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EDITORIAL

Politics and management

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Introduction

Politics play a part in any management decision albeit in different ways (Zahid, Butt, & Khan, 2022). It is often assumed that there are politics in play but its influence can differ depending on the time, context, and situation. There are various types of politics evident in organisations including within an organisational setting and externally with other stakeholders. Internal politics can play distinct roles depending on the type of organisation. This means more bureaucratic and larger organisations can have ingrained political systems, which can cause a slowness and difficulty in how decisions are made. External politics are more difficult to manage as they can vary in impact and are subject to change. This means care needs to be taken regarding how and why external stakeholders influence political decision-making.

Politics in a management context can be described as packaged political communications regarding discussions about power relationships. Seldom does management research integrate politics despite its practical significance unless politics is the topic of interest. This reflects the assumption it is taken for granted and not important. In reality politics is significant and can generate useful analysis particularly in a management context.

Political management is a field of study that should be prioritised more in management. It offers new ways of understanding management functions and offers insights into management behaviour. Politics is a strategic option but can be a necessity for managers. It can explain behaviour and focuses on underlying processes. It has consequences for relationships between managers and others but it should not be confined to an organisational setting. This editorial addresses why more interest in political management is required by concentrating on current discussions. This enables insights for management science and is helpful in developing the field.

Political management

Politics generally revolves around campaigning for certain causes (Buchanan, 2008). It can be done in a formal or informal way depending on the situation. Formal campaigns involve canvassing people about their views then influencing their behaviour with informal campaigns utilising tacit approaches to influence decisions. Research is needed to determine the extent that politics is used in organisations and the extent to which organisations can say they are politically motivated. The political management approach views politics as being of primary concern to organisations and is the reason for planning activities. The philosophical basis of political management is that organisations want a political reason for their existence.

Politics falls within management practices because decisions are made based on stakeholder involvement and as a result is essentially concerned with how organisations are created, managed, and valued (Ferris et al., 2007). An organisation achieves its goals through an understanding of the

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needs and wants of others. No organisation can avoid politics due to decisions about what courses of action to take. Politics is a process designed to result in specific actions (Cui & Zhang, 2023). It offers a way to address concerns and to control managerial functions.

Political management involves seeking to establish relationships for a reason (Elbanna, Di Benedetto, & Gherib, 2015). A political issue is a symbol of some kind of action. It is self-constructed based on individual perceptions of its importance. A source of social identity is to vote for a political party or issue. By doing so, it recognises the usefulness of societal involvement. There are people, businesses, and other entities that influence management policy including trade associations and lobbyists. In negotiations, influential people are placed in order to obtain a better result. The political influence of stakeholders has long been noted by managers.

Corporate political activity

Corporate political activity is defined as 'corporate attempts to shape government policy in ways favourable to the firm' (Hillman, Keim, & Schuler, 2004: 838). To understand political management, an interdisciplinary perspective incorporating economics, finance, strategy, and human resources is required. Politics involves corporate based activities designed to allocate resources based on key decision-makers (Drory & Romm, 1988). As a branch of social science, it deals with power relations and can be called political science. There can be an art to corporate politics depending on the situation with some people with good political skills making a difference to society. Politics can be used in a cooperational or conflicting way. This depends on the internal and external factors affecting the decisions and the negotiation skills of the people involved.

People form political parties to take a stance on a key issue or policy. Political parties influence who gets what in society, when, and how. This means it is a way of choosing what issues are relevant. By doing so, it is a form of human social relations and governance mechanisms. Politics is linked to ethical and moral positions with cultural contexts playing a key role. This means words and actions denote how political action is achieved. There can be both friends and enemies in politics with some bipartisan positions indicating collaboration. To maintain and secure influential positions, politics is required.

Usually people come together for a certain reason. Their shared needs result in the formation of beliefs. These beliefs can be rational or irrational based on emotional needs. Comparative politics is a way to compare and contrast political systems. It helps to understand the role of geography and history in political systems. Geography in terms of where a country is positioned and its neighbours can influence political direction. History involves considering past events that may influence future events.

Increasingly people need to consider politics as a science in terms of winning control over others. Often politics is characterised by dishonest practices based on the sympathies of a person. As a result, political life can be a rewarding profession when it links individual beliefs to action. Politics is a way people can manoeuvre others to do what they want. This can involve enhancing their own position as a key player. As a consequence, politics involves manipulation to dominate others.

Lobbyists are increasingly utilised in political circles in order to advance certain causes. They work on behalf of someone or an entity to influence decisions. They are often paid to carry out activities about government decisions. Lobbying is a form of advocacy in terms of speaking about others on their behalf. It involves direct contact between the lobbyist and the government entity but can involve other forms of communication.

Government relationships are a way to determine causes of action. Political strategy is a plan to win over others in doing what you want to be done. To do this, a coalition may be formed in order to control access to certain information. Firms provide resources to politicians for a reason. Political networks are based on influence and domination (Yan & Chang, 2018). Influence is based on helping another alter their perceptions. This can be achieved by providing certain information or theories.

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Domination refers to a sense of control over another in determining what they do. It means the other person's views subside to the other's views.

Corporate political behaviour uses the power of government for corporate needs. One of the most popular and still current books regarding political strategy is 'How to win friends and influence people' by Dale Carnegie that was published in 1936. It still is used as a reference book in courses or political strategy and human relations. Some of the suggestions in the book are around showing genuine interest in what others are saying. This helps to build a sense of rapport and trust. By paying attention to others perspectives, it helps to demonstrate integrity. This makes others feel valued and fosters a positive interaction. By emphasising improvement, others are more likely to consider the person as authentic. This can inspire others and enables connections to be built for future usage. People who are politically savvy understand how they can influence others. This can include preparing how they will discuss topics to a wider audience.

Geopolitics

Geopolitics has become increasingly relevant in recent times due to world conflicts such as that occurring between Ukraine and Russia (Ratten, 2023). It is based on human and economic geography in terms of how location influences decisions. Geography can be a contested topic due to changing perceptions of how and if it matters in society. To understand geopolitics, an eclectic perspective is required that takes into account history, climate change, religion, economics as well as other factors (Moreira, Marques, Braga, & Ratten, 2019). Political geographers study how politics influences geographic discussions. Geography can be described as a description of the physical aspects of a location. Many social issues are influenced by geography.

Geography is an interesting way to analyse politics as it examines the specifics of countries, cities, and regions. Characteristics of locations such as sea access, climate, and setting influence political conditions. Places are unique but independent depending on their location. They have a sense of history and are based on systemic interactions. How people live is based on places as they are the sites of human interaction. A mosaic of experiences is related to a place in terms of who we are and how we think. People as part of their political activity operate in groups based on family, social, cultural, or religious associations. These groups can include families, sport teams, and churches. Allegiance to a group can determine a person's political leaning. An important component of politics is associated with a group. Politics is influenced by a person's sense of place. This comes from their social and collective identity that arises from cultural association. People are guided by the norms and regulations associated with their identity. Belonging to a certain identity influences their behavioural norms.

Conclusion

This editorial has highlighted the role of politics in a management context. Corporate political activity was highlighted as a way of understanding how the environmental conditions influence business decisions. The role of geopolitics was also discussed in relation to recent global events that are having significant effects on management practice. These different approaches when used collectively help to understand the role of politics in management.

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