

The Evolution of Management Theories, Philosophies and Thoughts in Nigeria

Olusoji J. G. – olusojijames@yahoo.com, Dept. of Business Administration, University of Lagos, Lagos State, Nigeria.
Ogunkoya O.A. - ogunkoyaoa@yahoo.com, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

Abstract: This paper examines the evolution of management theories, philosophies and thoughts in Nigeria. It views management as a philosophy and practice that have existed in Nigeria even prior to the industrial revolution era in Europe. The study discusses management thought evolution in the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial history of Nigeria. By relying on secondary data gathered from related literatures, the paper identifies factors influencing the evolutionary development of Management thoughts in Nigeria which include colonialism, culture, socio-economic thoughts, technological development and organizational size. After drawing comparisons between Western management practice and Nigerian management culture, the study concludes that colonialism and culture are the major forces driving the development of managerial thoughts and practice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Communalism; Patronage; Indirect rule; Culture, Patrimonial Management

JEL Codes: B00; B19; B29

1. Introduction

Management has evolved and grown from virtually an insignificant theme in the previous centuries, to one of the most important field of study in this contemporary world and economy. It has become an important concept in not only business circles but also in social, economic and political spheres. Management has also developed into a dominant and innovative influence on which today's society depends for substantial support and national growth (Cole, 2004). Management can be defined conventionally as the act, practice and science of getting work done through people. However, real management according to Abedi (2001) can be described as the development of human and non-human resources through work.

Management has distinctly developed into numerous disciplines including marketing, organizational behaviour, operations research, human resources and strategic management. It is a field of study that is as old as civilization, and this is evident in the history of man itself (George, O.J et al 2012). Consequently, management has evolved in the social, political, economic and military lives of Nigerians prior to the colonial invasion of the 18th century.

Studies on management practices in Sub-Saharan Africa are few compared to almost any other region of the world. Most studies have emphasized western theories and commentaries on management and management dynamics. These studies, however, have not reflected the evolutionary trends and dimensions of management thoughts and philosophies in the most populous black nation, which are critically important to African management (Blunt & Jones, 1997).

The study of the evolution of management in Nigeria will add value to the already existing literatures which have only viewed management evolution from a western perspective (Kinggudu, 1991). Today's management thinking has evolved from a whole range of influences over a long period of time. By learning from the successes and failures from the past, re-inventing the wheel will be avoided since those who do not learn from the past are condemned to repeat the mistakes of the past. It is then necessary to historically trace our steps back into our rich history and culture as suggested by Fashoyin (2005: 66-175) that 'within the practices of the past, there are lessons of history for tomorrow in a continuous stream. We occupy but one point in this stream. The purpose is to present the past as a prologue to the future.'

Most Management theories are based on the writings of 20th century Western scholars whose disciplinary orientations were heavily grounded in economics and classical sociology (Mangaliso, 2001). Their writings depict people as being individualistic, utility maximizing, and transaction-oriented. Theories of management based on these assumptions frequently lead to mechanistic portrayals of human behaviour that largely ignore cultural influences and social differences (George, Owoyemi & Okanlawon, 2012).

The reality is that people are not just economic beings; they are also social and communal beings, and are often influenced more by emotions than presumed logic (George et. al., 2012). As Mangaliso (2001:34) concludes, 'by acknowledging this, global management discourse can evolve more holistic and inclusive theories' of management practices.

In this conceptual study, the evolution of management in Nigeria covers two major spheres of attention: the

epistemological evolution of Management thoughts in Nigeria and the ontological evolution of Management practices in Nigeria. Management studies have been carried out by indigenous researchers for the quest of universally acceptable management theories. These have become challenging because some considered management as a new phenomenon in the 19th century (Redding, 2002).

Management practice is not something novel. It has been practised in the ancient and earlier modern world. In the pre-colonial era, dating back 3000 BC, there were no large industrial firms. However, societies were organized, led and managed in all spheres of lives socially, educationally, politically, militarily and economically (Blun & Jones 1997).

While other advanced nations can trace the evolution of management thoughts since 5000 years BC, the earliest record of management practice in Nigeria was the Nok Culture in 200AD. Therefore, it is necessary to conceptually explore the evolutionary management trends in the Europe, America and Asia before examining that of Africa, especially Nigeria, and so we will review the relevant literature in the next section.

2. Evolution Management Thoughts: Western Experience

The ideal starting point for this conceptual study is to explore the evolution of the western historical concept of management. This is necessary as most management terms and disciplines, as we know them today, originated from the West. The period between 1700 and 1875

witnessed the industrial revolution and the writings of the classical economists. The emergence of the factory system during this period showed the importance of

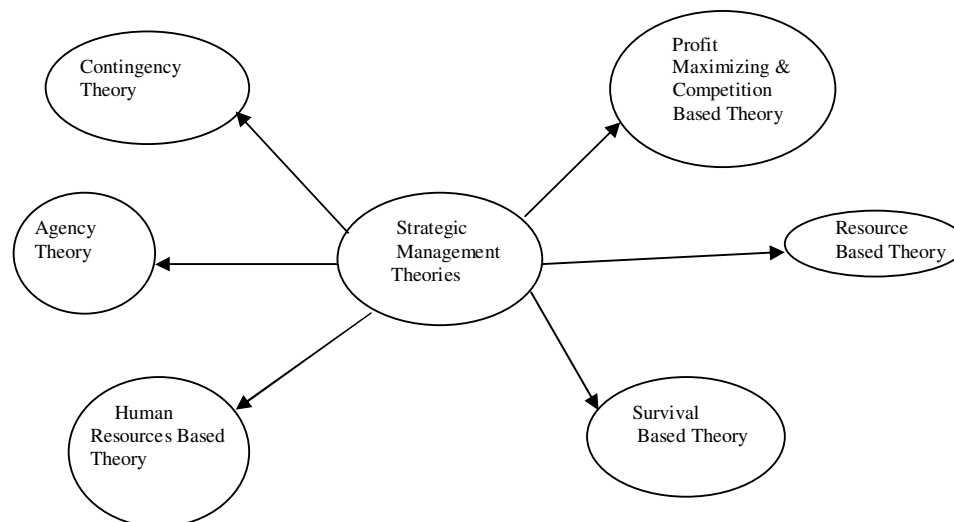
managerial functions in a novel way (Cole, 1999). As factories and jobs increased and a distinctive work culture began to take shape, appropriate management became imperative.

This revolution brought along with it new questions and challenges to which adequate attention was required. To find appropriate solutions to these problems, people began to recognise management as a separate field of study. The scientific management, being the first thought, initiated the systematic analyses of managerial aspect of organizations for practical application in the day to day running of organizations (Cole 1999; DuBrin, 2006; Raduan, Jegak, Haslinda & Alimin, 2009).

According to Smith (2002), the Modern Management theories have been traced back to the 1900 (Scientific Management); 1910 (Bureaucracy); 1920 (Administrative management), 1930s (Human Relations); 1940s (Quantitative Management); 1950 (Systems Theory); 1970s (Contingency Theory); 1980s (Total Quality Management); 1990 (Learning Organization); and 2000s (Reengineering). Today, the emergence of the information revolution and networking has shifted the paradigm focus of managers and academics to Knowledge Management, Team Work and the IMP (Networking) approach (Smith C., 2003). They have evolved with time to suit the needs of organizations and the environments they operate in. This is shown in the Fig. 1, Fig. 2 and Fig. 3 below.

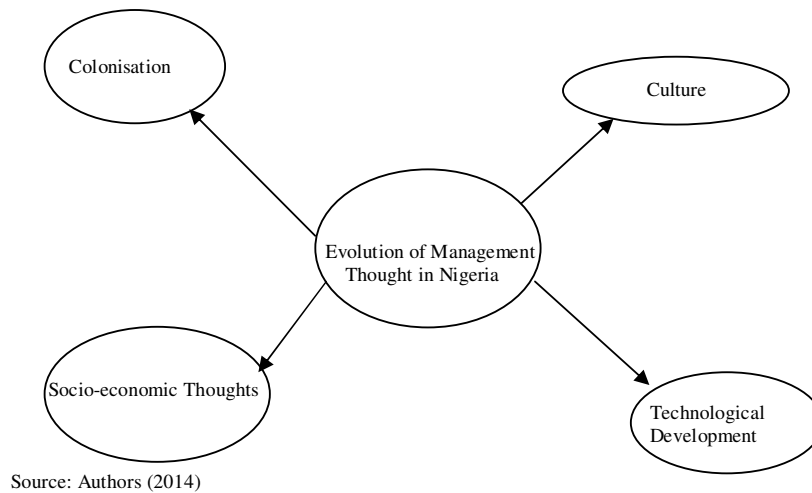
In Nigeria, management thoughts and practices have evolved differently starting from the pre-colonial period with management by communality, and then paternalistic, to scientific method of management that reflects of the colonial influences. The next section will examine the evolution of management philosophy in Nigeria and the factors affecting it.

Fig 1 - Colonization; Socio-economic thoughts; Technological development and Culture



Source: Authors (2014)

Fig. 2 - Factors involved in the management evolution in Nigeria



3. Management Philosophy and Practice in Nigeria

Nigeria is a sub Saharan country located in the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa and shares borders with Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Republic of Benin. It is Africa's most populous nation and the tenth largest country in the world, with population of about 149 million and total land area of 356,669 square miles (Fashoyin, 2005). Nigeria came into existence as a result of the amalgamation of 1914 that joined the North and South together to form Nigeria and it secured her independence in the year 1960 from Britain.

The Nigerian tribes and other early farming and hunting societies appear to have lived first in small nomadic kinship groups that tended to be cooperative and relatively egalitarian. As time passed, the Nigerian tribes settled into hierarchically organized communities presided over by kings and stratified by age, gender and wealth that were signified by ownership of livestock. In these communities, traditional management was based on ascribed power passed on through patrilineal inheritance. Age was explicitly associated with seniority and accumulated wisdom in the paternalistic setting (Yesufu, 1982).

4. Methodology

The paper is purely conceptual as it relies on the writings of published articles and texts for secondary data. It applied a qualitative research design following the tradition of (George et. al. 2012).

5. Factors influencing the Evolution of Management Thoughts and Practice in Nigeria

The evolution of management thoughts and practice in Nigeria has been shaped by the following four factors:

1. Colonization;
2. Socio-economic thoughts;
3. Technological development;
4. Culture

5.1 Colonization and its influence on Management thoughts

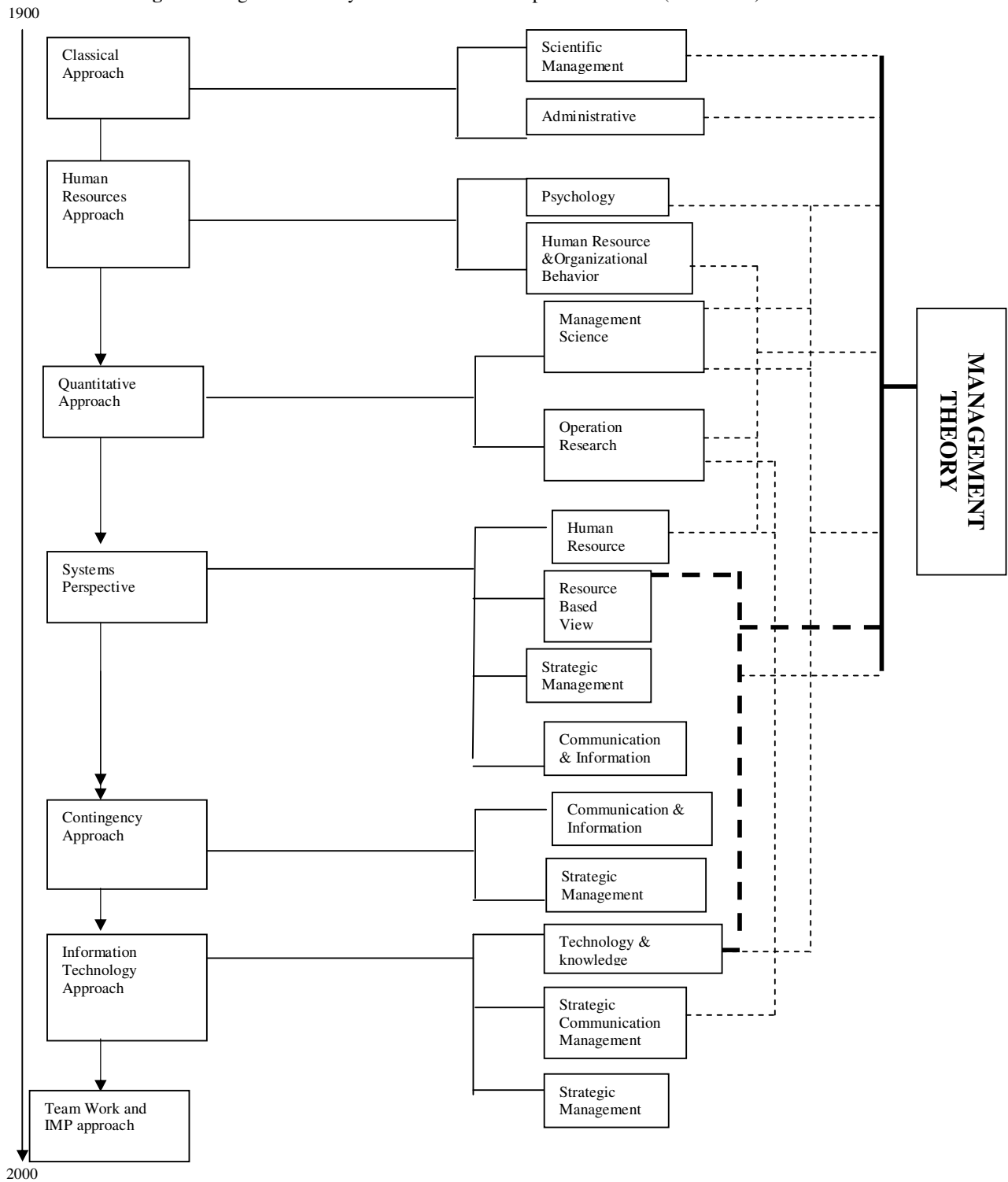
Colonization, also known as imperialism is the aggressive subjugation of a country or people by the other. The evolution of management thoughts in Nigeria has been influenced by the developments in the post industrial revolution era in Europe and America. The search for new markets for the mass production during the period led to the invasion of nations and communities, thus colonialism (Kamoche, 1992).

Just like most other countries in Africa, Nigeria came under effective colonization around the 19th century. The British, having established a foothold in the areas surrounding the River Niger with extensive trading and Christianization, began actively putting in place formal structures of colonization by way of government institutions and other political arrangements (Fashoyin,2005).

This started first with Lagos in 1861. By 1914, the Colony of Lagos and the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria had systematically become consolidated into an adjacent geo-political entity christened Nigeria. Britain established parallel administrative bureaucracies (in the North, South and Lagos colony) with which colonial companies exploited the vast natural resources of the continent, and Nigeria inclusive.

Western management culture has evolved through various significant phases: pre-industrialism (mercantilism), industrialization, scientific management, post-modernism. African management culture appears to be following the footsteps of the evolutionary developments in Western management practices (Kamoche, 1992), and therefore Nigerian firms look up to the West for management ideologies and practices, and also for criteria of success.

Fig. 3 -Management Theory Evolution in the Europe and America (1900-2000)



Source: Adapted from DuBrin, (2006: 14)

5.2. The Influence of Culture on Management Practices and Thoughts

Culture has long been considered one of the significant determinants for organizational behaviour and managerial practice (Hofstede, 1980; Peng 2001; George, et al., 2012; Triandis, 1995). Today, it is crucial to understand the diversity of culture and how it impacts on the evolution of management theories and practices. There is an abundance of literature on the concept of culture and cross-cultural study of organizational behaviour and managerial practice.

Culture is a complex set of norms, values, assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that are the features of a particular group (Lytle et al., 1995). Maintained that culture is the group's strategy for survival and it constitutes the successful attempt to adapt to the external environment. It is generally accepted that culture represents "software of mind" (Hofstede, 1991:21) rather than hardware.

In Nigeria, management has been practised using the cooperative and communal model. This is similar to the concept of Communalism (Eze, 1995; Inyang, 2008). The Communalism is a major feature of the African culture. Some Nigeria cultural dimensions are likely to contradict western managerial practices (Oghojafor, George & Owoyemi, 2012).

A deep respect for the elderly is presumably due to oral traditions where age and wisdom are closely related; and relationships between different age groups are markedly gerontocratic and generally paternalistic (Linguist & Adolph, 1996; George et. al., 2012). Consequently, the elderly, by the virtue of their wisdom, are expected to theorize for the younger ones to follow. The extended family serves as the building block for any organization; and tolerance and forgiveness indicates the importance of interpersonal relations over individual achievements.

To show the influence of culture on theoretical development, Hofstede (2001) suggests that two dimensions of culture are particularly important: (1) importance of religion and (2) traditional wisdom. The first dimension supports the relevance of one's relationship with a higher power. The second dimension emphasizes the importance of being hospitable, discussing decisions rather than imposing them on others, and that wisdom comes from experience and time, not education (Hofstede, 2001). These two cultural dimensions clarify the critical role of traditionalism in many aspects of life in Nigeria.

In Nigerian organizations, the importance of clan or ethnic interests over individual needs is manifested in different ways. African managers feel duty bound to satisfy social and even economic needs of their relatives (Dia, 1994). The distribution of scarce resources to clan and ethnic affiliates are natural responsibilities of management (Blunt & Jones, 1997).

With this paternalistic orientation, managers bestow favours, and expect and receive obeisance or reverence. This phenomenon offers a unique perspective on in-group collectivism and reflects a response to collective need rather than individual performance (George et. al, 2012).

Attempts have been made to identify core values of African managers, especially Nigerians. Mbigi (2002) identifies five core values: (1) respect for the dignity of others, (2) group solidarity, (3) teamwork, (4) service to others, and (5) the spirit of harmony and interdependence. The last dimension has been labelled the spirit of communalism, that is, Ubutu (Mangaliso, 2001; Mbigi, 1997).

Nigeria achieved independence in 1960 but has since been plagued by unequal distribution of wealth and ineffective, often corrupt governments that inherited and copied the managerial style of the West totally. Today, gratitude is being substituted for corruption; individualism is fast being substituted for our cherished communalism; and our paternalistic practices (Yesufu, 1982) are now being replaced with vulnerability approaches

5.3. Socio-economic thoughts

The socio-economic philosophies of Nigerians are often seen as consensus rather than centralized, bureaucratic, and authoritarian (Kiggundu, 1989). Indigenous Nigerian institutions are seen in the same light as the chief is seen through Western eyes as an autocrat and his institutions reflect this high power distance. This is a view contested by Ayittey (1991) who describes many African societies' chiefs as ruling by consensus. Institutions (including the firm) were imposed on Nigerian communities by the colonial powers, and remain today largely disconnected from these communities (Inyang, 2008).

5.4 Management Philosophy and Practice in Nigeria: Pre-Colonial Era

People have lived in what is now known as Nigeria since at least 9000 BC, and evidence indicates that since at least 5000 BC some of them have practised management through settled agriculture. With crude technology, Kingdoms emerged in the drier, northern savannah, prospering from trade ties with North Africa. At roughly the same time, the wetter, southern forested areas yielded city-states and looser federations sustained by agriculture and coastal trade (Fashoyin, 2005).

The pre-colonial management style in Nigeria is deeply entrenched in their beliefs and traditions (Fashoyin, 2005). The major managerial philosophy then was communalism. Communalism is the process of collectively solving a managerial problem by being your brother's keeper which was practised in trades and agricultural activities.

Nigeria is a multi-cultural nation embedded with diverse business and management principles. Before colonialism, Nigerians had indigenous managerial principles of communalism, father-figure, hard work, clan-loyalty, team-work and integrity (Inyang, 2008). These Principles were entrenched in the social and business conduct of the pre-colonial empires (Inyang, 2008). Coexistence among ethnic groups in Nigeria was disrupted by commercial slave trade of the 18th century

which interrupted the intellectual capacity for Nigeria to develop indigenous management theory.

Agriculture, which was mostly subsistence, was well organized with communal assistance from each farm to another farm. Members of the community were usually rewarded with the harvests and inter-married as show of gratitude (George, 2012). These managerial systems changed radically with the arrival of Europeans in the late 15th century, the rise of the slave trade from the 16th through the 19th century, and formal colonization by Britain at the end of 19th century.

The colonial era began in the late 19th century, when Britain consolidated its rule over Nigeria. In 1914, the British merged the northern and southern protectorates into a single state called the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria. Nigeria became independent of British rule in 1960. The next section examines the indirect rule management practice of the colonial period.

6. Colonial Management Philosophy: The Indirect Rule

Britain governed Nigeria via indirect rule, a system in which native leaders continued to rule their traditional lands so long as they collected taxes and performed other duties ensuring British prosperity. Uncooperative or ineffective leaders were easily replaced by others who were more compliant or competent, and usually more than willing to enjoy the perks of government. Britain was thus saved the huge economic and political cost of running and militarily securing a day-to-day government using the indirect rule.

Indirect rule operated relatively smoothly in the north, where the British worked with the Fulani aristocracy, who had long governed the Sokoto caliphate and who were able to administer traditional Islamic law alongside British civil law.

In the south, however, traditions were less accommodating. In Yorubaland, indirect rule disrupted historical checks and balances, increasing the power of some chiefs at the expense of others. Moreover, although the Yoruba kings had long been powerful, few had collected taxes, and citizens resisted their right to do so under British mandate.

In the southeast, particularly in Igboland, many of the societies had never had chiefs or for that matter organized states. Consequently, the chiefs appointed by Britain received little or no respect.

7. Management thoughts and philosophy: Post – colonial and Modern

After independence from the colonial master in 1960, the country was plunged into ethnic strife and military dictatorship. However, these ethnic groups gave the country a rich culture and the ability to develop managerial ideas and practice towards nation building. The culture has given birth to various managerial philosophies including:

1. Patrimonial management philosophy

2. Patronage philosophy
3. Indigenous Ecological philosophy
4. Balance management philosophy
5. Communal Management Practice
6. Acculturation Practice

a. Patrimonial management philosophy

Management culture varies greatly between urban and rural areas, across various ethnic and religious borders, and with levels of education. Nigeria is mostly a patriarch society where men are in charge of major managerial roles.

According to Dia (1996:37), 'the Nigerian society functions in a highly patriarchal fashion, with men exerting broad control over the lives of women, who are typically less educated and have limited access to wealth and social services'. The exceptions are in some southern states, where women are more active in trade and exert considerable political influence. Unfortunately, Nigeria has no state-supported social welfare system. Instead, most people rely on their extended families in difficult times and in old age.

b. Communal Management Practice

Communality is the basic management philosophy that governs existence and social relations in Nigeria (Fashoyin, 2005). It reflects a family atmosphere, philosophical affinity and kinship among and between indigenous people of Africa. While some views of collectivism are associated with 'here and now' relationships, communality is anchored in Nigeria history and includes present and future obligations to the social entity. Social life has traditionally revolved around communal ceremonies: weddings, infants' naming ceremonies and public performances associated with cultural and religious holidays.

c. Patronage philosophy

Most of the elite maintain power through networks of patronage: They secure and distribute labour, and receive political support in return. The system allows for some redistribution of income because patrons often pay for things such as school fees and marriage costs for relatives, community development, and charity work.

Wealth and power are distributed very unevenly in Nigerian society. The great majority of Nigerians, preoccupied with daily struggles to earn a living, have few material possessions and little chance of improving their lot. Meanwhile, chiefs, rich merchants, politicians, and high-ranking civil servants often accumulate and flaunt massive wealth, which to a degree is expected and accepted in Nigerian society.

d. Balance management

Balance management is a managerial approach of ensuring equity among all stakeholders in an institution by managers. In an effort to ensure equality and justice

among all ethnic groups in the country, the balance philosophy was applied by moving the country's political capital to Abuja. The political leadership moved from Lagos to Abuja in 1991 in the hope of creating a national capital where none of the country's ethnic groups would be dominant. This management thought is also the basis for the much criticized Federal Character principle which most times has sacrificed merit on the altar of catchment areas. Under this arrangement, a well-qualified applicant to public institution from the Southern part of the country could be rejected for an unqualified candidate from the Northern region due to the need to ensure equal representation of all regions.

e. Autocratic Political Management Philosophy

Between 1966 and 1999, the political philosophy was autocratic and dictatorship as Nigeria experienced frequent coups and long periods of military rule after which a democratic civilian government was established.

f. Indigenous Ecological Philosophy

Nigeria used to be an agricultural economy but now depends almost entirely on the production of petroleum, which lies in large reserves below the Niger Delta. In many parts of the country, farmers have practiced environmental protection for centuries. Their techniques include planting several different crops in a single field at once to cover the ground more evenly and thereby reduce erosion and increase fertility; planting and maintaining farmland trees and hedgerows to reduce erosion; applying manure to farmland to maintain soil fertility; and, in certain areas such as the Jos Plateau, terracing steep slopes.

g. Acculturation Principle

Nigeria's three largest ethnic groups—the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo—represent about 70 percent of the population. The Hausa, concentrated in the far north and in the neighbouring Republic of Niger, are the largest of Nigeria's ethnic nations. Many people of non-Hausa origin have become assimilated into the Hausa nation through intermarriage and acculturation. One such group is the Fulani, traditionally a semi-nomadic livestock-herding people. Many Fulani have settled in Hausa cities and towns and have become part of the Hausa community.

The Yoruba of south-western Nigeria incorporate seven subgroups—the Egba, Ekiti, Ife, Ijebu, Kabba, Ondo, and Oyo—each identified with a particular paramount chief and city. The oni of Ife is the spiritual head of the Yoruba. The advisory council are selected as a check and balance to the Oba's power. The majority of Yoruba are farmers or traders who live in large cities of pre-colonial origin.

The Igbo of south eastern Nigeria traditionally live in small, independent villages, each with an elected council rather than a chief. Such democratic institutions notwithstanding, Igbo society is highly stratified along lines of wealth, achievement, and social rank.

Overcrowding and degraded soil have forced many Igbo to migrate to nearby cities and other parts of Nigeria.

h. Joint Venture Management Practice

In the 1960s and 1970s, the petroleum industry developed, prompting greatly increased export earnings and allowing massive investments in industry, agriculture, infrastructure, and social services. Many of these large investments, often joint ventures with private corporations, were signed by the Nigeria Government. In an attempt to broaden Nigeria's industrial base, the government has invested heavily in joint ventures with private companies since the early 1980s.

The largest such project is the integrated steel complex at Ajaokuta, built in 1983 at a cost of \$4 billion which today is nearly moribund. In the mid-1990s the government introduced a series of reforms, including an allowance for greater foreign ownership in Nigerian industries, a loosening of controls on foreign exchange, and the establishment of an export-processing zone at Calabar.

i. Apprenticeship Practice

Smaller-scale manufacturing businesses engage in weaving, leather making, pottery making, and woodcarving. The smaller industries are often organized in craft guilds involving particular families, who pass skills from generation to generation.

Pre-independence Nigeria, its large population notwithstanding, had very little industrial development—a few tanneries and oil-crushing mills that processed raw materials for export. During the 1950s and 1960s a few factories, including the first textile mills and food-processing plants, opened to serve Nigerians.

During the 1970s and early 1980s industrial production increased rapidly, principally in Lagos, Kaduna, Kano, and Port Harcourt. Factories also appeared in smaller, peripheral cities such as Calabar, Bauchi, Katsina, Akure, and Jebba, due largely to government policies encouraging decentralization.

8. Conclusion

This paper has examined the evolution of management thoughts and practices in Nigeria and has posited that it has been greatly influenced by colonialism, culture, technological development and socio-economic thoughts. It established that management is a phenomenon known to Nigerians during the pre-colonial era. Nigerians managed by communality, consensus and unanimity (Inyang, 2004). It equally highlighted the indirect rule of the colonial period, which had much success in the Northern part than the South. The paper discussed the post-colonial and modern managerial thoughts which were a reflection of the integration of the western model of organizations and the traditional cultural values of communality.

In conclusion, the evolution of management thoughts in Nigerian has developed differently from that of European and America as a result of the impact of culture. A hybrid model of the Nigerian and Western-related management philosophies can be extremely

valuable due to the convergence of cultural influences. It is therefore recommended for further research to empirically determine the areas of divergence and convergence of the evolution of management thoughts between Nigeria, other African countries and the West.

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