

Manage theory in the Russian educational literature

Abstract

One of the most important reasons for the crisis state of modern Russia is the low level of managerial training of government officials. The obvious way to overcome this situation is to improve the quality of education of graduates of relevant universities. The author, considering the theory of manage as a generalizing discipline of the whole complex of subjects focused on the training of qualified managers, focuses on the educational literature in this area. Based on a detailed analysis of the content of one of the typical-the article shows that it is a collection of haughtily organized material that has little in common with the theory of manage, but is quite suitable for the formation of the notorious “competencies” introduced into the educational process by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation. However, the main thing - the actual theory of manage - is not in the textbook. According to the author, the content of almost all educational publications on manage theory completely coincides with the nature and general orientation of the higher education system-the research institute of modern Russia, namely, the imitation of the educational process. Does this approach meet the needs of modern Russian society?

Keywords: manage theory, educational literature, education system, training of managerial personnel

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Introduction

If you hold a review (even if it is a rigorous) of publications devoted to the analysis of the causes of the crisis state of modern Russia, it is easy to see that almost without exception the authors as the most important factor is called the professional incompetence of officials at all levels, the lower their management culture or its absence, their inability to solve complex strategic problems, but also it is a routine, everyday tasks.

We will leave the specific practice of staffing government structures without consideration for now. Let's pay attention to the management training system, which (ideally!) they should replace the existing ones and become the basis of the personnel reserve of the authorities, that is, for the higher education system.

After repeated “reforming” of the educational sphere, specialists in the Russian Federation are not trained in the vast majority of social and humanitarian specialties. Prepare the directioners. Within each direction, some more “profiles” are provided. The requirements for the referrals are carefully prescribed in the federal state educational standards (FSSES) in full compliance with the “competence approach” adopted as a methodological basis for the formation of curricula. In particular, by Order No. 1016 of August 13, 2020, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation approved such a Federal State Educational Standard “in the field of training 38.03 04 State and Municipal manage”. It also presents a list of eleven “competencies”, which together form the “universal competence of a graduate”. However, after a careful analysis of the content of these “competencies”, somehow there is no image of a skilled manager capable of solving large-scale tasks of state or municipal manage at a good theoretical level. The only managerial skill that, according to ministerial officials, this person should possess is the ability to “manage his time” and “build and implement a trajectory of self-development.” In addition, he must have a rather outlandish ability to “make informed economic decisions in various areas of life.” In all other respects, such a person is more like a sociable, sociable life-lover than a competent professional who is able to perceive and resolve

non-trivial, creative emergency situations that arise in abundance at the state and municipal level. Thus, the very basic ministerial premise, which orients educational organizations to form rather ridiculous “competencies” from their graduates, leaves no hope for replenishing the mentioned personnel reserve with qualified specialists who possess theory and manage skills.

However, there are some gaps in this order that leave certain chances for the possibility of circumventing and/or overcoming “competence” oddities in terms of interpreting their meaning. The point is that it is allowed to form the content and structure of the educational program in this area by educational organizations themselves. This means that the right to develop work programs of disciplines in this area and prepare educational materials for them is granted to the teaching staff of the relevant departments. This opens a window of opportunity to form a sufficiently sane manager from the trainees, even in such a “competence” framework.

It is quite obvious that in this direction, the basic, generalizing discipline, with the content of which all others should be consistent, is manage theory. And such a discipline is really included in the curricula. Let's consider what educational materials are provided by the discipline “manage theory”.

The first thing to note is that there are very few textbooks on manages theory. Their main authors are lawyers and economists. Lawyers sincerely believe that the production of laws and the organization of a system for monitoring their execution are managed. And since the creation of a legislative framework and the formation of a legal space is the prerogative of the state, manage in the views of lawyers is seen as nothing but public administration or government. Therefore, the textbooks that lawyers write about manage are called “theory of public administration”. Among them there are completely helpless ones, such as those in which the author, despite the huge volume of the text, cannot even give a clear definition of the very concept of “manage”.¹

There are others. For example,² oversaturated with a multitude of theories, concepts, approaches, methods, etc. However, all

this, perhaps, actual scattering of doctrines and practices has as its subject mainly administrative, legal, organizational activities of authorities and (at best) can only claim to be regulated, that is, the most elementary level of manage, the main meaning of which is to preserve the status quo of the system. The presentation, as a rule, is based on an unimaginably intricate legal will, very similar to an encrypted message to distant descendants, so it is very difficult to break through to the meaning of the text. As a result, we can draw a fairly unambiguous conclusion: there is no integral theory of manage in these and in all other textbooks prepared by lawyers, and it cannot be contained in principle.

However, most textbooks on manage theory are still written by economists, that is, people for whom the subject area of manage theory is concentrated exclusively in the social sphere and mainly in the field of socio-economic problems. The authors of one of the textbooks directly write: “the word “manage” means, as a rule, the manager of socio-economic processes”[p.15].³ For this reason, for most economists, manage theory is associated with management with all the consequences that follow from this circumstance. In fact, the general theory of manage considers the phenomenon and processes of manage in three areas: wildlife, technical systems and the social world as a whole, and not only in the economy.

Considering the above, let's consider what knowledge on manage theory (let's clarify - on the theory of social manage) a bachelor's degree student studying in the direction of “State and municipal Manage” can learn from textbooks prepared by economists, using the example of a more or less typical textbook.⁴

From the very beginning of the text, the general premise of this tutorial is confusing. The authors write: “The general goal of manage theory is the formation and development of managerial thinking, representation and understanding of the fundamentals of the manage process in state, municipal and private structures in modern conditions” (p. 14). Note: not a set of consistent ideas and fundamental, essential properties of managerial activity (that is, the theory itself), but a kind of “managerial thinking”. At the same time, the authors do not bother to explain what this mysterious thinking is and how it differs from, say, unmanageable. In addition, it implicitly follows from this premise (and the reader has a corresponding idea) that there are at least three different types of manage – state, municipal and private, which, of course, is not the case: the meaning and strength of the theory lies in the fact that it allows you to develop a manage algorithm that is invariant with respect to any subject area. It is also not clear why the theory proposed by the authors has time limitations: when, in particular, the “modern conditions” end and others begin, for which, presumably, this theory is no longer suitable.

There is a fairly reasoned comparison of the concepts of “management” and “manage” in the manual, from which it follows that the authors understand the scope of the correct application of the concept of “management” exclusively within the framework of a market production environment, according to which all components of management technologies, being very different in orientation and form, pursue a single goal – to extract maximum profit in conditions of limited resources. Thus, it becomes obvious the inconsistency of a stable tendency and established practice (not only among economists) to give the term “management” a universal managerial meaning, to consider it as a synonym for manage in general. This, in fact, exhausts the constructive part of the manual.

Further, the “gentleman's” set of detailed information about the so-called “classical” schools and “theories” of manage, wandering from textbook to textbook, follows: the theory of scientific manage

by F. Taylor and G. Ford, the administrative theory of manage by A. Fayol and M. Weber, the theory of “human relations”. E. Mayo and the “theory of motivation” by D. McGregor and F. Herzberg, the “quantitative” theory of manage, whose representatives were R. Akoff, L. von Bertalanfi, St. Beer, L.V. Kantorovich and others.

Without in any way downplaying the contribution and achievements of these scientists and practitioners to the foundation of the theory of social manage, it is necessary to recognize that the theoretical provisions and principles developed by them have long been included in the daily practice of manage, many normative documents have been developed on their basis, a set of immutable rules, methods and procedures of managerial activity has been formed: operationalization, rationing, regulation, subordination, cooperation, motivation, etc. They, without losing their practical value at all, entered the everyday managerial life and, of course, lost their theoretical status. They have not been perceived as “theories” for a long time. It is in this perspective that the inclusion of this material in the textbook would still be justified. However, as we can see, the authors acted completely differently, as a result of which the reader (student) has an idea of manage theory as a set of simultaneously, parallel theoretical constructs in the absence of technology and/or criteria for their joint use. As a result, manage theories and practices that are generally useful in their applied aspects are perceived in the student's mind as museum exhibits: you can look, you can't touch!

Further, the authors report on the alleged crisis in manage theory and the need to form a “new manage paradigm”. As an argument, they refer to the fact that “many domestic and foreign scientists openly declare the pre-crisis or even crisis state of the scientific direction of management”(p. 72).

This statement is very similar to an unexpected circus somersault! It would seem that having defined at the beginning of the manual (quite correctly) the subject area of management exclusively by the market environment, and its purpose is to develop rules and technologies for maximizing profit in production organizations, the authors thereby quite unambiguously established the relationship of this lesson with the general theory of social manage, namely, as a very specialized special case of it, in which there are no basic attributes that would qualify management as a manage science. After that, it would be possible to simply forget about management and direct all attention to the disclosure of the main purpose of the manual, indicated in its title - manage theory. However, the economic leaven of the authors is indestructible! It turns out that, contrary to their own logic, they continue to firmly believe that management is a scientific theory of manage and, consequently, a crisis of management means a crisis of manage theory.

Further - more! Following such a major “authority”, as the authors see someone V.I. Franchuk, they repeat unimaginably ridiculous, empty, not even worthy of mention and critical consideration “signs of a management crisis”.

The main reason for the need to develop a “new manage paradigm”, according to the authors, is that the previous “manage theories” characteristic of the industrial functioning and development of capitalism allegedly do not meet the requirements of a “market” economy. One might think that Taylor, Ford, Fayol and the rest of the theorists and practitioners of the past created their concepts in the conditions of socialism or (it's scary to even assume!) - communism. The cunning of the authors is quite obvious: the “market” as it was in Taylor's time, and, thanks to the destruction of the USSR, remained. Only this is a different market! The specifics of the current situation is that capitalism, in full accordance with K. Marx's prediction, has

moved from the industrial – productive – stage of its functioning to the financial-speculative – parasitic, that is, to decay. It is customary to camouflage this fact with more euphonious terms – “information society”, “knowledge economy”, “digitalization” and other bows. And this transformation, of course, could not but affect the nature of manage processes: the uncertainty of both the external and internal manage environment has radically increased, the number and intensity of the influence of hidden factors has increased, diagnostic and forecasting procedures have become significantly more complicated, etc. However, the essence of capitalism – making profit, profit – has remained unchanged. This means that with a certain modification of the technologies and manage methods used (that is, the instrumental and organizational apparatus), the manage activity itself in its basic; essential elements must also maintain its invariant basis.

However, referring to and agreeing with the opinion of “authoritative” scientists, the authors still insist that the theory of manage (in their understanding – management) is currently facing insurmountable problems, which caused the need to develop a “new manage paradigm”. This “paradigm” is referred to in the manual as the “quiet managerial revolution”, and its key provisions, as presented by the authors, are (p. 74):

- 1) rejection of the managerial rationalism of classical management schools, the problem of flexibility and adaptation to constant changes in the external environment is brought to the fore;
- 2) the use of systems theory in manage, which has its own logic and laws;
- 3) situational approach to manage, which is the dominant of the modern theory of social manage.

Let us comment successively on all three provisions of this “revolution”.

1) The rejection of rationalism in a theory claiming scientific status looks rather extravagant. Explain (but not justify!) this passage can only be explained by the fact that we live in the heyday of the so-called “postmodern”, which denies the existence of objective truth and declares the results of science to be the product of a conspiracy of scientists. “Postmodernism” has created a favorable ground for the rapid penetration into science of the “great teachings” born in the West, the intensive spread of which has led to rampant irrationalism, various kinds of nihilistic doctrines that radically contradict the canons of obtaining scientific knowledge. One enumeration of the names of the founders of these “great teachings” plunges their followers into a state close to orgasm. Apparently, the authors did not escape this influence.

As for “flexibility and adaptation to constant changes in the external environment,” in the general theory of manage, this is one of the imperative properties of any manage system, not only social. In addition, this requirement applies not only to the external, but also to the internal environment.

2) The concept of “system” is one of the fundamental concepts in manage theory. It was the need for its in-depth development that served as an additional incentive for L. von Bertalanfi to complete work on the creation of a theory of systems, all the provisions of which are included in the conceptual and methodological arsenal of manage theory.

3) The so-called “situational approach” is a special case of the second principle of the stability of L. von Bertalanfi systems, according to which, for its stability, the system must provide a

proactive reflection of its state and proactive support of decisions. That is, to anticipate and prepare resources in advance to overcome any possible adverse situations.

As we can see, there is nothing revolutionary and new in the “paradigm” proposed by the authors of the manual. And their exalted enthusiasm about this “paradigm” is very similar to the raptures of deep provincials trying on the dapper costumes of the fashion before last. Having proclaimed the “key provisions” of the proposed “paradigm”, the authors, in full accordance with its “provisions”, recommend a number of approaches for its implementation (pp. 84-116): process approach;

- a) system approach;
- b) situational approach;
- c) modern manage concepts.

In the faint hope of discovering something original and enabling the learner to gain useful knowledge about manage theory, we will consider the consistently designated approaches and concepts.

1) As about a revelation that has recently been revealed, the authors write: “Management is considered as a process, because the work to achieve goals with the help of others is not a one-time action, but a series of continuous interrelated actions” (p. 84).

At the same time, it is well known that the variable “time” (t) is always included in the space of variables describing the object of research of any science, any scientific direction. ANY! ALWAYS! This is an imperative requirement of any scientific research, which means that the object of research is considered as a consistent set of its states at various moments and/or amounts time. The study of static states of an object is allowed only at the stages of theoretical, abstract research. Thus, the existence of a special “process approach” in science is categorically impossible.

However, the authors, setting out their recommended approaches and concepts, proceed, in fact, from the ideas of management, in which, apparently, everything is possible. Although it has some claims to be scientific, it is still formed mostly on the basis of regulations and rules obtained empirically in real management practice. Only this can explain the appearance of this unexpected unit in the manual on manage theory.

2) It was noted above that system representations are immanently included in the theoretical-methodological and instrumental-methodological arsenal of manage theory. Therefore, it does not need any particular, specific “system approach”. And no one can change this situation, including the rather confused arguments of the authors about this.

3) The need to use the so-called “situational approach” in the “new manage paradigm” is based by the authors on a “sensational” discovery! It turns out that “the same manage functions are implemented differently depending on specific conditions. And “the results of the same managerial actions in different situations can be very different from each other” (p. 90). In this regard, it can be noted that if you use the recommendations of the authors and completely disable rational logic, then there is a prospect of churning out such and even more grandiose “sensations” in unlimited abundance. But seriously, the “discovery” made by the authors from the standpoint of the general theory of systems looks like the most ordinary banality: any leader, any researcher always proceeds from a specific situation in their actions, not illusory phantoms, and then builds actions according to its specifics. And it does not require any special “approaches”.

4) The first of the concepts proposed by the authors is called “quality manage”. Its meaning (in the author’s description) is that it is necessary to perform all types of work preceding the final product with high quality (“zero reject”). To put it mildly, the concept is curious: for poor-quality performance of their duties, employees are punished (fined, fired, etc). But for high-quality they just get salary. For very high-quality, employees receive additional incentives: bonuses, tariff rate increases, etc. It can also be recalled that the control and full provision of high quality of the final result at all technological stages of its receipt was, is and will be among the priority interests and responsibilities of any executive. This does not require a separate, specialized manage branch designed exclusively for quality management. And the authors themselves confirm this! “Quality manages” in their narration, in fact, replaces the entire management process (p. 96). This means that no special “quality manages” is required: it is necessary to organize the entire manage cycle correctly and competently, and the high quality of the final result will be guaranteed.

The next “modern manage concept” is called “result-based manage”. The name is quite strange because the absence of a result (goal) fundamentally excludes the possibility of any manage. That is, any manage (if it is manage!) is always aimed at achieving the set goal (result). There is no aimless manage!

It turns out that this strange name hides an important, but quite routine, procedure that has long been included in manage practice. Its meaning lies in the fact that from the entire range of indicators characterizing the manage system, the most capacious, relevant, informative, representative of the manage process with sufficient completeness are chosen. This allows people to make effective decisions in an expeditious manner. In domestic practice, this procedure is sometimes implemented according to the “20% rule”. In accordance with it, all indicators are arranged in a hierarchical row according to the degree of decreasing importance (according to one or a group of criteria), and only the top 20% are used in operational manage.

It is clear that this “modern concept” is the result of a long-term empirical improvement of manages practice. And although it has certain theoretical justifications, it clearly does not “reach” the status of a “concept”. The authors refer “project manages” to one of the “actual management concepts”. According to their tradition of considering management as a synonym for manage, they explain that “project manage (project manage) is a type of managerial activity based on the preliminary careful development of a model of actions to achieve a specific goal” (p. 101).

It is difficult to understand what the authors see as the theoretical novelty of this “current concept”. The project as one of the forms of organization of scientific or practical activities has been used for more than one hundred years. Even in the Russian Federation, this form has become so much part of manage practice that for a long time there has been a GOST standard defining the rules of project manage. If we approach this “current concept” from the standpoint of manage theory, then, according to its provisions, any manage goal should be represented in three time dimensions:

- a. Strategic – for the long-term perspective, for which the program is being developed;
- b. Tactical – for an average time perspective, for which a project or group of projects is being developed, if the goal is achieved in several directions;

- c. Operational – for the nearest time perspective, for which the plan is being developed.

The degree of concretization of goals and types of work to achieve in all three documents (program, project, plan) increases as the deadlines for their implementation are reduced. If in the program the goal(s) appears to be very general provisions, then in the plan both the goals and the types of work are set out with all possible care and detail. The project, as can be seen, occupies an intermediate position with features corresponding to this position. However, the project cannot in any way be considered as a self-sufficient form of manage: it must necessarily be included in the context of the entire triad. This is from the standpoint of the theory of manage.

Nevertheless, in the “current concept” under consideration, the project is presented precisely as an independent type of manage activity: it does not take into account either the operational or strategic interests (needs) of the system. This means that the manage system (organization), with the help of which the project is to be implemented, is perceived exclusively in a consumer, purely pragmatic way, by “market”, as a single-use product. It is quite obvious that the consequences of such “use” for the organization are not always favourable. But this manual teaches people to such “managerial thinking”.

To some extent, another of the “modern concepts” proposed by the authors is deprived of this disadvantage. It is referred to “strategic management”. The very concept of “strategy” is considered here quite correctly as “a set of global development ideas”. However, its content and practical implementation is interpreted exclusively from the standpoint of management. Therefore, it is not possible to find any value for the theory of manage in this “concept”.

The following “modern manage concept” presented in the manual is perceived very funny. It is called “manage of changes”. This “concept” is interpreted as follows: “This is a structural approach to the transfer of individuals, teams, organizations from the current state to the desired future state” (p. 106).

In order to appreciate the “innovation” and “constructiveness” of the author’s proposal, it is necessary to turn to the origins, namely, to the universal, encyclopaedic (that is, in no way specialized) definition of the concept of manage: “Manage is a function of organized systems of various nature (biological, social, technical), ensuring the maintenance of the necessary regime of their activity or transfer to other states in accordance with the objective laws of the existence of this system, the implementation of a program or a deliberately set goal” [p. 1640].⁵ As we can see, the manage is possible in two modes: 1) regulation (preservation of the initial state) and 2) the actual manage, in which the system moves from one state to another. This means that the essence of manage is always a change in the system (the whole system, not just the object, as it is stated everywhere in the manual). If we now pay attention to the name of the “modern concept” under consideration, then its absurdity (change of changes) will become obvious. That’s why we leave this “concept” without further absolutely obvious comments.

The rest of the content of the manual is whimsically (that is, without an obvious logical connection) scattered throughout the text information about manage functions, human capital, the culture of the organization, the social responsibility of the manager, etc. That is, there is a lot of chaotic material, practically unrelated to the theory of manage, but quite suitable for the formation of chimerical “competencies” fiercely introduced into the educational process by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

However, the main thing - the actual theory of manage - is missing in the manual.

Almost all educational publications on manage theory are built according to a similar scheme. The meaning of manage in these textbooks and manuals is drowning, "smeared" in a multitude of "theories", "concepts", "approaches", is lost in a multitude of information poorly or not at all related to the theory of manage. There is no single, integral theory of manage in them. There is not even a mention of the author of the general theory of manage, N. Viner, about its content, about the fundamental core of the manage process - the manage cycle. The inquisitive reader will not find in them either the principles of system stability, or the rules for ensuring their viability, or the laws of the functioning of manage systems - nothing that should be included in the daily arsenal of a professional manager.

The final conclusion: the hopes that the educational literature in any way eliminates the ridiculous attitudes of ministerial officials regarding the requirements for the training of future professional managers for state and municipal authorities have not been justified. The content of almost all educational publications on manage theory completely coincides with the nature and general orientation of the education system of modern Russia, namely, the imitation of the educational process, as a result of which the country receives a lot of useless, deprived of real knowledge of the existing education system of the orientalisers. Due to the fact that such a result of the education

system, not only in this area, but also in almost all others, has been reproduced for more than a decade, it seems to meet the needs of modern Russian life. Thus, a constructive way out of the situation is obvious! Otherwise, after education, the destruction of the country is next in line!

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that they have no direct or indirect conflicts.

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