

Review Article

The Dynamics of Collaboration: An Interdisciplinary Perspective on Management

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Abstract

Management, officially, has been an effective tool for humans for nearly a century. Traditional management relies on single-headed leadership, while more modern approaches emphasize plural-headed management. Participation, a key component of plural-headed management, has been recognized as a strategy to enhance cooperation in organizations for over fifty years, particularly since the 1960s. However, additional aspects of the concept need to be considered to foster synergy. Recently, new methods for involving people in organizational operations have been proposed, including empowerment management and engagement management. Collaboration management is among these. Collaboration has become a crucial element in various fields, including business, education, healthcare, and government sectors. However, some unclear concepts and practices in collaboration management require clarification. This paper aims to explore the various dimensions of collaboration, including its processes, benefits, challenges, and factors that influence effective efforts. By reviewing existing literature and case studies, this paper seeks to provide a foundational understanding of the role of collaboration in organizational management and success. Key findings will include the introduction, evolution, significance, emerging approaches in collaboration management, and the conclusion with implications.

Keywords

Collaboration, Management, Interdisciplinary, Dynamics, New Perspective

1. Introduction

United efforts to accomplish the task are a crucial function of management. As early as the management definition proposed by Fayol [1] in his landmark paper on management (originally called administration) stated that it includes three key aspects: having power and exercising it, designing organizational functions, and allocating resources to employees, and personnel management. The emphasis is on personnel management because without personnel, an organization's operations cannot be carried out. However, management

effectiveness will not be achieved without the cooperation of personnel efforts. The question is how to motivate people to participate in organizational cooperation.

In the late 1960s, management perspectives and practices shifted from the scientific management approach to the human-factor approach because of the Hawthorne Effect. Different management concepts and practices were developed and implemented to improve organizational management. Likert [2] proposed a participative style of organization,

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called the System 4 organization, which is more team-oriented. The primary objective of this type of organization is to engage employees in decision-making and enhance their work commitment. This concept has become more common in Participative Leadership, as opposed to Directive Leadership. According to Williams [3], Participative Leadership involves consulting employees for their suggestions and input in decision-making. Employee participation in decision-making should help them understand organizational goals and how to achieve them. Additionally, when employees participate in decision-making, they tend to be more committed to their work. Similarly, when this concept is applied to management, it is believed that organizational personnel should be aware of both the goals to achieve and the methods to accomplish them. Lussier [4] wrote that in the old management style, employees were told what to do, whereas in the new management approach, employees are expected to be partners in managing organizations through participative management, which empowers employees to share in performing management functions as a team.

Most of the time, the idea and practice of participation are discussed more than actually implemented, because, in reality, putting it into action is not as straightforward as it sounds. To fully realize the potential of the concept, more details should be examined and shared. The goal of this paper is to explore different aspects of collaboration, including its processes, benefits, challenges, and factors that affect successful efforts. Research methods include documentary review, content analysis, based on documentary researches on books, articles, research reports, both online and hard text related to the topic. The synthesis and summary of findings based on the article objective, mainly, is to explore the various dimensions of collaboration, including its processes, benefits, challenges, and factors that influence effective efforts. The findings will be presented in the following sections: Introduction, Evolution of the Concept, Importance of Collaboration, Factors Influencing Collaboration Management, Emerging Collaboration Management, and Conclusion and Implications.

2. Evolution of the Concept

In the 1960s, participative management was introduced to improve cooperation within organizations. As Power and Power [5] stated in their preface, participatory management gained recognition as a way to achieve more effective leadership. According to this idea, leaders do not see themselves as authoritarian but instead facilitate, evaluate, and coordinate with concerned individuals to solve problems. The term used at the time was 'consultive process.' Both authors preferred to use the term 'consultation.' Consulting issues in management, as indicated when the book was written [5], included policy issues, structural-functional relationships, program planning and budgeting, appellate procedures, and environmental consultation.

Participative leadership is another concept that involves

consulting employees to gather their suggestions and needs before making a decision [3]. Participation in decision-making can help followers understand which goals are most important and provide a clear strategy to achieve them. Additionally, when people participate in decisions, they become more committed to working hard to realize the decision. However, Moss [6] distinguished between Consultative Management and Participative Management. Management is characterized by "I ask, you answer, I explain, and I decide," while Participative Management is more about "The team and I will make the final decision." The authors believe that these two types of management represent an evolutionary stage of participation, progressing from consultation to team-based participation and ultimately to collaborative participation.

Collaboration is understood differently by various scholars. Bennett & Gadlin [7] stated that scientific collaboration is more common now than in the past. The trend is shifting toward encouraging collaborative efforts that bring together researchers from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to address complex questions and solve challenging problems. Collaborative teams would set common objectives, coordinate their resources, and develop a shared plan of activities designed to achieve those objectives. The main idea is that a group of people work together, either as individuals or as a team, to achieve a common goal or goals. Argranoff and McGuire [8] described collaboration as a purposeful relationship intended to solve problems that cannot be easily solved by a single organization. This type of collaboration is more similar to networking cooperation. However, Agranoff and McGuire also noted that collaboration can involve cooperative work among individuals within an organization. Additionally, Morgan [9] defined collaboration as working with one or more people to create something or achieve a goal or set of goals.

The definitions of collaboration, reviewed above, provide a broad understanding of the term as how individuals or organizational networks work together to achieve shared goals. The key differences between earlier participation and the recent evolution of the concept, summarized from the literature review [3, 6, 10-12], show that effective tools and concepts of collaboration include collaborative principles, management, and digital technology that connect internal individuals, external stakeholders or consumers, and alliance networks. The implications for organizational management are significant, with participation serving as a foundational element, while engagement and collaboration act as catalysts that unlock a workplace's full potential. Organizations should prioritize building a culture that actively encourages engagement and collaboration. This involves creating an environment where employees and networks feel valued, supported, and empowered to maximize their potential and contribute their unique talents toward shared visions and goals. Advanced digital technology makes collaboration more practical and effective.

In short, participation is a broader concept of management

that involves involvement or a plural-headed style of management, as opposed to the traditional single-headed style. As the concept and practice have evolved, several distinctive yet related concepts and practices have been implemented, including empowerment, engagement, and ultimately, collaboration. The key characteristics that differentiate these concepts and practices are as follows: Participative management enables employees to participate in decision-making, take action, and share in the benefits. Empowerment management delegates or shares power with employees in running the organization, while engagement management makes employees partial owners of the organization. Collaboration management views employees as valuable human beings with potential, ready to perform their best. The key to success in collaboration management is cooperating collectively toward organizational goals, inspiring, and supporting ongoing operations for sustainable achievement.

3. The Importance of Collaboration

As Power and Power [5] pointed out that participatory management was introduced. Recognition of a new approach in the 1960s aimed at more effective management. The movement, the authors believe, has changed how executives and staff operate organizations. The new approach shifted from 'single head decision-making' to 'plural head decision-making.' Although participation influences management, more effective participative management depends on the use of appropriate styles of participation. Academics have proposed different models to maximize the benefits of participation, and collaboration is one among them. This underscores the importance of collaboration.

Agranoff & McGuire [8] cited O'Toole, who identified five key reasons why collaboration management is crucial. First, policy is a complex issue that demands a collaborative structure for effective implementation. Second, direct intervention activities driven by the central unit are limited, making a network approach necessary. Third, operational units must adapt and employ balanced technical methods to achieve policy goals. Fourth, the gathering and linking of complex information requires interorganizational task forces and planning bodies to accomplish the task. Lastly, multiple mandates create additional pressure for managing networks. Agranoff & McGuire also added another reason for the importance of collaboration: the increasing prominence of knowledge, which makes collaboration management more necessary.

Motion blog [13] highlighted four advantages of collaboration management as follows. First, strong relationships: Employees seek meaningful interactions and a sense of belonging within the organization. They are happier at work when they develop deeper connections. Second, increased engagement and morale: Employees who participate in decision-making or problem-solving within the organization tend to feel more invested in their work. Third, collective intelli-

gence: The benefit of collaboration is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Cross-functional collaboration pools diverse skills, experiences, and perspectives. Fourth, shared accountability: The idea of 'everyone for oneself' is replaced with shared responsibility. Everyone works toward mutual benefit.

There is no doubt that multiple or collective leaders are more effective than a single one. Collaborative management improves employees' decision-making and participation. This type of management stresses collective effort and accountability. The key idea is 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.'

4. Emerging Collaboration Management

Based on the literature review, two models for collaboration management are identified as described below.

Morgan [9] proposed an adaptive, emergent collaboration framework, which included five components: goals and objectives, organizational culture, processes, technology, and governance.

Goals and objectives might seem like familiar issues for every organization, but they can often cause major problems and decrease effectiveness. They need to be clearly defined and communicated throughout all areas, including the company level, departments, employees, customers, and metrics.

Organizational culture must align with the strategic direction. If the organization is competitive and employees are encouraged to outperform each other, a collaboration platform won't be effective unless a culture of collaboration is actively fostered. Therefore, organizational culture needs to support the organizational strategy.

The process is how the organization manages its business. When social and collaborative tools and technology are used, everyone is expected to pay attention and review information regularly. Organizational workflows, processes, and tools must be planned, communicated, and used effectively.

Technology means choosing the right tools and using them objectively. More details on this topic will be provided later. And, finally, governance exists to ensure that everyone in the organization understands and follows consistent rules, policies, regulations, and operational procedures. Additionally, the organization may provide employees with best practices, guidelines, policies, and all relevant agreements.

Agranoff and McGuire [8] proposed a Hypothesized Model of Collaborative Management using a cross-tabulation of two interacting variables: Collaborative Activities and Collaborative Strategy, each with low and high levels. The low end of Collaborative Strategy is 'Passive,' while the high end is 'Opportunistic.' The low end of Collaborative Activity is 'Inactive,' while the high end is 'Active.' We renamed the model as Strategy-Activity Based Model, for short. And the outcome of the metric, mentioned, results in six collaboration styles, as follows.

Abstinence (Nothing Hill) is a model that the collaboration

is low both in activities and strategies, do not focus on work development much, and less cooperate with network. Jurisdiction-based (Cityville) is the model that seeks high collaboration for achievement, activity and strategy collaboration is high both within the organization and network. Contented (Richburb) refers to good opportunities, but lacks of collaboration, no intention to make deals with network. The former successful organizations fall to this type of model. Door-recipient (Bargain City) is kind of model that the organization is facing crossroads. The organization needs to decide what to act. The opportunity is open, there are plenty of activities to do, but hesitate. Reactive (Centerville) refers the organization that is of the middle, not so good and no so bad. Strategies and activities are at average to low. And the last model is Top-down (Vertville) refers to an old style of organization, top-down at most everything. Collaboration is low and depending on the boss and policy.

Motion Blog [11] identified five key traits of collaboration management: open communication, mutual decision-making, team-based solutions, high adaptability, and continuous feedback. Open communication ensures the team stays aligned, with everyone knowing their goals, responsibilities, expectations, and mutual benefits. Mutual decision-making complements open communication, ensuring that everyone feels included and valued. Every voice is heard, and feedback helps address gaps within the organization. Team-based solutions are essential, meaning problems and their solutions are everyone's responsibility. A team leader should foster opportunities for collaborative solutions, which are viewed as the most effective path to success. High adaptability is about responding quickly to challenges or changes. The team should stay agile and relevant to navigate different environments. Lastly, continuous feedback keeps the team informed about their progress and how close they are to their goals. Cultivating a culture of ongoing improvement is crucial to encourage reflection, adjustment, and growth.

In the digital age, technology plays a vital role in both everyday life and work. Besides choosing the right management strategies, selecting and using the appropriate technology is equally important. Morgan [9] demonstrated how digital tools support modern management through collaboration. He highlighted that platforms enable organizations to accomplish almost anything, from creating internet blogs to customizing widgets. Full-scale platforms can be seen as comprehensive tool sets rather than specific tools like a wrench or a hammer. Application options might include Mashups, Wikis, Blogs, Ideation Platforms, Social E-mail, and Collaborative File Sharing, to name a few. Moreover, Morgan [14] pointed out that technological skills, especially skills on using AI (Artificial Intelligence), were effective tools for the future leaders, whose remote working and collaboration became parts of successful management. Brody [15] wrote in his new book that remote work setting and leading remote and hybrid teams were parts of essential leadership skills of management in this era. The authors recommend

collaborative managers to make the most uses of digital technology in their workplaces.

There might not be a single solution or model for collaboration management. However, the core of collaboration management that sets it apart from other participative management innovations is 'the inside-out collective efforts of organizational members'. The problem is that a private organization consists of at least three groups of people: the owner, the administrative staff, and the workers. Inspiring collective efforts is a key success factor due to the diverse interests and motives of its members. Public organizational management faces additional challenges because public organizations have no true owners, only pseudo or representative owners. Besides the fact that those who work in government sectors have diverse backgrounds, interests, and motives, working without true ownership leads to a lack of someone who genuinely cares about organizational achievement. However, it is the duty and responsibility of administrative leaders to inspire and synergize the collective efforts of all parties to achieve mutual goals and benefits. Effective collaboration management should include shared ownership and vision, strategic planning, trust, and a culture of equity, mutual governance, evaluation, and continuous improvement. Lastly, but not least, please remember that organizations are created to achieve goals that cannot be accomplished by one person alone, but rather by collective groups of people. This means that all partners—owners, pseudo-owners, and operational personnel—should adopt an ownership mindset, share benefits that sustain their efforts, and have stable career promises, all of which foster collective efforts. This marks the beginning of a new era of management for everyone.

5. Conclusion and Implications

There is no doubt that participation is a key concept to success for both past and present endeavors of management, but the big difference lies in how the concept is defined and applied. In today's uncertain and rapidly changing world, new participation ideas must be defined and designed. Based on the literature reviewed above, the new concept of participation, called 'collaboration,' broadens its perspective and scope. Main findings are as follow.

Firstly, collaboration should be defined as 'a process of synergizing efforts of both internal and external stakeholders by seeking and responding to the mutual needs of all parties without compromising wholeness and sustainability.' As mentioned earlier, the goals of participation and collaboration are to involve employees in decision-making and management, thereby making them integral to the organization. Collaboration enhances and expands both the range and goals of participation.

Secondly, the scope of collaborative participation encompasses both internal and external participation, including organizational networks and customers, while the objectives are not limited to decision-making but also include mutual

benefits for the business and sustainability for all stakeholders. Organizational goals will shift from focusing solely on benefits to striking a balance of advantages for everyone.

Thirdly, the two models of collaborative management discussed above can serve as good examples of implementing collaboration. The first model is Adaptive Collaboration Model and the second one is Strategy and Activity-based Model.

And finally, new innovative models should be researched, applied, and improved. The authors believe we are on the right track, but refining how collaboration should be designed and implemented is the next step to pursue.

Abbreviations

AI Artificial Intelligence

Author Contributions

Chuankid Masena: Conceptualization, Resources, Writing – original draft

Saman Asawapoom: Conceptualization, Supervision

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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