

MANAGEMENT, MAESTRO! THE MANAGERIAL FUNCTIONS OR ROLES OF CHORAL CONDUCTORS

Rita de Cássia Fucci Amato (EESC-USP)

fucciamato@terra.com.br

Edmundo Escrivão Filho (EESC-USP)

edesfi@sc.usp.br



The aim of this paper is to discuss the managerial tasks carried out by the maestro, a professional-symbol of management, coordination and leadership, but whose real and day-to-day work is not really deeply understood. In this sense, the paper aims at providing a brief review on the theories of manager's job, electing the consolidated theories on the called "functions or roles approach" to design some observations on the managerial activities typical of a choral conductor. For developing this interdisciplinary analysis, besides the literature revision, the work is based also on a case study research with participant observation a conductor of an amateur choir. The application of the administrative theories to the choral environment contributes for clearing some aspects of the "production" and management of this kind of artistic group.

Palavras-chaves: manager's job, administrative theories, functions or roles of managers, maestro as manager, production of cultural goods and services.

1. Introduction

The aim here is firstly to point the description of managing as conducting a musical group and then to discuss what the organizational and managerial tasks carried out by a maestro are. For discussing this question, many approaches of the manager's job are discussed. These approaches were presented by the most detached management authors, from Fayol to Koontz and O'Donnell, Peter Druker, Chester Barnard, Simon, Mintzberg, Peter Senge and Prahalah, among others. In this context, the classical administrative or managerial functions are redesigned under new and different dimensions. Finally, to provide a first analysis about the relevance of some of these theories (functions or roles consolidated approaches) to describe maestro's managerial tasks, a study case is presented.

The methodological approach of this case study about the Madrigal InCanto (InCanto Chamber Choir) is based on a participant observation. According to Thiollent (2005), this research strategy was created in USA, in the 1940s, by Kurt Lewin. "While a methodological proposal, participative research and research-action detach the qualitative aspects of conception and organization of the research process, and its relation with the capacity of action of the involved actors" (Thiollent, 2005, p. 172). The study used participant research strategy, as choristers have an active role in producing the data collection (the experiences described and analyzed) and the conductor of this vocal group is one of the researchers.

2. Manager's job

Regarding the manager's job, basically two consolidated approaches can be identified: the process approach and the functions or roles approach (ESCRIVÃO FILHO, 1995; ESCRIVÃO FILHO; MENDES, 2008). For the authors of process approach, founded by Henri Fayol (1841-1925), the tasks of managers consist of a group of activities, the performance of which is a process sequential in the design and simultaneous in operation; a process that repeats itself continuously (ESCRIVÃO FILHO, 1995). Fayol explains: "To prepare the operations is to *plan* and *organize*; to see that they are carried out is to *command* and to *co-ordinate*; to watch the results is to *control*" (FAYOL, 2002, p. 225). On the other hand, concerning the functions or roles approach, although its authors do not share a single – or even similar – formulation on the manager functions, they can be grouped when the empirical support of their works and the criticism to the supporters of Fayol is emphasized. The main criticism directed to the processualists is that their theory prescribes "steps" for an effective management, which, in empirical reality, is far from the systematic and fragmented description proposed by the authors of the process approach (ESCRIVÃO FILHO, 1995). In the approach of the managers' roles or functions, represented by authors such as Barnard (1966), Simon (1976) and Mintzberg (1998b), the visible face of managerial behavior has started to be considered as characterized by brevity, variety and fragmentation of work. The roles or functions approach authors are not unanimous in their description of the managers' job, but they have in common the criticism of the reductionism and the unreality of the process approach. Authors such as Stewart (1982, 1979, 1976, 1974) and Kotter (1999) can also be classified alongside Barnard, Simon and Mintzberg (ESCRIVÃO FILHO, 1995), but a closer examination reveals that Stewart and Kotter also bring criticism both to the process approach and to the roles or functions approach, which basically reduces management to execution or to decision-making, respectively (ESCRIVÃO FILHO; MENDES, 2008, p. 12). Therefore, the latter two authors are familiar with the roles or functions approach, but they

propose new analysis, not yet fully disseminated and consolidated within management teaching and practice.

Another emerging perspective on the manager's job is addressed by Nadler and Tushman (1977), which fall within the so-called diagnosis approach. But they reject the diagnosis based on symptoms (in which the manager's job is just reactive) and the diagnosis based on the intuition of the manager. The authors propose, therefore, the systematic diagnosis based on particular organizational components, providing a "congruence model of organizational behavior", in which the manager's job is focused on solving problems.

Some contemporary views, individually advocated by their authors, do not constitute themselves great thinking lines on the manager's job, or are similar to those emergent approaches or to the already established ones. In this category, the visions of Senge (1994), based on organizational learning, and Prahalad, more focused on competitive strategy of large companies and corporations, stand out.

The following table briefly presents the concepts of the manager's job developed by the administration literature since Fayol.

Approach	Author	Description of the manager's job
1 st . Consolidated approach of the manager's job explanation: <i>process approach</i>	Fayol (2002)	To plan, organize, command, co-ordinate and control
	Gulick (1969)	Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting
	Koontz and O'Donnell (1972)	Planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling
	Drucker (2007c)	To set objectives, organize, motivate and communicate, measure, develop people
2 nd . Consolidated approach of the manager's job explanation: <i>functions or roles approach</i>	Barnard (1966)	Maintenance of organization communication, securing of essential services from individuals, formulation of purposes and objectives
	Simon (1976)	Deciding and coordinating (development of a plan for all members of the organization involved, the communication of relevant portions of this plan to each member, and ensuring that each member is willing to be guided by the plan)
	Mintzberg (1998b)	Interpersonal roles (figurehead, leader, liaison); informational roles (monitor, disseminator, spokesperson); decisional roles (entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, negotiator)
Emergent approaches related <i>functions or roles approach</i>	Kotter (1999)	Agenda setting, network building and execution (getting networks to implement agendas)
	Stewart (1982; 1979; 1976; 1974)	To meet demands under constraints and make choices
Emergent approach on <i>systemic organizational</i>	Nadler and Tushman (1977)	To diagnose organizational behavior, search for alternative solutions (action), evaluate and

<i>diagnosis</i>		<i>feedback</i>
Contemporary individual approaches	Senge (1994)	Five disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning and systems thinking
	Prahalad (1997; 2003)	Managing cultural and intellectual diversity, market volatility, Internet impacts, new and emergent clients; to design and implement complex strategic tasks, share and protect intellectual property, manage the public-private interface, provide intellectual and managerial leadership

Table 1 – Approaches of the manager’s job

For this paper, we selected the consolidated approaches on *functions or roles* of managers to analyze the work of the choral conductor.

3. Case study: Madrigal InCanto (InCanto Chamber Choir)

3.1. Introductory description of the group

The InCanto Chamber Choir (‘Madrigal InCanto’: <http://www.incantochoir.blogspot.com/>) is a musical group dedicated to the vocal *a cappella* performance of polyphonic music of the Middle Age, Renaissance and of our times. The vocal group debut in 2009, with the concert “From Renaissance to Brazilian Popular Music”, when the InCanto sang pieces by medieval and renaissance composers (mainly the piece from Cancionero de Upsala), and arrangements of songs by Paul Simon, Carlos Lyra, Milton Nascimento and Almir Sater. InCanto’s performance of Villa-Lobos’ “*Feliz Natal*” was classified as “a lovely performance”, by Dean Frey, director of Red Deer Public Library (Heitor Villa-Lobos Website, 2009), from Canada, which maintains an international site about the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. InCanto videos at YouTube.com have been watched in many countries, such as the Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Equator, Venezuela, Mexico, USA, Canada, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Germany, Sweden, Finland, United Kingdom, Poland, Australia, Japan, India and other countries.

The choir is formed by one conductor and (in the last concert) by 9 (nine) amateur singers: two mezzo sopranos, three sopranos, two tenors and two basses. The conductor is the only professional musician of the group (she has a degree in Music, a specialization in Voice, a master and a PhD in Education). One of the sopranos is the assistant and he has some studies on musical theory and the piano. She has conducted some rehearsals in 2009.

The idea that originated InCanto came from a casual meeting with one chorister (tenor) who sang in her choir (Municipal Choir of São Carlos; ‘Coral Municipal de São Carlos’, which existed from 1983 to 1989) and had recovered some recordings of the group. After this meeting, the conductor visited another chorister (soprano) who sung in her choir (Municipal Choir of São Carlos) and was her assistant in this group. From these meetings came the idea of a meeting with the members of this choir, to remember the past times and eventually sing some score. After a first meeting, it was decided to make a presentation and the rehearsals have been conducted since August 2008, culminating in the first concert of the group in December 2009. The low frequency of rehearsals (one a month) and health problems with the choristers delayed the presentation, firstly programmed for June 2009. In the last concert, the group was formed by: a conductor; three sopranos: one retired scholar from the

University of São Paulo (USP) in São Carlos, a researcher from USP-São Carlos and her daughter (a high school student); two contraltos, a retired secretary from USP-São Carlos and a trader; two tenors: a high-school professor (father of one of the sopranos) and a professor from USP-São Paulo (husband of the conductor); two basses, a high-school professor and a professor from the University of São Paulo State (UNESP-Araraquara).

3.2. Descriptions of manager's job applied to InCanto conductor's job

3.2.1. Barnard

According to Migliato and Perussi Filho (2008, p. 77), Barnard was the “first author to worry about consistently describing the functions of the executive, focusing on human, psychological and behavioral aspects. Moreover, the core of the Barnard's arguments is the tension between the achievement of organizational goals (called efficacy) and the need of individuals to achieve their personal goals (efficiency). “The organizational objectives can not be achieved unless the leadership recognizes a set of individual aspirations and find a way to help employees achieve them. The cooperative system works best if there is balance between both” (Migliato; Perussi Filho, 2008, p. 73).

Barnard was a pioneering thinker about the nature of leadership (the concept of a good manager as a trainer of values) in contrast to the figure of the authoritarian and manipulative manager (based on reward system). In InCanto Chamber Choir, the leadership exercised by the conductor is firstly based on her musical ability; secondly, on her facility to take decisions, taking into account a negotiation with the singers; thirdly, because she led internalize the conductor's leadership because of her strong intuitive power to build an imaginary appropriate to real situations; fourthly, because being together and producing high quality music is the greatest goal of all.

Another important point to be reviewed is the fraternity established by the conductor, which allows singers to express their anxieties and concerns about the work: moments of relaxation are essential in rehearsals (with juice and snacks). Relaxation allows suggestions and also definitions of new assignments to the singers. The leading process through co-operation and consent makes effective choices and goals achieved in a more rewarding way.

All leadership activities performed inside InCanto materialize the typical functions of managers described by Barnard (1966): maintenance of organization communication, securing of essential services from individuals, formulation of purposes and objectives.

3.2.2. Simon

For Simon, management (or administration) is the art of getting things done. With this author

the rationality of the decision (balance between means and ends) becomes the main concern of administrative [or managerial] theory; it is a managerial task distributing and influencing the decision-making function in a particular organization. [...] For Simon, the actual behavior does not reach the objective rationality (best choice), because the individual is limited and influenced often by his/ her physical ability, values, and extent of knowledge. (Albuquerque; Escrivão Filho, 2008, p. 86-7)

Starting from this perspective, the limitations create the path of decisions. In the case of InCanto, on the one hand there are limitations brought about by some of the choristers. The qualities and limitations of the voices of the singers clearly delimit the choices of repertoire. The professional activities of participants make it difficult to schedule rehearsals. There is always a great collective negotiation for extra rehearsals. The amateur link of the singers with the activity contrasts with the professional status of the conductor. This restricts the activities, but at the same time, a stronger charisma group was created in this organizational structure. The pleasure of belonging to a group with vocal quality trims the edges of amateur / professional relations. InCanto is the result of a number of voices and that is the foundation of its existence: to sing in harmony.

Concerning the conductor, she also adds up to several limitations, such as: The conductor lives outside the host city of InCanto (about 230 km) and in this sense the rehearsals usually only occur on Friday evening and Saturday afternoon (from 15 to 19:30 p.m.). Because of this limitation, large concerts and presentations should be scheduled taking this fact into account. The conductor has other professional activities (currently she is a postdoctoral researcher) that do not allow her spending more time in InCanto's activities. Suit rehearsals are left to the individual singers. Each chorister should study his/her voice and request any support assistance from the conductor. The choice of repertoire is limited to the aesthetic taste of the conductor and some precedents are open for requests of participants. The vocal music of the sixteenth century are the works currently focused by the conductor and fortunately the scores are welcomed by the whole choir.

Another key-word Simon's description (1976) is to coordinate. This role involves: the development of a plan for all members of the organization involved, the communication of relevant portions of this plan to each member, and ensuring that each member is willing to be guided by the plan. The organization of the activities plan of InCanto is delineated by the constraints highlighted. Planning and communicating are very participatory and democratic. These activities have a more horizontal and informal character and aim to take into account the views of all members (choristers and conductor). This way it is possible to obtain the commitment from all the targets.

3.2.3. Mintzberg

Mintzberg (1998b) descriptions on the three great complexes of managerial roles (interpersonal, informational and decisional roles) is a great counterpoint to the Fayolian theory and is, in itself, a new paradigm of the descriptions about manager's job. In reference to the interpersonal roles, InCanto's conductor is the "official" figurehead and liaison of the choir. She is the person who makes contacts and negotiates the eventual prices and fees for presentations. She is also the one who figureheads the group in media interviews and during the concerts, in which she conducts the ceremonial and theatric aspects of the presentation. Leadership and motivation are also centered in the maestro's person.

Regarding the informational roles, the conductor develops the roles of monitor and disseminator, mainly because of her participation in the choral environment (concerts, informal conversations with musicians, etc.). However, because of the informality and horizontality of the group organization, the choristers also bring to the group information about other choirs and musical groups, concerts and other points. The role of spokesperson is also played by the choristers, but mainly by the conductor, seen as the "official" figurehead of the choir.

Regarding the decisional roles, entrepreneurship is centered in the conductor, but with the active participation of the choristers. As disturbance handler, the maestro promotes a situational leadership, in which as a leader she makes use of her dialogue capabilities, and abilities for judgement and decision. InCanto's assistant, who is also a chorister, develops an important role in solving interpersonal disturbances, by means of motivational messages focusing on maintaining the existence and the harmony of the group. These activities also compose the internal dimension of the role of negotiator. In its external dimension, the decisional role is similar to that of the resource allocator role. Concerning this role, in InCanto an organization of work has been established in which all the members (choristers and conductor) are motivated to seek opportunities for presentations, focusing on the opportunities of remunerated concerts, such as those during scientific conferences, which are very common in São Carlos universities. Searching for resources is very important to the group to cover the costs of snacks usually consumed during rehearsals intervals. The group also needs to look for opportunities of paid presentations, because it needs money to make concerts in more formal and prestigious places: for example, in the first concert of InCanto, the Municipal Theater of São Carlos (funded by the municipal hall) required a fee of 415 reais to make the place available for the concert. As the group did not (and does not) have a sponsor, the solution was to share the expenses among conductor and choristers.

4. Concluding remarks

In addition to mentioning the apparent similarity between the conductor and the manager, and beyond the simple analogy or metaphor used in management literature (as a type of isomorphism in science, as conceived by Bertalanffy, 1977), it is important to highlight that the maestro's job, widely understood, is not limited in any way to wave the arms and make a vocal or instrumental group play music in a concert. In the day to day work of the conductor, during rehearsals, he performs the technical tasks of musical direction of a team, in which issues such as leadership, co-ordination, planning and motivation are essential factors for the construction of the artistic result expected from that human group. Also out of rehearsals, when the conductor has to raise funds for the choir, plan and organize the marketing of the concerts, examine and select scores, recruiting people and performing many other tasks, his activity resembles a manager's job. In fact, the conductor most often appears as a professional who performs many of the organizational functions – related to operations, marketing, finance, human resources and research and development, among others –, although their training, traditionally, only involves the technical-musical dimension, but almost never the organizational expertise. Moreover, to plan, organize, lead and control are words that mark the practice of conducting, but these terms come from management theory, and in administration, managers find it difficult to comply with these activities successfully, as noted by Mintzberg (1998b).

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