"Harmonizing Heritage: Bridging the Past and Present through a Comparative Study of Ancient Rajya Vyavastha and Current Management Principles using Design Thinking"

Author: Romita R. Swarup. Research & Academic Head, Explorra School of Design & Technology, Ahmedabad, India. www.explorra.org Email: romita@xdsindia.com

ABSTRACT

This Research paper presents a comparative analysis of the ancient Rajya Vyavastha system and modern principles of management on the concept of design thinking. Ancient Rajya Vyavastha, also known as ancient Indian governance system, refers to the political, administrative, and social structures that existed in ancient India. Rajya Vyavastha was a comprehensive system that encompassed various aspects of governance, including the principles of leadership.

The study aims to unveil the timeline of the principles of management by examining these two distinct frameworks and shedding light on their historical and conceptual foundations through the lens of design thinking. Design thinking is a process that has stages of understanding, observation, empathy, problem definition, ideation, prototyping & testing. While it has gained significant attention in recent years, certain principles and approaches found in design thinking can be observed in the problem-solving and decision-making processes of ancient Indian governance. Drawing upon research and analysis, this comparative study identifies commonalities and disparities between Rajya Vyavastha and modern management principles. It investigates various dimensions, such as decision-making processes, organizational structures, stakeholder engagement, and problem-solving methodologies.

While design thinking as a formalized methodology with its specific stages and tools was not explicitly practiced in ancient Rajya Vyavastha, the underlying principles of empathy, iteration, and a focus on feasible outcomes can be observed in the problem-solving approaches of that time. These principles continue to resonate with modern design thinking practices, highlighting the timeless nature of certain fundamental aspects of human-cantered approaches. By leveraging insights from Rajya Vyavastha, organizations can enhance their design thinking capabilities and unlock new avenues for creativity, and innovation.

It can be said in totality that this study uncovers the hidden connections between ancient Rajya Vyavastha and modern principles of management within the framework of design thinking. By bridging the gap between the past and the present, this research paves the way for a more holistic and culturally inclusive understanding of management principles in the ancient India and in the current times.

KEY WORDS:

Design thinking, Education, Innovation, Leadership, Management Principles

1. INTRODUCTION

In ancient India, the education system and the Rajya Vyavastha (system of governance) were intricately intertwined, forming the pillars of the society. The ancient education system, based on the gurukul tradition, nurtured students not only in academic knowledge but also in moral values, customs, and traditions. It instilled in them a sense of discipline, self-reliance, and a deep understanding of dharma. This holistic approach to education aimed at producing well-rounded individuals who would eventually become the future leaders and administrators of the kingdom. As students completed their education, they transitioned into the Rajya Vyavastha, where they would contribute to the governance and administration of the kingdom. The principles of dharma and ethical conduct learned during their education were reflected in their roles as rulers, ministers, and administrators. The ancient Rajya Vyavastha, with its emphasis on fairness, justice, and the well-being of the people, was guided by the wisdom imparted through the education system. This seamless blending of the ancient education system and the Rajya Vyavastha created a cohesive societal structure where education played a vital role in shaping the leaders who governed with integrity, wisdom, and a deep understanding of the needs of their subjects.

1.1 Overview of Ancient Indian Education System

The ancient education system in India had a profound impact on individuals and society, fostering intellectual growth, moral values, practical skills, and the pursuit of knowledge. It provided a strong foundation for personal development, social cohesion, and cultural advancement. The traditional education system, characterized by confined classroom spaces, primarily focuses on acquiring information. In this ancient land, disciples embarked on a transformative journey by leaving their homes and immersing themselves in the immersive environment of a gurukul, where they resided with their revered teachers throughout their learning journey. The beauty of this system lay in its autonomy, as the society refrained from interfering with the curriculum, teaching methods, and the process of acquiring knowledge. Ancient India embraced both formal and informal modes of education. The traditional education system placed great significance on instilling a deep understanding of traditions, customs, rituals, and religion in students, nurturing their cultural roots and spiritual connection. It fostered a holistic approach, shaping individuals not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually, paving the way for well-rounded members of society [1].A s time progressed, the education system underwent a significant transformation. Modern-day education emphasizes interdisciplinary approaches and practical applications, fostering a dynamic and versatile learning experience. The Indian education system stands out globally due to its ability to adapt and draw inspiration from the rich legacy of the ancient education system. [2].

1.2 Overview of Ancient Rajya Vyavastha

Ancient Rajya Vyavastha was characterized by a hierarchical structure and a set of principles that guided the functioning of the state. The ancient Indian society was divided into varnas (castes) and each varna had its respective rights, duties, and responsibilities. The ruler, known as the king, held a central position in the Rajya Vyavastha. The king was responsible for maintaining law and order, protecting the kingdom, and ensuring the welfare of the people. The administration was organized into various departments or ministries, each headed by a minister who assisted the king in decision-making and policy implementation. The king was advised by a council of learned scholars and ministers who provided guidance on matters of governance, justice, and diplomacy. The Rajya Vyavastha also emphasized the concept of dharma, which

was the moral and ethical duty of the ruler and citizens. The king was expected to govern with fairness, justice, and compassion, ensuring the well-being of all sections of society. The ancient Rajya Vyavastha played a crucial role in maintaining social order, promoting economic prosperity, and fostering a harmonious and inclusive society in ancient India.

1.3 Literature Review

Let us look into some of the evidences that can be gained from two very prominent cities of ancient India. Lothal, an ancient city located in present-day Gujarat, India, was part of the Indus Valley Civilization, which flourished around 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE. While archaeological findings provide insights into the urban planning, trade, and craftsmanship of Lothal, there is limited direct evidence about the education system in this specific city. However, based on the general understanding of the education system prevalent in the Indus Valley Civilization, we can infer some aspects. The education system was likely based on a combination of formal and informal modes of learning. The highly organized and planned nature of the Indus Valley cities suggests a society that valued knowledge and education. The presence of well-designed structures, sophisticated systems, and standardized weights and measures indicates the need for skilled artisans, engineers, and administrators, which would have required specialized education and training [3] [4]. Dholaveera another significant site of the ancient Indus Valley Civilization, located in present-day Gujarat, India, flourished around 2600 to 1900 BCE and provides valuable insights into the social, economic, and political aspects of that time. While our understanding of the ancient governance system in Dholaveera is not as comprehensive as we would like it to be, we can make some observations based on archaeological findings. Excavations have revealed the presence of structures that are believed to have served as educational institutions, the college-like complex in Dholaveera. These structures suggest the existence of formal places of learning, possibly for specialized skills or knowledge transmission. Archaeological findings depicting a seated figure with a student, that has been interpreted as representations of a teacher-student relationship. These figurines suggest the existence of mentorship and a form of knowledge transfer within the society. The presence of intricate designs and symbols, suggests a system of symbolic communication as educational information. The urban planning and infrastructure of the Indus Valley cities indicate a practical understanding of engineering. There was transmission of knowledge through apprenticeship-like systems indicate that some form of education and knowledge dissemination existed during that time.

2. MANAGEMEMENT & DESIGN THINKING

The principles of effective leadership, decision-making, and the well-being of stakeholders, evident in ancient Rajya Vyavastha, continue to shape modern management practices. The emphasis on ethical conduct, strategic planning, and organizational structure in ancient Rajya Vyavastha establishes a strong connection to contemporary management principles.

2.1 Definition of Management

Management combines the art and science of guiding individuals towards goal attainment, leveraging their skills and abilities. It involves overseeing and supervising employees, ensuring their adherence to assigned tasks and responsibilities. Managers play a critical role in driving productivity and fostering continuous improvement within the organization [5]. More broadly, management is the process of designing and maintaining an environment in which individuals,

MAH MUL/03051/2012
ISSN: 2319 9318

Vidyawarta 07 ®
Peer-Reviewed International
Journal

Oct. To Dec. 2023
Issue-48, Vol-08

working together in groups, efficiently accomplish selected aims (Koontz and Weihrich 1990, p. 4).

2.2 Modern Management Principles

Modern management principles encompass a set of guiding principles and practices that shape the field of management in contemporary organizations. As the business landscape evolves and becomes increasingly complex, these principles provide a framework for effective decision-making, organizational structure, and the achievement of strategic goals. Modern management principles emphasize adaptability, innovation, collaboration, and the well-being of employees and stakeholders. They recognize the importance of ethical conduct, social responsibility, and the integration of technology in driving organizational success.

Peter Drucker, a renowned management consultant and author, introduced several influential management principles. These principles continue to shape management practices and provide valuable insights into effective leadership, organizational effectiveness, and strategic decision-making. Management by Objectives principle emphasizes setting clear objectives and goals in collaboration with employees. It involves aligning individual goals with organizational objectives, empowering employees to take ownership of their work, and regularly reviewing progress towards achieving targets. The Customer-Centric Approach emphasized the importance of understanding and satisfying customer needs and preferences. Decentralization and Empowerment in decision-making to empower employees and promote innovation. He believed that organizations should distribute decision-making responsibility to those closest to the information and encourage autonomous problem-solving. Knowledge Work and Knowledge Workers focuses on the growing significance of knowledge-based work in modern organizations. Continuous Learning and Innovation is the need for organizations to embrace a culture of continuous learning and adaptability. Foster a mindset of innovation, encourage experimentation, and embrace change as a means of staying competitive in a dynamic business environment.

2.3 Evolution of Design thinking

Design thinking was first practiced by David Kelley, Professor at Stanford University - cofounder of IDEO. In the year 2003 Tom Kelley made it absolute to call IDEO approach as design thinking and not design. Design Thinking involved many steps and also used various principles to conduct projects [6]. Brown says design thinking is not a linear process, it takes shape from insights such that the unpredictable problems are sorted Serrat (2010). These problems known as wicked problems seem not to have solutions as said by Brown in 2008 and Durall, 2014. Design thinking thus, uses mindsets and methods that are often used by designers to come up with newer ideas, solutions and choices that fulfil the desires of users. Serrat also says design thinking is more of a plan that consists of, experimental, empathetic, abductive reasoning, visual, dialectical, and optimistic ways (p. 2) this sums up building confidence, i.e., creative confidence said by Rauth, Koppen, Jobst & Meinel, 2010. Tim Brown and David Kelly are the originators and formalizers of Design Thinking, Tim Brown's method has inspiration, ideation and implementation, where the inspiration stage is related to problem that has to be solved considering market opportunities as told by Brown in 2008[7]. Also, Brown says that design thinking is a powerful, effective and widely accessible process to affect innovation that can be combined in business, education and other fields. Design Thinking has creative tools like, prototyping, generating ideas, storyboarding and experimentation to solve managerial problems as said by Brown; Carlgren et al. 2010, 2014b. According to Tim Brown, CEO of

IDEO and one of the leading advocates of Design Thinking, aims to fulfil three conditions desirability, feasibility, and viability [8].

3. COMPARATIVE STUDY

The comparative analysis of the ancient Rajya Vyavastha, with modern principles of management, specifically focusing on the concept of design thinking is done by exploring the similarities and differences between these two systems, we can gain valuable insights into the evolution of management practices and their relevance in the present context. Also, a comparative analysis on concept of Design thinking shall be explored in this research paper. Design thinking, a contemporary approach that emphasizes innovation, user-centeredness, and problem-solving, provides an interesting lens to examine how ancient principles of governance align with modern management principles.

SIMILARITIES		
Ancient Education System	**Current Management Principles**	**Based On Design Thinking**
Tailoring education to specific skills & learning flairs. Focus on the user	Customer-centricity, where organizations understand & meet the needs of their customers.	Desirability, feasibility, & business viability Human centered approach
Think critically, engage in open-ended discussions, & explore new ideas.	Fostering a culture of creativity & innovation within organizations.	problem-solving, -> think outside the box -> innovative solutions.
Practical learning & apprenticeships to provide hands-on practice	Practical application of knowledge, encouraging employees to utilize their skills & expertise to solve real-world problems.	Wicked problems

Table 1 Similarities between Ancient Education System & Current Management Principles

Figure 1 Current management principles encompass a set of practices and approaches that guide organizations in effectively achieving their objectives.

Minor similarities	
Ancient Education system	**Modern management principles**
Moral, spiritual knowledge	Prioritize organizational success & competitive advantage
Gurukul -> Personalized through direct observation, practice, & discussions	Rely on structured classroom education, case studies, workshops, & practical applications of theories
Broad & comprehensive curriculum	Content is tailored to equip individuals with specific skills required for organizational roles & functions
Education was primarily accessible to the elite classes & was often influenced by caste & gender biases	Individuals from various backgrounds can access education & contribute to organizational success. Emphasize equal opportunity, diversity, & inclusion

Table 2 Dissimilarities between Ancient Education System & Current Management principles

SIMILARITIES		
Ancient Rajya Vyavastha	**Current Management Principles**	**Design Thinking**
welfare of citizens	Organizational structuring & its resources to optimize efficiency, Strategic planning	Create meaningful solutions.
The king & administrators were expected to listen, observe, & take subjects' perspectives	conflict resolution & customer centricity, organizational decision-making	Gain deep insights, -> empathy-> observation
Failure was not explicitly encouraged, but learning from experiences	Customer experience along with Risk Taking & Risk Management	Fail early to succeed sooner
Decision-making involved consultation with advisors & mentors	Cross functional operations, Collaboration, tools & techniques	interdisciplinary collaboration -> innovative solutions.
Decision-making & governance were influenced by the broader system & the interdependencies of departments	Encourages participatory decision-making, input from various stakeholders	System thinking (Analysis & Synthesis)
Effective communication & storytelling	Highlights the importance of open, transparent, & effective communication	Use of visualization techniques
Structured hierarchy	decentralized decision-making, & cross-functional teams	Structured approach

Table 3 Similarities between Ancient Rajya Vyavastha & Current Management Principles

According to the Bhagwat Geeta, the universe is comprised of two principles: the manifested and the unmanifested. The manifested aspect is perceptible to our senses, while the unmanifested remains beyond their reach. Before creation, the material elements exist in an unmanifested state, and from this subtle state, they manifest into the physical world. The unmanifested serves as the seed of the manifested, and both principles coexist. Drawing parallels from this philosophy, design takes shape as a product, process, service, or strategy, representing the manifested aspect. However, the unmanifested aspect, known as design thinking, influences the existence of design itself. By analysing designs from ancient India, we can explore this coexistence and delve into the realm of design thinking [9].

MAH MUL/03051/2012
ISSN: 2319 9318

Vidyawarta 07 ®

Peer-Reviewed International
Journal

Oct. To Dec. 2023
Issue-48, Vol-08

MINOR SIMILARITIES	
Ancient Rajya Vyavastha	**Current management principles**
Operated with unique social structures, governance systems	industrial revolution & globalization
traditions, customs, & the wisdom of rulers.	Formalized frameworks, theories, & practices that guide organizational management
Did not much emphasised on disruptive advancements or technology	Innovation, adaptation, & change as key drivers of organizational success, digital transformation, global markets
Traditional apprenticeship models & learning through practical experience & guidance from mentors.	Taught through formal education & training programs. Specialized courses & degrees

Table 4 Dissimilarities between Ancient Rajya Vyavastha & Current Management Principles

4. DESIGN THINKING TOOLS
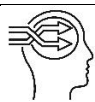
DESIGN THINKING	ANCIENT RAJYA VYAVSTHA, CURRENT MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES	HOW IT WORKS
OBSERVATION		Just as the King focused on the welfare of citizens – which means planning, field work is critical.
EMPATHY		This had the human factor of standing in stakeholder's shoes
PROBLEM DEFINITION		Voice of all stakeholders has to be considered inorder to define the problem faced by them
IDEATION		Generating ideas that are related to environment, people or products
PROTOTYPING		Using tools and techniques to bring the ideas into the real world
TESTING		Connect and enhance the prototype through story telling or other ways.

Table 5 How Design Thinking Tools work in context to the Ancient Rajya Vyavastha & Current Management Principles

5. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the comparative analysis specifically focuses on the concept of design thinking, it has provided valuable insights into the evolution and relevance of management practices over time. The study has highlighted the enduring principles of effective leadership, decision-making, and fostering innovation, which are evident in both ancient and modern management approaches. By unveiling the timeline and exploring the connections between ancient wisdom and contemporary practices, we have gained a deeper understanding of the timeless principles that underpin successful governance and management. The concept of design thinking has served as a bridge between the ancient Rajya Vyavastha and modern management, emphasizing the importance of user-centeredness, innovation, and problem-solving. By blending the wisdom of the past with the tools and insights of the present, we can cultivate effective leaders and foster a culture of innovation, creating a success future for organizations and societies as a whole.

6. REFERENCES

[1] Ghonge, M., Bag, R., Singh, A. (Copyright 2020). Indian Education: Ancient, Medieval and Modern, In Education at the Intersection of Globalization and Technology, IntechOpen, pp. 01-12. Google Scholar

[2] Author Mishra Nandita, Author Aithal P. S. (Copyright 2023), Ancient Indian Education: It's Relevance and Importance in the Modern Education System, International Journal of Case Studies in Business, IT, and Education (IJCSBE), ISSN: 2581-6942, Vol. 7, No. 2, May 2023

[3] Author Khodke Kalyani. (Copyright 2013). For The New Age Designer : Design Thinking From Ancient India

[4] Rao, S.R. Shipping and Maritime Trade of the Indus People. Expedition (Copyright 1965), 30-37.

[5] Author Olum Yasin. (Copyright 2004). Modern Management Theories And Practices

[6] [7] [8] Author Swarup Romita (Copyright 2022). Revolutionizing Managerial Skills in the 21st Century: The Power of Design Thinking

[9] Author Khodke Kalyani. (Copyright 2013). For The New Age Designer : Design Thinking From Ancient India