Management as a Design Science Mindful of Art and Surprise A Conversation Between Anne Huff, David Tranfield, and Joan Ernst van Aken


Abstract

Huff: Management is a relatively young profession and a young field of study. For some time, there has been an interest in "design" as a primary descriptor of management practice. Herbert Simon described management as a "design science" in The Sciences of the Artificial, first published in 1969 and reissued in a third edition in 1996, yet the specifics of design have not been clear to me, especially as the basis for action. My interest in design was recently piqued by David Tranfield, professor of management at Cranfield School of Management, who then introduced me to the work of Joan (pronounced "Johan" for those of you not familiar with names from the Netherlands) van Aken, professor of organization and management at Eindhoven University of Technology. van Aken’s work was very interesting, but I wasn’t initially convinced that management conceived as design could incorporate two metaphors for management that I have been more inclined to use: an "artful" blend of resources and action and the "capacity to respond to surprise." The following conversation with David and Joan provided a convincing positive answer. We discuss the definition of design, its importance, the art of design, its capacity to deal with surprise, inevitable limitations, how theory is involved, and a vision of the future. I hope that readers will find the basic idea as significant as I do.
Design science is an outcome based information technology research methodology, which offers specific guidelines for evaluation and iteration within research projects. Design science research focuses on the development and performance of (designed) artifacts with the explicit intention of improving the functional performance of the artifact. Design science research is typically applied to categories of artifacts including algorithms, human/computer interfaces, design methodologies (including process models) and languages.\(^ {a,b,c}\) Van Aken JE. "Management research as a design science: Articulating the research products of mode 2 knowledge production in management". Br J Manage. 2005;16(1): 19–36.

Management as an Art. Art implies application of knowledge & skill to trying about desired results. An art may be defined as personalized application of general theoretical principles for achieving best possible results. Art has the following characters E.g. to become a good painter, the person may not only be knowing different colour and brushes but different designs, dimensions, situations etc to use them appropriately. A manager can never be successful just by obtaining degree or diploma in management; he must have also know how to apply various principles in real situations by functioning in capacity of manager. Management is both an art and a science. The above mentioned points clearly reveals that management combines features of both science as well as art.

Management: Both Science and Art: Management is both science as well as art. Like science it has systematic and well-organised body of knowledge and like art it requires personal skill, creativity and practice to apply such knowledge in the best possible way. Science and art are not in contrast to each other; both exist together in every function of management. Management as a Profession: Profession can be defined as an occupation backed by specialised knowledge and training, in which entry is restricted. The main features of profession are: 1. Well defined Body of knowledge.