

## **Article Review: Henri Fayol, Practitioner and Theoretician - Revered and Reviled by Mildred Golden Pryor and Sonia Taneja**

**H. O. C. Gunasekara**

*University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Sri Lanka  
oshanidi@gmail.com*

### **Abstract**

The primary objective of this paper is to review an article titled “Henri Fayol, practitioner and theoretician - revered and reviled” written by Mildred Golden Pryor and Sonia Taneja (2010). Pryor and Taneja (2010) critically evaluate Fayol’s theory within the contemporary business context. They argued that Fayol’s theories are valuable and relevant for organizational leaders because Fayol was a practitioner who documented theories that worked best for him and his co-workers. Even though, there are a few criticisms on Fayol’s theories still his theories are applicable with some advancement as a basement for the management implications for the contemporary business world. Pryor and Taneja (2010) compare Fayol’s work with the contribution of other scholars namely, Follett, Mintzberg, Taylor, and Porter’s, while evaluating the original and current interpretation and application of Fayol’s theories. Finally, Pryor and Taneja (2010) appreciate Fayol’s contribution specially the 14 principles of management due to its more optimistic features. Therefore, it is necessary for the students, teachers, and practitioners to understand the relevance of the theories and be able to utilize, Fayol’s principles and theories for improving the organizational performance and further studies.

**Keyword:** Article review, Henri Fayol, Practitioner, Theoretician

### **1. Introduction**

The article “Henri Fayol, practitioner and theoretician - revered and reviled” published by Mildred Golden Pryor and Sonia Taneja in 2010 is a critical evaluation of Henry Fayol’s theory in accordance with today’s context. Pryor and Taneja (2010) noted that Henry Fayol as the father of modern management who has made a solid foundation on management discipline, theoretically and practically. However, the authors highlight the Fayol’s contributions and present optimistic as well as pessimistic critiques on Fayol’s theories. The main purpose of the article is to evaluate

the value and relevance of Fayol's theories both from academicians' and practitioners' perspectives. Having compared, Fayol's work with the other authors' contribution such as Follett, Mintzberg, Taylor, and Porter, the authors Pryor and Taneja (2010) demonstrate the original and current interpretation and application of Fayol's.

Pryor and Taneja (2010) presented their discussion based on four themes (1) the historical framework of management perspectives, (2) comparison with other management theorists, (3) contemporary management and (4) the perspective of strategic management and analyzed Fayol's theory along with strategic management perspective using the 5P's Strategic Leadership Model. Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Fayol's theories are highly recognized and valued by many academicians as well as practitioners who are organizational leaders due to the practical relevance of his theories while criticizing it based on several grounds as mentioned in the proceeding section of the review and concluded that Fayol's theory of management is well applicable with strategic leadership and management models and theories.

## **2. Learning Experiences**

The article presented a comparative analysis of Fayol's theory under four themes as follows: the historical management perspectives, other management theorists, contemporary management, and strategic management.

### **2.1. The Historical Management Perspectives**

Initially, Fayol had found that organizational and business life is an amalgam of six activities including technical; commercial; financial; security; accounting; and management (Fayol, 1949; Parker & Ritson, 2005; Bakewell, 1993 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) and introduced five functions of management, namely: planning, organizing; coordination; command; and control (Fayol, 1949; Wren, 1972; Breeze, 1985; Robbins et al., 2000 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Moreover, he advocated 14 principles of management designed to guide the successful manager which are: division of work; authority; discipline; unity of command; unity of direction; subordination of individual interests to the general interests; remuneration; centralization; scalar chain; order; equity; stability of tenure of personnel; initiative; and esprit de corps (Fayol, 1949; Cole, 1984 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010).

Fayol further elaborated that there are differences between technical and managerial skills. Technical skills are more important to worker level as well as managerial levels. However, managerial skills are essential for personnel at higher levels of management in the organizational hierarchy (Wren, 1994 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010).

Furthermore, Fayol has introduced five basic tools for successful administration (Breeze, 2002 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) as follows:

- i. General surveys must be conducted to assess the organizational achievements.
- ii. Business plans must be developed in each department.
- iii. Operations reports must be generated on a daily, monthly, or yearly basis.
- iv. Generate and communicate minutes of the meetings, for controlling and coordinating the departments.
- v. Authority and responsibility should be established throughout the scalar chain for monitoring and ensuring the accountabilities and responsibilities among the hierarchy.

As per Pryor and Taneja (2010), these five tools are important at every stage in an organization's life cycle which is functioning as strategies and tactics. All these tools adopted in performing activities, functions and principles strengthen an organization's capabilities for efficiency and effectiveness which leads to the organizational growth and excellence (Fayol, 1923; Breeze, 2002 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that these theories of Fayol laid a foundation to management as other management theories and practices were based on these initial activities, functions, and principles.

## **2.2. Comparison with other Management Theorists**

The article has made a comprehensive comparison on Fayol's theories based on other management authors including Follett (Parker & Ritson, 2005 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010), Mintzberg (Lamond, 2003, 2004 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010), Taylor (Berdayes, 2002; Parker & Lewis, 1995 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010); and Porter (Yoo et al., 2006 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010).

Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Follett is a contributor to Fayol's Administrative theory and Taylor's Scientific Management theory through the Behavioral science approach by bringing forward the idea that management must be rather addressed through human behavior and their relationships.

Theories of Fayol and Mintzberg were different conceptually, but not competing, which means Fayol and Mintzberg contributed to management theories and their theories were not mutually exclusive (Wren, 1994 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Mintzberg (1973 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) has made a step forward in management from Fayol rather than accept with Fayol's theory, stating dramatically different opinions by various authors, including Mintzberg himself, that continue to revile or reject Fayol's theories. Porter's competitive strategies are generic and not easy to understand and implement compared to Fayol's theories. But using Fayol's

theories to implement Porter's theories enhance knowledge and supports strategy execution. Specifically, it has preferable effect of each of Fayol's principles on the implementation of cost leadership and differentiation strategies (Yoo et al., as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Fayol was more open in terms of maintaining flexibility in the implementation of his theories and in organizational hierarchies compared to Taylor (Berdayes, 2002 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Taylor's view is a contingent, bottom-up view and that Fayol's view is a top-down perspective (Brunsson, 2008 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Furthermore, Taylor's managerial practice is more accurate than Fayol's concept of "General Management". However, Fayol (1949 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) was much more flexible in the application of his theories and changing plans to meet circumstances and flexibility.

### **2.3. Contemporary Management**

There are debates among various authors about the relevance of Fayol's theories for contemporary managers. Several authors (Archer, 1990; Fells, 2000; Hales, 1986 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) support Fayol's management theories as being meaningful and useful across generations and believe that Fayol's theories are relevant in today's organizations. Some other authors (Kotter, 1982; Mintzberg, 1973, 1989 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010) reject Fayol's theories because of the results of their own work and the results of some contemporary research (Rolph & Bartram, 1992; Secretan, 1986 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Accordingly, Mintzberg has somewhat disapproved Fayol's contributions because Fayol's management theories were the result of his lifelong work as a practitioner, but Mintzberg's work was more a snapshot resulting of reality from his work as a researcher and academician (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). "Mintzberg emphatically stated that management is not about functions, instead it is what managers do" (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). "Fayol gave us management as we would like it to be and Mintzberg gave us management as it is" (Lamond, 2004 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010).

However, the article presents a comprehensive analysis on Fayol's theory and its fourteen principles which have been evolved for the current contemporary business context and summarizes in the proceeding section.

Division of work was based on specialization, but in the current context, specialization has been enriched with cross-training among the employees, authority and responsibility should empower and enable people at all levels to contribute to the decision-making process of the organization, discipline must be rather obedience which should be based on self-discipline and respect based on knowledge, unity of command has to be spread into matrix organizations and teams, people receive instructions from multiple people (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Therefore, employees may

report to one boss who evaluates the employee. Unity of direction under today's strategic management involves in bottom up, top down and cross functional input to integrated plans, subordinate of individual to general interest must be spread to the teams and team members individual, personal, and work goals should support the general interest of the organization, remuneration and rewards in the current context should be based on knowledge, core competencies and team based (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Instead of order, today, creativity and innovation are considered more important than stability, in today's context, equity is determined on the basis of the workers' performance, stability of tenure has border as it is more preferred to retain only the best managers, in the current context initiatives are allowed as broader as empowerment and having the process ownership, Esprit de Corps has become broader as diversity and differences are necessary for creativity and innovation on strength of the team spirit (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Thus, Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Fayol's theory has been applicable to the current context of contemporary management with some advancement to the base of the theory.

#### **2.4. The Perspective of Strategic Management**

Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Fayol's theories are even more compatible with the 5P's Strategic Leadership Model for integration (Pryor et al., 1998, 2007 as cited in Pryor & Taneja, 2010). Pryor and Taneja (2010) states that the five 5P's model consists of purpose, principles, processes, people, and performance. Furthermore, Fayol's management functions are planning, organizing, coordination, commanding and controlling, when integrating both theories planning determines the purpose of the establishment of organization which are vision, mission, goals, and strategies. Equity/ morality/ courage determine principles, core values; furthermore, organizing and coordination determine people, processes, leaders, and systems of the organizations, while command and control determine performance measurements and key performance indicators (Pryor & Taneja, 2010).

According to Pryor and Taneja (2010) the 5P's model of Strategic Leadership is currently being utilized by practitioners as well as academicians, the elements of the 5P's model are easily integrated with Fayol's theories. This ease of integration and alignment demonstrates the extent to which Fayol's theories are relevant and useful in the contemporary business context.

### **3. Critique of the Article**

The article by Pryor and Taneja (2010) is based on Henri Fayol's theories to evaluate its value and relevance for current management practices comparatively. They appreciate the effectiveness of Fayol's theory which provided a solid foundation

from the evolution of management to this contemporary era and for future of management.

Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Fayol initially contributed to the management school of thought with activities, functions, principles, and tools of management as these are equally important in every stage in an organization's life cycle for strengthening its capabilities with efficiency and effectiveness leading to organizational growth and excellence. Pryor and Taneja (2010) comprehensive compared Fayol's theories based on other management authors including Mary Parker Follett, Henry Mintzberg, F. W. Taylor, and Michael Porter. Among them, some theories contribute to Fayol's theories and steps forward (theories by Follett), but on the other hand Fayol's theory is better in action compared to theories by Porter and Taylor and some theories are not mutually exclusive with Fayol's theory (compared to Mintzberg's). When compared to contemporary management theories with Fayol's theory, it is not applicable to the current contemporary business context while only a few were in favor of it (Pryor & Taneja, 2010). However, Pryor and Taneja (2010) appreciated the theory and principles of Fayol's as it could be applicable to the contemporary business context with some advancement for its origin. Several suggestions are presented in the proceeding section to enhance the validity of the argument of the article.

The article was based on a qualitative study on the comparative analysis of the existing theories. The discussion and the arguments could be strengthened if the authors could use empirical data with a larger sample of managerial positions in fortune companies to examine whether the selected companies are successful with the current management practices that they used and also find out which management practices are success or failure and reasons for that.

The article reviews how Fayol's theory has emerged in the school of thoughts of management. Furthermore, that historical evolution should also be based on how other theories have originated. Because, it could clearly be visible how other management theories have emerged based on Fayol's theories.

As per Pryor and Taneja (2010) comparison of Fayol's theory with other theories such as Follett, Mintzberg, Taylor, and Porter, the comparisons were well arranged and seems rational and indicated the applicability of other theories in contrast with Fayol's theory. However, some other relevant theories, namely classical management theories including Scientific management and Bureaucracy theory could be used for the comparison. From the Behavioral approach, Human Relations and Human Resource perspectives could be taken for the comparison. Further, Management Science approach, System approach, Contingency approach could be used to compare with the Fayol's theory.

Pryor and Taneja (2010) argued that Fayol's theory is still applicable for improving the efficiency of organizations. However, a comparison could be undertaken based

on contemporary Management theories such as Supply Chain management, Total Quality management, Diversity management etc.

Strategic management perspective analysis of Fayol's theory was based on only 5P's Strategic Leadership Model. Even though, the analysis provides good account about Fayol's contribution to management theories, strategic management process could be used to analyze Fayol's theory in a broader perspective in terms of strategy formation, strategy implementation, strategy monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, initially Fayol's theory was introduced by applying to the general administration it could be applicable to both not only in the business and public sectors.

Several researchers have critically reviewed Henri Fayol's theories and concepts. Ali et al. (2021) has reviewed Henri Fayol's 14 principles for application into educational management and recommended Henri Fayol's principles for developing management skills of academic institutional heads and recommended that using Fayol's principles can improve and strengthen the management skills of institutional heads that will have a positive impact on achieving organizational goals and focusing on excellence in education. The management skills of institutional heads can be strengthened and established by following the main components of the management principles developed by Henri Fayol (Ali et al., 2021).

Bacud (2020) discusses Henri Fayol's adoption of the 14 management principles in the respective organizational settings of the respondents which resulted in effective leadership and governance. According to Bacud (2020) the best management principles the leaders still found to be useful today, i.e. the principles of discipline, division of work, unity, authority and responsibility, equity and unity of command, the biggest challenges encountered by them and their coping mechanisms to address the same have been formulated by Fayol. It concluded that management principles enunciated by Henri Fayol are still widely adopted and applicable today and claimed to have been significant in attaining successful governance, those would give leaders a better understanding of how they should treat their subordinates and guide them how to make appropriate management decisions which would serve as an effective tool to becoming a more responsive and effective organizational leader in the future (Bacud, 2020).

According to Folorunso (2019) the fourteen principles of Henri Fayol was postulated as an administrative theory that would guide the administrators to achieve set goals through employees. Folorunso (2019) stated however, given the innovation in public organization, there is the need to investigate if this century old fourteen principles are still relevant and in use in the Civil Service. Folorunso (2019) discovered that despite the technological advancements in bureaucratic operations, Henri Fayol's principles are still being practiced in the government organizations. Specifically, the study revealed that the perceived workplace productivity increases with the increase in the practice of the 14 principles of Henri Fayol within government organizations. This

study therefore concludes that the adoption and practice of the fourteen principles of administration by Henri Fayol is still relevant for government organizations (Folorunso, 2019).

According to Achinivu et al. (2017) even though many start up organizations were technologically driven and managed, the need for human skills in their management is indispensable, the adaptation and application of Henri Fayol's management principles contributed in no small measure to the success of these organizations in their quest to achieve their targets. According to Achinivu et al. (2017) technological advancement has not eroded the need for the use of the principles by organizations that are result oriented.

Popper (2018 as cited in Folorunso, 2019) opined that Henri Fayol's postulations are the foundations of management theories and practice. Despite this, the effectiveness of the principles is dependent on the modifications that organizations can affect in their work environments.

Kumari and Arora (2013 as cited in Folorunso, 2019) sought to investigate if the organization applied the principles of Henri Fayol at work and the extent to which it does so. According to Kumari and Arora (2013 as cited in Folorunso, 2019) the fourteen principles of Henri Fayol were adopted and implemented in the organization, though to varying degrees, and discovered among the fourteen principles, centralization of power is highly applicable and principle of fair remunerations as being the least applied of all the principles. Despite this, the study reiterates the continual adoption and usefulness of the principles in modern administration.

Accordingly, several scholars have identified the applicability of Henri Fayol's theories in both business and public sectors in varying degrees based on the nature of the organization and confirmed that even at present those theories are applicable for organization with appropriate modifications.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The article critically evaluated Fayol's theory within the contemporary business context and attempted to integrate Fayol's theories with a strategic leadership model. Pryor and Taneja (2010) signaled to contemporary practitioners and academicians about the relevance and value of Fayol's theories and appreciated Fayol's theories as the original foundation for management as a discipline and as a profession. Thus, Fayol is considered as the first to advocate management education. This article compared Fayol's theories with others' contribution, such as Follett, Mintzberg, Taylor, and Porter indicating the alignment of Fayol's theories with strategic leadership and management. Pryor and Taneja (2010) emphasized that Fayol's theories are valuable and relevant for organizational leaders but pointed out some negative views as well. The theory of management functions aligns well with strategic leadership and management models and theories. Even though there are a few



criticisms of Fayol's theories are still applicable with appropriate modifications as a basement for the management implications for the contemporary business organizations including the public sector.

## References

- Achinivu, G., Okwu, H., Wey, A. A., Akpan, E. E., & Fasan, O. J. (2017). Application of the Henri Fayol Principles of management in start-up organizations. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSR-JBM)*, 9(10), 78-85
- Ali, I., Nayan, F. K., Sarker, A. R., Kadery, T. R., Firmansah, Y. (2021). Management Skill Development of Academic Institutional Heads in Bangladesh: A Conceptual Study on Henri Fayol's Management Principles. *International Journal of Human Resource Studies*, 11 (03). ISSN 2162- 3058.
- Bacud, S. A. D. (2020). Henri Fayol's Principles of Management and Its Effect to Organizational Leadership and Governance, *Journal of Critical Reviews* 07(11):162-167, DOI: 10.31838/jcr.07.11.25
- Folorunso, F. A. (2019). An Investigation into the Practice of Henri Fayol's Principles of Management in Ondo State Civil Service, Nigeria. *Journal of Human Resource*, 07(06), ISSN 2347-825X.
- Pryor, M. G., & Taneja, S. (2010). Henri Fayol, practitioner and theoretician – revered and reviled. *Journal of Management History*, 16(04), 489-503. Emerald Group Publishing Limited. DOI 10.1108/17511341011073960.