the rise and influence of management – what Burnham (1941) called the 'managerial revolution' – is restricted as well as enabled by wider relations, of patriarchy and ethnicity as well as capital and the state within which management decision making is embedded.

This assessment begs the question of why, in textbooks, management is so widely presented as a universal and neutral activity. One answer, as we suggested earlier, is that the authority of management depends, at least in the business sector, upon a covering over of the exclusion of democratic control over decision making – including the raising of funds, the generation of revenues, and the allocation of resources, within work organizations (Deetz, 1992a). This is no coincidence as disparities of ownership, income and opportunity have been secured by delegating control to management whose task it is, in the private sector at least, to deliver profitable growth by ensuring productive effort and containing dissent. The institution of management has ensured that privately owned work organizations are largely exempted from any form of democratic accountability to employees or a wider citizenship (Khuruna, 2002). Top management alone, enabled as well as constrained by corporate

governance regulation, is expected to exercise control over organizational matters, although there are many formal and informal expressions and modifications of this prerogative. Notably, there are some differences between countries as a consequence of legislation that incorporates some representation of labour and sources of countervailing power from unions, professional employees, pressure groups and so on.

Managers are intermediaries between those who hire them and those whom they manage. Managers are employed to coordinate, motivate, appease and control the productive efforts of others. These 'others' do not necessarily share managerial agendas and might otherwise be inclined to be productive in ways that would not accommodate the 'overhead' of managerial salaries and the dividends and capital growth that accrue to shareholders. As management becomes a separate activity undertaken by a specific, comparatively privileged group, any notion of work organization comprising a community of interest with shared goals invites a sceptical assessment. A 'them' and 'us' division is invited and can easily widen; and one key task of management is to address and minimize such a possibility. The situation is complicated, however, as managers are themselves salaried employees with their own sectional (e.g. empire building and defending) agendas, even if they are more directly accountable than other employees to major shareholders or, in the case of public management, to political elites and ultimately to electorates. Almost all managers are subordinates, and most are perhaps more subordinates than superordinates (although, as we have noted, our focus is primarily upon middle and senior rather than junior managers). The critical study of management unsettles conventional wisdoms about its sovereignty as well as its universality and the impartiality of its professed expertise. It is therefore worth stressing that the critical study of management is by no means 'antimanagement'.

The purpose of 'critical management studies' (CMS), as we conceive of it, is not to commend, or participate in, the Utopian project of eliminating all forms of hierarchy, removing specialist divisions of labour or even abolishing the separation of management from other forms of work. Rather, in addition to challenging received wisdoms about management, such as its impartial professionalism and political neutrality, the critical study of management aspires to foster less socially oppressive forms of organizing and managing. The (for us) desired democratization of managerial activity may result in divisive work organizations being replaced by collectives or cooperatives in which there is a focus *inter alia* upon social objectives, green forms of work and a reduced vertical division of labour. It is also highly likely that some vertical as well as horizontal divisions will be retained, albeit ones that are accountable to diverse stakeholders rather than shareholders or fund managers interested primarily or exclusively in securing or enhancing the return to investors. It is envisaged that social divisions will be justified through processes of democratic contestation, and not by executive elites whose decision making is supported by spurious, self-serving assertions about the rationality, impartiality or effectiveness of their rule. The demand here is not for an end to management but for the harnessing and redirection of management to more democratically determined and accountable ends.

01. "Management is inescapably a social practice (Reed, 1984) as it is embedded in social values, politics, interests and relations of class, gender, ethnicity, etc. As such, the meaning and activity of management are most 'intimately bound up with the social situation of the managing group' (Child, 1969: 16). The nature and significance of management depend upon the historical and societal context(s) in which it emerges and takes shape (Wilson and Thomson, 2006)".

Do you agree with the argument(s) as raised by Reed, Child and Wilson and Thomson in the above statement? Why or Why not? Justify your answer giving specific examples in relation to each point of view as raised by these authors.

(20 Marks)

02. (a) Discuss the aims of 'Critical Management Studies' (CMS) as given in the above discussion by Alvesson and Willmott.

(10 Marks)

(b) What is *your stance* on the aims of 'Critical Management Studies' (CMS)? Justify your answer with appropriate examples.

(10 Marks)

Part B

03. With the availability of advanced information technology that allows an organizations work to be done anywhere at any time, is organizing still an important managerial function? Why or Why not? Elaborate your answer drawing in practical examples from contemporary work organizations.

(20 Marks)

04. (a) "Leaders make a real difference in organizations performance".

Build arguments in support of and against this statement with suitable examples.

(12 Marks)

- (b) Do you think most managers in real life use a contingency approach to increase their leadership effectiveness? Discuss.

(08 Marks)

05. (a) Describe the job characteristics model as a way to design motivating jobs.

(06 Marks)

- (b) Would managers use any of the motivation theories or approaches to encourage and support workforce diversity effects? Explain your answer.

(14 Marks)

06. Write short notes on the following.

- a) Workplace Misbehavior.
- b) Self-Monitoring
- c) Emotional Intelligence (EI).
- d) Social Learning

(5x4 = 20 Marks)

